CHILDREN AND THEATRE IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

'All Work, No Play'

Anne Varty

Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain

Also by Anne Varty

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Anne Varty

For Joseph and Caitlin

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Introduction
The Child on the Victorian Stage

Children's participation in nineteenth-century theatre was widespread, sophisticated and encouraged by adults. Performers on domestic, amateur and professional stages, children assumed roles as diverse as Puck or an oyster-ghost, while as audience members they were deemed to hold strong views on the plot lines of pantomime and to have sufficient stamina to enjoy the full five hours which a mixed bill could entail. Their work in the professional theatre could be inconspicuous, as was the case for a little boy who announced

> " I'se got engaged at the theatre, and I'm one on 'em what does the waves"...he was one of a number of children engaged to go on all fours under sea-painted canvas, and by the moving up and down of their backs produce the swell of the billows.[1]

Alternatively, it could be highly visible, like the thirteen year-old Emma Bowman in her role for *The Little Squire* at the Lyric Theatre in April 1894, of which Lewis Carroll wrote 'Empsie has a beautiful part, and a *very* long one: a good deal of the play rests on her'.[2]

And whether star or supernumerary, their work was relatively well paid. Ellen Terry, reputedly eight years old, though really nine,[3] was paid a salary of 30s as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Princess's Theatre, London in 1856.[4] In the Commons on 10 July 1889 Mr Labouchere stated that trained juvenile supernumeraries at Drury Lane received 'From 1s. 6d. to 2s. for each performance; if not trained, from 9d. to 1s.'[5] Mrs Fawcett claimed in 1887 that 'a child under ten earns 10s. a week. Such wages are only given to trained children; the others are paid 6d. or 7d. a night.'[6]

At home they could be performing charades scripted by Henry and Alexander Mayhew in 1850, acting proverbs, or rhyming versions of Grimm's fairy tales scripted by Julia Corner in the 1860s. They could be learning French by perform-

ing Florence Bell's *Twelve Tiny French Plays for Children* (1888).[7] Or they could be posing in tableaux of advertisements for Brooke's Monkey Soap or Pear's Soap in church halls during the 1890s under the direction of Constance Milman.[8]

These activities enjoyed the stamp of royal approval. As a child Princess Victoria loved to watch her elders play charades; later she rehearsed plays at home with her own children and often took them into London to watch performances. In February 1854 she took them to see a pantomime version of *The Miller and his Men* at the Princess's Theatre and the whole family admired the juvenile displays: 'The Children were delighted, and the evolutions of the 80 little children, none older than 6 and some only 3, as the Scots Fusiliers, were very pretty.' [9] When professional companies came to perform in the theatre Prince Albert built at Windsor Castle, the juvenile members met an especially warm welcome. Of the Terry family's appearance in *King John* she noted 'The character of poor little 'Arthur' was most touchingly and beautifully acted by Miss Kate Terry, a little girl of 9 years old. The scene between Arthur and Hubert was heartrending.'[10]

The Queen was not alone amongst nobility and the social elite in her taste for child performers. In 1869 the *Era Almanac Advertiser* announced the retirement of Miss Lydia Howard, 'THE LITTLE FAIRY ACTRESS (Formerly called the 'Baby Actress'), Not yet FIVE years old, in her Marvellous and Delightful ENTERTAINMENT.' Amongst her noble patrons the advert claims that

> Mrs. W. E. Gladstone, Mrs. Tait [wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury], the Hon. Lady Nugent, Mrs. Gathorne Hardy, and Lady Wallscourt have honoured Miss Howard by THREE TIMES attending her entertainment.[11]

However, the days when leading members of Church and State could indulge this taste so publicly were numbered. Twenty years later another Archbishop of Canterbury (Rev. Benson) spoke in the Lords against the employment of children in theatres and argued that Christians should not attend pantomimes where children appeared.[12]

What distinguishes the participation of children in professional theatre during Victoria's reign is the sheer scale of numbers involved. By 1887 it was estimated that during pantomime season there were some 10,000 children working in theatres across the country.[13] Ample evidence for the role played by massed children in the spectacular effects of pantomime is afforded by newspaper reviews. Augustus Harris's Drury Lane production of *The Forty Thieves* in the winter of 1886–7 to mark Victoria's Jubilee turned the celebration of British grandeur into a pinnacle of his own career. He chose to introduce the extraordinarily lavish 'Jubilee scene' with a display by 'Madame Lanner's clever little pupils' who 'go through characteristic national dances'. An *Era* review devoted to a full account of the costumes of this gargantuan imperial pageant describes their appearance in detail:

> The English Jack tars appear entirely in white silk, with deep navy blue sailor collar and cuffs, and large straw hats. The Scotch Highlanders in dark plaid (in which red predominates), Tam-o'-Shanters with eagle plumes, and carrying their circular metal-studded targes of leather and their quality hilted claymores, escort Scotch fisher maids of the 'caller herrin' ' type, carrying creels and wearing shepherds' plaid petticoats and three-corned handkerchiefs tied under the chin; tunics of red and black plaid turned up 'fish-wife' fashion with red, short black velvet stay bodices, laced with red over a white chemisette, and loose dull blue jackets. The Irish lads and lasses are the next to put in an appearance, the former in stone grey corduroy coats and breeches, with ribbed worsted stockings to match, dark green velvet double-breasted waistcoats, orange silk neckties, grey felt hats, and the latter in deep blue poplin petticoats, buff figured bodices, and scarlet silk hooded cloaks. The Welsh girls are daintily apparelled in chestnut plush bodices, brown and fawn striped velvet petticoats, flowered maize-colour silk crossover kerchifs, striped cream silk aprons, mittens to correspond, market-baskets in their arms, and the national high hats.[14]

The Jubilee scene, and the Cave scene, in which 'marching and countermarching and kaleidascopic evolutions of hundreds of, doubtless, the most costly costumes ever seen on any stage' were spectacles on a grand scale even by Victorian standards.[15] But that the ever canny Harris should place a huge choral ballet by children at the beginning of the Jubilee pageant testifies to the high status this type of performance enjoyed. These 'clever pupils' embody the homeland. They represent the heart of the Empire, the charm and ingenuity of their display function as an initiating token of pride to prepare the way for the metaphorical children of Empire, from Afghanistan to Australia, to follow in an opulent display where theatrical wealth reflects imperial glory.

Spectacle was also at home in the East End of London, particularly in the hands of Harris's friend and rival John Douglass jun. who managed and wrote for the Standard Theatre in Shoreditch. Like Harris, Douglass was quick to exploit the spectacular effects which large groups of children could generate. He pre-empted Harris's jubilee deployment of children in his play *Our Silver Wedding* (1886) in which he staged a Sunday School treat in Epping Forest:

> Over two hundred and fifty children were engaged and a dozen wagonettes – each drawn by two horses, brought them to the sylvan retreat. John's stage management of the crowd was excellent, each happy load of children could be heard singing the chorus of a different popular song as they entered – games, races, and various contests were enjoyed, no detail being overlooked.

> A vicar received a note from the wife he adored, stating that she had left him for ever, and the reading of this epistle by the broken-hearted man, whilst the children were dancing around him, was an intensely human situation that gripped by sheer contrast.... [16]

Public demand for the spectacle of performing children was parodied by Jerome K. Jerome in *Stage-Land*, his satire of theatrical characters fashionable during the 1880s. In the chapter devoted to 'The Stage Child' Jerome invents the story of a man who is being driven to distraction at home by his eleven adorable children and who is to be treated to a child-free evening in the theatre:

> Our friend said he did not want to see another child or hear another child until he got home. He wanted to forget that there were such things as children in the world.
>
> We got up to the Strand and dropped into the first theatre we came to. The curtain was up, and on the stage was a small child, standing in its nightshirt and screaming for its mother.
>
> Our friend looked, said one word and bolted, and we followed.
>
> We went a little further, and dropped into another theatre.
>
> There, there were two children on the stage. Some grown-up people were standing round them listening, in respectful attitudes, while the children talked. They appeared to be lecturing about something.
>
> Again we fled, swearing, and made our way to a third theatre. They were all children there. It was somebody or other's Children's Company performing an opera, or pantomime, or something of that sort.
>
> Our friend said he would not venture in another theatre. He said he had heard there were places called music halls, and he begged us to take him to one of these, and not to tell his wife....
>
> The first thing we saw were two little boys doing tricks on a horizontal bar.
>
> Our friend was about to repeat his customary programme of flying and cursing, but we restrained him. We assured him that he really would see a grown-up person if he waited a bit, so he sat out the boys and also their little sister on a bicycle, and waited for the next item.
>
> It turned out to be an infant phenomenon who sang and danced in fourteen different costumes, and we once more fled....
>
> He said he thought a little music would soothe and ennoble him – make him feel more like a Christian than he did at that precise moment.
>
> We were near St. James's Hall, so we went in there.

> The hall was densely crowded....'The marvellous boy pianist – only ten years old!' was giving a recital....
>
> We asked him if he would like to try any other place of amusement, but he said, 'No.' He said that, when you came to think of it, it seemed a waste of money for a man with eleven children of his own to go about to places of entertainment now-a-days.[17]

Lost children, precocious children, companies of children, child acrobats and child prodigies: the sources all of these parodied types are readily identifiable in the theatrical culture of the day.

More extraordinary than the Victorians' taste for juvenile performers itself is the fact that the fashion peaked at exactly the same moment as legislation was brought in to curb its most extravagant excesses. *Stage-Land* was published in 1889, the same year which saw the passing of the Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This prohibited the theatrical employment of children under seven, and regulated that of children aged between seven and ten. The flourishing of the stage child contradicts major innovations of nineteenth-century politics in child protection and regulation of labour manifest in successive Factory Acts from 1819 onwards and in the Education Acts of 1870 onwards. In an era which became increasingly sentimental about its children, and protective towards them, the highly visible presence of juveniles on stage also ran counter to debates about the respectability of the acting profession as a whole. If adult actors and theatre managers still had to assert the decency of their profession as late as 1885,[18] then why were children not merely tolerated but actively encouraged in this supposedly tainted environment? Was the presence of children on stage in 'legitimate' dramas simply the artistic expression of an age dominated by realism, unable to imagine alternatives when the script called for child characters? 'Could *Prince Arthur* or *Little Lord Fauntleroy* be played by grown-up people?' was asked in the House of Commons by Mr. Addison in July 1889 while the Lords lamented the prospective loss of plays from the repertoire such as *Claudian, A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Winter's Tale*.[19] Did the increasingly dominant presence of children in pantomime reveal an obverse taste, an antidote to realism, an indulgence in fantasy, spectacle, burlesque and the forbidden erotic? Was there a political agenda behind the selection of juvenile companies to perform versions of *Gulliver*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and traditional pantomimes? These are some of the paradoxes and questions which this study sets out to explore.

An understanding of the contribution of juvenile performers to the entertainments of the Victorians is significant today both for the aesthetics of theatre practice it reveals, and as evidence for shifting social constructions of children and childhood. Theatre historians interpret an unusually ephemeral body of evidence; the work of children within this is doubly transient. The adult lives of exceptional

child stars are remarkable only because they are of no interest. The actor Fred Belton met both Master Betty and Clara Fisher in adult life and observed: 'Master Betty...is another proof that preciosity in youth becomes, as age advances, stunted. When I knew him he was a kindly, fat man, with an excessively lumpish son.'[20] Of Clara Fisher, whom he met in America, he wrote that she was 'a homely, kindly, commonplace, reputable woman, with not a scintillation of that ability which had startled the world in her youth.'[21]

While the fleeting nature of childhood was undoubtedly part of the allure enjoyed by juvenile performers, when a 'clever child' developed a distinguished adult career, the achievements of youth have often been given only cursory biographical attention. The poverty and uncertainty of Marie Wilton's juvenile career, were, for example, quickly eclipsed by the upholstered respectability of her role as Mrs Bancroft. So dominant was the cultural perception of her adult persona that in 1889 she had to remind the public that she had ever appeared on stage as a child: 'As since my earliest childhood I have been associated with the stage, I may, perhaps, be permitted to speak on this vexed question as to the employment of little children in theatres.'[22] At the time it was only Millicent Fawcett who noticed the discrepancy between her support for stage children in 1889 and the regret, expressed in her autobiography just one year previously, that her own career had begun so early: 'I wish I could recall a happy childhood; but alas! I can remember only work and responsibility from a very tender age.'[23] The critical tendency to overlook this part of Bancroft's career has continued. Nina Auerbach, contrasting the early trajectory of her career with that of Ellen Terry, mistakenly stated: 'she made her debut at seventeen, by which age she was visibly not a child.'[24]

Ellen Terry made her stage debut so young that not even she can recall whether she herself or her elder sister Kate rehearsed as the 'Spirit of the Mustard-pot' for a Glasgow pantomime, although Ellen claims the experience as her own:

> What more natural than that my father should offer my services? I had a shock of pale yellow hair, I was small enough to be put into the property mustard-pot, and the Glasgow stage manager would easily assume that I had inherited talent....When they tried to put me into the mustard-pot, I yelled lustily and showed more lung-power than aptitude for the stage. 'Pit your child into the mustard-pot, Mr. Terry,' said the stage-manager. 'Damn you and your mustard-pot, sir!' said my mortified father. 'I won't frighten my child for you or any one else!' [25]

By the age of nine she was cast as Mamillius in *A Winter's Tale* and quickly graduated to significant speaking roles, most famously as Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* during her three years at the Princess's Theatre under the Keans' management from 1856 to 1859. She recalls that throughout this period she was

never out of the bill. Since it was customary for the evening's entertainment to comprise of more than one piece, at the Christmas season of 1857-58 when she was eleven, her night's work began with the role of Puck and was followed by that of 'Goldenstar', the good fairy in *The White Cat*, Planché's extravaganza.[26] The appetite of the audience had to be matched by the stamina of the performer.

The details of Ellen Terry's juvenile career are biographically documented, and their broader significance has been stimulatingly explored by Nina Auerbach.[27] This is, however, an exception. Many children, forgotten today, worked equally long hours in the theatre, but did not go on to develop distinguished adult careers there. A playbill for the Royal Albert Saloon and Standard Tavern and Teagardens in Shepherdess Walk, Shoreditch for 13 February 1843 announced that *The Adopted Child* would feature as the last item, due to finish at 11.00 pm, and that Master E. F. Hill would make his first appearance in that character.[28] Today we know nothing of what became of him. A similar example is afforded by Phoebe Carlo, who played the first Alice in Savile Clarke's dramatisation of *Alice in Wonderland* in 1886 at the age of twelve. She had been performing since 1883 but abandoned her theatrical career shortly afterwards. The story of her stage life is traditionally told only in so far as it interacts with the work of Lewis Carroll, himself an ardent lover of juvenile performances. And even Phoebe Carlo's work as Alice is often forgotten because it has been upstaged by Isa Bowman, who played Alice in the 1888 production. Bowman, however, continued her stage career into adulthood, and marketed herself as 'the real Alice'.[29]

Lewis Carroll was a frequent visitor to plays in which children appeared. His diaries contain the names of over seventy young performers.[30] Today most of them occupy an obscurity still deeper than that of his one-time favourite Phoebe. Yet as named individuals performing scripted roles they are now, as they were then, celebrities in contrast with the hundreds of children who worked as supernumeraries in pantomimes and other seasonal entertainments. They contrast with the children in the cast list for the 'Day Scholars' at Goody Two-Shoes' school in E. L. Blanchard's Drury Lane pantomime of 1862, named as 'Masters Wag, Lag, Fag, Brag, Dag, Nag, Gag, Mag, Tag, etc, Misses Nimble, Simple, Sample, Rumple, Whimper, Simper, Niminy, Piminy, etc.'[31] As Mrs Fawcett asserted at the height of the 1889 campaign to curb the industry, 'the children are employed by hundreds, while those of them who can obtain engagements in theatres after they are grown up are counted by tens.'[32]

The 'infant phenomenon' of Victoria's reign did not spring fully formed from an egg, though this may have been one of its theatrical accomplishments. In a long tradition of European theatre, children appeared as *putti* and the Christ Child in the Mystery Cycles, in small parts in Shakespeare's plays, and in extensive roles in Marston's work for the Boy Companies at St Paul's in London in the early seventeenth century.[33] There are many examples of stage children across Europe dur-

ing the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, both in the theatre and in fiction. *Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* (1795–96) offers particularly resonant insight into the lives of young performers and their audiences, not least instructive amongst which is the brief biography of the theatre director Serlo:

> He had been, one may say, born and suckled in the theatre. While yet literally an infant, he had been produced upon the stage to move spectators merely by his presence; for authors even then were acquainted with this natural and very guiltless mode of doing so. Thus his first 'Father!' or 'Mother!' in favourite pieces, procured him approbation, ere he understood what was meant by that clapping of the hands. In the character of Cupid, he more than once descended with terror in his flying-gear; as harlequin he used to issue from the egg; and as a little chimney-sweep to play the sharpest tricks....His father was convinced, that the minds of children could be kept awake and steadfast by no other means than blows; hence, in the studying of any part, he used to thrash him at stated periods...[34]

In assembling the most typical feats of juvenile actors to establish Serlo's pedigree, Goethe reveals both the routine nature of life on the boards for a child whose parents work there, and the way in which theatrical dynasties were made and maintained. Theatre was a family business, and in Britain there were many historical examples from the same period to match the fiction of Serlo.

A vivid account of the fortunes of a family of actors is given by Charlotte Deans who toured the north of England and Scotland from the 1780s, married twice and raised thirteen children on the way. Some of her children, as they became suitably aged, took up juvenile roles whenever they were required. She remembers that shortly after her marriage to her fellow actor Mr Deans in 1803, when she was joint manager of their touring company with Mr Hobson that: '[t]he strength of the company followed the fortunes of Mr Hobson; when his brother, Miss Longstaff, my son Henry (a boy), my husband and myself, were the whole of the dramatic persons of our corps, and no paraphernalia but two old scenes and a green curtain.'[35] Given that Miss Longstaff soon married Mr Hobson, it is obvious that this company was structured by close family ties and Charlotte Deans' indefatigable fertility kept them with a constant supply of juvenile members.

Life on the road was arduous and it was difficult for children travelling with their parents to be occupied in any way other than in helping out with performances, although once they reached an age at which they did not need to be cared for by their parents, many of her children did embark on different professions of their own choosing. It was not just the need for parental nurture which kept her family together, there was an economic dimension too, revealed when Charlotte Deans finally retired. She notes that as a result her family was 'thereby compelled

to seek situations for themselves as they best could.' [36] This lifestyle was routine for many families of touring actors throughout the nineteenth century, as family traditions were built up. Ellen Terry asserted of her youth that 'theatrical folk did not imagine that their children could do anything but follow their parents' professions.'[37]

Today one of the best known theatre families is the Ternan family, of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, whose fortunes have been brought to life by Claire Tomalin.[38] Others include the Robertson family who managed the Lincoln Circuit and amongst whose juvenile members was Madge Robertson. She continued her career into adulthood as Mrs Kendal; her brother Tom Robertson, who made his first stage appearance aged five as Hamish in *Rob Roy* in 1834, became house playwright for the Prince of Wales's Theatre in London under the Bancrofts' management during the 1860s. In Glasgow the Glover family dominated the theatre business; significant in London were the Conquests, and the Grimaldis, whose son Joseph became the accomplished clown so admired by the young Charles Dickens.[39]

But the Victorian period marks a unique change in the foundation of theatrical dynasties. It was in this era that theatre businesses could be started by children rather than inherited by them. For example, Lewis Carroll's interest in Isa Bowman fuelled his determination to advance not only her own theatrical career, but also that of her three siblings. His interventions of their behalf resulted in large-scale public success, confirmed by the *Era* in June 1902 which announced:

> Among the celebrated theatrical families who from their childhood upwards have been cherished by the playgoing public none have filled a more prominent position for the last decade than the Bowman sisters.[40]

All four girls went on to conduct stage careers (Nellie starred in *Peter Pan* from 1906 to 1910), and only Maggie gave up acting when she married in 1902.

The Appeal of the Victorian Child Performer

That children made a major contribution to theatre during the nineteenth century is not in dispute. But the reasons why they maintained a powerful theatrical appeal during this era must still be explored. Goethe's observation that the baby Serlo was able to affect audiences by his mere presence, with no consciousness of his whereabouts and no understanding of what applause signified provides an important clue towards one explanation for the popularity of the performing child during the nineteenth century. His theatrical power derived precisely and paradoxically from what Jonas Barish has identified as the child's participation in a cluster of 'guileless folk' cherished alike by Romantics and Puritans for their 'absolute sincerity....the peasant, the savage, the idiot, the child – those in whom the histrionic impulse

remains undeveloped.'[41] The infant appears to perform without self-consciousness, making no distinction between performance and play: it seems to perform for its own pleasure rather than for an audience. This set the stage child radically apart from adult actors in an era when the cultural value of theatre was dominated by 'antitheatrical prejudice' so persuasively described by Barish.

Schiller had asserted that '[m]an only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and *he is only fully a human being when he plays.*' [42] For nineteenth-century thinkers authentic playfulness seemed to be more readily achieved by children than by adults and the child's capacity for play allowed it to hail from a prelapsarian era. Walter Pater, for example, lavished plangent praise on 'play' and the 'unexpected blessedness' it bestowed. He found depictions of play manifest in the *fête champêtre* canvasses of the School of Giorgione, and claimed to see 'those masques in which men avowedly do but play at real life, like children "dressing up," disguised in strange old Italian dresses.'[43] Robert Louis Stevenson, one of the most outspoken Victorian admirers of childhood, fused the Romantic appraisal of play with Rousseau's promotion of the child's primal home in nature to create a picture of the child as an inhabitant of arcadia, an index of man's innocent and unfallen origin: '[i]n the child's world of dim sensation, play is all in all. "Making believe" is the gist of his whole life, and he cannot so much as take a walk except in character.'[44] The child 'makes believe' for its own benefit, rather than requiring an audience to suspend disbelief. Stevenson's observation led him to assert of children that 'surely they dwell in a mythological epoch, and are not the contemporaries of their parents.' [45] He concludes his essay on 'Child's Play' by anticipating the driving urge of Barrie's creation of Peter Pan:

> [i]t would be easy to leave them in their native cloudland, where they figure so prettily – pretty like flowers and innocent like dogs. They will come out of their gardens soon enough, and have to go into office and the witness box. Spare them yet awhile, o conscientious parent![46]

These nostalgic fantasies, longing for home and origin, crystalise in the dubious utopia of Neverland and its principal inhabitant, 'the boy who never grew up' for whom all life was play and dying itself imagined as 'an awfully big adventure'. But until the arrival of Peter Pan and the theatrical construction of his world in 1904, the mythological epoch Stevenson identified could be glimpsed in the theatre, through performances by individual stage children. Barrie's Edwardian play carries the freight of a long tradition of thought about the significance of the child.

But how does child's play relate to acting? Is a child playing at pirates to be viewed in the same way as a child performing in *Pirates of Penzance* on the professional stage? For the producers of that show at the Savoy in 1884, it seemed they had only to harness the child's innate playfulness. The fusion between playing and

acting, captured in the term 'play-acting', existed from the perspective of the audience rather than the child, and it was a fusion nurtured by the Victorians as it supported both the aesthetics and the politics of the stage child: Ernest Dowson argued in 1889:

> A child who is a real child and not a precocious little prig, a child who has entered into its inheritance, lives all its real life in the kingdom of pretence....And why should not this charming, childish instinct be trained and cultivated for the pleasure of discriminating folk who can appreciate it....Our opinion is that it is a pleasure to them; we believe that they delight in it. And if they work hard at it, it must be remembered that they work very hard at play. As Montaigne says, 'the play of children is not performed in play, but to be judged as their most serious action.' And to let children go on stage is, after all, to do nothing worse than to cultivate their playful instinct. [47]

The eighteenth-century actress Charlotte Charke, daughter of the poet laureate Colley Cibber, captured the likeness between child's play and performance in her autobiography. She remembered, aged four:

> Taking it into my small Pate, that by Dint of a Wig and a Waistcoat, I should be the perfect Representative of my Sire....[T]he Oddity of my Appearance soon assembled a Crowd about me; which yielded me no small Joy, as I conceived their Risibility on this Occasion to be Marks of Approbation, and walked myself into a Fever, in the happy Thought of being taken for the 'Squire.[48]

Her account of the masquerade illustrates both the child's capacity for 'make-believe' which Stevenson enshrined a century later, and the 'undeveloped histrionic tendency' Barish presents as an essential component of Romantic virtue. In believing herself 'taken for the 'Squire' Charlotte was playing to herself.

That the communicated conviction of such sincerity remained a prized feature of child performances is clear from the terms in which child actors are reviewed during the nineteenth century. As late as 1889 Dowson wrote of the eight year-old Minnie Terry that she was

> 'natural...simple...charming....She treads the boards...with as utter an absence of self-consciousness or affectation, and as perfect a spontaneity, as if she were in her own nursery at home.'[49]

The passage from child acting to adult acting is recognised in the autobiography of another eighteenth-century actress, Hyppolite Clairon, as, at the age of twelve, the time from which she began to 'derive a pleasure from dissimulation'.[50] Peters

comments 'with consciousness, with entry into adulthood, has come theatricalism...which, in Clairon's narrative, finally overcomes the authenticity of the actor, autobiographically 'playing herself' on the revelatory page.'[51] The point at which she learns to regard performance as telling lies marks the transition between 'making believe' and requiring others to suspend disbelief. In Biblical terms the shift can be identified as a primal Fall.

The inference from these two eighteenth-century examples is that as children the performers managed effortlessly to unify the actor's paradox of simultaneously learning a role and identifying with it. The child performer inhabits what Stevenson called a 'mythological epoch' because it possesses an identity at once multiple and single, simultaneously mobile and still. Auerbach has identified what she characterises as the 'dangerous mobility' of the child actor in her analysis of the second stanza of Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1804), which concludes 'As if his whole vocation/ were endless imitation'. Yet the second stanza cannot be read independently of the first, with its assertion that the child comes 'trailing clouds of glory' from God, its home and origin.[52] Auerbach argues that to focus only on the first stanza of the Ode is to misread the poem as a 'sentimental benediction to innocence'. In her view it 'celebrates a generalized child who is eerily other than humanity...[who] appears human only because he is a consummate actor.'[53] But it may equally be argued that for Wordsworth and succeeding generations, the Ode suggests that the performing child stood unblemished and its audience unsullied in an era when prejudice against actors and their profession focussed on their doubleness or duplicity.[54] Barish has demonstrated that 'the actor, or impostor, practices a perilous art, and tempts other men to do the same. The age-old dread of mutability, the longing for a state of perfection akin to the immobility of God...persist...in the nineteenth century.'[55] But the child was no impostor, its very identity was, as Wordsworth identified, to be 'a little actor' *and* to reflect divinity. The license to act out an authentic self that was nevertheless learned, repeatable and various was the special preserve of the child actor.

It was jealously copied later in the Victorian period by some actresses in an effort to diffuse moral hostility to their profession. A reviewer of Mary Anderson in Gilbert's *Comedy and Tragedy* at the Lyceum on 26 January 1884 stated:

> Miss Anderson is evidently no disciple of the school-girl style of acting which has lately, and so detrimentally, been cultivated and practised by many of our actresses, and which is fostered and so continually encouraged by many writers and managers.[56]

As Worthen argues, 'Victorian performance seemed to require the actress's personal exposure, the revelation of her most intimate 'face' to the prying stare of the

public.'[57] He notes the objection by Henry James to actresses who selected 'an explicitly amateurish' manner designed 'to protect them from the vulgarity of the actor's professional display'.[58] The adoption of school-girl acting style could shield them from some types of criticism.

The conventions of theatre history concerning acting style suggest broadly that the representation of feeling through codified gesture during the eighteenth century gave way to individually internalised demonstrations of emotion during the nineteenth century. George Taylor has shown how eighteenth-century conventions survived into the nineteenth century more prominently in certain genres such as melodrama or the sensation play.[59] During the 1880s the debate between two schools of acting, the 'mechanical' and the 'emotional' as Diderot termed them, became focussed by competition between 'masks' and 'faces'.[60] Just as the child performer dismantled the dichotomy between the actor's multiple and single identities, so too it cuts straight through the masks/faces binary. The child actor has neither a mask nor a face, but unsettles by possessing both in equal measure. The acting child is simultaneously itself and other, authentic and pretending. Dowson wrote of Minnie Terry:

> Her spontaneity...always strikes me afresh with new amazement – it is difficult to believe at times she is saying something she has learned by rote – and her share in the dialogue...was so childlike, withal so appropriate, that I frequently forgot the credit which Mr Grundy [the playwright] should have for his share in my admiration of the cleverness of the little lady.[61]

Children were taught both words and gestures, and expected to deliver them with learned emphasis and conviction. Assessed in these terms, their acting style can only be described as belonging to the 'mechanical' school. However, the most adept child performers could make these learned gestures look like an overflow of powerful feeling, giving credence to their skill in the emotional school.

The complex negotiation between spontaneity and repetition may be observed in the breach when Lewis Carroll coaxed fifteen year-old Isa Bowman in her role as the Duke of York in *Richard III*:

> One more thing. ('What an impertinent old uncle! Always finding fault') You're not as *natural*, when acting the Duke, as you were when you acted Alice. You seemed not to forget *yourself* enough. It was not so much a real prince talking to his elder brother and his uncle; it was *Isa Bowman* talking to people she didn't *much* care about, for an audience to listen to. I don't mean that it was all *through*, but *sometimes* you were *artificial*. Now don't be jealous of Miss Hatton, when I say that she was *sweetly* natural. She looked and spoke just like a *real* Prince of Wales. And she didn't seem to know that there was any audi-

> ence. If you are ever to be a good actress (as I hope you will), you must try to forget 'Isa' altogether, and be the character you are playing. Try to think 'This is really the Prince of Wales, I'm his little brother, and I'm very glad to meet him, and I love him very much,' and 'this is *really* my uncle: he's very kind, and lets me say saucy things to him,' and *do* forget that there's anybody else listening![62]

Carroll establishes a dichotomy between 'natural' and 'artificial', and encourages Isa to recover the more juvenile and unselfconscious acting style she had deployed the year before in *Alice in Wonderland* (1888). He tries to cultivate her imaginative identification with the role to release spontaneity in her performance. Commensurate with her self-forgetfulness was the opportunity for the audience to forget itself. For Carroll, this may have facilitated his voyeuristic pleasure in her performance and enabled his covert identification between her 'Uncle' as he styled himself in life, and the uncle on stage who 'lets me say saucy things to him'.

Victorian admirers of the performing child may therefore have enjoyed the experience of a double nostalgia. First, they saw the 'mythological epoch' embodied by the child's quasi-divine unity in multiplicity. Secondly, in terms of theatre history, they watched the child acting in a style which had predominated during the preceding epoch. Two kinds of longing for what was past, the one metaphysical and the other temporal, affected the adult audience of the Victorian child. This was often further inflected by the personal memories of childhood triggered by the formalised scrutiny of children on stage.

Dowson's observation of the unique configuration of acting style in Minnie Terry's performance, spontaneity and learning by rote, points towards two further kinds of pleasure which Victorian stage children made available to their audience. The child's spontaneity generated a special intimacy between audience and performer. When an audience witnessed the act it was allowed invisibly to participate in the 'make-believe' of the child's world, and was positioned as voyeur. The child's paradoxical exhibition of absolute sincerity on stage invited erotic, scopophilic attention. The sexual fetishisation of the child actor was a component of its allure.

On the other hand, the rote learning of the child's performance suggests an altogether different element of fascination. When William Archer summarised his position in the debate about whether actors used primarily mechanical or emotional resources for performance, he dismissed the idea that acting was a purely imitative art:

> '[t]he manners and passions of his fellow men form...the actor's province. Over part of this domain unemotional imitation will carry him safely. The reproduction of manners, in themselves, is effected by a mere extension of that instinct which makes children the 'sedulous apes' of their elders.'[63]

For Archer, adult actors take their performance beyond the bounds of mere mimicry or imitation through the exhibition of internalised feeling. They are not like children, they are not 'sedulous apes'. The Darwinian idea embedded in Archer's swift citation of Stevenson's assessment of how he learned his craft by the imitation of mature writers, points to the idea that children were in some sense primitive adults. Herbert Spencer had deployed a version of this eighteenth-century 'law of recapitulation' in 1877 when he described the mind of the 'savage':

> '[i]nfancy and nursery life, show us an absorbtion in sensations and perceptions, akin to that which characterizes the savage....Children are ever dramatizing the lives of adults; and savages, along with their other mimicries, similarly dramatize the actions of their civilized visitors.'[64]

Gustav Jahoda argues that Spencer was amongst many social anthropologists who believed that 'the modern child was a savage, just as the savage was a child.' [65] Evidence for this claim rested on the child's capacity for imitative dramatization. The rote learning, the imitation, all the elements of mechanical acting style, therefore cast the child actor as a species of primitive or savage humanity. It offered an irresistible spectacle for the Darwinist and imperialist Victorian public.

The logic of Spencer's argument pointed towards a domestication of the figure of the savage during an era dominated by the politics of imperial expansion. Strange peoples encountered at the borders of distant British territory were also to be found at the very heart of every civilized home, in the nursery. Since the infant's imitative faculty was nowhere more publicly visible than in the theatre, where it was as controlled and as scrutinised as the behaviour of the colonised 'savage', certain types of performance by the stage child afforded the heartening spectacle of colonial superiority. The policing of 'primitives' by the soldiers of the British Empire explains the military metaphor for the description of the armies of children marshalled across the stage in pantomime. The favourite pantomime deployment of children in military guises reflected the accommodation of 'natives' within the ranks of the imperial army. It was an ultimate statement of assimilation. Juveniles as all-singing, all-dancing soldiers and sailors such as the British Tars in the harlequinade of *Goody Two-Shoes* (1876), the Lilliputian army in the *Gaiety Gulliver* (1879), the entire cast in the *Children's Pinafore* (1879), the procession of Sir Garnet Wolseley's Egyptian army in the Drury Lane pantomime *Sinbad the Sailor* (1882), display this assimilation of the savage by the ranks of the civilized. The threat was made safe, and superiority affirmed.

For Spencer, the observation that '[c]hildren are ever dramatizing the lives of adults' was a defining quality of childhood. Participation by children in role play, formalised by theatre, was therefore an enactment of childishness, a public assertion of the categorical difference between children and adults, and the demonstra-

tion of the child's kinship with an altogether more atavistic state of being. The common appellation 'clever child' to denote a particularly successful juvenile performer was a signifier of her (or sometimes his) childishness, her remarkable aptitude for mimicry; it was not to be understood as we might take the term today, to refer to the growing maturity and skill of the performer. It was rhetoric designed to keep the 'clever child' in its place, and to assess its acting skill within the framework of an anthropological construction of childhood. 'Evolution' was a technical term from ballet used to describe the dance routines of the juvenile chorus; it puns felicitously with the notion that performance by children was the manifestation of a transitional stage of development.

Belief that role play was a constitutive component of childhood helps to clarify why there was parliamentary confusion in 1889 over whether the ludic activity of theatre children was simply a formalised expression of being a child, or whether their behaviour in the theatre should be correctly viewed in terms of work. Mr Addison MP asserted:

> There is nothing in which my own children up to and beyond the age of 10 take a greater delight and enjoyment than in acting or what they call 'dressing up,' and instead of injuring their nerves they always seem to me to be the better for it.[66]

His views were supported by Mr Labouchere who claimed 'there can be no doubt that it in no way injures the children physically to go through this small amount of work – play I would rather call it.'[67] For children who acted professionally, who participated in the rote learning and rehearsal which enabled their performance, there was never any doubt that they were engaged in work. They were employed, they were paid, they were working. Marie Wilton recalled '[n]o games, no romps, no toys – nothing which makes a child's life joyous. I can recollect a doll, but not the time to play with it....before I fell asleep after my work, I often wished that I could play with it sometimes.'[68] The ideologies that surrounded children's performance were so manifold and powerful that this simple fact was often obscured.

When the popularity of stage children peaked during the 1880s with the fashion for 'children's pantomimes' in which all or most of the cast were children, their heightened visibility sparked a new political debate. Two Victorian pieties collided over the issue of child actors. Pragmatists who valued the income they brought to the theatre industry itself and to the children's families were locked in fierce dispute with moralists who valued the child's developmental potential, arguing that it was damaged by this kind of work.

The parliamentary debate was conducted in the Commons in July 1889 in the context of the Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to and Protection of Children. The

lower house recommended that children under the age of ten should be prohibited from any kind of performance work. But in August 1889 the Lords ameliorated this prohibition, and decreed instead that the age of prohibition should be reduced to seven, with licenses required for girls under sixteen and for boys under fourteen. The Act came into effect on 1 November 1889.[69]

The Scope of this Study

One of the fundamental concerns of this investigation is to make visible, and to bring into the focus of critical discussion, work undertaken by children in the entertainment businesses of the Victorian period. It is, therefore, anchored in the social history of debates about the legitimacy of child employment in theatre which arose during the 1870s and which led eventually to regulation in 1889. Evidence from more ephemeral and less verbally scripted types of juvenile performance, particularly acrobatics, was drawn on by moral reformers during the decades of debate, and inflected the way in which child labour in permanent houses and in scripted drama came to be viewed. The present study therefore draws on some evidence from such traditions to account for shifting social perspectives on child performers in scripted drama. But since the impact of legislation was most conspicuous in the commercial circuits and permanent houses, the focus of this investigation lies in material from these sources. While no attempt is made to offer a chronological history of favourite child roles in the Victorian repertoire such as those found in *The Two Orphans*, *Green Bushes*, *The Ticket of Leave Man*, *The Manager's Daughter*, *Drink*, *Caste*, *Masks and Faces*, *The Silver King*, *The Two Little Vagabonds*, *The Golden Ladder*, *Claudian*, dramatisations of Dickens's novels and productions of Shakespeare's plays, many are brought into discussion, framed by a social context.

Scrutiny of political debates neither begins nor concludes this exploration. Instead, it opens with an investigation of the diverse kinds of training children underwent to fit them for the stage in the absence of any nationally recognised or standardised drama school. It encompasses training in both voice and movement, and considers also the choral ballet training offered by Katti Lanner in her self-proclaimed National Training School for Dancing. The purpose of beginning the story here is to make it plain from the outset that, from the perspective of the children involved and those working with them in the theatre, they were engaged in paid employment, and that the rigours and rewards of their activity fall clearly into the category of labour.

This chapter is followed by two quite different investigations of exploitation and desire provoked by the appearance of the trained child, both of which explore contrasting but related intersections between the child produced in performance and the modes of its consumption. While the training of the juvenile performer sought to control, with varying degrees of success, what the child actually did on stage, it

could not control so precisely the responses generated by these manifestations. Chapter Two, therefore, presents narratives of how the child's body could be subjected to a scopophilic regard from certain sectors of the audience. It considers the unusually extreme cases of Lewis Carroll and Ernest Dowson, the memoirs of Marie Wilton, and the biography of Constance Gilchrist. Chapter Three explores more ideologically conditioned desires and nostalgias which were generated by the child in performance, and pursues a familiar tradition of analysis concerning the Romantic signification of the child as an embodiment of primal innocence. The arcadian/savage terms of this discussion are well established in literary and art historical studies of this period, but child actors and their roles have not hitherto been brought into this frame. Since theatre is a live art, notwithstanding the fact that our recovery of material from this period is limited to various kinds of text, children working within it and performing roles congruent with arcadian or savage models offer particularly immediate incarnations of these ideologies. They obscure themselves as individuals in the very moment of acting out and illustrating what childhood could be taken to signify. This combination of immanence and transcendence makes the study of the theatre child in these terms particularly compelling. It is also crucial to explain why this group of child workers was unique in being the last, in the nineteenth century, to have its organised activity brought under any kind of regulation, the difficult emergence of which is the subject of the four chapters which follow.

Indulgences of the figure of the child as a vessel for adult fantasy were exercised in parallel with awareness of the child as social being throughout the period. Adult projections were not confined to manipulations of the figure of the child, but could also affect mature self-perception. A pivotal chapter, between the explorations of arcadia and the scrutiny of social conditions, presents the conventions of Victorian pantomime as means of fashioning the audience as an idealised body of children, creating the child as consumer. The study continues with an account of the development and eventual domination of the awareness of child as social being over the clandestine or celebratory appeals of the juvenile performer. It presents oblique considerations of the child actor as a worker through, for example, a discussion of Richard Binsey Peake's *The Climbing Boy* (1832). It also presents direct confrontation with the idea of the performing child as a worker through an analysis of reforming campaigns about education, prostitution and cruelty.

These chapters seek to explore the implications of the kind of bifocal vision afforded, for example, by John Doran's 1881 observation of juvenile supernumeraries in Drury Lane Theatre. But without a preceding account of the ideological articulations of the child as arcadian or savage inhabitant of a Golden Age it is impossible to understand how the terms of the contemporary debate were so confused:

> If it should occur to you that you are sitting over or near a gasometer, you may find confidence in knowing that...even the young ladies who glitter and look so happy as they float in the air in transformation scenes, could not be roasted alive, provided they are released in time from the iron rods to which they are bound. These ineffably exquisite nymphs, however, suffer more or less from the trials they have to undergo for our amusement. Seldom a night passes without one or two of them fainting; and I remember, on once assisting several of them to alight, as they neared the ground, and they were screened from the public gaze, that their hands were cold and clammy, like clay. The blood had left the surface and rushed to the heart, and the spangled nymphs who seemed to rule destiny and the elements, were under a nervous tremour; but almost as they had touched the ground, they shook their spangles, laughed their light laugh, and tripped away in the direction of the stately housekeeper of Drury.[70]

Doran's observations are structured by a sequence of binary oppositions which pivot on the double identity of the juvenile performers on and off stage. Their onstage appearance as 'spangled nymphs' is contrasted with the 'nervous tremour' of their screened appearance in the wings. The public gaze is governed by aesthetics, the private with ethics. Yet even Doran's efforts to balance the multiplicity of view by which juvenile performers were seen and interpreted is confounded by the discourse of his representation. The children off stage are more brutally anatomised and dismembered than they are on stage. During the performance they are described as 'young ladies', albeit constrained and in danger of being consumed by the very light which makes them visible at all. But in the wings a curious reversal takes place. From this perspective the euphemism of 'young ladies' becomes yet more exaggerated: now they are 'ineffably exquisite nymphs', no longer human but unfortunately hampered by all too human bodily functions. Their hands feel like 'clay', an image which suggests that performance has rendered them inanimate, ready to be created afresh by the vivifying hand of the backstage managers. In a strangely unfocussed clause Doran tells us that 'the blood had left the surface and rushed to the heart'. This clause is not governed by any sentient subject at all. The children, as children, have vanished from the picture. Doran then resorts to further stereotyping by creating a picture of carefree and resilient children in their swift recovery as they leave the arena of his scrutiny. Whatever they may suffer in the course of their labours, it is short lived and soon forgotten. Laughing and 'tripping' away, Doran returns these children to a pastoral idyll like that depicted in Kate Greenaway's *Book of Games* (1889), rather than picturing their exit into the dark and potentially dangerous streets of Covent Garden. Their appearance as 'nymphs' has been simply an alternative view of their arcadian affinities, and what at first seemed to be an account of two quite different juvenile identities ultimately collapses into one.

Doran's account is typical of the tangled terms of the political discussions which took place during this period, when commercial interests about the value of the child actor as resource and commodity clashed with ideological constructions about the signification of childhood, and campaigners sought to bring ethics into a public domain which had previously been dominated by commerce and aesthetics.

The final chapter of this study offers something of a postscript, an excursion into the realm of domestic and amateur performances, to demonstrate how public contentions were played out or pandered to in the private domain. It is, however, a necessary conclusion since it provides evidence about the activity which Mr Addison MP called 'dressing up' in his effort to comprehend and judge the working conditions of professional child actors. It demonstrates how misguided it was to use the experience of homely, leisured play as a measure for professional activity, and provides evidence for a further source, pragmatic rather than ideological, of middle class misapprehension about the work of stage children.

1
Training Juvenile Actors

The training children received for their stage appearances varied a great deal. Sometimes there was none at all, as is illustrated by the extreme case of the 'wholesale kidnapping' of a group of youngsters in Worthing in 1843 for a benefit performance of Stirling's adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Bijou Theatre:

> Without the 'Dotheboys-Hall' scholars, this performance could not, however, take place. And here was the awkward dilemma. Worthing mothers of the poorer class did not countenance play-acting, believing Old Nick to be in some way connected with it. A local Figaro helped me out of my difficulty....He was a performer on the French horn....'I'll get you fifty, sir, never fear.' And he was as good as his word. Lured from the by-streets and alleys by his horn, like the children in the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin', the small fry followed him to the theatre yard; once there Figaro closed the gates upon Mr. Squeers's pupils. Amidst crying and moaning they were placed on the stage, sitting on benches and kept in order by Figaro's cane – poor children, completely bewildered. When the treacle was administered, most of them cried. This delighted the audience, thinking it so natural (so it was). At nine o'clock, the act over, our cruel barber threw open the gates, driving his flock out, with a pleasant intimation of what they would catch when they arrived home. Mothers, fathers, sisters, in wild disorder, had been scouring the town for their runaways, and the police were completely puzzled, and at their wits end, at such wholesale kidnapping. Figaro was nearly torn to pieces when the ruse was discovered.[71]

At the opposite end of the spectrum we may consider the fourteen year-old Mary Anderson, coaching herself in scholarly isolation:

> I selected for my study a small white-washed carpetless room at the top of the house, where no one was likely to intrude: its only furniture a table and chair, a crucifix, a bust of Shakespeare, a small photograph of Edwin Booth, and a

> pair of foils, which I had learned to use with some skill. Bronson, Comstock, and Murdock on Elocution, Rush on the Voice, Plutarch's Lives, Homer's Iliad, and the beloved red and gold volumes of Shakespeare, were my only books.[72]

Between these poles of the choric and the solitary, the haphazard and the rigorous, there stretched a spectrum of experience and opportunity, as variegated as the roles assigned to children but not always matching the requirements of those roles. The lack of any recognised school for actors was one factor in maintaining that variety. Theatre companies, whether touring or in-house, trained their own juveniles who often learned on the hoof in rehearsals, while individual actors set themselves up as teachers and coached children privately in elocution and movement. For as long as theatre remained primarily a family business, children learned from their parents. But once the profession opened its gates to newcomers, theatrical agents, many of those in London situated on the York Road in Lambeth, took children on to their books and supplied them to managers who trained them with more or less care. As the taste for juvenile ballet and choral movement became more pronounced in the latter half of the century, ballet schools were established to guarantee a constant supply of well-drilled juniors to the major theatres such as Drury Lane and Crystal Palace. The main factor which conditioned the learning experience of a child was whether they were going to perform as individuals or in a group of dancers, singers or pantomime extras.

Voice

For children aspiring to individually scripted roles voice training was essential, and this meant learning to command both volume and accent. That store was set by the ability to deliver lines in what passed as received pronunciation may be judged by remarks of praise and blame attracted by certain performances. The possession of a cockney accent was a particular crime. A review of *The Old Love and the New*, which appeared in *The Theatre* in February 1887 concludes:

> Natalie, the child, was entrusted to a little girl with a natural aptitude for acting, but a total disregard to the necessity of an aspirate, and having about the most developed cockney accent it has been our lot to hear.[73]

Lord Leighton, aware of the disadvantages of a cockney voice, used his influence to help one of his juvenile models, Dorothy Pullen, pursue her dream of an acting career. His biographer described the situation, which took place in the winter of 1879:

> She told me that she had recently lost her mother, her father had deserted his family of five girls and two boys, and she with her elder brother were left to

> support them....As Leighton and I grew to know her better we found her very intelligent and conscientious....She confessed to me, while sitting one day, that she longed greatly to find something to do more interesting and remunerative than spending her days as a model. She thought she could act. I consulted Leighton. His first exclamation was , '*Impossible!* with that voice! How could she go on the stage?' I thought the voice, which had a singularly unpleasant Cockney twang in it, might be trained, as I had observed how very eager she was to learn to speak in a more educated manner, quite realising her own shortcomings. Leighton came round to my opinion; and, once having made up his mind that she was bent on educating herself for the stage, showed himself as ever the most unselfish and untiring befriender....We succeeded in making the little girl work exclusively at her acting, and Leighton, Watts, and I frequently visited the school where she was being trained under Mrs. Glyn, to hear her and her fellow students perform the pieces they had studied. Eventually she appeared in London and in the provinces, and quickly communicated all her successes and failures to Leighton and to me. [74]

A satirical short story by G. Sidney Paternoster in *The London Stage Annual* of 1904, 'Miss Nobbs' Debut,' describes the insurmountable difficulties of elocution experienced by some young cockney-speaking aspirants. Miss Nobbs' father has invested £20 in three months of lessons for his eighteen year-old daughter from a theatrical agent, money which she hopes to repay from her stage earnings. At the end of this period she discusses with her mother what stage name would serve her best:

> 'but w'y er yer in sich an 'urry ter find a noo nime? I thought yer'd settled on Vera Vysy?'
>
> 'Nort claus enough fer the songs I'm a goin' ter sing,' replied the girl.
>
> 'The songs yer goin' ter sing,' repeated the mother. 'Thet's wort yer been s'yin' fer the laust month er more, an' nothin' but tork orl the toime. I'm fair sick er torkin' abaht it, an' after the money we poyed that igent an' orl, I do think it's abaht toime ee fahnd yer a job.'
>
> 'An if I were ter tell yer that ee 'as?' questioned the girl. [75]

Neither Vera Vysy nor Miss Nobbs last more than one performance in the theatrical profession, as the signposts to the house of Professor Higgins in Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1914), supposed to be based on Leighton's interventions in the career of his model Dorothy Pullen, are clearly marked out.

One way to achieve the correct accent was to take elocution lessons, and the trade journals carried many advertisements from those offering this service. The

Era Almanac Advertiser of 1868 announced, for example that 'Mr. Coe, Stage Director at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, gives LESSONS in ELOCUTION to Clergymen, Orators, Ladies, and others, at his residence, 7, Jermyn Street, St. James's. Pupils prepared for the Theatrical profession.'[76] Lewis Carroll met him at the Haymarket in March 1867, and reported 'we had some talk about the lessons he gives in elocution. He says he has given lessons to various clergymen, barristers, and lecturers, and I am by no means sure that I shall not go to him to get a few hints'.[77]

The same issue announced:

> THE ROAD TO THE STAGE. Apply to Mr. DRYDEN, Dramatic Instructor, 7, Euston Road, King's Cross, Lessee of the Cabinet Theatre. Men who became great actors by performing at the Cabinet Theatre -....Little women who became great by performing at the Cabinet -...Miss Rebecca Isaacs..., and others too numerous to mention. Stars innumerable ready to shine the first opportunity.[78]

Twenty years later the adverts were the same:

> WANTED – Miss Dolly Demsiel receives pupils for singing, pianoforte, and elocution. Concerts, At Homes, and Dramatic Performances given in September. Any Study 1s. 6d. per lesson. – Apply 5, Gledhow Terrace, South Kensington.
>
> Miss Sarah Thorne continues to receive pupils for lessons in Elocution and Stage Practice. Four months 'Stock' Season at Margate commencing at Whitsuntide.[79]

Sarah Thorne managed the Margate Theatre Royal from 1867 until her death in 1899, and she opened her School of Acting there in 1885.[80]

By contrast, Mary Anderson described her solitary dramatic study where she used books rather than people to train her voice and delivery. There were many authorities on elocution. Amongst them she selected James Rush's *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*[81] whose detailed physiological observations were interspersed with references to the successes and demerits of certain actors. She also used work by Andrew Comstock, a self-styled 'professor of elocution' admired and published in Britain as well as America. She is likely to have used his *System of Elocution*[82] by then in its ninth edition. Comstock's international reputation extended well into the second half of the nineteenth century. A posthumous version of his System was edited in Scotland by James Allan Mair and published by Collins for use in schools as *The Model Elocutionist* in 1874.

Anderson described an exercise which she learned from Comstock to overcome the weakness of her voice caused by diphtheria:

> Strange as it is, but very few of us know how to breathe properly. The simple method of taking a deep full breath through the nose, without strain, holding it as long as possible and slowly exhaling it through the mouth, never going through the exercise more than twelve times consecutively, and always in the open air, not only freshens one, like a dip in the sea, but, when followed by certain vocal exercises, gives control over the voice, which it strengthens and makes melodious. At the end of six months, my voice was hardly recognisable: it had become so much fuller and stronger.[83]

Anderson's careful and relatively late training of her voice was beneficial to her career. During her English season at the Lyceum in 1882-83, *The World* praised her voice and contrasted it with that of her nearest rival in England, Miss Bateman, whose 'voice had been broken by her severe course as an infant phenomenon'.[84]

Comstock's work on elocution was immensely detailed and practical in approach. He described exercises in 'vocal gymnastics', articulation, pitch, force, time. He yoked all of these with gesture, an element of his work based, he stated, on Gilbert Austin's highly respected *Chironomia*.[85] Abstract physical exercises were coupled with literary extracts for rhetorical delivery, and illustrated by diagrams of famous actors striking 'attitudes'. The skill required to acquire this complex, prescriptive and balletic coordination of words and gestures gives ample evidence for classifying performance by children and adults alike as 'mechanical'.[86]

The principles of elocution and voice production were passed on to child performers in a variety of ways. Ellen Terry remembered how she was taught by Mrs Kean during her time at the Princess's Theatre from 1856 to 1859:

> During the rehearsals Mrs. Kean taught me to draw my breath in through my nose and begin a laugh – a very valuable accomplishment! She was also indefatigable in her lessons in clear enunciation, and I can hear her now lecturing the ladies of the company on their vowels. 'A, E, I, O, U, my dear,' she used to say, 'are five distinct vowels, so don't mix them all up together as if you were making a pudding. If you want to say, 'I am going on the river,' say it plainly and don't tell us you are going on the rivah!' You must say *her*, not *har*; it's *God*, not *Gud*: rem*on*strance, not rem*un*strance, ' and so forth. No one ever had a sharper tongue or a kinder heart than Mrs. Kean.[87]

Ellen Terry was later enlisted by Lewis Carroll to give elocution lessons to his protégées, including Isa Bowman.

Marie Wilton recalled how she benefited from the elocution lessons which her own mother had received as part of her routine school education.

> She was thus able to give me what I could never have hoped to attain by other means, a knowledge of elocution and voice-production, to which I owe the power of making every word heard, even in a whisper, in any building, however large...I have never forgotten a little lecture which my mother gave me in order to impress upon my young mind the necessity of making myself heard by the entire audience; she thought of a plan by which she could touch my feelings, as I suppose she found it quite difficult to make me understand, at that early age, the meaning of making the voice travel round the house. She said: 'There is a poor man who is the last to get into the gallery, and consequently only has a corner in the back row of all, therefore he sees and hears with great difficulty; he has been working hard and has saved his sixpence to give himself a little treat. How dreadful then it would be to find that he cannot hear what the actors are talking about! How he must envy those more fortunate than himself, and how unhappy he must be! Think of him when you are acting; direct your voice to the poor man who is sitting at the very back of the gallery, and he will be grateful to you.' [88]

Children received a similar kind of instruction from managers themselves. Ellen Terry remembered how Mrs Kean, managing the Princess's Theatre, coached her rival Milly Smith in the role of the fairy Dragonetta for the pantomime in 1857. One of her speeches ran like this:

> Ungrateful Simple Simon! (darting forward) You thought no doubt to spite me!
>
> That to this Royal Christening you did not invite me!
>
> BUT – (Mrs. Kean: *'You must plaster that 'but' on the white wall at the back of the gallery.'*) -
>
> But on this puling brat revenged I'll be!
>
> My fiery dragon there shall have her broiled for tea![89]

Beyond enabling children to speak both loudly and clearly, the general effect of their vocal training was to obscure traces of social class and regional origin evident in their natural speech, allowing its theatrical voice to be a mobile signifier to be fashioned as required by its role.

This is borne out by a comparison between Blanchard's dialogue for the good schoolboy Johnny Stout and the bad Tommy Green in two pantomime versions of *Little Goody Two-Shoes*. In the first, for Drury Lane in 1862, these roles are taken by adults, J. Robias and G. Weston. An example, taken from a school-room routine about language, shows Green's iniquity inscribed in his non-standard speech, while Stout's virtue is implied by his more assured command of linguistic propriety:

Goody Now, then, first class, to learn the alphabet.

To form the letter A, what do you get?

[Music.- Two or three Children get three pieces of wood, which they show on the stage as an upright frame, forming the letter A.

That's right: A stands for apple – here is one,

Which you shall have as soon as school is done.

Tommy Green. Aren't it a prime 'un? Won't I swear they've ate it?

Goody To take this apple you require a hand,

Now, what's the letter which for that should stand?

[Music.-Changing position of the pieces, the letter H is formed.

Good children! That will do for you to-day.

[In their delight, they let the letter fall.

There, pick it up; don't drop your H's pray.

Johnny Stout. Please'm, to see you Mr. Graspall comes.

He says, the carriage has your landlord in it,

Who wants to see you, just for half a minute.[90]

When Blanchard revised the script for performance at the Adelphi in 1876 by a company composed entirely of children this section of script was retained verbatim, the parts of Stout and Green being played by two girls, Ellen Feldon and Rosy Smith respectively.[91] Although the age and gender of the performers had changed, their voices, together with their signifying connotations, remained the same. Identical control over the artifice of voice was required of the children as of their adult counterparts.

Movement

The children performing in the 1862 *Little Goody Two-Shoes* have no dialogue at all. Their main contribution is in movement. While this example tells of careful rehearsal, some arrangements could be hasty. Carroll describes his experience of watching from back stage a performance by the juvenile cast of *Living Miniatures*, a box office flop, produced by Mr Coe at the Haymarket Theatre in March 1867:

> By this time the overture had begun, but before the curtain drew up there was a new bit to be rehearsed as 'Mr. Grumble-gudgeon Mite,' a wonderful little boy of 5½, was to sing a comic song for the first time, and some lines of conversation had been written to introduce it. I had no idea before that they ever did such a thing as rehearse, close to the curtain, with the audience on the other side of

> it, however I suppose the music prevented any of it being heard. I went on the stage to see this done, and the conversation was repeated, and the 'business' (the moving about) gone through till Mr. Coe was satisfied.[92]

Actors too could assume the role of teacher for the children with whom they worked, and such last minute preparations for certain roles do not appear to be unusual. T. E. Pemberton, biographer of the Kendals, records 'a touching episode' that occurred during a performance of *East Lynne*:

> Those who are familiar with that extraordinarily popular play...will remember that the (to some of us) objectionable 'stage child' is always in evidence. Mr. Kendal had, in face of his audience, to kiss one of these objectionable little people, and, noticing that the poor mite cast for the part had a pitiable eruption about the mouth, he resolutely, but certainly not unreasonably, asked for a substitute. There was no difficulty about *that*, but Mrs. Kendal's woman's heart and characteristic 'quickness' saw tears gather in the little thing's eyes, and knew that it (probably it was the offspring of the stage carpenter or the gasman) would have the heartache if it did not appear. Accordingly she took some of the most good-natured of the members of the stock company into her confidence, and when the 'drop' fell on one of the acts they went through the little scene in which the child had to be seen, and sent it home happy in the belief that a first successful appearance had been made 'before the public.' [93]

Striking here is the speed with which such adjustments were made. During the interval between one act and the next, one child was being pacified by a dummy run while another must have been prepared to assume the role.

Sometimes extraordinary measures had to be taken to ensure that children did the right thing on stage. One historian of the Old Vic marvels at the problems of stage management posed by what he calls the 'core' scene of a play called *The Banished Brothers*:

> a stolen child, escaping, was provided with a dog-guide. While the child slept 'enter a serpent pursued by a large eagle.' The serpent puts the eagle to flight and advances to sting the child, when 'the dog rushes on, kills the snake, licks child's face and leads him off.[94]

However amenable and carefully rehearsed the child might be, nothing could guard against its response to the unexpected. Kendal family lore tells how, under her father's management at the Marylebone Theatre, Madge Robertson, not yet six, was 'sent on to the stage to soften the heart of Kotzebue's sorely depressed...hero' in *The Stranger*. She was very proud of her new costume and, catching sight of her

nurse in the pit, 'forgetful of the footlight barrier that divided them, gleefully called out, 'Oh! nursey, look at my new shoes!'[95]

The ability to move confidently and unselfconsciously in costume was a skill which children had to acquire. Ellen Terry describes the rigours of learning stage deportment at the Princess's Theatre:

> One of the most wearisome, yet essential details of my education is connected with my first long dress. It introduces, too, Mr. Oscar Byrn, the dancing-master and director of crowds at the Princess's. One of his lessons was in the art of walking with a flannel blanket pinned on in front and trailing six inches on the floor. My success in carrying out this manoeuvre with dignity won high praise from Mr. Byrn. The other children used to kick at the blanket and progress in jumps like young kangaroos, but somehow I never had any difficulty in moving gracefully. No wonder then that I impressed Mr. Byrn, who had a theory that 'an actress was no actress unless she learned to dance early.' Whenever he was not actually putting me through my paces, I was busy watching him teach the others. There was a minuet, to which he used to attach great importance, and there was 'walking the plank.' Up and down one of the long planks, extending the length of the stage, we had to walk first slowly and then quicker and quicker until we were able at a considerable pace to walk the whole length of it without deviating an inch from the straight line. This exercise, Mr. Byrn used to say, and quite truly, I think, taught us uprightness of carriage and certainty of step.
>
> 'Eyes right! Chest out! Chin tucked in!' I can hear the dear old man shouting at us as if it were yesterday; and I have learned to see of what value all his drilling was, not only to deportment, but to clear utterance.[96]

When not trained within a theatrical company it was most common for young children to be prepared for individual roles by their parents. The brusque debut experience of the four year-old Vesta Tilley, dressed as Red-Riding Hood and carried onto the stage of the St. George's Music Hall in Nottingham in 1868 by her father was unusual. He set her down with the blunt advice, 'Now don't be frightened. Sing as if you mean it. Do not cough. Speak up.' She sang, but then hesitated:

> I stood there, uncertain for the first time what to do, because he had not told me which way to leave the stage. He came to my rescue. He walked on and picked me up, hugging me with pride and delight, and carried me off to more applause.[97]

It was much more usual for children to be coached by their parents. Marie Wilton's recollections of her early stage career illustrate the complex rigour with which her

parents trained her. Sunday was her only day of rest, and even then 'part of the early day being spent in learning some fresh part, or in being taught lessons by my mother.' Both parents assisted her during her performances:

> Once I rebelled while reciting as a little gipsy: I was discovered at a wood-fire, with a hanging kettle over it, my father being at one side of the stage, and my mother on the other, ready to prompt me. My father gave me the words I recited, and my mother followed them with the expression of countenance I should assume at certain passages; so I looked from one to the other for my cue. But on this particular night my small temper had been upset, and I somehow got mixed. When my father saw that I was nearly breaking down in the words, I assumed his angry expression of face, although I ought to have been smiling, and imitated the encouraging face of my mother when I should have been sad. To the great horror of my parents, when I went forward to tell the audience their fortunes, I saw our landlady in the front row of the pit, her face beaming with delight at my performance. I dropped my little basket of songs and cards, and stretched out my arms to her, crying, 'No, no; me no stage – me go pit.' The next time our landlady witnessed one of my performances it was from a more elevated position – the gallery![98]

The weight of evidence about the training of children suggests that they were coached mechanically to imitate, copy and repeat the elements of voice and movement required by their roles. Ellen Terry may have been an exception. She remembered how in 1858 her imagination was sparked by Mrs Kean's violent methods when she was slapped and beaten into achieving an appropriate tone. In 1897 she wrote to a journalist 'I've often wondered about the present-day children – whether imagination is as rampant in some of them as it was in me?'[99]

Girls joining the theatrical profession at an older age and not from theatrical families received the kind of in-house training that was normal for most young men and aspiring adults. Henrietta Hodson, who acted with Ellen and Kate Terry in Bristol during the 1860s and later married the MP Henry Labouchere,[100] described typical first experiences:

> When I was fourteen years old, my mother said to me, 'If you wish to become an actress you must begin at once, for you will never do anything on the stage if you do not learn acting like your A B C at school.' So I was sent off to Glasgow.
>
> On my arrival there, the manager, Mr. Glover, told me that I was to receive a salary of eighteen shillings a week....[Mrs. Glover] had taken a lodging for me,

> consisting of a room....For this I paid four-and-sixpence per week. With the rest of my salary, I had to provide myself with food and clothing....
>
> At first I used to walk on the stage as a speechless peasant, court lady, or page, and to dance in the back row of the ballet. After six months I was given a part of two lines. I sat up all night to study it, repeating the lines over and over again, and placing the emphasis first on one word and then on the other.
>
> When the eventful night came on which I was to speak for the first time on the stage, I was so nervous, that I broke down on my second line. This was considered a great disgrace, and I was put back for another three months in to the ballet and the 'speechless ladies.'
>
> My next speaking part was of six lines, and this, as the manager made me rehearse it to him again and again, I got through without breaking down; on which I became a 'speaking lady,' and was promoted to the front row of the ballet.[101]

Her disadvantages in comparison with children who start early are plain. Her wages are barely more than the fifteen shillings a week which the nine year-old Ellen Terry earned in 1856 for her performance of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Princess's Theatre. Her display of stage fright contrasts starkly with the unselfconscious approach adopted by, for example, Marie Wilton and Madge Robertson whose comic breaches of performance with direct address to friends in the audience suggest that they experienced stage, auditorium and home as a seamless whole in which anxiety of this sort played little part. Ellen Terry recalled terrible stage fright, but was not afflicted with it until she had more than five years' experience and was about fourteen years old.[102]

By the 1890s the idea that women could work for their livings had become commonplace, even if it was still regarded with suspicion in some quarters. In a collection of essays of practical advice edited by Lady Jeune called *Ladies at Work*, each of which had first appeared in the Christian journal for girls and young women *The Monthly Packet*, the chapter on 'The Stage' sits cheek by jowl with 'The Medical Profession' and 'Journalism' as a legitimate pursuit. Addressed to those aged between seventeen and twenty-four, it offered a detailed guide on how to become an actress, stating plainly that women entering the stage so relatively late were at a serious disadvantage by comparison with children from theatrical families:

> It is only in story-books that a débutante rises at one bound to the top of her profession: if Fanny Kemble did so, she owed it to the well-earned fame of her

> family, and her father's position as a manager....From her earliest childhood the actor's daughter finds school, library, interest, ambition in the theatre; always in and out of one, she sees acting, hears the practical criticisms of the professionals, adds to the family budget by playing child-parts, and picks up unconsciously what you will have to learn by slow degrees. So you must work hard.[103]

What this work should consist in is set out methodically, following a lament that England, unlike France, possesses 'no standard or school of acting'. [104]

Ballet

Following voice training, aspiring actresses were advised by Latham to focus on the body, for which:

> first-class dancing lessons were recommended. The Polish Mazurka, the Tarantella, the Minuet de la Cour are splendid training for the body for lithesomeness, agility, and expression, even if you never have occasion to use them on the stage....fencing is almost indispensable. [These skills should be coupled with the study of stage deportment] the innumerable technicalities which govern your behaviour on the stage itself. The right method of coming on and going off, how to make a cross, which hand or knee to use, how to turn, to group yourself with others, to dress the stage, etc....very few people will take the trouble to teach it, but you will find Mr. Charles Daly, of 8, Overstone Road, Hammersmith, a most helpful master in practical stage training.[105]

Yet for all the efforts of the aspiring young woman, Latham concludes by restating the competitive threat posed by children from theatrical families: 'the child of a scene-shifter or a super stands a better chance than the most charming, talented, and highly-educated outsider.'[106]

Children who participated in productions as individuals constituted a minority of those involved in theatre. A far greater majority were employed as dancers or as supernumeraries in pantomime. For them training in movement was more important than voice, and there were many opportunities to learn ballet from 'dancing masters'. While there was no national school for acting, there was, from 1876 a National Training School for Dancing, founded by Colonel Mapleson and headed by the Viennese-born choreographer Madame Katti Lanner. Her rehearsal rooms were at 73 Tottenham Court Road from which she supplied ballets to Her Majesty's, the Alhambra, and Crystal Palace. In 1880 she began collaboration with Augustus Harris, arranging the ballets for his ever more spectacular pantomimes, while continuing to choreograph for Crystal Palace, (in particular the open air summer ballets performed there), and to dispatch juvenile *corps de ballets* to the

provinces. In 1887 she was appointed by the new management of the Empire Theatre (George Edwardes and Augustus Harris) to effect the transition of that house from a variety theatre to the home of English ballet where she remained until her retirement in 1905.

> 'I could not live without working'...and so her brain remains occupied with dreams of beauty, while she sees the pupils, who came to her when they were helpless children, making steady progress, and hears the praise of playgoers of the past as well as the present generation.[107]

She was formidable, exacting and revered, with a hard head for figures financial as well as balletic.

She had started dancing when she was seven years old, trained by her father in Vienna, where she made her professional debut, aged fourteen, at the Imperial Opera House. This was followed by an international dancing career in Europe and America. Her first appearance in London was 'Giselle' during Colonel Mapleson's opera season at Drury Lane, from which she continued to tour, working in New York for four years. In 1875 she returned to Drury Lane in the dual capacity of 'ballet-directress' and *première danseuse*. This was followed by a season at Her Majesty's Theatre and a brief trip to Dublin where she took her last bow as a performer. Living in London she devoted the next thirty years to choreography and private ballet lessons, becoming something of an institution in her own right:

> Lanner's appearance before the curtain was the consummation of a 'first night' at the Empire. Her huge body encased in black silk, gold chains about her neck, her head surmounted by a fair wig, the nightly arrival whereof from a neighbouring hairdresser was one of the anxiously awaited moments in the life of the Empire, Lanner would smile and bow and kiss her hand, then impulsively snatch and kiss any convenient ballet-baby. And then we comfortably said 'All's well' and went home.[108]

Her appearances in front of the curtain were not confined to first nights; ever hungry for acknowledgement and applause, her birthday, 14 September, was observed throughout the 1880s by a public presentation, handed over by a juvenile dancer and duly reported, often with an engraved picture of the event, in *The Sporting and Dramatic News* and other theatrical papers.

The National Training School for Dancing became famous and eventually even notorious when Mrs Fawcett used Lanner's relentless training routine as evidence in her campaign to stop the employment of children in theatres and forced the House of Commons to take notice of her methods. Describing Lanner's school in 'Holes in the Education Net', Fawcett stated:

> A theatrical academy of dancing will have a complementary private school at 10d. to 1s. a-week within about two minutes' walk of it. The proprietor of the academy takes little children as young as four or five, and gets their parents to sign indentures binding the babies to an apprenticeship of nine years. When they begin their professional training these babies are so tiny that they cannot do their steps or throw out their little legs without tumbling over. To prevent this a rope is stretched across the room by which they steady themselves with their hands. Such children are required, from the time their indentures are signed, to attend the dancing academy from ten or eleven o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon, three or four times a week, whether they have an engagement in the theatre or not. By these means their proprietor or proprietress always has a troupe of children ready to be hired to any theatre in any part of the kingdom, or for that matter, outside it.[109]

Although this is a hostile account there is nothing in Lanner's representation of herself in the press to suggest that it is inaccurate. She repeatedly expressed exasperation at what she regarded as the laziness of 'English girls', asserting that they like to perform in the theatre but they do not like the hard work and daily training required to excel. It is to this laziness that she attributed the fact that few English girls progressed to the status of *première danseuse*, and that the stars had to be imported from the Continent.[110] She was equally contemptuous of legislation introduced to restrict the age at which children could begin to perform. Asked in 1895, 'What does the School Board say to their employment?' she replied:

> Well, the age at which we can employ children without a special license has now been raised from ten to eleven; and possibly it will be raised again ere long. To be lithe, supple, graceful, a girl should begin young. Ten is the usual age, but to excel she should begin at five. I myself began at seven.[111]

She was loath to be drawn on the school education of her pupils which she seemed to view as a mere impediment in their progress as dancers. Since most, by her own account, would remain at a lowly level in the *corps de ballet*, Fawcett's anxieties about their likely future seemed well founded. Despite this, Lanner stated that she encountered no difficulty in securing the number of pupils necessary for the large scale on which she worked: 'The mothers come and entreat me to take the girls, so that I am able to choose what I want in the way of looks or grace.' The reason for such parental entreaty was plain: 'I have occasionally had five girls out of one of your excellent British families. Sometimes two or three girls will take home £3 or £4 a week; not a bad addition to the family exchequer.' She adds that the salaries of small children vary considerably, ranging between 10 to 18 shillings a week. [112]

Lanner was a business woman as well as an artist. For her there was an economy of scale to be considered when producing a ballet which, in the 1890s, cost

anything from £4000, with an expected run from eight to thirteen months. Participating children required, therefore, both stamina and patience. She found boys to be deficient in these virtues, declaring that she would not like to take boys because 'I find girls quite enough':

> Sometimes they come late on the stage, don't get into their right place, fall out of line. They require a little discipline, especially when a piece has been running a long time. Then they grow careless and uninterested. Everything goes with such ease that it is apt to be mechanical.[113]

The mechanical nature of their performance was a necessary feature of the way in which they rehearsed, both at Lanner's and elsewhere. As Lady Jeune described,

> They are not taught at the theatre, and do not rehearse *en masse* till a day or two before the pantomime is brought out. The children are taught in sections...that is to say, a certain number are trained together at a time, and taught the figures and movements which they are all to play together afterwards on the stage. But the whole troupe never meet until the days of rehearsal, perhaps a week before Boxing Day, when they, having been so well taught, quickly take their part, and fit in like little pieces in a puzzle, forming the lovely picture which we and our children enjoy so much at Christmas time. [114]

This was the method of rehearsal deployed in other centres where children did not attend training schools throughout the year but were prepared for specific productions by staff at the theatres which employed them. William Mitchell offers the following account from his investigation into the conditions under which pantomime children worked in Glasgow during the early 1880s:

> Long, patient, persevering rehearsals are indispensable. The rehearsal begins four to five weeks before Christmas, and for this period the children get no remuneration. They require to attend every afternoon and evening for three or four hours, but except for a night or two immediately preceding the opening performance, they are not kept beyond eight o'clock. On one of these nights I learned with regret that they had been kept night and morning throughout....The selection and classification of the children according to the parts they are to play is one of the first considerations of the stage-manager or his assistants. When so classified, special training is required to suit them for the individual characters they are to represent. One group at a time, like a class in school, is taken in hand by the drill-master, and the requisite instruction in dance, or action, or song is given for longer or shorter time according to the progress made.

> Piano or violin accompanies the rehearsal, giving life to the songs and choruses as well as materially assisting in keeping proper time.
>
> Songs specially got up for the occasion have to be learned and practised. The Charity Girls chant a ditty about being 'happy all day long,' and jump about with their skipping ropes...The 'Fat Boys' are taught certain funny movements, and having a ranting, roving melody peculiar to 'merry, merry fat boys.' All this, it will be seen, cannot be perfected without a great deal of careful, persistent training.[115]

Mitchell's account gives a strong sense of the complexity of the preparation involved for children aged between four and fourteen, as well as the large scale on which such interludes depended for their effect. The nature of the financial transaction varied between children attending theatres for their training and those attending schools. Children trained in-house were not paid during the rehearsal period, as Mitchell stated; their time and effort were regarded as investments required for the financial reward they would receive on a weekly basis during the performance run. This contrasted with weekly charges (1s. a week in 1889) made by Lanner of her pupils who would recoup this investment from their wages.

There were several theatrical schools for children in London, apart from Lanner's specialist agency in dance. Mrs Fawcett noted 'a Mr. Francesco, who does the same sort of work' [116] and Lady Jeune described the work of two such schools in the Strand: that of Mr Steadman who 'principally trains boys', and that of 'Mr. Nolan and Mr. Fitzgerald'.[117] The latter were:

> about the largest 'purveyors' of children in London, and many of the infant prodigies of the stage owe their introduction to them. Mr. Nolan is a kind, elderly man, a Roman Catholic, of whom his pupils are very fond, and he takes the warmest interest in their career. He has a training school at which singing, elocution and dancing are taught, and any morning by going there one can judge for one's self as to the way in which teaching is given. The discipline and control is very complete, for it would be impossible to carry on such a business unless almost military obedience is enforced....Mr. Nolan has a few very nice girls, of twelve or thirteen, who are learning dancing lessons at his school – one is acting in the Savoy. Her father is a coal merchant over Blackfriar's Bridge, and she goes to the theatre every night by herself, one of her brothers fetching her home; another little girl, who when I went there the last time was out of an engagement, was helping to prepare the dresses for a company just going on tour.[118]

Jeune, the great apologist for such employment, was keen to emphasise its virtues, which included the discipline learned during training and the potential social advantages gained from the employment itself.

If in 1889 Nolan was regarded as one of the largest agencies for theatrically trained children, by 1909 it was the longest-standing. An article in *Cassell's Magazine* on 'Fairies of the Footlights' focuses on their training at 'Happy Nolan's', claiming that the school was 'established nearly half a century ago by an Irish schoolmaster in Chelsea' when:

> it was the first accredited school for stage children in England. His son, a tall, thin, kind-eyed man, known, and rightly known, as 'Happy Nolan,' carries on the business started by his father. No one has ever seen a child who is miserable in his dancing rooms or office. [119]

Written twenty years after the heat had gone out of the political debate, this article reviewed Nolan's activity in terms of 'The Pixies' Tea-Party' which took place during the interval between matinee and evening performance in pantomime season:

> To take tea at Happy Nolan's on a matinee day is an inspiring ceremony. After their 'shows' all the kiddies congregate at the old house in the courtyard, hard by the Prince of Wales's Theatre, where a spread is provided....The chief – very tall and very thin – sits in the chair of state that has arms and back to it. He presides over the feast and maintains order. The rest of us are on forms or the red leather seat that runs along the wall....There are, perhaps, two or three girls who have passed the fairy stage, and are performing with troupes. They have come to see the younger members of their family. Many only see their sisters once in three or four years, as extended tours take them to the ends of the earth....The last slices of cake are eaten. The children who have to go farthest to their work-play are already leaving for their evening's 'show.' For an hour or two, they will become sprites in gardens, caves, or grottos of unparalleled splendour, or in the Ice Palace of King Christmas.[120]

The major and indeed obvious conclusion to draw from these examples of training undertaken by children to prepare them for work on stage is that their public appearances required effort. But it was effort which at its most successful tended to obscure itself. Ideologies of childhood which represented the theatre child as an epitome of perfection because of its exhibition of spontaneity, naturalness and playfulness were taken in by these hidden pragmatics of theatre as business. It was not until Parliament considered how best to protect acrobats from the dangers of their profession, in 1872 and 1879, that any sense of distinction between process and product entered public discussion of how children achieved a polished and,

crucially, seemingly effortless performance, and this only with regard to acrobatics, not theatre. The Children's Dangerous Performances Act of 1879 failed to take any account of training and focussed exclusively on performance. It remained therefore an inadequate measure in the protection of children from the dangers of their profession.

Accidents and Traps

The increasingly organised nature of the training received by stage children, implies a professionalisation of the child actor. This led towards the reforming campaigns which became outspoken during the 1870s, but it also implied a duty of care by the employer for his employees. Yet however careful their training, nothing could guard against the physical hazards children encountered in the course of their work. The production values of pantomime, with their scenes of spectacle and transformation which became more sophisticated as theatre technology became more advanced, incurred significant risks for performers. Tom Robertson voiced his concerns during the 1860s:

> The transformation-scene – an ingenious piece of cruelty introduced some ten or fifteen years ago – is a pleasure to the audience, but death to the ballet. The poor, pale girl is swung up to terrific heights, imprisoned in and upon iron wires, dazzled by rows of hot flaming gas close to her eyes, and choked by the smoke of coloured fires. Sometimes the silver-robed victim faints or goes into hysterics, and so incurs the odium of affectation. The scene-painter is relentless, the stage-manager is relentless, and the manager must make a fortune speedily. 'Hoist'em up, carpenters!' – fill their minds with fear, their lungs with foul vapour. They are young and strong; and it won't kill 'em, unless, indeed, a rope break or a wire give way; and if so, the spirited and enterprising lesee will behave with that accustomed liberality which has ever characterized etc., etc. He will bury the girl at his own expense, and for the parents' tears, they may be d----d-- with a £5 note.[121]

In Robertson's view, the theatre manager treated his juvenile employees as items of theatre property, commodities and props to be disposed of purely with regard to the aesthetic effect they could be made to create and the income this could generate.

In 1881 the theatre historian Percy Fitzgerald confirms the basis of Robertson's fears for juveniles by his description of the mechanics of the transformation scene. Fitzgerald conveys an excitement at the complexity of backstage technology, and presents the safety of child actors as a mere problem to be solved by elaborate machinery. The performer is simply an extension of stage carpentry and, for

Fitzgerald, no more subject to ethical consideration than the metal to which she is strapped:

> The ingenuity exhibited in the aerial displays – girls apparently floating in the air at great heights – has to be supplemented by extraordinary precautions to prevent accidents. These 'irons', as they are called, to which the performers are strapped, are made of the finest, best-tempered metal, and their shape must be ingeniously contrived to supply strength in company with the artistic requirements....Large platforms, or 'equipments,' as the French call them, are the essential portions of every 'transformation' ...so nicely balanced that a couple of carpenters can raise them, although burdened by a score of *figurantes*, each strapped to her iron.[122]

Fitzgerald's enthusiasm cannot disguise the sense that theatrical machinery functioned as a kind of trap, and that children were particularly vulnerable within it. Theatre managers were reluctant to acknowledge that the training of juveniles involved both coercion and empowerment in equal measure. They sought instead to obscure the element of entrapment in which their juvenile cast members were embroiled, as it functioned as a real, physical manifestation of the unregulated nature of their employment. Augustus Harris consistently maintained that the financial rewards for their participation, and their labour itself, were adequate compensations. 'They are fairly paid, look upon the whole thing, in spite of coercion and fatigue, as a game, and are taught their drill in addition to learning obedience and the pleasure of emulation' he stated confidently in 1880.[123]

Neither payment nor precautions could prevent accidents. One of the most show-stopping of accidents, which arose directly from the scripted passivity of the six year-old boy concerned, occurred in Melbourne, Australia at the Theatre Royal during a performance of a romantic musical by Morton, *The Slave*, in 1860. Although it took place in a far-flung corner of the Empire, it was still reported by the *Era* for readers at home to consider:

> In the last act Gambia is supposed to throw the child of Clinton and Zerinda across a chasm to its parents. By some mistake, the child, who was impersonated by Master Willie Brook, a fine boy of six years of age, was not firmly attached to the wire by which he is swung over. Mr. Brooke having no reason to suppose but that all was prepared, threw the child from his arms, when to his horror the poor little fellow fell on to the stage. The accident occurred in the view of the audience and the greatest alarm was manifested. The curtain was dropped, and although the movements of the child after all showed that it had not sustained severe injury, the excitement of the audience was evidently intense. After the lapse of about a minute, Mr. Jackson came in front of the cur-

> tain, and announced that the child had not experienced any serious effects from the accident, a statement that was warmly welcomed by the house, and soon after the curtain rose again, and Mr. Brooke appearing with the boy in his arms, completely reassured the audience as to the safe and sound condition of the little fellow. [124]

Ellen Terry describes how she too fell victim to faulty stage machinery during the run of her performance as Puck :

> I...had to come up through a trap at the end of the last act to give my final speech. My sister Kate was playing Titania that night as understudy to Carlotta Leclercq. Up I came – but not quite up, for the man shut the trap-door too soon and caught my toe. I screamed. Kate rushed to me and banged her foot on the stage, but the man only closed the trap tighter, mistaking my signal.
>
> 'Oh, Katie! Katie!' I cried. 'Oh, Nelly! Nelly!' said poor Kate helplessly. Then Mrs. Kean came rushing on and made them open the trap and release my poor foot.
>
> 'Finish the play, dear,' she whispered excitedly, 'and I'll double your salary!' [125]

Mrs Kean, like Harris after her, reached for money as a cure.

Training did not include drills on what to do in emergencies, the most frequently encountered of which was fire, a special hazard during the nineteenth century because of the inflammable fabrics of the environment and its technologies. Legislation was introduced several times to minimise the dangers to actors and audience alike, culminating in the Metropolis Management and Building Acts Amendment of 1878.[126] An account of the burning of the Surrey Theatre during a pantomime run, in January 1865, illustrates the dangers:

> For the second time the old Surrey Theatre has been totally destroyed by fire...At 20 minutes to 12 on Monday night the alarm of 'Fire!' was given...at a quarter to 12 the building was empty, and at 12 it was a red-hot shell....Behind [the curtain] confusion was for a time worse confounded, for the gas had been turned off at the first alarm, and the poor ballet-girls were running about screaming, and not unnaturally terrified at the knowledge that the sparks which others less dangerously clad might face with impunity would bring certain death to them...Fortunately...the chief pantomimists...had dragged out as fast as they could find them, all the ballet-girls, children, and supernumeraries that assist in the performance of the pantomime, and who in their light thin dresses as fairies were huddled miserably together in the half-thawed snow and sleet till they were kindly sheltered in adjoining houses. Hardly were the last clear of the theatre when the whole interior became a mass of flame, in which nobody could have lived for a single instant.[127]

1. Ballet Girls on Fire, Lucy Taylor, *Fairy Phoebe*; or *Facing the Footlights* (London, John F. Shaw & Co., 1887), The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark 1489 e. 299, p. 203

The report shows how pantomime children were at greater risk than adults in such situations. Not only did they need help to get out of the dark and burning building, but also their costumes afforded a double hazard in being highly flammable inside the building and useless against the midnight winter cold outside.

In 1887 a provincial actress, Helen Cresswell, describes her experience of a theatre fire and the escape of her six year-old son, making his debut as Little Willie to her Lady Isabel in *East Lynne* in Kendal:

> The dressing-room was in the flies, and reached by an iron spiral staircase, a terrible journey to make three or four times a night. I watched his bonny face till it was out of sight, and we had blown each other our last kiss; then went on the stage to finish the play...Louder and louder grew the hum of voices. What did it mean? Was that a hiss? Then clear above the Babel of sound rose one awful word, sounding in my ears like a yell of despair...'Fire!'
>
> I...flew blindly, madly, up that iron staircase. 'My child! My baby! Oh! my God, give me my baby!' Every step took me further into that hell of smoke and flame! I remember flinging up my arms with a choking, despairing shriek – then came darkness – oblivion.[128]

Neglected by the dresser earlier in the evening, the boy had already left the theatre and wondered home before fire broke out. He was sitting on the doorstep waiting for his mother.

The physical hazards encountered by children at work in the theatre, together with an acknowledgement that training implied work became weapons in the campaigns of reformers during the 1880s.

2
Looking-Glass Children: The Performing Child as Erotic Subject

When Grace Latham recommended a career on the stage to young women she set out the distinguishing 'peculiarities' of the 'art of acting':

> 1. That the physical personality of the actor forms the material in which he works.
>
> 2. What he produces does not endure to bring him fame at a later date, its full and only effect must be made at once, and is then over for ever.
>
> 3. He can do nothing without the co-operation of his fellow actors and of the audience – a seething, restless mass, whose attention is liable to be called away at any moment.[129]

She saw that the actor's body was the material out of which the art is made, its achievements were ephemeral, and require an unspoken contract between fellow performers and audience.

These were factors which affected the experienced as well as the novice. Mary Anderson explained her early retirement from the stage because of her increasing distaste for 'the disappointments connected with the art itself – the painting one's pictures with one's own person, in the full gaze of the public'.[130] Claire Tomalin argues that while Madame Vestris and Mrs Jordan enjoyed showing off their bodies on stage, Fanny Kemble 'found performing profoundly distasteful and believed that the public exhibition of herself did a violence to her womanly dignity.'[131] The material conditions of the actor's art were just as important for children as they were for adults, but unlike their grown-up counterparts, juveniles were rarely free to choose whether to accept them or not.

The child's body was its primary aesthetic resource, as it was the primary financial resource for theatre managers and parents or guardians, while the physical transience of childhood fixed the natural term for which its particular attractions

were available. Walter Sickert's painting *Little Dot Hetherington at the Bedford Music Hall*, exhibited in London in 1889 and again in 1895 with the new title '*The Boy I love is up in the Gallery*', has come to focus critical discussion about the sexualised body of the music hall child, affording analogies with the theatre child.[132] The image shows Little Dot, dark haired, her face a yellow mask of stage paint, dressed in a diaphanous white frock to reveal the dark shape of her body, lifting her left arm and pointing towards the gallery. She is illuminated by a ray of light, framed and dwarfed by a dark theatre interior and the dark hats of spectators. She is physically separated from the audience by the brass balustrade along the front of the stage, a convention both of the music hall stage and of Sickert's representations of it, but the barrier seems unusually high to emphasise her diminutive stature and the teasing unavailability of her body. The most startling feature of the composition, which has excited art historians and theatre commentators alike, is the fact that the performing Little Dot is framed not simply by stage and auditorium, but by an enormous gilt mirror, the edge of which runs parallel with the picture frame. Wendy Baron states 'because no part of the reflected image is also seen as 'real', this frame reads as if it were another decorative detail of the interior.'[133] Steedman argues:

> The anxiety of our own contemplation of 'Little Dot Hetherington', of the child all alone in her little white smock, is partly produced by the extreme visual uncertainty that the painting provokes. Even when it is understood...that reflection constitutes the whole reality of the image, it is still extremely difficult to work out where Little Dot is in relationship to all her different audiences, and indeed *where* you are, as viewer. As a watcher of Sickert's child, there is simply no place to be.[134]

Sickert's Little Dot exists only as a looking-glass child. With this image of pure reflection, based on his visit to the Bedford in November 1888 when Little Dot Hetherington performed there, Sickert elided the difference between child as social being and child as vessel of adult fantasy. It is an apt coincidence that one of her previous roles was as a dancing oyster ghost in *Alice in Wonderland* (1886). The title given to the painting in 1895 was inspired by Marie Lloyd's famous song, 'The boy I love is up in the gallery'. But of course, it was not the performer who loved the boy, rather it was the men in the audience who loved to be flattered by the performer's expression of interest.

Marie Wilton recalled in her autobiography how discomforting it was for herself as a child to be the recipient of unlooked-for amorous interest from the audience. Her account shows how far she was from internalising the desires of her audience when she was performing as Cupid in Frank Talfourd's *Atalanta* at the Haymarket where J. B. Buckstone was manager and Henry Compton a leading actor in the company:

> I was pestered by some stupid letters of nonsensical admiration. Their frequency became so annoying, the notes being accompanied by flowers with silly requests that I would wear them, that I consulted Mr. Compton...how best to put a stop to the nuisance. In his quaint way he said, 'Some love-sick boy! but as his letters are addressed to the 'Sweetest God of Love in the world,' send them on to Buckstone! As for the flowers, give them to me; I'll wear them.'...In the last scene he placed the little note that was sent with the flowers between the white feather wings which I wore as Cupid; and when I had to draw an arrow from my quiver in the business of the scene, the billet-doux fell to the ground, much to my confusion. Compton laughed and said, when the piece was over, 'I don't think our love-sick friend will trouble us any further.' The next night, however, he received a letter, saying, that if only he knew the misery he was causing to a poor harmless fellow, he never would have been guilty of such an unkindness. Compton inquired what sort of a man brought the letter. The hall-porter answered, 'Not a man at all, sir – it was a boy.'[135]

Marie Wilton's relief at this news was short-lived. Two weeks later she received a letter which stated 'I shall be here again to-morrow night, and if you do not then wear the bouquets I shall send you, I shall wait outside the stage-door, and as you pass me in your cab, I shall shoot you dead.'[136] Her mother decided to accompany her to the theatre, and they were advised by Compton to leave by the front entrance rather than the stage-door. At the same time he left instructions at the stage-door to detain the loitering 'boy' if necessary. But as nobody was seen and Marie escaped the theatre unscathed, the threat was thought to be a hoax. Shortly afterwards she was visited at her lodgings by an elderly woman who claimed to be the widowed mother of the twenty-one year old man who had been pursuing her. The woman had discovered the physical threat and managed to keep her son at home that evening, adding that 'the whole night he was raving'.[137] He was subsequently 'pronounced insane', but the mother continued with an extraordinary request for an interview between Marie Wilton and this man on the basis that, '[h]e has promised that if he can hear from your own lips that you can never care for him, he will rest content and never trouble you again.'[138] Marie Wilton's mother consented to this arrangement.

When the appointment was met and the procession of mother, son and doctor filed into the room, leaving the son's minder ('a strange looking man, who I distinctly remember had lost a thumb') outside the door, Marie Wilton recalled, '[i]t would be very difficult for me to describe my feelings and my mother's looks; I only know that I was terribly frightened.'[139] The doctor rehearsed details of the harassment for her to confirm, and she was then asked to reject the young man's attentions:

> I paused for a second. I looked at the young man's anxious but extremely plain face, and saw his eyes still fixed upon me with a look of intense sorrow and suffering. I then said, 'I can never care for this gentleman, and I ask him to trouble me no further.' The doctor turned to him and said, 'You hear?' There was then a general movement. The poor fellow came up to me, looked at me with a wild stare, and said, 'Good-bye.' He turned round, walked to the door, over which hung my portrait, gave a sort of stifled scream, exactly like the squeak I had heard in the theatre, rushed hurriedly from the room and past the man outside, who immediately ran after him as fast as his legs would take him.[140]

This episode, taken as a whole, reveals a young performer's vulnerability to unwanted and even deranged attentions from her audience. It also shows that the efforts to protect her by those closest to her and most responsible for her safety, in both professional and personal spheres, tended first to privilege and accommodate the desires of her assailant before considering her own needs. Compton attached the 'billet-doux' to her Cupid costume, and her mother granted the interview. Marie Wilton's feelings of powerlessness extended even to her command of language ('it would be very difficult for me to describe'), leaving her with a raw sense of fear at the face to face confrontation.

The scopophilic desire of her assailant is confirmed by his repeated attendance at the theatre to watch her perform and to look for signs of acknowledgement from her during the show. In this public context he enjoyed voyeuristic superiority, since Marie could not see him, did not know his identity, and the attempts by her colleagues to subvert the controlling power of his gaze proved futile. On his arrival at the interview Marie remembered that he had 'odd, light-blue eyes, which he fixed on me the moment he entered the room and never took them away until he left the house'[141] while her portrait, hanging over the door, which he saw on his departure, elicited the same 'stifled scream' that she had heard in the theatre. He was captivated alike by the sight of her performing body, her domestic persona, and her picture. Wilton brings her account to a self-deprecating conclusion, while also acknowledging the potential power of her image:

> I often wondered whether his inherent madness or *my beauty* (!) was the cause of this sad episode. After a little consideration and several references to my looking-glass, I concluded that it must have been the former.[142]

From her own rational perspective and with the aid of her very literal self-scrutiny in the mirror, she was not a looking-glass child. Yet attempts by those around her to assimilate the demands of her assailant had encouraged her to entertain the possibility of personal responsibility both for his attentions and his ultimate suicide.

Costumed as Cupid, the role in which she specialized as a child, Marie Wilton's

body was cross-dressed and exposed to a degree that would not have been permissible in other public contexts. Ellen Terry remembered that when she appeared as Cupid in Bristol in 1862, she 'wore a short tunic which in those days was considered too scanty to be quite nice.'[143] Later in the century, theatre reformers like Ellen Barlee disapproved of the scant costuming and flesh-coloured tights worn by children during rehearsal and performance of fairy roles, ballet, and acrobatics. Barlee recounted the journey from modesty to shamelessness undertaken by 'one girl of fifteen':

> when ordered to doff her clothing and habit herself in 'tights,' ... she crouched down in a corner of the room with shamefacedness, and dared not rise until laughed out of her shyness. The same girl now sits unblushingly to photographers to be taken in all kinds of attitudes....[144]

Tracy Davis has argued that the fabric of the tights not only gave the appearance of nakedness, but also tended to obscure the joints and natural articulation of the leg so that the performer's legs seemed to point smoothly towards the crotch.[145] The partial and therefore suggestive revelation achieved by costume facilitated the sexual fantasies of the audience.

Barlee was as concerned about the eroticising effects of cross-dressing as she was about scantiness of dress. She described how the ambitions of a middle class girl were dashed by her first stage experience, cast as a Page in the pantomime:

> To come before the public in low-class companionship, in a boy's dress, had never entered into her calculations....[She] soon learnt...that her Page's dress was the least of the dark shadows which lay behind the glitter and the glare of the life she so coveted....[W]aiting to be called to take her part she had to bear the coarse jokes of the various male *habitués* of the place, of the Clown and the Harlequin, and other such co-workers, who discussed her appearance, shape, and physique with accustomed criticism. [146]

For this middle class girl to dress as a boy violated the social cultivation of her femininity by exposing her body which was normally concealed and conventionally shaped by girls' clothing. Barlee considered the effects of cross-dressing not simply in terms of the appearance projected, but also in terms of the corresponding performance. She worried that the 'bounce and swagger' required of girls acting as soldiers or sailors would not remain as stage manners but would come to represent internalised morals, and so contribute to the coarsening of the child's ethical sensibilities.[147] This anxiety, focussed on the moral welfare of the performer, was, as Barish has demonstrated, a standard element in antitheatrical arguments during the nineteenth century.[148] It was a view internalised by performers themselves. Ellen

Terry claimed, 'the parts we play influence our characters to some extent, and Puck made me a bit of a romp.'[149]

Barlee thought that cross-dressing disguised neither sex nor gender, but emphasised both. This view was shared by Lewis Carroll who wrote in more general terms to Savile Clarke about preparations for the revival of *Alice in Wonderland* at the Globe in December 1888:

> I wish to withdraw, absolutely, my suggestion of letting boys act any female characters. You were quite right, and I was quite wrong. It would vulgarise the whole thing. The rule doesn't work both ways – I don't know why, but so it is. Girls make charming boys (e.g. Little Lord Fauntleroy) but boys should never be dressed as girls. [150]

For Carroll, cross-dressing highlighted rather than concealed the gender of the performer. Cultural convention played a large part in his taste, since girls and young women had been cast as boys and young men for decades preceding Carroll's statement of preference. The predeliction may have had its roots in tradition, but as Barish argues, during the Victorian era there was widespread belief that actors internalised the customs and manners of their roles. There was therefore suspicion that boys who played female roles were emasculated off as well as on stage.

This belief structures the clash between expectation and experience delivered by an interview with the Australian child star Leo Byrne in 1893. The boy had come to England in 1891 to perform the role of Harold in *Ned's Chum* at the Globe, a play that had been written and produced especially for him by Christie Murray in Auckland. The journalist had seen Leo Byrne perform as Mignon in *Bootle's Baby* in Melbourne three years previously, and setting the scene for the interview, he wrote:

> The name, Leo Byrne, set down against the character [Mignon] on the programme, had nothing feminine in its sound, but the pretty mite, who prattled so innocently and freshly was certainly a little girl down to her finger tips. So everyone thought, for a girl to assume a boy's velvet cap and knickerbockers is now a stage custom that has come to be looked upon as a necessity, since girls, for some unaccountable reason, seem to monopolise, so far as juvenile performers are concerned, the necessary dramatic instinct and assurance. But here was a startling innovation. A little lad had defeated the girls on their own ground, for of course, Mignon's representative was a boy. I was so charmed with the play and the actor who had done so much to secure its success, that...the firm's acting manager took me round to see him. I found a sturdy boy of between seven and eight, rather shy and reserved, but with the air of a perfect little gentleman! The pinafore and frock had been somewhat contemptuously thrown aside, and Master Leo stood revealed in *propria persona*. [151]

The Latin words stand in place of a striptease, and his masculinity had to be textually reasserted through the off-stage dialogue of his interview. Asked about his previous experience, Leo Byrne mentioned having performed in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* in Adelaide:

> 'That was a very long part, wasn't it?'
>
> 'Oh, the part was all right, but there was too much dressing in it. I never could play about in the waits. It was quite sickening. It was always 'Mind those velvet clothes, Leo, and I never could have a slide down the banisters with them on.' [152]

Even when playing a male role, itself heavily feminised, the boy demonstrated as masculine an off-stage persona as possible.[153] It was a chance to confound those in Charles Kingsley's camp who, as Barish shows, asserted Mosaic prohibition against cross-dressed boys.[154]

Two Child-Lovers: Lewis Carroll and Ernest Dowson

> The public like it because it amuses them to see little tottie children performing regular evolutions and dances upon the stage. They sometimes say they like it because they are 'so fond of children'. Their love of children is shown in a way rather similar to the love of an epicure for skylarks – in a pie.[155]

Mrs Fawcett's image of the theatre child consumed to feed adult appetites, satisfying and stimulating at once, is compelling. Her brief sketch to explain the taste for children on stage begins with amusement, moves to fondness, and swiftly on to love and consumption. Although consummation is deferred, the sexual dimension is clear. Her images are matched by those of a situation in *Alice in Wonderland*, observed by Max Beerbohm in his review of the production at the Vaudeville Theatre in 1900:

> We laugh long when someone, to whom Alice has declared that she likes the Carpenter better than the Walrus 'because *he* was just a little bit sorry for the poor oysters,' replies 'Yes, but he ate more of them;' we find in that reply a more deliciously just indictment of sentimentalism than ever was made....The children laugh, too; but their laughter may be hollow mimicry of ours. [156]

In 1900 Alice was played by the adult actress Ellaline Terriss, so removing some of the dramatic paradox incurred in 1886 when the twelve year-old Phoebe Carlo as Alice made this statement about Mr C. Bowland as the Walrus. But Beerbohm did not allow the point to be lost. The Walrus might have felt some sentiment for

the oysters, but still he ate them. The Carpenter adjusts Alice's understanding of the bestially disguised adult who feeds on the bodies of children. A physical appetite is satisfied, carnal desire is acknowledged. Beerbohm extends the metaphor of taste to his analysis of the situation, termed a 'deliciously just indictment'. The scene is typical of the astute duplicity of Carroll's style. He uses a childish situation to denounce adult taste, as if this in some way infantilises mature practice and so diminishes its threat. The return of the consumed oysters as ghosts, a feature of *Alice* exclusive to its stage representation introduced in January 1887[157], suggests the serial nature of such consumption:

> [*Ghost of second* OYSTER.] O woeful, weeping Walrus, your tears were all a sham!
>
> You're greedier for Oysters than children are for jam....
>
> [*Seats herself on* WALRUS. *Ghost of third* OYSTER *appears. The Ghostly hornpipe, and ghosts go off*][158]

Seating herself on the Walrus was supposed to be a punishment, but it looks more like a further reward. Theatre assures a constant succession of children's bodies to delight the carnal interests of their spectator, the consuming adult. Their display allowed Carroll and his fellow child-lovers to have their cake and eat it. As if to confirm this point, Carroll noted enthusiastically of the 1888 revival of *Alice* that 'Little 'Emsie' Bowman...was delicious as the Dormouse, and as the dancing oyster ghost'[159]. Beerbohm's closing comment of this section of his review airs the suspicion that the laughing response of children in the audience may have been 'hollow mimicry' of the adult audience. He aligns the watching children with Alice and the oyster ghosts: as survivors of their own consumption they seem superior, yet their unknowing manipulation renders them all as victims.

Carroll often delineated his theatrical impressions of performing children in terms of the gustatory metaphors 'sweet' and 'delicious', as if they were items on a menu. For example, in 1880 Carroll described the eight year old Sallie Sinclair, whom he had first seen in 1879 as '*première danseuse* in the "Children's Pantomime" at the Adelphi', as 'a sweet-looking and graceful little creature: when I made friends with her family, I found her quite as charming in real life as she had looked on the stage.'[160] Carrie Coote's performance as Eva in G. F. Rowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* at the Princess Theatre in 1878 was described in his diary as 'sweetly played'[161], a view reiterated to Tom Taylor when he said she acted the role 'with refinement and sweetness'. After seeing 'Little Phoebe Carlo' in *The Silver King* at the Princess's Theatre in March 1883 Carroll noted that she 'looked *sweet*, but had nothing to say'.[162] In 1877 he described Connie Gilchrist as 'that most delicious of Harlequins' after seeing her in *Little Red Riding Hood* [163] and Marion

Terry was 'a delicious blind girl' in John Oxenford's *The Two Orphans* at the Olympic. [164] U. C. Knoepflmacher has argued that Carroll's hunger for little girls inspired Christina Rossetti's vengeful creation of 'Mouth Boy' in the last story of *Speaking Likenesses* (1874): 'his face exhibited only one feature, and that was a wide mouth....the mouth, which doubtless could eat as well as speak, grinned, whined, and accosted her: "Give a morsel to a poor starving beggar"'.[165] Her illustrator Arthur Hughes emphasised the likeness between Carroll and this creature by depicting the grotesque 'as a horrid blend of Tweedledum and Lewis Carroll'[166] and composing Maggie's encounter with the figure as a mirror image of Tenniel's drawing of Alice meeting a Tweedle twin. Hughes' significant addition to Tenniel's portrait of Tweedledum was the suggestion of 'sexual threat'[167] through a giant feline phallus which pokes out between Mouth Boy's legs, its mouth stuffed with its own dangling kitten.[168]

Carroll was not alone in using metaphors of physical appetite to describe the visual pleasure he derived from observing children.[169] It was to some extent common practice, typified for example, by the *Times* reviewer's description of 'delicious freshness' he found in the performance by the child cast of *Little Goody Two-Shoes* at the Adelphi in 1876.[170] An excerpt from *Kilvert's Diary* shows how the metaphor of appetite changes into expression of sexual desire:

> Oh, as I watched them there came over me such a longing, such a hungry yearning to have one of those children for my own. Oh that I too had a child to love and to love me, a daughter with such fair limbs and blue eyes archly dancing....One beautiful girl stood entirely naked on the sand, and there as she half sat, half reclined sideways, leaning upon her elbow with her knees and her feet partly drawn back and up, she was a model for a sculptor, there was the supple slender waist, the gentle dawn and tender swell of the bosom and budding breasts, the graceful rounding of the delicately beautiful limbs and above all the soft and exquisite curves of the rosy dimpled bottom and broad white thighs.[171]

Kilvert's erotic excitement was confined to looking, and he formalised this vision by re-contextualising the image to the artist's studio. Kilvert became the sculptor, the girl his model.

Carroll did not confine his pleasure in such images to the studio of his imagination. He recorded in his Diary, on 28 January 1888, his experience of drawing the fourteen year-old model Ada Frost from life:

> Ada has sat as a model ever since she was 5, and it was very comfortable to see how entirely a matter of business it was to her, and also what a quiet, dignified manner she had. I think a spectator would have to be really in search of evil thought to have any other feeling about her than simply a sense of beauty, as in

> looking at a statue. She has a fairly pretty face, and a quite lovely figure, and kept almost perfectly still for fifteen or twenty minutes at a time: it was a real enjoyment to have so beautiful an object to copy. In the rest-periods, she put on a dressing-gown and sat by the fire, while I showed her and Mrs. Shute, some photographs I had with me. She seemed to me a good and modest girl, with every prospect of growing up a pure and good woman, in spite of the peculiar surroundings of her profession.[172]

He justified his activity by invoking the professionalism of the model, and by viewing her body first as a 'statue', then as an 'object'. But his dismissal of 'evil thought' serves simply to assert its presence; finally took refuge in speculation about her moral future. The reflex shared by Kilvert and Carroll is one of distancing themselves from the girls they observe by viewing their bodies as inanimate art objects. This both arrests the mental image and asserts a declaration of Kantian disinterest in relation to the subject. Such impeccable aesthetic sensibility may, however, mask a more sinister Pygmalionism, identified by Gail Marshall as a feature of Victorian interpretation of performing women, though not children.[173]

Anne Higonnet has demonstrated how nineteenth-century representations of children, purporting to celebrate their innocence, acquired an increasingly erotic dimension.[174] Millais' *Cherry Ripe* (1879), a reworking of Reynolds's *Portrait of Penelope Boothby* (1788), may be taken as the culminating image of this paradox. The subliminal eroticism of this astonishingly popular picture has been convincingly explored by Laurel Bradley.[175] Millais emphasises the infantile nature of his subject by showing her feet dangling below her dress as she sits on a chair, while the whiteness of her dress symbolises her purity. Yet her costume, like that of her predecessor Penelope Boothby, signifies maturity, particularly in the large and lacy mob-cap, and in the long black gloves. Millais' disposition of his subject's arms and hands is the most erotically suggestive feature of his composition. Unlike Reynolds, who depicted Penelope Boothby with her arms neatly folded across her lap, Millais shows a more open pose. The black, gloved forearms of his model rest on her thighs and suggest the pubic hair of a mature woman, while her exposed fingers and thumbs are positioned to depict the vulva. Her posy of flowers is cast aside, and she returns the candid stare of the spectator. Millais' punning title, with 'cherry' standing for both fruit and, since medieval times, virginity, signified something to be consumed. Furthermore, the title invites the viewer to recall Campion's song, 'Cherry-Ripe' which became hugely popular after it was sung by Madame Vestris at the Haymarket in 1825 during John Poole's comedy *Paul Pry*.

Carroll himself was swift to participate in the complex configuration of erotic innocence displayed by *Cherry Ripe* and recalled by the song, with a photograph of *Xie Kitchen as Penelope Boothby* in 1879.[176] He retained the candid stare, the hair draped across the shoulders (straggly, not flowing), the mob-cap, the long

black fingerless gloves and the over-large dress. In homage to Reynolds, Carroll places one of Xie's arms across her lap, while the other is drawn vertically, her chin just resting on her exposed fingers. The effect of this arm is to suggest a stockinged leg, strangely misplaced and contributing to the messy, exhausted and whorish impression made by the whole composition.

For Carroll it was a short step from the visual arts to theatrical performance. He asserted, 'surely the distinction between a picture painted on canvas, and a picture formed by living figures on a stage is more fanciful than real?'[177] Carroll used the theatre as a powerful resource for his photographic art which was always intimately connected to his personal life. In 1878 he bought a collection of seven year-old Carrie Coote's cast-off theatre costumes from her mother for use by models in his photographs to enhance the dramatic authenticity of his work.[178] These clothes carried an implicit eroticism, as dressing up implied undressing and evoked the body they had once touched. He acknowledged that 'theatrical children always have a special attraction for me'[179] and routinely supplied himself with models from children he saw on stage by making their acquaintance and then nurturing their friendship. Reflecting on his four-day beach holiday with one such eleven year-old friend, Phoebe Carlo, at Eastbourne during July 1885 he developed a spiritual gloss for his use of the gustatory term 'sweet' as he struggled to respond to her as more than just a beguiling physical companion:

> I am rather lonely now she is gone. She is a very sweet child, and a thoughtful child, too. It was very touching to see (we had a Bible-reading every day: I tried to remember that my little friend had a soul to be cared for, as well as a body) the far-away look in her eyes, when we talked of God and of heaven – as if her angel, who beholds His face continually, were whispering to her.
>
> Of course, there isn't *much* companionship possible, after all, between an old man's mind and a little child's, but what there is is sweet – and wholesome, I think....[180]

The most paradoxical feature about this intimate self-scrutiny was that it was made in a letter to another, then adult, 'child' friend, Edith Rix, who was thereby implicitly invited to put herself into Phoebe's place and to become the new partner of Carroll's 'sweet' and 'wholesome' companionship.[181]

The letter to Edith about Phoebe shows Carroll playing the part of Reverend, a role that it seems he was at some pains 'to remember'. But role play and self-dramatisation were constant features of the way in which he related to his child friends. The theatre not only supplied him with child friends, but also offered a resource to facilitate his developing relationships with them. His statement that Phoebe Carlo was a 'charming companion to take about among my friends'[182] is typical of the way in which he treated them like adults. Yet his diary note about the

conclusion of a subsequent visit by Phoebe to Oxford indicates that he could change roles at will: 'We had a little dinner together at 7.30, after which my tired little friend had a good nap on my knee, from which I had to wake her to come off by the 9.5 train to town.'[183] In 1889 he even cast himself as a newly-wed with the fifteen year-old Isa Bowman who performed as the second Alice in 1888:

> Isa is one of my *chiefest* of child-friends: I had her with me at Eastbourne last summer (I'm a *very* old fogey, now, you know; so I defy 'Mrs. Grundy' fearlessly!) for a week's visit, nominally: but we got on so well together, that I kept writing to Mrs. Bowman for leave to keep her longer, till the week extended to *five*! When we got near the end of *four*, I thought 'at any rate I'll keep her over the normal *honey-moon* period.' I felt rather curious to see whether there was *any* young person, of the feminine gender, whose company, tête-à-tête, I could endure for a *month*. I hadn't believed it possible: and used to say, when twitted with being a bachelor, 'I never yet saw the young lady whose company I could endure for a *week* – far less for *life*!' But alas, I can plead that argument no longer![184]

This honeymoon in Eastbourne followed a lengthy courtship, a significant period of which was Isa's visit to Oxford from 11 to 15 July 1888, described by Carroll in a playful short story. It concludes:

> After dinner, Isa got somebody or other (she is not sure who it was) to finish this story for her. Then she went to bed, and dreamed she was fixed in the middle of Oxford, with her feet fast to the ground, and her head between the bars of a cellar window, in a sort of final tableau. Then she dreamed the curtain came down, and the people all called out 'encore!' But she cried out, 'Oh, not again! It would be too dreadful to have my visit all over again!' But, on second thoughts, she smiled in her sleep, and said, 'Well, do you know, after all I think I wouldn't mind so very *much* if I did have it all over again!'[185]

Carroll's ludic denial of a fixed narrating identity confirms his polymorphic personae in relation to his subject. The nightmare 'final tableau' in which the child is grotesquely captured in front of 'the people' may suggest his own anxieties about Isa's underlying consent to his five-day enterprise, while the contented 'second thoughts' may enunciate his own wishes at the end of the holiday. However mixed the feelings of both parties may have been, they are held at a distance of unreality by the framing devices of dream and theatre.

On two occasions recorded in his letters Carroll legitimated his physical intimacy with children by an invocation to theatrical convention in which he cast himself as Pantaloon. On 31 October 1886 he wrote to Savile Clarke about one of his three

daughters: '*Entre nous*, I should inevitably have assumed to myself the privilege of the 'grey and slippered pantaloon,' and have kissed Kitty, had she been *unique....*'[186] And in 1889 he recalled to Mary Brown:

> It must be nearly 20 years since we met and it is *very* doubtful if we should even recognise each other now! My memory of you is of a little girl who sat on my knee (a performance that you may have totally forgotten by now) out on the cliffs at Whitby: and yours of me – well, of not quite such an old 'lean and slippered pantaloon' as I have now become. [187]

The scholarly reference is to *As You Like It* (II. vii, l. 158), but this does not expunge the popular reference to Pantaloon, the salacious old fool and father to Columbine, in the pantomime harlequinade. And in both letters the invocation of Pantaloon seems unnecessarily intrusive. Why should he wish to kiss only one of Savile Clarke's daughters, and find himself unable to do so because she has two sisters? Why does the reference to Pantaloon legitimate the desire? Why does he remember Mary Brown's sitting on his knee as a 'performance'? This designation turns simple childhood behaviour into deliberate action, and invests it with a knowing connotation. The carnal knowledge belongs to the spectator and recipient of the supposed action, who understands it as 'performance', rather than to the performer. Carroll's pose as Pantaloon allowed him to play games with himself, as well as with girls he found attractive. Publicly, Carroll complained frequently about the vulgarity of the harlequinade.[188] Privately, he may have enjoyed the punning slippage between the reference to high art, Shakespeare, and popular art, the harlequinade, which permitted his own masquerade. Carroll's response to his child friends seems to follow the kind of pantomime script which Dickens described in 'The Pantomime of Life':

> [Pantaloon's] amorous propensities...are eminently disagreeable; and his mode of addressing ladies...is downright improper, being usually...a perceptible tickling of the aforesaid ladies in the waist, after committing which, he starts back, manifestly ashamed (as well he may be) of his indecorum and temerity; continuing, nevertheless, to ogle and beckon to them from a distance in a very unpleasant and immoral manner.[189]

Eigner summarises the role of Pantaloon as a 'mischievous old lecher, who represents patriarchal authority and the corrupt hierarchy.'[190]

This is far from the public role Carroll adopted. Typical of his general attitude to 'coarseness' on stage was his pronouncement, made in passing to Savile Clarke about plans for the dramatisation of *Alice in Wonderland*:

> Most of the London Pantomimes are entirely spoiled, for children and indeed for any person whose tastes are not debased, by the indecencies introduced into the harlequinade. Setting the question of right and wrong on one side, it is still inexplicable to me how managers can think it to be for their interests to pander to the tastes of dirty-minded youths and men in the Gallery, with the certainty of offending many in the Stalls, etc. It is to the lasting credit of Mr. Gilbert, and I think the nation ought to feel grateful to him for it, that he has given us so many pure and absolutely innocent pieces, like *The Mikado*, to which one can safely take ladies and children.[191]

Awareness of social class was at the root of Carroll's complaint: the gentility of people who could afford to pay for seats in the Stalls preserved their sensibility from the 'debased' pleasures peculiar to those in the cheaper Gallery seats. A show of purity was the preserve of the rich, impurity of the poor. The reference in his personal correspondence to Pantaloon in *As You Like It* could therefore safely smuggle in a covert reference to the 'vulgar' figure of the pantomime Pantaloon, undetected perhaps by the writer himself. Echoing the Humpty Dumpty of *Through the Looking-Glass* in his essay 'The Stage in the Spirit of Reverence,' Carroll stated, 'a word means what the speaker intends by it, and what the hearer understands by it, and that is all.'[192] In his letters he sheltered in the moral safety granted by the exclusivity of the two parts to his recognition that language depends on convention. If the class of speaker and listener is the same, both will understand Shakespeare as the referent to 'pantaloon'; if it differs, the harlequinade may intrude.

Carroll's identification of himself as Pantaloon in relation to his child friends may be taken as an ultimate statement of the erotic pleasure which he took in the spectacle of the performing child's body, a pleasure which was for him not confined to the stage but which was fundamentally voyeuristic. He used his pseudonym to make himself invisible; it permitted him to conceal or expose his identity at will. When he received letters addressed to Lewis Carroll at his Christ Church College address in Oxford he returned them unopened declaring that no such person existed, and if he received mail addressed to Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, he returned it with the statement that Dodgson had not written this book. To Isabel Standen whom he had met in Forbury Gardens in Reading in 1869 while he was waiting for a train and by his own account had known for only 'fifteen minutes' he wrote:

> [a] friend of mine, called Mr. Lewis Carroll, tells me he means to send you a book. He is a *very* dear friend of mine. I have known him all my life (we are the same age) and have *never* left him. Of course he was with me in the Gardens, not a yard off – even while I was drawing those puzzles for you. I wonder if you saw him?[193]

This letter is cited in an article published by his nephew S. D. Collingwood at the time of Carroll's death about the 'strange attraction [children] had for him' explained as an expression of 'love'.[194]

The ferocity with which Carroll protected his urge to remain invisible was caught in Isa Bowman's account of his abhorrence at having his portrait painted or picture taken. She remembered a rare outbreak of anger towards her when he caught her sketching a picture of him:

> Suddenly he turned round and saw what I was doing. He got up from his seat and turned very red, frightening me very much. Then he took my poor little drawing, and tearing it into small pieces threw it into the fire without a word. Afterwards he came suddenly to me, and saying nothing, caught me up in his arms and kissed me passionately. I was only some ten or eleven years of age.[195]

Isa was thirteen before she even met Lewis Carroll, so she colluded in his infantilising behaviour. Nevertheless, the episode reinforces an acknowledgement of Carroll's need for social invisibility. This has traditionally been interpreted as a feature of his shyness or modesty. But, as Karoline Leach argues in a survey of Carroll biographies, his shyness was amongst many fabrications by writers who sought to generate a public mythology about the man.[196] Carroll's desire to remain unseen, in the context of his experience in the auditoria of London theatres, seems to be more deeply rooted in the empowering voyeuristic pleasure of scopophilia, than in his alleged modesty.

As a photographer Carroll was literally concealed behind the camera lens. He exercised control over the image taken, yet as Catherine Robson argues, those images reflected him 'everywhere and nowhere'.[197] As a spectator in the theatre he was more passively positioned, cloaked in the invisibility of the crowd and the relative darkness of the auditorium. Both roles afforded him erotic pleasure. Critical consensus on the eroticism of Carroll's images of girls breaks down over the issue of how to evaluate this feature of his work. Susan Stewart argues that:

> modern sceptics might interpret Charles Dodgson's interest in photographing little girls in the nude as a prurient one, this interest must as well be linked to the place of the photograph in cultivating the natural. The body has become a garden, remote from the uncontrolled sexuality of the natural sublime.[198]

Nina Auerbach also argues for a liberating and self-effacing motive: 'Carroll as camera eye does perfect justice to the self-transforming mobility of his model. The eroticism...belongs to the child; the artist merely understands it'[199] Her enthusiasm is echoed by Kincaid,[200] but it is a view disputed by Lindsay Smith who presents Carroll as controlling not liberating.[201] Karoline Leach argues for a Victorian cult of the child nude which renders such images 'innocuous'.[202] Her view is support-

ed by Hughues Lebailly and by Richard Foulkes.[203] But they overlook the possibility that while there may indeed have been a convention for the innocent celebration of childhood in the Victorian period, it does not follow that Carroll's practice fell within it. Indeed, Carroll may have used cultural norms to mask his desires. Jacqueline Rose, while condemning his images as 'the ultimate fetish', suggests a more general argument about Victorian perceptions of childhood innocence and sexuality which became visible after W. T. Stead's sensationalised investigation of child prostitution in 1885:

> The child prostitute.... – object of social legislation – was at once (and this is the key) totally sexualised and totally innocent. The call for attention, the felt need and anxiety, all centred on the seeming paradox of a sexuality which could only be seen at the very moment when it was to be blotted out.[204]

For Carroll it was not legislation which simultaneously revealed and 'blotted out' the sexuality of his subjects, it was time itself, and the metamorphosis of their bodies from pre-pubescence to maturity. The camera lens and the proscenium arch allowed him to capture the moment of poise, between exposure and extinction. His requirements also justified his discarding of his child friends when their bodies no longer satisfied his passion.

The ardour of Carroll's serial desire for girls was matched by Ernest Dowson's fetish for a single child star. The twenty-two year-old poet began to notice the six year-old Minnie Terry in 1888 after seeing her in *Bootle's Baby*. Devoted to a 'cult of Minnie Terry' [205] which he shared with his friend Arthur Moore, Dowson went to see her in every new show, often finding her the main feature of his attention: '[w]hen this delightful little girl is on the stage the interest is at its height'.[206] He collected photographs of her, eagerly awaiting release of new images, and exchanging them with friends: 'I enclose you the latest Minnie Terranium in my collection – which kindly return'[207] and '[m]y collection now comprises 3 cabinets 2 cartes de v. and 1 plaque'.[208] He was hungry for glimpses of her in the street, but content for these encounters to remain distanced spectacles. The only intersection between Dowson's scopophilic passion for Minnie Terry and his physical experience was in the resemblance between the child star and Adelaide Foltinowcz (1878-1903), the daughter of a Polish restaurateur with whom he conducted an affair. He was first attracted to Adelaide because of the likeness between the two girls, based not just on looks but on detailed scrutiny of their bodies: 'I am the whole clientele, and there is a little Polish demoiselle therein (Minnie at 5st & – no not quite that – whom it is a pleasure to sit and look at.'[209] He was keen for photographs of Adelaide that confirmed the resemblance: '[t]hey have promised to have her photographed soon: then I will convince you how curiously like she is to at least two photographs of Minnie.'[210] He was triumphant when friends made the

same link: 'I am glad you mistook Minnie Terry so: I always thought there was a strong likeness, and this is an excellent corroboration: but Adelaide must be taller.'[211]

Dowson generalised from his personal predeliction for young girls and Minnie in particular, in two ways. First, like Carroll, he joined in public support for employment of children in the theatre with his polemic.[212] Secondly, privately, and also like Carroll, he claimed to derive spiritual succour in the company of girls, seen in his assertion 'how girls helped to assuage the pain'. Dowson, unlike Carroll, was open about his sexual desire. But he found his activities with his 'latest Amarylis'[213] ostensibly inhibited by recent legislation:

> [w]e spent a somewhat monotonous evening on Thursday & after I had sat for some two hours & a half on the sofa with my arm round the waist of the demoiselle & Lefroy ditto with his – we agreed that in view of the new act le jeu ne valait etc.[214]

He was referring to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 which had raised the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen, strengthening legislation from 1875 which had raised the age of consent from twelve to thirteen. Rose's argument suggests that Dowson's awareness of the supposed sexuality of his 'Amarylis' may rather have been stimulated by the Act, which could explain how he spent two and a half hours contemplating it.

Dowson was not altogether ironical when he asserted that without the cult of Minnie Terry 'there is no balsam in Gilead'.[215] He found a way to sublimate his all too real sexual desire for the young girl, to make her his muse, his 'Beata Beatrix'.[216] His route to salvation was through Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Describing to Moore the pleasure of his developing friendship with Adelaide, he expanded:

> Do you remember, par exemple, Pater's note in "Marius" – to the effect that when one's pain in life seems just a stupid, brutal outrage on us & one can seek refuge from it, at best, only in a mere "general sense of goodwill, somewhere, perhaps" – sometimes the discovery of that goodwill if it is only "in a not unfriendly animal...may seem to have explained & actually justified the existence of our pain at all". That is really almost true. Certainly the mere friendliness of a child has some such effect on me.[217]

Dowson's memory of Pater's text is reasonably accurate,[218] and his untroubled move from animals to children is facilitated by Pater's narrator who in the preceeding discussion had observed:

2. Minnie Terry, *The Theatre*, November 1889, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark Per. M. adds 125.d.5, facing p. 241

> I see daily, in fine weather, a child like a delicate nosegay, run to meet the rudest of brick-makers as he comes home from work. She is not at all afraid to hang upon his rough hand: and through her, he reaches out to, and makes his own, something out of that great world, so distant from him yet so real, of humanity's refinements. What is of finer soul, or of finer stuff, in things, and demands delicate touching – the delicacy of the little child represents to him that, initiates him into that. There, surely, is a touch of the secular gold, of a perpetual age of gold.[219]

Dowson shared with his Oxford mentor a faith that the child offers access to the Golden Age, incarnates it, disseminates it. He seemed to experience personally the Romantic view of children as ciphers of original perfection, and repeatedly asserted the spiritual benefits of his encounters with young girls. After watching Minnie and her friends play in the street he wrote 'it was a delightful picture & restored my equilibrium vastly',[220] and dismissing the solaces of wine, women and song, he concluded 'Nay – as I have remarked before – the idea of the little girl is the only one which doesn't make for bloodiness'.[221] This enthusiasm transferred directly to the political position he adopted over the employment of children in theatres, an argument which hinged on private devotion. Facing the public he changed the 'cult of Minnie Terry' into the 'Cult of the Child':

> Indeed, it is not surprising that an age which is, after all, chiefly pessimist, an age which is so deeply disillusioned, should turn with an immense delight to the constant charm of childhood....And not less in the drama than in the rest of art the cult of the child should have a place, so that just as we seek relief from the sombre and relentless psychology of M. Paul Bourget in the realism of the nursery...we may find it now and again across the footlights, and acknowledge, as we must all have done a year ago, when we applauded the exertions of the charming little player who performed the *title-role* in Mrs. Winter's play of *Bootle's Baby*, that art can still offer us the counterfeit presentment of one exquisite relation.[222]

His passion for Minnie lay at the heart of his apologia for stage children. Minnie's ability to conjure the nursery around her, to invite the spectator into her most intimate domestic environment, permitted her audience to forget itself, and to enter with her the 'mythological epoch' Stevenson believed children inhabited. That is where Dowson found his 'balsam' and Pater his 'perpetual age of gold'. But the child's oblivion of its surroundings also concealed its spectators and handed to them the pleasure of voyeurism, so that for some, like Dowson, entry to arcadia went hand in hand with sexual empowerment.

Marie Wilton's Pearls

The story of Dowson's passion for Minnie is fragmented and elliptical, but it allows the reader enough to construct a narrative from Dowson's point of view. Minnie's voice is silent; she was probably even unaware of the impression she was making. To hear this kind of story from a young performer's perspective we can turn to Mrs Bancroft's 'The Broken Necklace: A Love Story' which she first published in *Stories of the Stage* (1880) and repeated in her autobiography (1888). It recounted the development of her relationship with an obsessive member of her audience. She began by saying that the fortunes of the provincial company for which her father worked were depressed and in order to revive them the manager hit on the idea of presenting herself, Marie Wilton, as Juliet: 'I was a pale, thin, delicate-looking child, and very tall for my age, being only thirteen, although announced in the bills as twelve.'[223] She took some persuading to accept the role, and to add encouragement her father promised to buy her the pearl necklace which she had set her heart on:

> Often on my way to and from our rehearsals, when I had time to loiter, I stopped at a window in the little High Street, and longingly looked at a necklace of pearl beads, in three rows, marked five shillings – a fortune to me then. I saved until I had half a crown, and then tried to induce the shopman to let me have it for that price; but I failed. My father promised to buy me the treasure if I would be very good, and study 'Juliet.' How readily I said 'Yes,' for the labour of learning the words and being taught by my mother how to speak them, seemed light indeed compared with the joy of possessing those little pearl beads.[224]

As far as she was concerned the necklace was the crowning glory of her first night:

> I had on a pretty white dress, trimmed with narrow silver lace, my hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders, and best adornment of all was my beautiful pearl necklace. Oh! how every one would envy me those beads.[225]

The performance went smoothly until the fourth act when she had to drink the poison. She described how she started to trip over the long train of her gown ('which had been a great anxiety to me all through the play'), and in saving herself from falling:

> my necklace gave way, and the beads scattered about in all directions. I looked scared for a moment; but when I fully realized that it was broken, I fell to crying so bitterly that I thought my heart would break too. I sank on the couch sobbing piteously. The audience thought this a good piece of acting, and gave me great applause.[226]

Mrs Wilton tried every means of persuasion to get her daughter back on stage for the last act, but Marie told how 'nothing but the restored necklace, one row of which was broken and the beads scattered all over the stage' would induce her to continue, until finally her mother had to promise to buy her another one:

> So, in the greatest grief, and with stifled sobs, I went through the last act. When I fell on Romeo's body there was great applause, but in the middle of Friar Laurence's last speech I saw some of my beads lying close to his feet. His treading upon them seemed imminent, so I got up and rescued them, and then lay down again. Of course, the rest of Friar Laurence's speech was not heard, and the curtain fell amidst loud laughter.[227]

Marie was given a thorough telling off, and taken home. As an opening narrative this sequence establishes the child performer as completely unselfconscious about her part in the action and unhampered by anxieties about how her performance could affect her fellow actors or the audience. She focused on what was important to herself, primary amongst which was her pride in her new pearl necklace and her distress when it was broken. We can see that she did not in the least inhabit the part of Juliet; instead she focused on the stage business required by her role. She remembered that she had to throw her head back to drink the poison, she noticed the encumbrance of the train on her dress, and noted what happened when she fell on Romeo's body in the last act. Not for a moment did she suggest an awareness of emotional or metaphysical significance to the play or her part in it, beyond her feelings about the pearl necklace. And through her physical interpretation of the part it was as easy for her to step out of her role as it was to step back into it ('I got up and rescued them, and then lay down again'). As Marie wrote, describing the difference between her mother's extreme nervousness as she was dressing her, and her own calm, 'I was of that happy age that knows no responsibility'.[228] Dressed in white, her costume told of innocence, purity and potential sacrifice while the silver trim betokened her social status; it was a costume that seemed to match both the role she played and her off-stage identity. The exposition shows a very young girl at work. She was financially, emotionally and practically dependent on her parents, watched and controlled by them throughout. Although Marie Wilton was then of the age of sexual consent, and she was playing the part of a young girl intoxicated at the discovery of her own sexuality, her narrative of these events focuses on more childish things. The only overt token of sexual allure in her appearance was the way in which her hair hung 'in large waves over [her] shoulders', a traditional sign of feminine undress and erotic maturity.

The complication developed:

> As we were leaving the theatre, my eyes swollen from crying over the injured necklace, a gentleman who had witnessed the performance and the scene stepped up to us, and said, 'I hope you will pardon me for speaking to you; my name is Captain ------. Let me tell you how much I have been impressed by your little daughter's acting as Juliet; it really was, for so young an actress, remarkable. Take care of her. Good night. Good night, little one!' He shook my hand, and asked me if I would give him the remnant of my broken necklace, which I had so carefully rescued from destruction when supposed to be dead. I trembled at the thought of parting with it; but my mother whispered to me, 'I am going to buy you another.' So I gave it. On our way home we talked of nothing else – my father dwelling on the criticism, and I on the final disappearance of my necklace.[229]

The Captain addressed the family group, exchanging courtesies with Mr Wilton, owner of the property in which he is really interested, and then wresting first a handshake then the last fragment of the most precious necklace from 'little' Marie herself. But why did he want to speak to them at all, and why did he want Marie's necklace? Was it that he shared the thrill articulated by Dowson in witnessing the unselfconsciousness of juvenile acting? Did the necklace offer him a token to access the 'age of gold'? Were the pearls erotically charged by their former proximity to her body, were they a sign of the girl's virginal purity which he wanted to possess?

Marie described how she looked out for the Captain but never saw him in that place again. About two years later, in Bristol, as she was leaving the theatre with her mother after playing Ophelia:

> who should step up to us, but my 'prophet'. We both recognized him at once. I was delighted, but my mother feared that his admiration of me as a child, might grow into something more serious, and therefore she did not receive him with that warmth that she otherwise might have done. He said, 'Well, little one, you see I was right, you are going up the ladder, step by step; mark my words, the next one will be London.[230]

Marie Wilton was then fifteen, and not regarded by herself or by her mother as a child anymore. It is obvious how she had matured in the intervening years: she took a professional interest in her own performance, was keen to discuss her work with her mother, and took a social interest in other people. The Captain therefore posed a threat to Marie which apparently he did not two years earlier, and his attentions were discouraged by her mother. It seems that on this occasion Marie's father was not present, and the only dialogue she recounted was between herself and the Captain, her mother and her anxieties sidelined. While Marie's maturation was

clear, the Captain had not altered his mode of address to her; she remained 'little one', and he seemed to enjoy her infantilisation. She continued:

> My heart jumped at the sight of this man; there was a kind of mystery about him. He seemed to be mixed up with my life somehow; and whatever part of importance I played, I always thought of him and his kind words. He showed me the string of pearls, and said, 'You see how I have treasured these. I don't intend to part with them. I shall never give them back to you unless you ask me for them.' How different were my feelings for those pearls now! It seemed like taking away my heart when he first asked me for them; and now, unknown to myself, he had taken it away.[231]

The Captain had become a talisman for Marie, associated with rites of passage in her life. To find him in flesh and blood standing in front of her after a night of some significance in her career was auspicious for her, and perhaps accounts for the fact that she did not notice it as odd that he still had her old beads in his pocket, nor did she question their significance for him. When she first gave them to him it was hardly a gesture of consent ('it seemed like taking away my heart'). Like a puppet she was manipulated by her mother, who was simply encouraging her daughter to be gracious to a well-wishing stranger. She remembered the wrench of parting with the pearls two years later, a parting orchestrated unwittingly by her own protective mother. But now the pearls took on a new significance for her. Linked with the mysterious stranger, with her own success and with the thrill of the unknown, the pearls seemed really to be a love token, an emblem of mutual affection and excitement.

The Captain's statement that he would never give them back to her unless she asked for them seemed to issue an invitation and a challenge. And the way in which he was next seen using them shows a further evolution in their signification: 'Every night during his short stay he sat in a corner of the dress-circle, and at the end of the play would show me the pearl beads'.[232] Was this an innocent celebration of a love token? Or did this repeated display of a secretly cherished item invest the beads and the action of showing them, privately yet in public, with a virtually obscene significance? It seems as if the Captain in the circle was teasing Marie on stage with an erotic show, as a way of developing a forbidden relationship and proclaiming his possession of her prized virginity. She continued the narrative:

> He would wait sometimes outside the stage-door, just to press my hand and say, 'Good-night, little one.' He had not time to say more; for my mother used to sit at the window of our lodgings, which were opposite, to see me come home. I was now in love for the very first time in my life.[233]

A thwarted elopement, and decades later a proper proposal of marriage foreclosed by the Captain's sudden death abroad, brings this story to an end. Marie remembered their final parting:

> The day came to say good-bye. He showed me the pearl necklace, saying, 'You see how I have guarded it. I will never part with it; it seems to have linked our two lives together.' I looked at the broken beads, and all the old times came back to me. There was my necklace just as I had left it; and the knot which I had made to prevent the other beads from falling off.[234]

For her lover it was as though she were still the thirteen year-old girl who wept for her necklace on the first night she played Juliet, while the beads offered Marie herself a fleeting glimpse of her own now distant childhood. Marie Bancroft's story illustrates the extraordinary power which the theatrical display of a young girl as a sexual subject could have on adult imagination, and the vulnerability of children to the kind of attention which could arise from its impact. Despite her protectively alert mother, and her own rational reflection that 'there was nothing in this man to attract a girl of my age. He was not young, not what is called good-looking, and was poor; but what was this to me?' [235] she was infatuated by his persistent attention, and absurdly trusting in his 'honour'.

Constance Gilchrist: Model, Muse, Aristocrat

All of the examples considered here involve the spectator in a love of looking, and the subject fetishised within an image. Carroll's photography, Dowson's collection, Marie Wilton's arrested fictional identity as the thirteen year-old Juliet scrambling after her pearls, all three confirm Jacqueline Rose's contention that 'the visual image [is] the ultimate fetish'.[236] The complex nature of mutual transformation between subject and her image, and exchange, both commodified and erotic, between image and spectator, are to be found in the career of Constance Gilchrist (born 23 January 1865). She became a darling of image makers and theatre-goers when she shot to prominence as Harlequin in the Adelphi children's pantomime *Little Goody Two-Shoes* in December 1876.

Her first stage appearance had been as Prince of Mushrooms in the pantomime *Jack in the Box* at Drury Lane in 1873. She continued to appear in minor pantomime roles, as Harlequin, for example, in the juvenile cast of *The Children in the Wood* at the Adelphi in 1874. Following her stage accolades in 1876, she began to pose as a model, first for J. M. Whistler who began his portrait of her performing her 'skipping rope dance' in 1876. The painting, *Harmony in Yellow and Gold: The Gold Girl – Connie Gilchrist* was finished by 1877 when Lillie Langtry saw it hanging in Whistler's studio. By then the subject was so famous that Langtry, who said that she had 'seen Connie Gilchrist but once' was instantly certain of the

likeness.[237] During the 1880s the painting was bought by the MP Henry Labouchere, licensee of the Westminster Aquarium and, in 1889, ardent parliamentary supporter for the employment of children in theatres. Whistler, however, borrowed it back from him in order to work on it. The painting hung untouched in Whistler's studio until his death in 1903, when it was returned to Labouchere who entrusted it to Robert Ross for exhibition at the Carfax Gallery. It now hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Whistler's second attempt to represent Connie Gilchrist, *The Blue Girl: Portrait of Connie Gilchrist*, was begun in 1879, when her stage fame was secured, and is regarded as a more successful rendering of 'her fragile beauty'.[238] It remained in his estate until his death when it was bequeathed to the University of Glasgow.

She was also a favourite juvenile model for Frederic Leighton and she figures in four of his paintings from the period 1877-1879: *Music Lesson* (1877, Guildhall Art Gallery, Corporation of London); *Study: At a Reading Desk* (1877, Sudley House, Liverpool); *Winding the Skein* (1878, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales); Cleoboline in the untraced painting *Cleobolus and Cleoboline*.[239] Leighton exhibited both *Music Lesson* and *Study* at the Royal Academy in 1877, and the reviewer for the *Art Journal* identified the former as 'the most striking bit of Artwork in the whole Exhibition', enjoying 'this sensuousness of finish, this quality of preciousness...we see in this picture of 'Music Lesson' [and] in that of the fair little girl...seated on the Turkoman carpet in a figured dress.'[240] It certainly must have seemed so to Connie Gilchrist herself who was taken there by Lewis Carroll on 2 July 1877, 'I took Connie with me to the R.A. which she seemed to enjoy (particularly seeing Mr. Leighton's pictures of herself!).'[241]

Carroll himself combined his entertainment of Connie with the pleasure of being entertained by her on that day since the second purpose of his visit to London was to see her perform the 'skipping rope dance' at the Westminster Aquarium. He had noticed her in *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, which he had attended with his child friend and model, Evelyn Hatch, on 13 January 1877. Carroll instantly thought her, 'one of the most beautiful children, in face and figure, that I have ever seen. I must get an opportunity of photographing her.'[242] By the beginning of March he had made direct contact with her family, sending his usual gift of a copy of Alice, which he recorded as having been accepted by 'Mrs. Gilchrist, mother of the "Harlequin"' on 3 March. The following Saturday he was back for the Adelphi matinee, with Evelyn and another child.[243] On 10 April he spent an 'enjoyable day' in London:

> Called on Mrs. Gilchrist, and spent about half an hour with her and "Connie". I was decidedly pleased with Connie, who has a refined and modest manner, with just a touch of shyness, and who is about the most gloriously beautiful child (both face and figure) that I ever saw. One would like to do 100 photographs of her.[244]

Obsession mounting, five days later he recorded:

> Devised a plan which seems more feasible than any I have yet thought of, for getting photos of Connie Gilchrist: – to be staying in London, to bring her over to Oxford by the early train, and take her back in the evening. This would give nine hours in Oxford, and cost little more than paying for her and an escort, who would be an encumbrance.[245]

In October 1877 Carroll still described her as 'that most delicious of Harlequins' after seeing her in the children's pantomime of *Red Riding Hood*,[246] but by the following year he began to lose interest. When he saw her as Siebel in H.J. Byron's burlesque *Little Doctor Faust* at the Gaiety Theatre he wrote, 'she is losing her beauty, and can't act – but she did the old skipping-rope dance superbly.'[247] By then she was twelve, and Carroll's attention was turning to Marion Terry, the new pre-pubescent darling of the stage, 'a delicious blind girl' in *The Two Orphans* seen by Carroll on 5 October 1878.

Gilchrist may have been discarded by Carroll, but not by the general theatre-going public. Her professional fortunes were secured when John Hollingshead, manager of the Gaiety Theatre, saw her perform in *Little Goody Two-Shoes*:

> She was so young when I first made her a member of the Gaiety company, that we went through the form of an apprenticeship. She had appeared in a juvenile pantomime at the Adelphi Theatre, and long before several friends, notably the late Montague Williams, advised me to engage her. I had arranged the contract with the late Mr. Ambrose Maynard, an excellent and honest 'agent' who existed long before Waterloo Road was a music-hall market place. I did all I could to make her comfortable in the theatre, and she repaid me by quiet and amiable conduct, and a determination to remain with me as long as I continued in management. She had several opportunities of 'bettering' herself, especially after she made the success with Mr. and Mrs. Florence as 'Libby' in the *Mighty Dollar*. She might have had a leading position as a juvenile actress at a prominent London Comedy Theatre, but she declined all offers – in the latter case against my wish.[248]

Hollingshead also declared that he had an 'objection to "children" at the Gaiety. 'I had made one exception in the case of Miss Constance Gilchrist, and I did not wish to make another.'[249] He remembered that by Christmas 1878 she appeared in H. J. Byron's burlesque *Young Fra Diavolo* and was so successful that she 'was advanced to the front as a juvenile dancer, mastering the skipping-rope dance, and avoiding Miss Kate Vaughan's distinct style.'[250] She remained a firm favourite at the Gaiety, with roles such as 'Tiddy-Widdi' in *Gulliver* (1879), Montgiron in *The*

Corsican Brothers & Co (1880), Abdallah in *The Forty Thieves* (1880). She played Polly in *Bubbles* (1881), a 'comedietta' written especially for her by Charles J. Fawcett. By then she was sixteen and her part as comic servant emphasised her transitional status between child and adult, the role requiring her to take initiative and responsibility, but also showed her to be in need of advice and protection.

She continued to work at the Gaiety, as Maid Marion in *Little Robin Hood* (1882), Anne in *Blue Beard* (1883), Miranda in *Ariel* (1883), as well as Libby in *The Mighty Dollar* (1880) and Florence in *Captain Cuttle* (1880). Eventually there was a fairy tale ending for Gilchrist herself: 'when the Earl of Orkney met her she was the darling of the dandies and at the height of her fame as a dancer.'[251] They married at All Souls' Church, Langham Place in 1892; the groom was twenty-five years old, and the bride was twenty-seven. Having joined the aristocracy, Gilchrist retired from the stage immediately; she had one daughter, Lady Mary Fitz-Maurice. The Earl of Orkney's obituary notice in the *Star* offered more comment about Gilchrist than about the Prince Charming figure of the Earl himself. Under the headline 'Demure Daring' it reminded twentieth-century readers:

> When she was engaged at the Gaiety she was still so young that articles of apprenticeship had to be drawn up for her.
>
> Her limbs, long and graceful, were incredibly slender for those days of the buxom thigh and the well-turned calf. She had shy violet eyes peeping from under a thick corn-coloured fringe.
>
> The chorus was sometimes daring – for those times – but little Connie Gilchrist had half the Gaiety mashers in love with her because she was demure.
>
> She became the most photographed young actress. More fame came when Whistler painted his appealing picture of her....Her costume was a short gold tunic and high fawn boots.

The Earl's obituary was eclipsed by *Harmony in Yellow and Gold*, the first reproducible and commodified image of his dead wife, painted when she was eleven years old.

3
Pastorals and Primitives: Child Actors in Arcadia

Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* assigned to the child the power to reveal a 'perpetual age of gold'. He was drawing on conventional nineteenth-century thinking about children and childhood inherited from the Romantics. Goethe's story of the child performer Mignon, at the heart of *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre*, is central to this element of Romantic ideology, as Carolyn Steedman's compelling study of nineteenth-century childhood and the iconography of Mignon suggests.[252] When Goethe's travelling hero Wilhelm encounters a troupe of nomadic circus performers he is struck by the appearance of one of the children. Anonymous, androgynous, attractive and elusive, she is the perfect plaything for his imagination, even figuring as a mysterious alter ego in his quest for identity. Wilhelm next sees her performing acrobatic tricks with other children whose strangely distorted movements provoke alternately astonishment and horror in the audience. His sympathies are aroused and the desire to protect her grows alongside the wish to possess her. Eventually he buys her from the circus master, and their ambiguous relationship develops towards the physical embrace which concludes Book Two. Book Three opens with a song:

> Know'st thou the land where the lemon-trees bloom?
> Where the gold-orange glows in the deep thickets' gloom?
> Where a wind ever soft from the blue heaven blows,
> And the groves are of laurel and myrtle and rose?
> Know'st thou it?
> Thither, O thither
> My dearest and kindest, with thee would I go.[253]

The two stanzas which follow conclude with an address to 'my guide and my guardian' and finally to 'Father!' Only when we have read the song, free standing as though it represented an interlude or a preface to what follows, are we told that

it was sung the next morning by Mignon and heard by Wilhelm. The song retains a disembodied quality; the archetypal needs and desires of Wilhelm and Mignon find expression through her voice. Beyond the eroticism of Wilhelm's interest in Mignon, affirmed by the riddle of her gender which captivated him from the start, there is a metaphysical dimension to the attraction of this vulnerable theatre child, captured by this song. She embodies overwhelming longing, the desire for arcadia, the perfect homeland from which she imagines she was stolen and to which Wilhelm yearns to travel both on his account and with her.

Seen in this light children were displaced inhabitants of Arcadia, 'the land where the lemon-trees bloom', pastoral and idyllic, standing outside time and history; their naïveté held power to heal the fretful adult, their innocence could bring beatitude. Goethe's appraisal of the child typified a Romantic vision shared across Europe, in Britain expressed most famously in Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality'. It was a view inherited by later writers, amongst them Ruskin who attributed reverence of the child to Christianity, declaring that 'the sanctity of womanhood worshipped in the Madonna, and the sanctity of childhood in unity with that of Christ, became the light of every honest hearth, and the joy of every pure and chastened soul.'[254] Reviewing the representation of children in the literature and visual art of his century, he prized the emergence of 'child benediction' from the 'Cotter's Saturday Night', through the village children in novels by Mary Russell Mitford which, altogether more pagan, 'brought back to us the hues of Fairy Land,' until:

> at last the charm is felt in London itself, – on pilgrimage in whose suburbs you find the Little Nells and boy David Copperfields, and in the heart of it, Kit's baby brother at Astley's, indenting his cheek with an oyster-shell to the admiration of all beholders; till at last, bursting out like one of the sweet Surrey fountains, all dazzling and pure, you have the radiance and innocence of reinstated infant divinity showered again among the flowers of English meadows by Mrs. Allingham and Kate Greenaway.[255]

Ruskin's history of the representation of childhood here is sketchy and unstable. He omitted, for example, Wordsworth's vision of the child 'trailing clouds of glory', and elided Christianity with paganism by superimposing christchild and fairy. What predominates, however, is a sense of the child as incarnation of transcendence, its body a manifestation of a divine or supernatural element within humanity.

The idea of an unfallen sensibility particular to childhood and made available to adults through the agency of children was widely exploited. The literature of the nineteenth century is rich with versions of this figure, such as Dickens' Amy in *Little Dorrit* (1857), George Eliot's Eppie in *Silas Marner* (1861) and Hodgson

Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1885). Wilde announced that his first collection of short stories, *The Happy Prince*, was written 'partly for children, and partly for those who have kept the childlike faculties of wonder and joy, and who find in simplicity a subtle strangeness'. [256] Pater adduced Winckelmann's easy relationship with children as evidence of something 'simple and primeval' in his nature,[257] and he celebrated the preternatural sensitivity of childhood in his story 'The Child in the House' (1878). Pater's lyricism about the sensibility of his child hero Florian was motivated, Ann C. Colley has argued, by a nostalgic yearning to recover his own childhood through fantasised recollection. She suggests that Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) and Ruskin's *Praeterita* (1885) use similar strategies to exhibit personal nostalgia.[258] Pater's view of childhood was influenced by his interpretation of Wordsworth, of whom he wrote:

> It was in this mood that he conceived those oft-reiterated regrets for a half-ideal childhood, when the relics of Paradise still clung about the soul – a childhood, as it seemed, full of the fruits of old age, lost for all, in a degree, in the passing away of the youth of the world, lost for each one, over again, in the passing away of actual youth.[259]

Here Pater was exercising his supreme ability to superimpose the metaphysical and the temporal, and to establish personal correspondence between myth and the mundane.

Stevenson, like Pater, indulged in theorising which enhanced everyday experience with a sense of mythical grandeur and significance, but his method was more directly linked to the theatre. His 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children' (1874) offers an introduction to the role of the spectator in relation to juvenile performance, and yields some insight to the ideological foundation of the taste for the child actor. Stevenson described his pleasure on overseeing two separate spontaneous performances by children. The first is a dance 'in the drawing-room of an hotel in France':

> One of the ladies led the ring, and I can recall her as a model of accomplished, cultured movement. Two little girls, about eight years old, were her pupils; that is an age of great interest in girls, when natural grace comes to its consummation of justice and purity....But the best part of it was yet to come. For after the others had desisted, the musician still continued to play, and a little button between two and three years old came out into the cleared space and began to figure before us as the music prompted.... She had an admirable musical ear; and each new melody, as it struck in her a new humour, suggested wonderful combinations and variations of movement. Now it would be a dance with which she would suit the music, now rather an appropriate pantomime, and now a

> mere string of disconnected attitudes. But whatever she did, she did it with the same verve and gusto. The spirit of the air seemed to possess her like a passion; and you could see her struggling to find expression for the beauty that was in her against the inefficacy of the dull, half-informed body. Though her footing was uneven, and her gestures often ludicrously helpless, still the spectacle was not merely amusing.... It was grace in the making.[260]

Stevenson established a scale of evolving maturity, in which the 'little button,' not yet designated as fully human, represented the most inspired and intuitive performer, alive with 'passion' and seemingly unaware of her audience. The 'little girls' represented the midpoint. Their physical responses to music combined the discipline of the schooled adult with the ineptitude of the impassioned child, and competition between learning and instinct was visibly manifest in the unevenness of their performance.

Before developing the analysis of what he observed, Stevenson added a second and even less formal example. He recalled how he watched a skipping game amongst 'common children' in Hampstead. Once the skipping was well under way, he remembered how:

> the elder girl took in her arms a fair-haired baby, while the others held the rope for her, turned and gyrated, and went in and out over it lightly, with a quiet regularity that seemed as if it might go on for ever. Somehow, incongruous as was the occupation, she reminded me of Italian Madonnas.[261]

Stevenson's interpretation of the children at play formalises their activity, giving it shape and meaning of which the performers themselves are unaware. He swiftly changed the genre from sacred drama to 'broad farce':

> The funniest little girl, with a mottled complexion and a big, damaged nose, and looking for all the world like any dirty, broken-nosed doll in a nursery lumber-room, came forward to take her turn.[262]

This girl was ungainly and uncertain, keen to join in but afraid of doing so, '[t]here never was anything at once so droll and so pathetic.' Watching the performance, Stevenson was himself at play: it is his vision which transforms the elder girl into a Madonna, a figure touched by the divine, and the last girl into a doll, an inanimate plaything. He dwelt on his responses:

> Much as I had enjoyed the grace of the older girls, it was now just as it had been before in France, and the clumsiness of the child seemed to have a significance and a sort of beauty of its own, quite above this grace of the others in power to

> affect the heart.... [W]hen little broken-nose began her pantomime of indecision I grew excited. There was something quite fresh and poignant in the delight I took in her imperfect movements. I remember, for instance, that I moved my own shoulders, as if to imitate her; really, I suppose, with an inarticulate wish to help her out.[263]

Looking on, Stevenson was engaged much more intensely by imperfection than perfection. It offered him the imaginative opportunity to intervene and correct, rather than placing him in a position of passive admiration. The imperfect performances did not merely put on a show, they also demonstrated a disjunction between what the performer achieved and what she envisioned. The visible difference between what the child imagined and what she actually projected is reminiscent of the more formal example of the four year-old Charlotte Cibber parading in her father's wig and believing that she had fooled her audience. The audience is captivated by the lack of histrionic awareness, charmed by naïveté. Stevenson's confession that he wished 'to help her out' illustrates one way in which techniques of this kind could affect the audience. His own body moved unconsciously, to copy her gestures of innocence, to incarnate the mood for himself. But his 'wish to help her out', to become the artificer in the scene, even to seduce and so destroy the picture that enchanted him, suggests a more sophisticated adult response.

In the concluding paragraphs of this essay Stevenson offered some general principles to account for his pleasure at these informal performances by children, and revealed the ideological foundation of his views:

> There is a sincerity, a directness, an impulsive truth, about their free gestures that shows through all imperfection, and it is to us as a reminiscence of primitive festivals and the Golden Age.[264]

The link which Stevenson asserts between children, primitive festivals and the Golden Age is rooted in eighteenth-century thought, stretching well beyond Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' adduced by Pater as the classical source for this configuration of ideas. Gustav Jahoda has recently explored the early sciences of social evolution and anthropology for their promulgation of these notions, while Juliet Dusinberre has examined the impact of such thinking on the nineteenth-century development of child psychology.[265]

According to Jahoda, Herbert Spencer was amongst the most prominent theorists in social evolution who stated:

> The saying that the savage has the mind of a child with the passions of a man...possesses a deeper meaning than appears. There is a genetic relationship between the two natures such that...we may regard the co-ordination of them in the child as fairly representing the co-ordination in primitive man.

> The intellectual traits of the uncivilized...may now be recapitulated while observing that they are traits recurring in the children of the civilized.
>
> Infancy and nursery-life, show us an absorption in sensations and perceptions, akin to that which characterizes the savage. In pulling to pieces its toys, in making mud-pies, in gazing at each new thing or person, the child exhibits a predominant perceptiveness with comparatively little reflectiveness.
>
> There is, again, an obvious parallelism in the mimetic tendency. Children are ever dramatizing the lives of adults; and savages, along with other mimicries, similarly dramatize the actions of their civilized visitors.[266]

Biologically, it was believed that the embryological development of the members of any species repeated, or recapitulated, the evolution of the entire genus.[267] In terms of sociology it was maintained that there was a prevailing likeness between the consciousness of the child and that of primitive man. Therefore the child, like the savage, stood for an expression of the childhood of the race, from which the mature adult, and civilized society, evolved.

This latter, evolutionary, dimension of such thinking helped to fashion Stevenson's ideas about what was communicated by 'the movements of young children' and the way in which he contrasted them with the movements of older children and adults. It explains why he saw in the young 'a reminiscence of primitive festivals and the Golden Age.' It underpins the transcendental impulse of his imagination which transforms a girl skipping while holding a baby into an image of an Italian Madonna, and equally informs his denial of the full humanity of the 'little button' and the broken-nosed 'doll' both of whom seem mysteriously animated by forces beyond their full control. The parallelism between so-called primitive man and the child also informs Stevenson's assertion that 'we have an irrational indulgence for small folk... we cannot overcome our astonishment that they should be able to move at all, and are interested in their movements somewhat as we are interested in the movements of a puppet.' Stevenson's conceptual construction of the sensibility of the child transforms it into a puppet-like creature, moved by 'passion', possessed by 'spirit', manifesting a Golden Age communion with the divine which the adult can recognise but no longer incarnate. This results in his dual image of the child as simultaneously less than human, the doll, and more than human, the Madonna. The 'little button' pleased Stevenson because she showed him 'grace in the making', an emblem of evolutionary transition.

In the final paragraph of the essay Stevenson claimed that the pleasure which he derived from the observation of children at play 'turns... upon consideration not really aesthetic'. He stated that it cannot 'be preserved by any plastic art'. 'Art,' he asserted, 'is powerless to do more than stereotype what is ungraceful' so losing 'all pathos and humanity'. He concluded, 'these humorous little ones must go away into the limbo of beautiful things that are not beautiful for art, there to wait a more

perfect age before they sit for their portraits.' Yet Stevenson's assertion that the plastic arts were powerless to capture the complex pleasure that the observation of young children at play could yield does not rule out the possibility that the theatre may afford precisely that aesthetic opportunity. Stevenson himself used metaphors from theatre, such as 'pantomime', 'farce' and 'puppet' to describe the spontaneous performances which he watched, and even analysed his own responses as though he were a member of a formal audience. Theatre could engage the audience in just the ways that Stevenson discovered in himself, and the ideology of 'recapitulation' which informed Stevenson's vision was one element that fashioned Victorian taste for child performers.

The yoking of images of the savage and the Golden Age in the figure of the child resulted in a particular strand of representation. In this context children could signify the dangerous anarchy of primeval demonic forces. They were monstrous, uncanny harbingers of evil, such as the foundling Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Oscar Wilde's *Star Child* (1889). In the last decade of the nineteenth century the dichotomy can be seen in the contrasting depictions of children in *The Time Machine* (1895) where Wells presents the childish Eloi as beautiful, benign imbeciles in a dystopia, and in *The Turn of the Screw* (1897) where James exploits the angelic image of children to mask inscrutable malevolence.

Given that the 'mimetic tendency' of children was regarded as evidence for their kinship with the primitive, juveniles performing in the theatre were perpetually and inevitably demonstrating this relationship. The theatre child was a corporeal representation of the savage. The figurative significations of its literary siblings were brought to life, and animated a Victorian appetite for child actors. Pastoral or demonic, sometimes excitingly pastoral and demonic like Ellen Terry's Puck, many roles scripted for children during the nineteenth century expressed aspects of this configuration. The anarchic, monstrous and threatening child-savage was translated into the figure of the precocious child, and was most safely contained within the genre of comedy.[268] Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Spoiled Child* (1790), W. T. Moncrieff's *Home for the Holidays* (1828) and Edward Lancaster's *The Manager's Daughter* (1836) were enduringly popular illustrations of this type during the nineteenth century. All were 'sedulous apes' who mimicked their elders.

The pastoral child was more complex and variable in its representation. Its power to heal, sanctify or simply to correct, was demonstrated in plays such as W. S. Gilbert's *Dan'l Druce* (1876), *Drink* (1879),[269] *The Silver King* (1882), *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *Editha's Burglar* (1887). The related power of the arcadian child to remind audiences of mortality by pointing towards immortality is captured by the representation of the dying child and was nowhere more popular than in the frequent dramatisations of Mrs Henry Wood's novel *East Lynne* (1861), first staged in London in 1863.

Spencerian theories of social evolution linking children with primitives merged with a cultural tendency that predated the Victorians, to treat children as 'miniature adults'.[270] A boy could be addressed as 'my little man' as Charles Kingsley constructs the child auditor of *The Water Babies* (1863); girls were 'little women' as Louisa Alcott reminded her readers in 1868. But as François Cellier, producing *Pirates of Penzance* discovered in 1884, they also belonged to the more uncanny and mysterious class of 'little people'. Children on stage continued to be represented as (or to represent) miniature adults long after the decline of this view in other spheres of British culture.[271]

Miniatures and Little People

In part this was a survival of eighteenth-century convention, following David Garrick's partial adaptation of *Gulliver's Travels* as *Lilliput* in 1757 in which Garrick as Gulliver was the only adult in a cast of children. His prologue draws attention to the fantastic transformation of scale afforded by his production, the 'microcosmic miracle' which Susan Stewart brilliantly argues is part of the sustaining appeal of miniatures.[272] It was also explicit about the political and satirical opportunities made available by this alienating deployment of children:

> Now to your sight these puppets I'll produce
> Which may, if rightly heeded, turn to Use;
> Puppets not made of Wood, and play'd with Wires,
> But Flesh and Blood, and full of strange Desires,
> So Strange – you'll scarce believe me should I tell -
> For Giant Vices may in Pigmies dwell.
> Beware you lay not to the Conjurer's Charge,
> That these in Miniatures, are you in large:
> To You these little Folks have no Relation,
> As diff'rent in their Manners, as their Nation.[273]

The social satire of Swift's narrative becomes shockingly explicit when children deliver such lines as are spoken by Lady Flimnap (played by Miss Simpson) to Gulliver:

> I must confess to your Lordship, tho' I have some children, I have not seen one of them these Six Months; and tho' I am married to one of the greatest Men in the Kingdom, and, as they say, one of the handsomest, yet I don't imagine that I shall ever throw myself into a Fit of Sickness, by too severe an Attention to him or his Family.[274]

Revivals of Garrick's *Lilliput* continued well into the nineteenth century. A playbill for Saturday 13 December 1817 for the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane announced:

> Performed for the third time, A Dramatic Romance, in two Acts, with new dresses and decorations called LILLIPUT, Founded on the Piece of that name, written by the late David Garrick, Esq. and interspersed with Songs, Duets, Glees, and Choruses. To be (with the exception of the character of Gulliver) wholly performed by YOUNG LADIES (between the ages of six and thirteen years).... The New Dramatic Romance of Lilliput, Having from the uncommonly surprizing Talents of the Children, excited not only the most rapturous Cheers, but astonishment of the Audience, will be repeated this evening and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday next.

The convention of using children to represent Lilliputions in stage versions of *Gulliver's Travels* outlived revivals of Garrick's version, as new writers and managements adapted the fable. Marie Wilton appeared as the 'Emperor of Lilliput – a very tiny monarch' in a pantomime of *Gulliver's Travels* at the Theatre Royal, Manchester.[275] In 1876 the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel presented over two hundred children in *Gulliver's Travels; or Harlequin Prince Rover and the Good Fairy Tricksy Wicksy*.[276] H. J. Byron's version of Swift's satire opened at the Gaiety on 26 December 1879 for matinees only. The programme described the show as a 'Comic Operatic Spectacular Extravaganza' in five Acts and twelve Tableaux. The journey transported Gulliver and the audience from Plymouth harbour in Act I to The Golden Age in Act V, via the child-populated lands of Lilliput in Act II (where money rather than sex was the cause of complaint) and the Grand Ballet between Acts IV and V in which the child star Constance Gilchrist featured as 'Tiddywiddi'.

The theatrical embodiment of the citizens of Lilliput by children is a specific example of the stage child as miniature adult, but the idea of performing children as 'Lilliputions' came to supply critics with a more general metaphor for children on the Victorian stage.[277] At the same time the astonishing career of the juvenile performer Master Betty, who specialised in adult roles, generated a living fable to rival the metaphoric significance of Lilliput and to disseminate the notion of child as miniature adult.

In 1803 the twelve year-old Master Betty (William Henry West Betty, 1791-1874) created a sensation in Dublin as young Norval in Home's tragedy *Douglas*. Following this 'every one was curious to see his Romeo, for it was felt that it must assuredly be impossible for the boy to portray a passion which he could not yet have experienced. But he did...'[278] He quickly became known and marketed as 'The Infant Roscius'. He toured Ireland and Scotland. In Glasgow he was complimented by Home on the best performance of young Norval ever seen. Venturing

south to an engagement in Birmingham at the elder Macready's theatre and then to London, he first appeared in Covent Garden on 1 December 1804 as Selim in Brown's *Barbarossa*. Master Betty was such a serious draw that crowds outside the theatre had to be specially policed, owing to sheer weight of numbers attempting to get a view of the protégé. He became an overnight celebrity; within a week his life story was being sold on the streets, and the King and Prince of Wales had requested introductions. After appearing with even greater success at the rival theatre Drury Lane, he set off on a fortnight's tour of the provinces which netted him some £2000. In 1805 he played Hamlet in London for the first time and Pitt adjourned parliament to allow MPs to attend.

Master Betty withdrew from the stage in 1808 and matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1810. His re-entry to the stage in 1812 marked the beginning of a mediocre adult career: the roles with which he had captivated audiences as a child seemed unremarkable when he performed them as an adult. More compelling as a miniature, he retired finally in 1824 and spent the next fifty years living comfortably on the fortune amassed during his five years of infant fame. Other children marketed as 'The Infant Roscius' after Master Betty's departure include 'Master Brooke, the Hibernian Roscius' (G. V. Brooke) for whom *Home for the Holidays* was written, and who appeared at the Victoria Theatre and at Sadler's Wells under Phelps in the 1830s,[279] and Stanislaus Calhaem who, from the ages of five to twelve played leading roles in legitimate dramas across the provinces, finally reaching London in 1856 when he played Leontes in *Perdita* at the Lyceum. Unlike Master Betty, Calhaem never stepped down from the stage.

Despite rivals and imitators, Master Betty remains the most famous child star of this period. Celebrated for playing adult roles, depictions of Master Betty show him as a diminutive replica of an adult figure. At the height of the Romantic period, a major source of his appeal was the sense of marvel, noted by Armstrong, that a child could express 'passion' beyond his experience. The phenomenon of Master Betty seemed to confirm the Romantic view of children as agents of divine genius, animated by original powers they could not control and did not understand. Images of Master Betty show the boy dwarfed by the scale of his surroundings.[280] The smaller his size, the greater the theatrical effect. Master Betty takes his place as the first 'old child' of the nineteenth century, a living emblem of the eighteenth-century trope of the child wise beyond its years. A familiar figure in literature and on the stage during the nineteenth century, including Paul Dombey, and the Midshipmite from *Patience*, the last Victorian embodiment of the type is the tragically self-destructive Father Time in *Jude the Obscure* (1896).[281]

Edward Stirling published a parody of the craze for Master Betty in his history of Drury Lane Theatre:

Jeu-d'esprit on precocious children's acting, directed to Master Betty's performances:

'On Monday next will be presented
"THE TEMPEST,"
in which, by particular desire, the part of Caliban will be performed for her own benefit by
MISS BIDDY SUCKLING,
an infant, not yet quite four years old! and who appeared in the same character, almost two years ago, with such universal applause at the
THEATRE ROYAL, DUBLIN.
N.B.- The Infant Caliban will introduce, for that night only, a song in character and accompanied by herself, to which will be added
"LOVE A LA MODE."
The part of Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm by the child.
'N.B.- The parts of Coriolanus, King Henry the Eighth, and Shylock, have been some time in rehearsal by Miss Biddy, and will be performed by her as soon as the daily *Bulletin* shall declare her sufficiently recovered from her hooping-cough – a disorder which the public must have perceived is rather friendly than otherwise to her performance of Caliban, in which she will therefore continue during the remainder of the season....
'The manager further respectfully acquaints the public, that in consequence of the immense damage and calamitous accidents which have arisen from the unexampled pressure of the crowd on the child's nights, skilful surgeons will henceforth be regularly stationed in all parts of the house.
'*Vivant Rex et Regina.*'[282]

Stirling's sense of the ludicrous aspect anticipates Jerome K. Jerome's satirical treatment of 'the stage child' in 1889. But by casting the infant as Caliban, Stirling emphasises the monstrosity both of the performing child and of the taste to applaud her. He compounds this by naming her 'suckling' like a pig and by trumpeting a disease, whooping-cough, as a virtue of her performance: the public and its darling are mocked together in this satire. Stirling also suggests that, like Caliban in *The Tempest*, the precocious child actor is loved, feared, abhorred, and finally abandoned. If Master Betty was an inspired genius, then his alter ego Biddy Suckling was a freakish monster. Original and distorted copy illuminate one another.

Stirling's parody exposes the monstrous material out of which the child genius is fashioned and in doing so he reveals a force which drives an appetite for the child actor when it is viewed as a miniature adult. If we agree with Susan Stewart that 'there are no miniatures in nature',[283] it follows that the classification of children as miniature adults affords culture a way to contain and dominate the natural.

Diminution does not lessen the child's monstrosity, nor its potency as an agent of primordial anarchy, but brings these features within the boundaries of civilisation and makes the child available for reinterpretation as 'genius'. These two facets of the stage child, monster and genius, are illustrated in Henry Morley's comments about a double bill of *Richard III* and *The Young Couple* at the St James's Theatre designed to star the Bateman sisters in 1851:

> Little girls respectively of eight and six, who are both pretty and clever, but whose appearance in an act of 'Richard the Third'...is a nuisance by no means proportioned to the size of its perpetrators. No doubt there is talent shown in it; and it is curious to hear such small imps of the nursery speak so fluently, and strutting about easily, repeat a well-taught lesson with such wonderful aptitude. But this is the feeling of a moment, and nothing is left but the wearisome absurdity of such big words in such little mouths.[284]

'Imps' in Shakespeare's work, yet Morley was warmly approving of the girls' performances in Scribe's *The Young Couple*. This play had been written by Scribe to showcase the talents of the French child prodigy, Leontine Fay (born 1810) to enhance her reputation as a genius which Scribe himself had carefully fashioned. He had started the rumour that Leontine had written his play *Petite Soeur* in 1821 to dazzle the French public with her talents. Her repertoire and her reputation were opportunistically acquired by later generations of child stars. Morley elaborates on the Bateman girls' success in her role:

> here the little girls are thoroughly amusing. They play a couple of children of the old French noblesse, married by order of the Court, who, without knowing what love is, are supposed to imitate in a pretty piquant childish way such of its symptoms as they have had opportunity of watching in the case of their two grown-up cousins. The least of the children, who had strutted and stamped in *Richard III*, plays the boy; and to see her in a bag-wig and knee-breeches, and with a better sense of broad humour than she had shown of tragedy, represent a boy attempting little freedoms of the meaning of which he has not the remotest notion...is irresistibly comical.[285]

Genius is manifest by the expression of feelings unknown to the demonstrator, and it is not lessened by its comic effect. But it sits cheek by jowl with mimicry, aping, and the grotesque.

The representation of child as miniature adult is a physical analogy of its classification as mentally precocious. But while the cultural purpose of these two modes of viewing the stage child may be similar, the theatrical effects and connotations which follow are different. Stewart develops her argument about the cultural sig-

nificance of miniatures by demonstrating how the utilitarian function of the original gives way to decorative value in its tiny copy. Illustrating her case with the example of the Orkney chair, she argues that while the life-size chair is laboriously hand-crafted and made for domestic use, its toy copy is machine-made and serves as a decorative and sentimentally conceived souvenir of rustic and more innocent times. She asserts 'the movement is from work to play, from utility to aesthetics, from ends to means.'[286] In a similar way it can be argued that the deployment of vast numbers of children in the pantomime chorus facilitated a sentimentalised picture of harsh social realities.

Choreography and Costume

From the perspective of stage management, a host of well-drilled children creates a dynamic stage picture, allowing the display of variety within choreographic unity far more effectively than a similar chorus of adults. This is primarily because there are simply more bodies within the stage space when children are deployed. A company of children therefore offers a director greater freedom to generate astonishing spectacles of apparently effortless energy and scale than a company of adults drilled in the same way. But the diminutive stature of children, doubly dwarfed by the huge auditorium space, affords further and more complex carnivalesque opportunities. Alienated from reality by their size, children could represent with fantastic impunity aspects of the adult domains of work and politics. However, as the following examples suggest, the ideological force of such displays worked to reinforce dominant political mores while seeming to subvert them.

When Queen Victoria saw the pantomime version of *The Miller and his Men* at the Princess's Theatre in 1854, she enjoyed the 'very pretty' evolutions of the eighty children, 'none older than 6 and some only 3, as the Scots Fusiliers', and she noted that 'Lord Aberdeen, Lord J. Russell, and Lord Palmerston were represented.'[287] The Queen was delighted by the diminutive army rather than offended by it, and equally thrilled to identify contemporary political figures in this translated form. So close to the outbreak of the Crimean War later in 1854 this use of children as miniatures suggested that military strength might be thought of as child's play. The war itself heralded the resignation of Lord Aberdeen as Prime Minister of the coalition government, and the assumption of the role by the seventy year-old Lord Palmerston.

A similar military trope was presented in Blanchard's *Sinbad the Sailor* at the Drury Lane pantomime of 1882-83 when there was:

> an army of boys and girls, fitted out and accoutered in the most wonderful little uniforms ever devised. They represent the army of Egypt under Sir Garnet Wolseley, in fighting trim, complete and accurate to every haversack and button. The children in the audience will be wild with delight when they see them,

> and demand, I should say, their cast-off uniforms after Christmas for the nursery.[288]

Indoctrination for imperial success started young, in the most unexpected contexts and in seemingly the most harmless of guises, while adults could enjoy the display of easy-seeming might and order. Perhaps more insidiously, even when the subject-matter of what the children represented was not military, it was commonplace for the army to supply the metaphor for descriptions of their stage performance. A reviewer of the Drury Lane *Cinderella* in 1883 announced that amongst its chief features was:

> first and foremost, the wonderful procession of fairy-tales: which should be the talk of the schoolroom and the nursery for some time to come, and is remarkable not only for the richness of its appointments, but for the marvellous skill with which, under Mr. Charles Harris, the little army is marshalled on and off the stage.[289]

Pantomime children could represent the world of work in an equally idealised form. The reviewer for the *St. James' Gazette* of George Conquest's pantomime at the Surrey Theatre, *Jack and Jill, and the Well on the Hill* in the same season noted 'much is made out of a scene in which an army of diminutive workpeople 'run up' a house on the stage with even more rapidity than the contemporary jerry-builder.'[290] William Mitchell, investigating the working conditions of pantomime children in Glasgow during the early 1880s, records his admiration for the rehearsal of a routine that represented various kinds of manual labour:

> the chief feature was the drill, and it was perfectly amazing to see the beautiful and intricate figures the children described as they marched, and intermarched, and countermarched, and advanced, and retired, and threw their little arms and limbs into the most graceful postures. Some represented reapers and shepherdesses, and the various movements with reaping-hooks, rakes, and crooks, all accompanied by suitable music, were very artistically rendered. By a very slight change of costume the children were transformed into tiny blacksmiths, and very harmonious blacksmiths they became. One handled the tongs, while on real anvils others swung in very tradesman-like fashion little hammers of iron, all chanting at the same time a melodious refrain which rhythmically harmonized with their tinkling strokes, affording altogether a novel and interesting spectacle.[291]

The illustration accompanying this text in Mitchell's book depicts two out of the three blacksmiths as well-dressed girls, suggesting a further aspect of the alien-

ation and translated state of these workers. Such displays were designed to present the audience with the familiar world made strange, to present beauty, felicity and ease where normally there was dirt, hardship and effort. Displays such as these enacted a double domination. First, the monstrous aspect of the child was harnessed, and this in turn was used to beautify the world of work. Stewart's contention that the decorative value of the miniature supervenes upon its use-value permits the view that the Victorian pantomime chorus turned children from dangerous savages into fascinating toys and decorations, returning them once more as creatures of the arcadian pastoral.

Pantomime children were used to populate the fantasy world of the narrative which often began in a realm of darkness where difficulty had to be overcome, before a transition to light and the triumph of good. Juveniles provided the swarms of tiny goblins, giant spiders, monkeys and evil spirits required to animate a threatening supernatural world, before changing into flower fairies and friendly sprites. Often their performances stole the show, illustrated by a review of *Mother Goose* and the *Enchanted Beauty* at Drury Lane in 1880–81:

> I have personally never seen anything better in a pantomime than the Toy Scene – 'Mother Goose's Farm in Lowther Arcadia.' The toys are admirably contrived – the animals from Noah's Ark especially so. A dance of flaxen-haired wax dolls by the children of the National Training School of Dancing is simply delightful, and scarcely less so is a Watteau dance by the same children in the Dresden Ballet.[292]

Alternatively, the hostile critic of *Red Riding Hood* at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1883-84, admitted that there were 'some pretty effects', and picked out as:

> Prettiest and most attractive of all, however, are the Kate Greenaway choruses – one of Little Boy Blues, one of tiny Rosie Posies, one of Johnny Stouts. These last, in flat caps with tassels and yellow corduroys buttoned up tight under their armpits, their slates at their backs, a solemn quaintness their peculiar attribute, are simply irresistible.[293]

The twin arts of choreography and costume conspired to maintain the idyll, and to keep the sense of effort and disorder glimpsed through Stirling's memory of working back stage on *Jack and Gill* at Drury Lane in 1854 firmly out of sight and mind. He recalls that there was a farmyard scene, in which 'children represented turkeys, ducks, geese, etc. One evening a small boy – a goose, came crying to me, without his bird's legs, telling a pitiful tale against one 'Billy Brown' (a turkey-cock), who had 'whacked him', and 'stole his legs.' Justice was done to the goose, and the fighting turkey-cock had his comb cut.[294]

Such a solution to dressing-room squabbles would have been anathema later in the century to the costume designer Carl Wilhelm, every detail of whose work was carefully planned for its stage effects and contribution to the complete stage picture. Wilhelm asserted in an article 'Art in the Ballet' that the functions of pantomime for an adult audience, the subduing of reason and the stimulation of sensory pleasure, made powerful demands on his area of expertise:

> It will, I think, be readily granted that this class of entertainment emphatically demands a far greater exercise of ingenuity and freshness of invention than any more serious appeal to a cultured audience; inasmuch as the reasoning powers and sympathies being less stimulated by ballet and spectacle, the appeal to the more superficial sense of sight is the more direct, imperative, and absorbing than when the stage situation insists on a due recognition of – let us say – the heroine's fortunes rather than her frocks.[295]

He states that 'colour...is emphatically the life-blood of my work', and that 'in a ballet or spectacle, the play of colour in the dresses constitutes the dominant feature.'[296] He arranges the colours of chorus and supernumeraries 'to accentuate or to lead up to' the costume of the heroine, and approaches costume design as an exercise in large-scale pictorial composition.[297] His account of how he solved practical artistic problems indicates the extent to which children supplied a special kind of resource. Wilhelm remembers:

> casting about for the best method of representing, on an extended scale, the gossamer plumage of the bird of paradise; this latter was a poser for a time in the Drury Lane Pantomime scene, 'The Kingdom of the Birds,'...until it occurred to me to try the effect of a mass of strips of fine ivory silk gauze, deepening to yellow, as in the real feathers, and I was rewarded with complete success: the effect, seen across the footlights, of the floating fairy fabric being remarkable in its absolute identity of resemblance. For the humming birds in the same scene, played by children, I found specially made spangles an excellent substitute for the iridescent lustre of these feathered gems.[298]

Wilhelm found 'flowers...particularly fascinating subjects for costume adaptation,' and reproduced a picture of a child's 'Daffodil' costume, from the Ballet of the Bell Flowers in Oscar Barrett's pantomime of *Dick Whittington*.[299] Wilhelm's discourse presents the child as a kind of blank canvas, stating:

> the little 'Daffodil' affords an instance of the treatment of silken petals akin to the Lily-of-the-Valley leaf mentioned above; and the deep yellow underdress, with its fullness arranged to fall into the ragged border, represented the flower very fairly.[300]

The individual child has become invisible, absorbed by the crowd and the colour harmonies of its scenic context.

These transformations of scale and identity participate in larger Victorian projects to dominate and subdue nature. The theatrical conceit depends on the simultaneous display of child and flower. Superimposed they point the adult audience towards recovery of the lost world of arcadia and the particular fusion of child with flower was a common trope in the late nineteenth century. Oscar Wilde's Selfish Giant declared of his revivified garden, 'I have many beautiful flowers...but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all.'[301] 'Childhood,' Max Beerbohm asserted in a review of *The Snowman* at the Lyceum in 1899, had come to be regarded as 'the perfect flower of human existence' and 'children,' Alice Meynell declared 'are so flower-like that it is always a little fresh surprise to see them blooming in winter.'[302]

While Beerbohm attributes the movement that transformed children from subjects of the cautionary tale into features of exquisite pastoral decoration to the work of Meynell herself, Kate Greenaway and R. L. Stevenson, a groundbreaking contribution to this cultural shift was the 'children's pantomime' *Little Goody Two-Shoes, or Harlequin and Little Boy Blue* at the Adelphi Theatre in 1876. This pantomime, scripted by Blanchard, featured an exclusively juvenile cast and followed the traditional mould of an opening drama and Harlequinade. Loosely based on the cautionary tale published by John Newberry in 1765, *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*, Blanchard incorporates nursery rhyme material and an original May Day scenario to oust the wicked adults of the traditional fable by the shining example of the florally decorative children. It was immediately pronounced 'the pantomime of the season', heralded a spate of all-child productions, and catapulted several members of its cast into immediate stardom.[303] Five years later it was remembered by Leopold Wagner in his history of pantomime as 'one of the chief attractions of London' in the winter of 1876, and the unique vitality of the production was such that he had to remind his readers that children's pantomimes, featuring an exclusively juvenile cast, were 'not by any means a novelty.'[304]

Children's Pantomimes *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, Adelphi (1876)

Little Goody Two-Shoes was a pioneering initiative by the Adelphi manager F. B. Chatterton, who commissioned the combined skills of 'an old boy' for the libretto and the children's choreographer John Cormack who 'invented and arranged' all the ballets and general action of the piece. The script is a revision of the pantomime which Blanchard had supplied to Drury Lane in 1862–63, in which John Cormack had performed as one of two Harlequins. Scenery at the Adelphi was by Frederick Lloyd, music by Edwin Ellis. After a private view on 20 December 1876,

Little Goody Two-Shoes opened to the public for 'morning performances' at 2.30 pm on Saturday 23 December and from Boxing Day throughout the Christmas holidays. *The Daily Telegraph* announced on 21 December that 'this capital children's pantomime will be before a week is over the talk of London', and it remained on the bill at the Adelphi until April. By February it was placed on the evening programme, starting at 6.45 pm to precede Boucicault's *Shaughraun* which started at 8.45 pm; in March it preceded *Colleen Bawn*. Matinees on Wednesdays and Saturdays were performed throughout the entire post-Christmas run.

The play opens in the village school of Goody Two-Shoes, in the early morning. Little Boy Blue arrives with love tokens for her. They sing and dance together before kissing and parting in preparation for the arrival of the 'scholars' for their lessons:

> 'Tis nearly nine – my school will soon begin;
> Oh what a fluster he has put me in.
> There! now, I think, I look a little more
> Like a schoolmistress than I did before.
>
> *Turns round and presents a more matronly appearance -The clock strikes nine – Goody takes her place at the desk with large rod before her. Scholars arrive. Boys and Girls enter, one by one, each with a bob and a curtsey. Lastly,* LITTLE TOMMY GREEN, *the thin wicked boy, and* LITTLE JOHNNY STOUT, *the fat good natured one. They arrange themselves on forms. Girls on one side, Boys on the other.* [305]

They learn their alphabet, start on sewing lessons, when a stir is created by the quarrel between Little Tommy Green and Little Johnny Stout over the cat in the well. Nursery rhyme discord between the 'wicked' boy and the 'good natured' one prepares the mood for the arrival of the villains who appear in their midst to claim rent from Goody Two-Shoes. She scorns him, sends the children off to their new schoolroom, the Bramble Brake in the forest, and sends her pigeon with a message to Little Boy Blue. The scene ends with '*general uproar*. SIR TIMOTHY [GRIPE] *and his Man are pelted with books and slates. A real breaking up!*'[306] Throughout this pantomime the nastiness of Blanchard's villains, played by boys, Master Napier Barry and Master H. Wilson, is undercut by their comic treatment. Their aura of threat is retained by purely inter-textual methods: implicit reference is made to the real power of Gripe and Graspall to frighten Goody Two-Shoes and to disrupt her life in John Newberry's 1765 text, and in Blanchard's version of 1862 when they were played by men (Tom Matthews and Mr Shaw). At the same time, adult audiences familiar with melodrama could recognise the stock character of the ruthless and scheming rent collector. It is further possible that Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman were inspired by Blanchard's collocation of rent collector and

schoolchildren to restore the fierce villainy of the situation in their widely praised play *The Silver King*.[307]

Scene II opens to the sound of 'pastoral music' at a Hunting Lodge on the borders of the forest. This threshold location symbolises a balance of power between the rural virtue of Goody Two-Shoes whose domain is the forest, and her urban, capitalist enemies whose aggressive exploitation of nature is made visible by the Hunting Lodge. It is followed by a further retreat into the pastoral as Scene III opens in the '*Bramble-Brake, in the depths of the forest,*' and shows a '*Picturesque Glade*' into which '*Boys and Girls enter, with garlands, as if making their way through the wood.*' A duet of 'I know a Bank whereon the Wild Thyme Grows' is sung straight away ('*by the sisters* GOWARD'), followed by a clog dance by 'LITTLE QUEEN MAB, *disguised as* MASTER DOUBLE-SHUFFLE'. The forest location, the fairy song from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the florally decorated children, together assert the transformational magic of the sacred wood. The audience has been taken to the heart of arcadia, to learn the unconventional lessons of Goody's new school. The interlude described sets the fairy scene for action and with '*effects of sunset as the scene progresses*' the audience is taken deeper into a land of dreams, relinquishing the consciousness that comes with daylight. Tommy Green enters having been collecting wild birds' eggs. He explains immediately that 'I've blown them all'. Green, the hunter, is Gripe's representative in the pastoral idyll, an alignment that both diminishes Gripe's threat and magnifies Green's wickedness. The childish prankster and the adult villain have yet to be banished or transformed. Johnny Stout, laying out the picnic, chides Green for his cruelty. They quarrel as a comic duo, and Green continues his hunt for eggs in trees while trying to snatch food at the same time. Soon his branch breaks, and he falls to the ground clutching a nest. 'I told you so...' goads Johnny Stout. Tommy Green has a new idea for a game and calls:

> ...Hide-and-Seek!
> I haven't had a hiding all the week.
> When I cry 'Whoop,' the others all must follow,
> Now turn your heads, and wait till I say 'Hollow.'

Green hides up another tree and a:

> *lively game of Hide-and-Seek commences – the Children searching for him in vain –* GREEN *takes advantage of their absence by rapidly descending and taking a very large slice of bread and cheese, which* STOUT *has left, then hastily resumes his former position, Children return, and express astonishment that they have sought in vain.*[308]

The children in the audience are accommodated by the potential for call and response in this game, as a version of 'Look behind you!' is temptingly inscribed

here. Such participation would align them with the virtuous children of Goody's arcadia. Green climbs down from his hiding place quipping puns, and Goody Two-Shoes enters. She blesses their playfulness, reminds them that tomorrow is May Day and declares 'I will join your game': 'MUSIC – *A ring is formed, and a game commenced, when, in the midst of it,* GOOD NATURE *enters in her red cloak, as Dame Peabody.*'[309] The lights change to '*the glow of advanced sunset.*'[310] Goody sends the children home; Stout is the last to say goodbye:

JOHNY S.	Oh, please, mum, I don't like to leave you here,
	It looks so lonesome.
GOODY T.	I am safe – don't fear.
	Here we keep school, remember.
JOHNY S.	Yes, mum. Now
	All take your leaves, and don't forget your bough.[311]

The self-reflexive theatricality of these puns links tokens of the pastoral (leaf and bough) with the departure of the performing juveniles (leave and bow) to suggest how the children's transformational magic can spread beyond the confines of the stage. The children retire and Goody '*reposes on bank, arranging foliage before, so as to screen her from observation – Stage dark* – MUSIC'

The dark setting provides the context for Green's punishment and frames the ideological opposition between himself and Goody. He accidentally conjures up the Demon Envy and asks her to kill Goody's favourite bird, the cock robin. Finding that he is required to stay with Envy until the deed is done, decides 'Oh dear! I'm in for it – I'll cut and run.' Off he goes, vanquished and never to appear in the drama again. It is easier to banish Green's evil than to transform it. Good Nature appears as a fairy to chase away the Demon Envy, sings a good natured song and casts a spell: 'Flowers, unclose your eyes!/ Be animated, Nature! wake! arise!'[312]

Goody sings Edwin Ellis's first original musical composition of the piece, the 'Forget-Me-Not' song, with words by H. P. Gratton, father of Emily playing Goody Two-Shoes, and Master Harry playing Little Boy Blue, and is then introduced by May to her '*floral sisterhood*'. After meeting Cowslip, Primrose, Violet, Honeysuckle and Bluebell, 'NETTLE *thrusts herself impatiently forward*':

NETTLE.	You don't like me because I sting. Hollo!
	(*Shakes hands familiarly with* FORGET-ME-NOT.)
GOODY T.	The most uncultivated plant I know.
GOOD N.	These with the rest will now in wreaths combine,
	And show how they can turn, twist, twirl and twine.
	(*Grand Pas seul, by* LA PETITE CERITO, *and Ballet of Bouquets, on which, with Tableau, the Scene closes.*)[313]

The project of metamorphosis signalled from the beginning of this central scene is complete. The children have been changed to flowers, and the worst evil they can manifest is the bad manners of the 'uncultivated'.

The last scene opens on May Morning in '*Woodland Avenue, leading to Buttercup Mead*'. The action may no longer be set in the forest, but the rural virtue of Goody Two-Shoes still presides over the location. She is '*enthroned*' as the Queen of May. Her power assured in both material and metaphysical terms, it is safe to bring on the villains. Immediately Sir Timothy and two Gamekeepers enter,

> *one with a large packet under his arm, labelled 'Poison for Small Birds,' the other with gun and bag full of small birds already slaughtered.*[314]

Tommy Green has been subsumed by Gripe and the Gamekeepers, his blown eggs have become their dead birds. Their concerted villainy is trounced by the combined efforts of Johnny Stout and Little Boy Blue, while Goody Two-Shoes retains her childhood innocence, responding to the announcement of her forthcoming wedding by referring to her magically facilitated reunion with her pets and her beloved robin. This heralds the transformation scene:

GOOD N. Once more you gather round me, and, that well,
So hear what now Good Nature has to tell;
Often has England felt my power in it,
And never more than at the present minute.
And now-------
BOY BLUE. I know what you are going to say.
GOODY T. And so do I, we are all to go and play.
BOY BLUE. These fairy folks are such old fashioned elves,
Now just for once let's try and change ourselves.
GOODY T. Boy Blue and I, our powers thus combine,
You become Harlequin – and I Columbine.
(*Change to* HARLEQUIN *and* COLUMBINE.)
TIM. GRIPE. A good idea! those rustic robes throw down,
You turn to pantaloon – I change to clown.
(*Changes* GAMEKEEPER to PANTALOON, GRIPE *changes to* CLOWN.)

GOOD N. Now then away; a Merry key your mission,
And Fill Adelphi with your Exhibition.
TRANSFORMATION[315]

Goody Two-Shoes and Little Boy Blue become the Harlequinade lovers they were destined for, while the comedy always latent within Gripe's performance of the vil-

lainous role is expressed by his transformation to the Clown, and supported by that of his lackey the Gamekeeper to Pantaloon. The action of the Harlequinade itself bears no links with the preceding drama, and a fresh set of performers was deployed to enact this traditional element of the pantomime genre. It concludes:

> *Hornpipe by Sixty Able Bodied Young British Tars-The Enemy in Sight-The Action-and success of 'the Flag that's Braved a Thousand Years the Battle and the Breeze,' 'Rule Britannia,' and*
> GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!!![316]

This ending is similar to that of the 1862 text in which the last scene of the Harlequinade, 'invented by J. Cormack,' is set outside 'Marine Stores, Public House, and Sailor's Home' and closes on 'England's Glory and Riches brought by her Ocean Waves'.[317] Jacky Bratton has argued that the textual fun of this kind of summary conditions and structures the experience of the audience,[318] yet for readers today the change in aspect after the excessively pastoral tone of the preceding drama is difficult to adjust to. Reviews and the subsequent careers of the children who took part in this harlequinade demonstrate that it was the most winning element of the production.

'Our Captious Critic' of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* tried to explain what made the production such a sensation. His review began by suggesting that adults enjoyed the company of 'a well-bred child better...than a wit of the modern school. Because to the first, everything is new under the sun, and he is not above expressing his wonderment and delight.'[319] The child's ability to banish adult cynicism and ennui, to provide a conduit for the sense of awe, to revivify the senses were magnified by the stage, and the critic looks back to the era of Master Betty for an example of juvenile performance outstripping the honed work of adults in representing a familiar classical repertoire. The reviewer names each performer in turn, admiring the 'serious comicality that is quite delightful' and 'the true charm of fairy story...given in a manner that grown performers could not hope to acquire.'[320] The critic's real enthusiasm for the production breaks through in his account of the Harlequinade:

> I confess that up to the present time I had always regarded this part of the entertainment as a very silly and stupid piece of brutal buffoonery, and so I still consider it when played by grown mummers; but, as done at the Adelphi, the fun of the thing dawned upon me for the first time in my life. It is essentially the wild frolics of childhood – the utter abandonment of animal spirits only proper to the time of life before care or experience have begun to sober down the temperament of mankind. I always detested the antics of Master Bertie Coote essaying the antics of the time-honoured character. I repent that now I have dis-

> covered the drollery of the thing for the first time in my life. Now I can understand the humour of 'Hot Coddlings' and 'Tippitywitchet,' hitherto mysteries of unrevealed humour. Hobbling Pantaloon, too, has now a meaning and a charm for me – but ah! delicate delightful little Harlequin, what shall I say of thy grace and youthful beauty? Miss C. Gilchrist, I do not wish to make you vain at your age, but I must say that you are quite the darlingest Harlequin that ever was; and you, tiny Columbine, otherwise Miss Carrie Coote, I would not exchange you for for a cart-load of premières danseuses. The final scene of the Adelphi pantomime, which represents the main deck of a British man-of-war crowded with little British tars, ought to bring to Mr. Chatterton a formal note of approval from the Admiralty, for it is calculated above anything to revive the old naval enthusiasm of the nation. In short, I shall be surprised if the Adelphi pantomime does not find as much favour in the sight of the older class of playgoers as one might safely reckon upon its receiving from the children.[321]

Restored to its proper owners, the Harlequinade became available for adult appreciation and pleasure. It was such a success that by March 1877 the managers sought to double the fun by increasing its scale, presenting a 'Double Harlequinade' in which two children represented each of the figures Clown, Pantaloon, Harlequin and Columbine.

3. *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, Harlequinade, *Illustrated London News*, January 1877, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark N.2288 b.6, p. 60

D'Oyly Carte, *The Children's Pinafore* (1879) and *Pirates of Penzance* (1884)

A rival production was D'Oyly Carte's *Children's Pinafore* which opened at the Opera Comique on the afternoon of Tuesday 16 December 1879 where it ran in tandem with the already established success of the adult company's performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *H. M. S. Pinafore* (which had been running for over a year) until 20 February 1880. While the adult version was then removed from the evening bill, the *Children's Pinafore* continued as a matinee production until 20 March 1880 when it was finally removed to allow rehearsals of *The Pirates of Penzance* to take place. The idea for this extraordinary experiment, the concurrent performance of the same opera by a juvenile and an adult company, was attributed to D'Oyly Carte's managing director Richard Barker whose task it became to audition and train the new cast. And if Hollingshead had secured from the cast of *Little Goody Two-Shoes* Constance Gilchrist and the Cootes for his production of *Gulliver* at the Gaiety, Barker could boast of Harry and Emily Grattan (Captain Corcoran and Josephine respectively) in the company of the *Children's Pinafore*.[322] It was an astute move which won the approval of D'Oyly Carte, Gilbert and Sullivan, and enabled the company to offer two shows in one season using the same set, and effectively re-launching the opera for a Christmas market hungry to repeat the pleasures of the 1876 season. It was rewarded with an extended fantasia of the nautical scenes on the British man o'war with which *Little Goody Two-Shoes* had ended.

The innovation was an unqualified success. Clement Scott declared:

> If anyone asked me how I could delight a private box full of children of all ages and sizes, I should decidedly say by expending a little judicious capital at the Opera Comique where some exceedingly clever youngsters act 'H. M. S. Pinafore' in admirable style and without a tinge of juvenile precocity....I don't believe that London has ever seen anything better than the baby 'Pinafore'.[323]

Another critic, who attended the opening performance announced, 'We have no hesitation in describing it as the most marvellous juvenile performance ever seen in the metropolis.'[324]

The juvenile production necessitated the transposition of Sullivan's musical score to suit the vocal range of children. This task was painstakingly undertaken by the musical director of D'Oyly Carte's company, François Cellier. He remembered:

> it was no child's play to transpose the key of every song to fit each individual child's voice; the choruses necessitated entire rearrangement, especially the string parts, and in the unaccompanied numbers orchestral accompaniment had to be substituted for the support of male voices.[325]

The technical and aesthetic assiduity with which Cellier and Barker approached their work demonstrates how seriously they viewed the project. This was not a second class production by a cast potentially unequal to the task they were set; instead absolutely first-rate production values were deployed to enable the children to achieve the impossible. Cellier asserted that the final result was so polished that Gilbert, Sullivan and D'Oyly Carte, returning from America in time to see the show, 'advised members of the elder company to go and take lessons from their junior rivals',[326] while critics were unanimous in praise of the children's professionalism:

> Many well-known members of the theatrical world who saw them at the rehearsal declared it to be the most remarkable performance they had ever attended, and one and all expressed the utmost astonishment at the marvellous talents of the children. It was not merely that one or two were possessed of unusual gifts; the entire performance was complete, finished, correct, and diverting in the extreme....Nothing could be better, either, than the manner in which the difficult text was delivered. Every word was clear and distinct, and, what rendered the representation more amusing than all, was the original conceptions of several of the characters. This gave the performance a freshness and individuality of the rarest kind. The choruses were sung with great precision, and it was delightful to listen to the clear, bell-like voices.[327]

The unusual competence with which the children performed their roles was attributed by one critic to the fact that they:

> had every opportunity of observing the turns and twists of their elders in the actual performance through which they are drilled, and come to an understanding as to what those twists and turns are intended to convey.[328]

The juvenile copy of an adult original would seem initially to maximise the satirical humour of *H. M. S. Pinafore* which targeted the British Navy. The *Children's Pinafore* was a parody of a parody. This effect was enhanced by the way in which the juvenile impersonators of the characters Sir Joseph Porter, First Lord of the Admiralty (Master Edward Pickering, born 1871) and Captain Corcoran, commander of H. M. S. Pinafore (Master Harry Grattan) had been trained in 'clever imitations' of the adult 'original', the actors George Grossmith and Rutland Barrington a detail of the juvenile production noticed by Clement Scott,[329] and confirmed by 'Our Captious Critic' who asserted of Master Edward Pickering that 'he is a splendid miniature of Grossmith, and only excels that great original in the matter of legs.'[330] By focusing its miniature copy on the adult original, the juvenile production placed the satire at a further remove from the potential political

realities of Gilbert and Sullivan's work in an era of heavy imperialist aggression.

Lewis Carroll was amongst the few who responded innocently to the *Children's Pinafore*, his vision conditioned by the fact that he had 'never seen Mr. Gilbert's clever play *Pinafore* performed by grown-up actors'. For him, the children's utterance of a script composed for adults, retained power to startle and magnify. He stated:

> as played by children one passage in it was to me sad beyond words. It occurs when the captain utters the oath, 'Damn me!' and forthwith a bevy of sweet, innocent looking little girls sing, with bright, happy looks, the chorus, "He said, 'Damn me!' He said, 'Damn me!'" I cannot find words to convey to the reader the pain I felt in seeing those dear children taught to utter such words to amuse ears grown callous to their ghastly meaning. Put the two ideas side by side – hell (no matter whether you believe in it or not; millions do), and those pure young lips sporting with its horrors, and then find what fun in it you can! How Mr. Gilbert could have stooped to write, or Sir Arthur Sullivan could have prostituted his noble art to set to music such vile trash it passes my skill to understand.

The response by the Editor of *The Dramatic Review*, who reprinted Carroll's letter to *The Theatre* in June 1888 was simply and dismissively 'Fancy taking Mr. Gilbert seriously!'[331] Carroll's complaint was lonely, and contrasted with the view of others who asserted that in line with the manifesto for wholesome entertainment issued by the Comedy Opera Company that 'the purity of [*H. M. S. Pinafore*] is undeniably proved by the fact that it can be put into the mouths of babes without alteration, and with as perfect safety as though the little ones were repeating a string of nursery rhymes'[332]

The *Children's Pinafore* was a more palatable commodity than the adult version, the diminution of cast size carried with it, therefore, not a magnification of the political message but a concomitant and perhaps surprising diminution of that too. Audience attention was diverted from the political subject matter, to consider the aesthetic marvels of the show and to admire the triumphs of individual performances. The success of the *Children's Pinafore* was such that D'Oyly Carte chose to repeat the stunt in December 1884 by launching a *Children's Pirates of Penzance* in his new and luxuriously equipped Savoy Theatre.

Cellier presented the children as privileged in their access to the house of art, rather than as paid participants in an industry:

> The very thought of appearing in public, and at the Savoy too, of all places, was to them a dream of immeasurable glory. The boys had all played at policemen

> before in their gardens or play-grounds, but now they would be "real life-like Bobbies, just like Mr. Rutland Barrington"; and some of them were to be blood-thirsty pirates, only with stupidly tender hearts. Oh, what a spree they were going to have, these holidays – and – just fancy! – going to be paid for it! Wasn't it all enough to incite the boys to do their best? "As to *the spree*," thought Barker, "I'll see to that!"[333]

The theatrical context channels the energy of childhood games and role playing, suggesting adult need to control juvenile spree-making. The roles that the boys perform are those of policeman and pirate. Both are social figures of coercion and authority, mutually constructing and maintaining the boundaries of law and order. Their kinship was emphasised in the juvenile production by the fact that Pirate King and Police Sergeant were performed by the brothers Stephen and Charles Adeson. The characters stand as emblems for the series of compulsions to which these children were subjected. The anarchy and subversion of the pirate figure are assimilated with the rule of social order not by the narrative figure of the policeman who is just a pirate seen from the other side, but by the discipline of theatrical performance itself. The potentially disruptive energy of childhood is contained and made safe by the director for the comfort of the audience.

Cellier remembered that the girls were manipulated in a different way:

> The little girls, in less demonstrative fashion, betrayed becoming pride in their new and responsible vocation. Probably they had all, at some time or the other, heard of Madame Patti – "Patti had been next to nobody when she was a child. Why shouldn't we become stars of equal magnitude? As for Leonora Braham, and Jessie Bond, Rosina Brandram, and other popular Savoy ladies, we have seen them often; but we are not going to try and copy them – they are all splendid actresses and singers, of course, but then" – argued the juvenile ladies – "they are not so young as we are, and people like young – very young persons on the stage if they are not *too* precocious – we don't intend to be at all precocious" – "No," thought Dick Barker – "not if I know it!"[334]

The girls are presented as star-struck, naively imagining a glorious future. Looking to their own present, they are aware of their ability to satisfy the here unquestioned public taste for 'young – very young persons on the stage'. Recognising and participating in the commodification of their own youth, these girls belie their denial of preciosity, and reinforce the irony of Cellier's version of Barker's 'not if I know it!' This trade in innocence corrupted the very quality that was valued; but the theatre, with its framing proscenium arch, could crucially maintain appearances, while the trade in youth was likely to result in an accelerated adulthood. Auditions

had been closed to all 'above the age of sixteen', and some 'young ladies' were turned away when it emerged that they had 'arrived at years of discretion.'[335]

Cellier emphasised social stereotypes in his gendered account of how and why consent was won from the children. Boys, he claimed, like the rough and tumble games of cops and robbers, and were only too pleased to be paid for playing them, while girls liked showing off and were delighted to be supplied with a paying audience. Cellier closed down each of the paragraphs describing the youthful enthusiasms of the cast with a grimly ironic quip. The rhetorical structure itself suggests how childhood pleasures and freedoms would be harnessed and constrained by the discipline of theatre work. This was a discipline he was at pains to emphasise in the next paragraph where he addressed 'several well-meaning people who...must direct their pince-nez towards the Savoy stage. They took exception to these performances, fearing that the children's education would be neglected, and that they would be first over-worked, and then spoilt by adulation.'[336] Cellier explained that D'Oyly Carte was careful to treat his company well, and that 'the Board of Education were more than satisfied that every child would not only be well looked after, but would also reap great benefit by the tuition and discipline that would attend their professional engagements at the Savoy Theatre.'[337] The nurturing environment which Cellier constructs here is briskly forgotten in the penultimate paragraph of the chapter, where he celebrates the commercial and aesthetic success of the production, announcing: '[a]fter the Christmas holidays the children "Pirates" were sent on tour, and in all the leading provincial towns were welcomed with unbounded enthusiasm.'[338]

Despite the social context of his discussion, Cellier was rarely able to represent the auditioning, performing, working children simply as children. Instead he was ingenious in the generation of one circumlocution after another. Phrases such as 'miniature company', 'youthful histrionic aspirants', 'untutored juveniles', 'little candidates', 'juvenile ladies', and the metaphor 'warblers' are all deployed. A favourite term was 'the little people': 'François Cellier was...appointed music and singing master to the little people';[339] 'the intelligence of the little people was most remarkable.'[340] This term is itself punning, unstable and paradoxical. It refers simultaneously to charmed creatures of faery folklore, alien, other and not quite benign, and also, idiomatically, to children. But children as 'little people' were not just small people, they were somehow less than people altogether, again, not quite human, but human-like. He used the term in contexts which described the theatrical education of these children, and he suggested by it that there was something uncanny about juveniles mastering the discipline and drill necessary for the successful performance of opera. Diverse connotations of 'the little people' are built into Cellier's assessment of the enterprise in competing and conflicting ways. His writing suggests that the children both embody enchantment and induce an enchanted state in their spectators. Their performance places them as completely

'other'. They are perceived as neither children nor adults, but as a species of elf or fairy.

In making this identification Cellier was building on convention. Albert Smith had facetiously identified the fairy as the first stage in the life cycle of the ballet girl in his 'Natural History of the Ballet Girl':

> You will find [in the green room] a small pale child undergoing a lesson from the Ballet-mistress before the others arrive. She looks as if she had been generated from the atmosphere of a play-house, as spontaneously as were the galvanic mites of Mr. Crosse, apparently from nothing.
>
> She has on a curious dress – ballet from the waist downwards; ordinary walking costume above that point. Indeed, her appearance will remind you of the old woman in the nursery tale, who fell asleep on the highway, instead of selling her eggs at market; and whose petticoats were cut all about her knees by one Stout, an inhuman pedlar, so that even her little dog did not know her.
>
> This is the Ballet-girl in her first stage of transition from the flying fairy – the stages being Fairy, Extra, Corps de Ballet, and Coryphée.[341]

A similar conceit, though satirically more cutting, structures Dickens' essay 'Gaslight Fairies' in which he identifies not just stage children but also their supernumerary elders as belonging to the Fairy family.[342] For Smith and Dickens the link is justified by the rapid and complete transformation undergone by this species, and by their invisibility outside the theatre. Critics have recently commented on the association between Victorian children and fairies. Auerbach discusses representations of the uncanny child in *Private Theatricals*, while Stewart claims:

> By the Victorian age, the domestication of the fairy is complete and the English fairy becomes inextricably linked to the enduring creation of the Victorian fantastic: the fairylike child. Although the Victorian child was held to have a near-magical association with nature (think, for example, of Alice and the fawn in the forest without names), this nature is diminutive and readily transformed into culture.[343]

Albert Smith had captured his fairy in the instant of change, a Pan-like hybrid costumed as half walker and half dancer, before comparing her to a fictional old woman so transformed as to be unrecognisable. The very act of identifying the ballet girl as a species of elf is embroiled in the business of assimilation and cultivation. So successful was the cultivation of the child-fairy that the Earl of Dunraven was unable to distinguish the two halves of the hybrid in the Lords on 5 August 1889. The last shot in his speech to protect the theatre industry's *status quo*, and

alleging the impossibility of staging *A Midsummer Night's Dream* without young children was: 'there must be small fairies'.[344]

The transitional status of the children who appeared in *Pirates of Penzance* was compounded by the fact that, as in the *Children's Pinafore*, some of the fifty-four strong child cast were presented as copies of adult actors. Harry Tebbut, who played Frederick the pirate-apprentice, 'is 'made up' to resemble a popular light English tenor, of whom he is a curiously exact reproduction, supposing the latter to be contemplated through a pair of reversed opera-glasses.'[345].

Yet at the same time Cellier conveys an awareness of the children's artificial acceleration into adulthood, in terms of their self awareness and demeanour. This acceleration was perceptible on stage, and confirmed by other reviewers of D'Oyly Carte's enterprise, who noted, for example, of 'the diminutive Major General of Master Percy' that 'the boy possesses the manner and carriage of an aristocratic old gentleman, and he rattles through his patter song with an ease that is seldom met with in older actors.'[346] Clement Scott observed of Miss Effie Mason (born 1870) performing Little Buttercup in the *Children's Pinafore* that she 'has a woman's voice with a child's face.'[347] Outside the theatre, in other social contexts, it was considered shocking if children exhibited the accessories of age and experience. Diane Purkiss cites Henry Mayhew's revulsion at finding an infant watercress seller 'in thoughts and manner a woman.'[348] But within the magical space of the theatre building, the construction of the stage child as a hybrid figure was a profound aspect of its power to attract and captivate audiences. It even entered the subconscious, as evinced by a dream recorded by Lewis Carroll in his diary on 15 May 1879:

> Last night I had a dream which I record as a curiosity, as containing *the same person at two different periods of life*, a feature entirely unique, so far as I know, in the literature of dreams. I was staying with my sisters in some suburb of London, and had heard that the Terrys were staying near us, so went to call and found Mrs. Terry at home, who told me that Marion and Florence were at the theatre, 'the Walter House,' where they had a good engagement. 'In that case,' I said, 'I'll go there at once, and see the performance. And may I take Polly with me?' 'Certainly,' said Mrs. Terry. And there was Polly, the child, seated in the room, and looking about 9 or 10 years old: and I was distinctly conscious of the fact, yet without any feeling of surprise at its incongruity, that I was going to take the child Polly with me to the theatre, to see the *grown-up* Polly act! Both figures, Polly as a *child*, and Polly as a woman, are I suppose equally clear in my ordinary waking memory: and it seems that in sleep I had contrived to give to the two pictures separate individualities.[349]

4. *Pirates of Penzance*, *Dramatic Notes*, December 1884, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark Per.M.adds. 124 e.22, p. 73

Carroll had himself already created a literary version of the hybridised child-adult in his heroine Alice. Following the remarkable successes of juvenile companies in London since 1876 when Carroll, on seeing *Little Goody Two-Shoes* noted of Carrie Coote that 'in a few years' time she will be just the child to act 'Alice,' if it is ever dramatised',[350] the stage was set for the dramatisation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1872).

Alice in Wonderland

In September 1886 the librettist H. Savile Clarke approached Carroll about a stage adaptation of these children's books, and although Carroll initially resisted a conflation of the two works, the result was the composite *Alice in Wonderland. A Musical Dream Play, in Two Acts for Children and Others*. It opened at the Prince of Wales's Theatre on 23 December 1886 where it ran for fifty matinee performances before it was due to close on 26 February 1887. The box-office success was such that the provincial tour which had been booked to begin in Brighton's Theatre Royal on 3 March 1887 was postponed, permitting the London run to continue until 18 March, interrupted only by three days in Brighton. The provincial tour began in March and ended in September. The cast was largely though not exclusively composed of children, and on 16 September 1887 Carroll made a special trip to his publisher Macmillan to sign forty-one copies of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to present one to every child who had participated. Performed by children and aiming for a juvenile audience, this dream play offered an experimental alternative at the height of the pantomime season. The verdict was immediate:

> We can scarcely hope to find a performance equal to this one for the complete enjoyment of the young folks now in our midst again, and to send a boy or girl to school after the holidays without a visit to this theatre...would almost amount to cruelty.[351]

There was, however, some caution amongst reviewers. *The Era*, recognising that the production was 'intended for children,' reserved judgement:

> Until we see, as we may next week, the Prince of Wales Theatre filled with juveniles, accompanied of course by their parents and guardians, but still themselves constituting the audience, it will be impossible to say that *Alice in Wonderland* is successful or not. Messrs. Clarke and Slaughter must eventually abide by the decision of the juveniles.[352]

It was not until the play's fourth professional revival in the Victorian period, in December 1900 at the Vaudeville Theatre, that the role of Alice was played by an adult (Ellaline Terriss) for the first time. On that occasion Max Beerbohm was nei-

ther so rash as to ascribe the judgement of merit to the audience, nor so confident that the play was intended for children. His review concluded with a note of disappointment on Terriss's performance:

> To every one alike, she is all smiles, and sweet superiority, and honeyed graciousness. She is not merely a fairy: she is the fairy-queen. This is a pity. It robs the play of what would be, as I conceive, its primary appeal to children. It does not, however, mar very grievously the enjoyment of the adults. And is it not for us adults, after all, that these pantomimes are intended?[353]

At Carroll's suggestion to Savile Clarke, Phoebe Carlo was cast as the first Alice. Since the age of nine she had managed a busy theatrical career and played a number of substantial roles, including 'Carus' in *Claudian* by Henry Herman and W. G. Wills at the Princess's Theatre in December 1883, 'Kit' in *Hoodman Blind* by Henry Arthur Jones and Wilson Barrett at the Princess's Theatre in August 1885, 'Harry Reade' in *Sister Mary* by Wilson Barrett and Clement Scott at the Comedy Theatre in September 1886. Carroll had first seen her on stage in the children's pantomime *Dick Whittington and his Cat* at the Avenue Theatre on 1 January 1883, and his personal friendship with her began on 15 May 1885, during the run of her performance as 'Cissie' in Henry Herman's and Henry Arthur Jones' *The Silver King* at the Princess's Theatre, when he set out for London with the express purpose of meeting her.[354] She was an accomplished performer, well-equipped to command the rigours of the part of Alice and to deliver the 215 speeches required of it, 'nearly three times as many as Beatrice has in *Much Ado About Nothing*.'[355]

Savile Clarke agreed to the engagement of Phoebe as Alice in October 1886, a move which pleased Carroll and which focussed his mind on the forthcoming production since, as he saw it, 'a great deal of the success of the piece must necessarily depend on Phoebe'.[356] Writing to Savile Clarke on 31 October 1886, Carroll suggested that the play should have three Acts, rather than the two projected, to be achieved by introducing an interlude of 'The Hunting of the Snark' between Acts one and two. His reason, apart from 'giving people *plenty for their money*' and prolonging the pleasure for the 'child-part of the audience', was 'to give a *real* rest for Phoebe, in the middle of her hard task. I am greatly afraid of her breaking down *physically*, before the thing has run a fortnight.'[357] This suggestion was rejected by Savile Clarke, as was Carroll's second wish with regard to Phoebe, that he should 'dress Phoebe at [his] own expense.'[358] The costumes, designed by M. L. Besche, were based on John Tenniel's illustrations to the Alice books, and this remained a constant feature of professional productions of the play during the nineteenth century.[359]

Carroll made two further suggestions to which Savile Clarke assented affecting the visual appearance of *Alice in Wonderland*. The first was 'that masks (of heads,

of animals, etc) should always partly show the human face: the other that *ladies should be warned that bonnets, or hats, are not allowed in the stalls and dress-circle.*[360] The simultaneous concealment and revelation of the child within its enchanted persona, while faithful to the techniques of Tenniel's illustrations and embodying the same theatrical conceit deployed elsewhere, in the Adelphi pantomime and by Wilhelm's costume designs, signals the anthropomorphic foundation of Carroll's construction of Wonderland. It is furthermore, a departure from the traditional use of 'skins' for children playing the parts of animals or monsters: their faces, and therefore their underlying human identity, were normally completely hidden by the costume. Carroll's attention to bonnets, which found its way into the programme in a more permissive style by the statement 'Stalls, 10s. 6d., Balcony Stalls, 7s 6d., Balcony, 6s., First Circle (Bonnets allowed), 4s., Pitt (armed and cushioned), 2s 6d., Gallery 1s.' , was a clear indication of his concern to secure good sight lines for the children in the audience, and therefore, while seeming a trivial and inartistic feature of theatre management, had a major impact on the visual impression of the piece.

A lengthy review of the production appeared in *The Theatre* on 1 January 1887. Descriptive rather than evaluative, it gives a sense of the play's style and construction:

> The story runs glibly, opening with a chorus of fairies surrounding Alice asleep in a chair beneath a tree, from there we progress splendidly, making the acquaintance with all our old friends, the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, the Duchess with her Baby....Then comes a long and brilliant procession, which should fill Alice's heart with awe, if not with admiration, but our heroine is nothing daunted by this large crowd. 'Why, they're only a pack of cards,' she says....She then dances with the Cards in a graceful gavotte, and afterwards protects her old friend, the Cheshire Cat, from an undeserved execution....
>
> In the second act, Mr Savile Clarke takes us to another book, 'Through the Looking-glass,' and Alice in introduced to the Chessmen and Chorus, who dance stiffly for her delectation, the Red Queen gives her some advice after she has spoken to the live flowers, as Tweedledum and Tweedledee appear.... and so the play goes on until we see Alice once more asleep on her chair, and hear her wake to say, 'Oh! I've had such a curious dream!'[361]

Carroll's assertion that '"Alice" and the "Looking-Glass" are made up almost wholly of bits and scraps, single ideas which came of themselves' is readily substantiated by this account of the narrative collage which constitutes the dramatic flow of the play.[362] The theatrical analogues which helped Savile Clarke to structure the play and gave the public a conceptual framework within which to understand it, were to be found in works by W. S. Gilbert and Shakespeare.

Joseph Knight reviewed three fairy plays by W. S. Gilbert produced at the Court Theatre on 18 December 1875, *Galatea and Pygmalion*, *The Wicked World* and *Broken Hearts*. He asserted that they were the 'most important contribution to fairy literature that has been supplied by any dramatist...since the seventeenth century,' and discussed the functions of Gilbert's fairyland setting:

> That Mr Gilbert should have found fairy stories a convenient vehicle for satire is easily conceived. One of the simplest and most customary means of ridiculing human institutions is to test their effect upon unsophisticated natures. Fairy machinery lends itself readily to such a purpose. In a world in which nothing can be pronounced impossible or illogical, since the law of sequence is abrogated, the wildest experiments are permissible. In his fairy dramas, accordingly, Mr Gilbert has done elaborately what with machinery much less complicated, was accomplished by Voltaire.[363]

Audiences were therefore already familiar with the use of an enchanted landscape as a frame for contemporary satire. Gilbert yoked the magic of folklore with the illusions of theatre to force the suspension of disbelief and gain permission for outlandish treatment of immediate social and political concerns. The idea that in fairyland 'nothing can be pronounced impossible or illogical, since the law of sequence is abrogated' suited the structure of Carroll's narrative very well, while the spirit of Gilbertian satire also settled happily in Wonderland. The context of Gilbert's fairy plays was implicitly invoked by Mrs. Freiligrath-Kroeker when she adapted the Alice books for performance by children at home or at school and published her text in a volume called *Alice and Other Fairy Plays for Children*.[364]

Knight's felicitous expression 'fairy machinery' draws attention to another feature of the uncanny that was presented by the stage child. The juvenile fairy could be seen not as different from the stage machinery which produced her, but as an articulated, animated extension of it. Albert Smith suggests how theatre machinery provides the habitat for young fairies:

> If you again saw this child with similar little people at night, they would probably be asleep amongst some of the machinery, having been tied to a floating cloud in the first scene...and then dismissed...until the conclusion....To the audience, however, they are willing elves, who appropriately people the 'Realms of Joy,' to the centre of which glorified region their presence is confined.[365]

Diane Purkiss argues that when audiences gasped at gaslight fairies they saw 'not a triumph of the supernatural, but a triumph of technology.'[366] It can be argued, however, that when the fairies were acted by children, the supernatural really did

come into view, since they were not different in kind from the machinery to which they were strapped. R. L. Stevenson identified the youngest of his dancing children as a 'broken-nosed doll in a nursery lumber-room'; Barlee dubbed her pantomime children 'human machinery', and Jean Margaret Davenport was called a 'living puppet' in the *Manager's Daughter*.[367] In this light Lewis Carroll's passion for mechanical devices and moving toys can be seen as a further dimension to his love of stage children. Isa Bowman described his Christchurch rooms as 'a fairy-land for children' because of his collection of musical boxes and other devices. She particularly remembered '"the Bat", an ingeniously constructed toy of gauze and wire, which actually flew about the room like a bat,' which made her 'a little afraid...because it was too lifelike.'[368] For Carroll, Isa herself may have been like his toy bat; she and her performing fellows were curiously animated playthings.

A Midsummer Night's Dream was frequently revived during the nineteenth century, its authoritative text having been restored by Madame Vestris in her pioneering production at Covent Garden in 1840.[369] By the time of its production most proximate to *Alice in Wonderland*, at Crystal Palace in June 1886, it had become conventional for children to perform the fairy roles. Reviewers contrasted the child fairies of the Crystal Palace production unfavourably with their incarnations in Edward Saker's production for the Alexandra Theatre in Liverpool, which had opened on 29 March 1880 before transferring to Sadler's Wells on 28 June 1880. The children of Saker's production were rewarded with liberal praise:

> They act their parts perfectly, and the elocution and singing of the principals, apart from their acting, is something to be wondered at. It may be objected that in substituting children some of the poet's language is lost, being of necessity, cut out; but, if we do not have the entire text, the extra charm infused into the remainder of it more than compensates for the temporary loss sustained. Little Addie Blanche, the Puck, is scarcely more than three feet high, yet she might have been accustomed to the stage for years, she is so perfect. Her sprightly 'Ha! ha! ha!' sings through the theatre, and seems to recall to the imagination the memory of some long-forgotten, merry, laughter-loving dream. Her sister, Miss Rosa Blanche, as the first fairy, and Miss Kate Barry as Titania, are both much to be commended, they act most delicately and gracefully, and sing the songs allotted to them charmingly and surprisingly. If one of the juvenile actresses excels the others, it is Miss Laura Lawson. She never for a moment seems to lose sight of the character she is impersonating, and the result is a most pleasing and finished portrayal of the fairy being....Some sixty other children complete the fairy cast....[370]

Addie Blanche was cast as Puck again in 1886, but it seems that her magic had waned in the intervening years:

> The fairy element, without which the comedy goes for nothing, was entirely wanting in the Crystal Palace revival. The fantasy was gone, the illusion was dispelled. Even Miss Addie Blanche, the maddest and merriest of sprites when she played in Edward Saker's revival six years previously, had lost the proper conception of Puck. Lively enough she was in all conscience, but in her endeavour to be impressive with her audience she sadly over-acted.[371]

For the later nineteenth-century audience, children controlled the enchanted wood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, manipulated the erotic battles of the adult principals as they underwent their sexual maturation, and acted out their own scenes of sexual jealousy and possession. Children, perceived as both dangerous and charming, were the ideal vehicles for such images of entrancement and atavism.

Carroll used the language of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to describe his collaboration with Savile Clarke on *Alice in Wonderland*:

> as the...originator (as I believe, for at least I have not consciously borrowed them) of the 'airy nothings' for which Savile Clarke has so skilfully provided, if not a name, at least, a 'local habitation,' I may without boastfulness claim to have a special knowledge of what it was I meant them to be, and so a special understanding of how far that intention has been realised.[372]

He also viewed the cast as 'the stage embodiments of his own dream-children'[373] and addressed his protagonist as '"Alice," the child of my dreams'.[374] Carroll's representation of his own methods as a writer for whom 'every...idea and nearly every word of the dialogue, *came of itself*'[375] as if arising from his subconscious, concurred with Savile Clarke's deployment of the dream play, a theatrical style available and established within contemporary performance traditions. *Alice in Wonderland* opens with Alice sleeping in a chair, emblem of domestic interior, placed at the foot of a tree. Fairies dance around her, singing:

> Sleep maiden sleep! As we circle around thee,
> Lulled by the music of bird and bee.
> Safe in the forest since fairies have found thee
> Here where we come to keep tryst by the tree.
> Sleep, Alice, sleep! These are magical numbers,
> Songs that we learn from the mount and the stream.
> Ours be the task to keep watch o'er thy slumbers,
> Wake, Alice, wake, to the Wonderland dream.[376]

The collocation of the performance term 'numbers' with its rhyme word 'slumbers' glues together the ideas of theatricality and sleep to generate the dream play,

as the audience is carefully informed of the frame within which the subsequent drama is to be understood, while the forest setting and its fairies clearly invite comparison with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The influence of the contemporary staging of both Shakespeare's comedy and Gilbert's fairy plays can be traced in the staging methods of *Alice in Wonderland*. For example, illuminated gauzes to effect transitions into the depths of the enchanted wood had been used since the 1850s, and *Alice in Wonderland* presented 'dissolving view effects' to elide the scenic shifts of the acausal narrative.[377] The use of gauzes was not, of course, confined to Shakespeare's fairy plays, and contemporary audiences would have been most familiar with this device from the 'transformation scenes' of pantomime. Walter Slaughter's music, at Carroll's specific request, deployed 'traditional airs' for the nursery songs and jingles to which Carroll had written new words, thereby enhancing the satirical effect of alienating recognition within 'Wonderland'. What remains ambiguous, in both the novels and their staged version, is the extent to which Alice is, as Empson argues, the 'passive judge' of what she encounters in this latter-day pastoral environment, and the extent to which she is responsible for conjuring it all forth.[378] The choice is between an emphasis on the *Alice* works as social satire or on their representations of the inner workings of childish reason.

The production and its cast became celebrities. They enjoyed star billing at the Lord Mayor's Juvenile Ball of January 1887. The *St. James's Gazette* reported:

> 'Juvenile Ball at the Mansion House'
>
> The annual fancy-dress ball was given by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, Sir Reginald and Lady Hanson last evening, at the Mansion House. The guests, who numbered over 1,100, began to arrive shortly after six o'clock....The dresses of the children were tasteful and elegant. There were the usual courtiers and shepherdesses, naval and military men,....The foremost feature of the evening's proceedings was a procession of the Kings and Queens of England, in which about 200 of the children took part....Punch and Judy, performing dogs, marionettes, conjuring...the *pièce de resistance* of the evening was a performance of a few selections from the first act of a musical dream-play, 'Alice in Wonderland,' by the Prince of Wales Company. Dancing was kept up till about midnight.[379]

The second professional production of *Alice in Wonderland* opened for matinees at the Globe Theatre on 26 December 1888 with Isa Bowman in the title role. Carroll had noticed her as an oyster ghost at the Prince of Wales's and 'fancied she looked nice'.[380] He recommended her for the part to Savile Clarke, despite the fact that he 'had never heard her speak on stage.'[381] Savile Clarke, however, had worked with her before when he produced a series of tableaux based on Hans Christian

Andersen tales for the Anglo-Danish Exhibition in June 1888. The casting choice proved felicitous with both Carroll and the public.

By the time of the third professional revival of *Alice in Wonderland*, which opened at the Opera Comique on 22 December 1898, the first Alice had grown up. The reviewer for the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* noted:

> the original Alice – Miss Phoebe Carlo, now grown into a beautiful woman – looked on from a private box....Her successor little Miss Rose Hersee, who, in the performance of her by no means easy task, displayed not a little skill and intelligence. Alice is very seldom out of the picture. Miss Hersee, however, showed no sign of tiring, and speaking, singing, and dancing, was the admired of all admirers.[382]

Alice in Wonderland was now a play with a past. Its novelty had worn off, and the tone of its critical reception changed. William Archer argued that the Clarke/Slaughter adaptation was 'a hasty sketch rather than the adequate dramatic transcript of this playroom classic.'[383] He particularly regretted the insistence on the unity of place which, in his view inhibited 'that sense of wondering adventure in which the juvenile mind so greatly delights.' When Ellaline Terriss came to star as the first adult Alice in the 1900 Vaudeville Theatre production ('put up as a stop-gap, because we were not quite ready with the play that was to follow'),[384] it was not just the play which had a past, but Alice herself:

> Though modern adults are apt to resent even implicit morality in a book for children, children delight in it. They delight in feeling that, in some way or other, Alice is being 'improved' by her adventures. Orally, she seems to be an awful prig, but various internal evidence makes them suspect her of having 'a past' – of having been naughty; and they feel that, somehow or other, the Caterpillar and the Red Queen and all the rest of them are working out her redemption. This human, commonplace element in Alice, and the delight depending on it, are, I think, missed in the production at the Vaudeville. Not merely does Miss Terriss look more like a fairy than a child: she behaves as such. She gives no hint of 'a past' behind the priggish manner. She seems as one born to patronise, from a pedestal of solid virtue, Red Queens and White Queens and other potentates. For her no monster, how grotesque so ever, has any terrors; she is secure, with the security that comes of a conscience utterly untroubled.[385]

By 1900 the stage stereotype of 'the woman with a past' was commonplace, and while a child might have a paradisal past, the idea that it had a social past was

unheard of. It seems that for Beerbohm, Terriss's adult incarnation of the child role released a new version of the hybrid child-adult, and removed the arcadian aura from the figure of Alice once and for all. No longer a miniature adult, but a real one, the transcendence of the role had gone.

From the point of view of Terriss and her participation in the new management at the Vaudeville Theatre, *Alice in Wonderland* was an 'immense success. We had a very long run – right beyond the Christmas season' and 'Alice had put us right on the map.'[386] Terriss was set up for her next starring role in a play written for children and accommodating many child performers, highly derivative of its Christmas predecessor, *Bluebell in Fairyland* by Seymour Hicks and Walter Slaughter. It opened in December 1901, and 'told the story of a little crossing-sweeper, Dicky...and a little flower girl, Bluebell....'[387] who are translated from a busy London street to the saccharine location of 'Dreamland'. *The Daily Telegraph* commented:

> Like most things in fiction, *Bluebell in Fairyland* has its prototype, but it is surely no reproach to the pretty heroine of the story that her adventures recall in a measure those of a certain world-famed Alice, whose trip to Wonderland remains a joy forever alike in the nursery and the library.[388]

Bluebell in Fairyland was a huge hit, with up to nine performances a week and sustaining a total of '294 performances before we just had to take it off.'[389] The characters were, as Terriss asserts, pure 'stage conventions'.[390] Invoking a past that was now unashamedly artificial and sentimental, arcadia was banished from the stage as these figures heralded the urban, displaced fairies of the Edwardian period to be found in *Peter Pan* and its successors.

Savages and Mimics

Children's pantomimes, in which juveniles played all the parts, presented an obverse of the earlier comic tradition in which one child played many parts. *The Spoiled Child* (1790), *Home for the Holidays* (1828) and *The Manager's Daughter* (1836) are three short comedies centred on the antics of a precocious and mischievous child. Their central characters are all descendants of Tony Lumpkin in Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). Goldsmith's juvenile trickster embroils the adult characters in difficulties which he then finally resolves, but his activity forms a mere subplot in the machinations of overarching drama concerning the adult lovers. The plot focus in the dramas which contain his descendants remains securely with the juvenile lead; these plays are structurally less complex, and as the editor of *The Spoiled Child* asserts in 1826, 'the effect...chiefly depends upon the acting.'[391] It was Mrs Jordan as Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child*,[392] Master Burke as Victor Pleyel in *Home for the Holidays* and Jean Davenport as

Jean Margaret Davenport in *The Manager's Daughter* who thrilled the first audiences of these plays because of their performances.

The congruence of the name of the central character and the name of its first performer in *The Manager's Daughter* emphasises the primacy of the performer. The play was written for Jean Davenport to show off, and the playwright did not trouble to invent a character name. It is no accident that this brashest assertion of identity between performer and role came to epitomise 'the infant phenomenon' for the nineteenth century when Dickens plundered the successes of the Davenport Company in his creation of Crummles' enterprises in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839). Yet the burden and the fame of performance were transferable, and a succession of accomplished performers, most of them children, filled the roles in subsequent decades.

Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child* was performed by eleven children in identified productions between 1804 and and 1866.[393]Throughout this long performance history only two boys are known to have played this breeches part, the costuming of which was firmly prescribed by 1826. The editor states that Little Pickle should wear: 'Nankeen trowsers, white waistcoat, little smart green jacket, frilled shirt-collar laying open over shoulders, white stockings and pumps. – 2nd dress: white trowsers and waistcoat, little blue sailor's jacket bound with white, and white buttons.'[394] The adjective 'little' which qualifies both the green jacket and the blue one seems at first redundant. It may suggest that the jacket was a copy of an adult style, in 'little' to fit Little Pickle, or it may suggest that the jacket looked small even on a child, as a way to signify the infantile character of the role but also a metaphorical indication that the character is growing, threatening to burst out of childhood habits. The costume emphasises the conventionally androgynous appearance of the stage child. Yet despite Mrs Jordan's statement in the Prologue that, 'Brimful of mirth he comes – Miss Tomboy's brother, / We hope you'll think they're something like each other,' there is little ambiguity about the gender of the role.[395]

The play opens in a dining parlour with Old Pickle and his sister discussing Little Pickle's behaviour. Old Pickle asks his sister for patience until the holidays end, when the boy will return to school. She insists that his paternal indulgence is misguided, 'unless he is severely punished for what he has already done, depend upon it this vicious humour will be confirmed into habit, and his follies increase in proportion with his years.' She complains, 'had you been rendered as ridiculous as I have been by his tricks, as you call them, you would have been the first to complain, and to punish.'[396] Old Pickle admits that he has been doused with water as his son places basons of water above doors and leaves them a-jar, but wants to dismiss everything as high-spirited whimsy rather than vice. To her objections about her nephew's education Old Pickle declares:

> Do you tell me I can't educate my own child, and make a lord chancellor, or an archbishop of Canterbury of him, which ever I like – just as I please? [*Pickle is about to take a chair, when Young Pickle by a string draws the chair from behind him; Old Pickle falls.*][397]

His determination to punish his son (who has still not made an entrance) for this latest practical joke is overtaken by alarm when the cook rushes in to inform them that the pheasant they are carving for lunch is actually Miss Pickle's pet parrot, placed in the pot by her nephew. Just as they are taking this in, John the stable man enters '*slowly and lame, his face bound up*'[398] with a tale of more extreme violence:

> as I was coming home this morning over Black Down, what does I see but young master tearing over the turf upon Daisy, tho' your honour had forbid him to ride her – so I calls to him to stop – but what does he do, but smacks his whip in my face, and dashes over the gate into Stoney Lane; but what's worse, when I rated him about it, he snatches up Tom Carter's long whip, and lays me so over the legs, and before I could catch hold of him, he slips out of the stable, and was off like a shot.[399]

Confronted with this evidence of his son's viciousness, Old Pickle vows to punish him by sending him to sea. The adults withdraw to the back of the stage as they hear the boy approach. Little Pickle enters, congratulating himself on the success of his pranks, until he realises the presence of his elders. Still he manages to 'explain' things, claiming that he was just trying to tame Daisy to prevent his father from having an accident. Turning to John, he justifies his actions by an appeal to the class difference between master and servant, which in his view supervenes upon the hierarchy between man and boy, and talks his way out of cooking his aunt's parrot.

His aunt has been recently flattered by the courtship of an 'itinerant actor, and author'[400] called Tagg, and her vanity makes her easy prey. She objects however to the damage to her reputation by having been locked in a closet with him. She blames the boy for her incarceration and for spreading scandal about it. But insouciant Little Pickle declares 'all I said was, you were amusing yourself in your closet with a favourite author.'[401]

This sexual innuendo, which eroticises Little Pickle/performer rather than his maiden aunt, heralds the complication of the plot, described by the 1826 editor as follows:

> [Old Pickle] resolves to adopt a plan, suggested by his sister, for the purpose of taming her incorrigible nephew, that of disowning his son, for a time, and driv-

> ing him from his house. A plot is laid, in concert with *Margery*, his old nurse, and a story is trumped up, that young *Pickle* is *not*, in reality, the son of *Old Pickle*, but of the aforesaid *Margery*, she having, when an infant, exchanged him for the *true Pickle*; hoping, by this ingenious device, to make the fortune of her son, at the expense of the legitimate heir: but that her *conscience*...relenting, prompts her to make this confession....The young rogue receives this unwelcome news very doubtfully; he fancies *they*, in turn, are playing a trick upon him: the fact is, however, reiterated with so much gravity, by both *Mr*. and *Miss Pickle*, that he doubts no more, but breaks out in a strain of deep pathos and beauty, sufficient to redeem his childish pranks, were they a hundred times more wanton and extravagant.[402]

This 'strain of deep pathos' is the song 'Since then I'm doom'd', for which Miss Booth and Madam Vestris were so highly praised.[403] It represents a momentary exposure of vulnerability during which the savage child metamorphoses into its arcadian alter ego and is given the opportunity to '[draw] tears from every eye' in the audience. The moment was so sensational that six separate musical versions of 'Since Then I'm Doom'd' were published between 1790 and 1805:

> Since then I'm doom'd this sad reverse to prove
> to quit each object of my infant care;
> torn from an honour'd Parent's tender Love,
> and driv'n the keenest, keenest storms of Fate to bear;
> ah! but forgive me, pitied let me part;
> ah! but forgive me, pitied let me part;
> Your frowns, too sure, wou'd break my sinking Heart;
> Your frowns, too sure, wou'd break my sinking sinking Heart.
>
> Where'er I go, what e'er my lowly State,
> Yet grateful mem'ry still shall linger here;
> And when, perhaps you're musing o'er my Fate,
> You still may greet me with a tender Tear;
> Ah! then forgive me, pitied let me part,
> Your frowns too sure, wou'd break my sinking Heart.[404]

The song developed a life and popularity of its own, such was the strength of sentimental interest in its subject.

But within the play, the transformation of Little Pickle is fleeting because nurse Margery, also affected by the boy's grief at displacement and loss, is moved to tell him the true situation. Little Pickle seeks revenge by disguising himself as Margery's son Tommy who insults Miss Pickle about her age, plans to set fire to

her house but instead agrees with his sister 'who, in point of invention, is only second to himself',[405] that they should fall in love with each other and elope.

Moving towards the denouement and returning to a lighter tone of farce, Little Pickle's final act of revenge is against his aunt. He eavesdrops on her moonlight meeting with Tagg (whose real affection is for her property rather than her person), and while they are amorously ensconced in their bower, he stitches their clothes together. Their parting, which Tagg had wanted to stage as 'such sweet sorrow', becomes a farcical disentangling. Eventually they separate, Miss Pickle to fetch her casket of jewels ready for elopement, and Tagg to find her a disguise in which she can escape her brother's vigilance. Old Pickle, as anxious to keep his sister's property in the family, as he is to protect his daughter from Tommy, a 'rascal not worth sixpence', will not countenance her match with Tagg. Old Pickle spies his sister returning with her casket, and steps back to watch. Miss Pickle goes to the bower where she mistakes Little Pickle for Tagg and tries to run off with him, but their escape is blocked by Old Pickle:

Miss P. (R.)	Heavens! a jail! poor dear Mr. Tagg, a victim to his love for me - oh, let us implore his forgiveness – intreat him to release you. [To Tagg.
Little P. (C.)	[*Kneels and throws off his disguise as Tagg, and appears in his own hair, though still in the sailor's dress.*] Thus let me implore for pardon, and believe, that a repentance so sincere as mine will never suffer my heart again to wander from it's [*sic*] duty towards him.
Old P.	What's this! my son. [*Exit* Miss Pickle, *R. in anger; embracing* Little Pickle.] Odds my heart, I'm glad to see him once more - Oh, you dear little fellow! – but, you wicked scoundrel, how did you manage to play me such tricks?
Little P.	Tricks! Oh, sir, recollect you have kindly pardoned them already! and now you must intercede for me with my aunt, that I may have her forgiveness too, for preventing her from eloping, as she designed, with her tender swain, Mr Tagg.
Old P.	Forget 'em, ah! had you vexed me as much again, I should be more than repaid by the happiness of this moment.
Little P.	Kind sir, my joy is then complete, and I will never more offend.[406]

This two-act farce forms a cautionary tale, as much for parents as for children, since *The Spoiled Child* expands upon the adage 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. The central character,

> being endued with an extraordinary flow of animal spirits, combined with a singular talent for mischief, amuses himself (and the audience,) during the holidays, with a variety of practical jokes on his father – the servants – but more particularly on an antiquated maiden aunt.[407]

His behaviour, governed by greed for instant gratification of desires, is a perfect model for the justification of Evangelically inspired notions that children manifested original sin and that their defiant will had to be broken to secure their redemption and their divinely ordered subservience to their parents. His animalism is manifested by complete disregard for conventional social order and rule-following; he appears to have no moral conscience, inflicting physical pain on lesser beings than himself, animals and servants, injuring his father and humiliating his aunt. Little Pickle embodies the monstrosity of childhood, telescoped into the distance by the emphatically elderly demeanour of his father and aunt.

Only when robbed of his identity, social status and home, does he exhibit any kind of finer feeling, and this he does with such typical excess that it instantly charms those predisposed to indulge him: his nurse and the audience. His savagery is confirmed, anarchy is only momentarily checked, and the effect of his cautioning is transitory. The threatening nature of his former behaviour has been enriched by the liberty of his disguise, as he proposes an incestuous liaison with his sister and considers burning his aunt's house to the ground. The acts of mimicking adult behaviour are made to confirm the savagery of the child, and the lower the child's social status, the more unruly its behaviour. Little Pickle as Tommy was even amused to witness his own father's distress at believing him lost at sea, the scene in which the parent receives his emotional due for indulgence of the child.

The play was said to be carried by the skilful acting of the juvenile lead; its narrative focus is on the behaviour of the representative child. As 'acting' elides with behaviour, the 'mimetic tendency' comes to the fore and the primitive is incarnated in the theatre. Yet the spoiled child is ostensibly tamed by the end, and the whole is contained within the genre of farce.

W. T. Moncrieff's *Home for the Holidays: or Young Master, A Comic Drama in One Act* was first produced at the Royal Surrey Theatre on 8 January 1828. Like *The Spoiled Child*, it deploys the motif of the precocious and indulged child, but it overturns the convention of this figure as the origin of mischief by presenting the protagonist as the creator of harmony from the discord generated by the adults during his absence.

Moncrieff states in his 'Advertisement' for the piece that he has adapted the 'National Custom', that a boy, home for school holidays, is allowed to be master of the house for the first twenty-four hours of his return, from its successful dramatisations in France and Germany. He continues:

> It was put into its present shape for the purpose of legitimately displaying the talents of that very extraordinary little boy, MASTER BURKE, in the character of Victor Pleyel, which he sustained in a style of excellence that would not have discredited the efforts of the most experienced actor on the stage.[408]

Master Burke, known as the 'Irish Roscius', was contemporary with Clara Fisher and made his debut in Dublin in the role of Tom Thumb.[409] Although Master Burke was an accomplished musician who became more famous as a violinist than as an actor, Moncrieff states that he refrained from including elements such as 'Hornpipes and Musical Displays, Pantomimic change of dress, and unnatural and impossible assumptions of adult character,' which may have brought him 'a noisier popularity' and all of which are features of *The Spoiled Child*, in order 'to shew the Histrionic talents of Master Burke, in a rational and genuine point of view.'[410] He observes that his determination to promote the career of this boy was in further defiance of convention:

> the character of the Young Master is usually played, on the Continent, by a girl, and may be sustained so here, with, perhaps, encreased effect, as there appears to be a peculiar gout at present, for seeing female legs in breeches: but the Author wished to shew a little boy, playing a little boy's character, and creating a predominant effect, though opposed on all sides by the strongest efforts of veteran and acknowledged talent.[411]

He concludes with unstinting praise for his juvenile lead:

> he has only...to express his high admiration of such precocious merit, and to hope that the unwise flattery of over-weening admirers, may not, hereafter, check the progress of study; but that renewed approbation may lead to encreased improvement and reputation – and the wonderful talents of the boy, be matured by the judgement of the man, and rewarded...by the continual...patronage of the world.[412]

When the play opens, the adult characters prepare themselves for an interlude of unbridled saturnalia: 'my mad-cap nephew, Victor, will...be arriving soon from Gottenburg, and then, according to immemorial custom, he must be master of the house for the next four-and-twenty hours.'[413] Victor duly arrives, accompanied by his Latin Master, Professor Herringutten, first performed by Dibdin Pitt. They splutter scholastic Latin puns, and Victor immediately orders an enormous dinner. The gratification of animal appetites has begun. The butler asks 'what wines would your honour wish brought up? Sauterne, Frontignac, Hock!'. Herringutten interjects with the inevitable pun 'Frontignac, Hock! *hic*, *haec*, *hoc*, good!' He is

trumped by Victor's rejoinder 'You decline it, so do I – wines, I don't like wine – let me have some currant juice and alicampane water – that's what I like!'[414] His dislike of alcohol confirms his juvenility but also augurs the sobering events which are to befall the adult company. He quickly discovers that his uncle has discharged his nurse Dorothea,

> that preserved me when my poor mother died – that always took my part, and never denied me anything – I suppose they think I'm nobody in this family, but egad I'll soon let them see I'm somebody...[415]

His indulgence of infantile desires therefore continues with the command that his substitute mother be found and restored to her proper role in the household.

Victor continues to defy and dismantle situations which his uncle had allowed to develop. In so far as he follows his own sense of propriety rather than that of adult construction, Victor's behaviour is 'mad-cap' just as was anticipated. Yet his interventions expose various moral corruptions within the domestic environment, all of which he sets to right. For example, he forges letters to arrange a wedding feast which had been due to unite two locally feuding families but which had been cancelled over a quarrel about the guest list; he exposes a cheating tenant and arranges for him to pay appropriate rent. His behaviour veers between the exceptionally juvenile and the disturbingly sophisticated. He sets his Latin Master to translate 300 lines of the Aeneid and he admits to having stolen seven jars of apricots from the cheating tenant during the previous summer. On the other hand, he confesses that he knows about the tenant's tricks because:

> I was locked up in your store cupboard, all the time, and heard everything that passed!...Yes, I had a small affair in your house at the time, don't be afraid, it wasn't your wife! You were not honoured so far! I shall not peril the lady's reputation by mentioning names! I trust I'm rather too gallant to kiss and tell! Suffice it, I had a little *affaire de coeur*. If girls take a liking to me, how can I help it![416]

Sexually-knowing and alert to questions of reputation and adultery, this seems incompatible with his apricot-devouring, currant juice-drinking identity. Yet these dual aspects of his character construction are linked as expressions of physical appetites and primal drives that must be satisfied regardless of social convention. For Victor, the end justifies the means, and despite his display of atavistic desires, he correctly summarises the plot with the declaration to the assembled household 'as you were acting like children, I acted like a man!'[417] The play's exposure of a potentially alarming congruence between the natures of children and adults is circumscribed by the genre of comedy and its conventional restoration of domestic

order and social hierarchy. Moncrieff's *Home for the Holidays* enacts a double containment of the child as primitive, since the audience is allowed to witness saturnalian juvenile self-indulgence while recognising that, in this particular plot, it works to establish a more just community. They are entertained by his 'mad-cap' antics, and watch them paradoxically harnessed to benefit society. It seems as if the savagery of Little Pickle was too fierce to be permitted unchecked replication.

When Ellen Terry starred in a play also called *Home for the Holidays* during 1859 to 1861 she played the role of the unruly boy, but the surrounding plot was completely different, suggesting a folkloric polymorphism of the narrative motif of the precocious child. Terry attributes her version of the play to 'a Mr. Courtney'.[418] She and her elder sister Kate played every part in this and in its companion piece *Distant Relations*, directed by their father and first performed at the Royal Colosseum, Regent's Park before touring:

> In 'Home for the Holidays,' which came first in our little programme, Kate played Letitia Melrose, a young girl of about seventeen, who is expecting her young brother 'home for the holidays.' Letitia...was discovered solioquising ...: 'Dear Little Harry! Left all alone in the world, as we are, I feel such a responsibility about him. Shall I find him changed, I wonder, after two years' absence? He has not answered my letters lately. I hope he got the cake and toffee I sent him, but I've not heard a word.' At this point I entered as Harry, but instead of being the innocent little schoolboy of Letitia's fond imagination, Harry appears in loud peg-top trousers (peg-top trousers were very fashionable in 1860), with a big cigar in his mouth, and his hat worn jauntily on one side. His talk is all of racing, betting, fighting....Later on, Sister Letty, looking from the window, sees a grand fight going on between Master Harry and a butcher boy, and then Harry enters with his coat off, his sleeves tucked up, explaining in a state of blazing excitement that he 'had to fight that butcher-boy, because he had struck a little girl in the street.' Letty sees that the lad has a fine nature in spite of his folly, and appeals to his heart and the nobility of his nature – this time not in vain.[419]

Master Harry's 'nobility of nature' seems to mean nobility of breeding, blood and ultimately class, as he pits himself against the unschooled and lower class butcher-boy in order to demonstrate his adjusting accommodation to acceptable behaviour. Acts of violence are apparently acceptable if they are performed in the interests of asserting proper social hierarchies. The fun of the piece is in watching two children aping the manners and beliefs of their elders, as Master Harry adopts the swagger of the man about town and Sister Letty disguises herself as the grim old woman who foresees his destruction. The 'mimetic tendency' of the performers is again self-reflexively embedded in the script, bringing the childish primitive to the fore through both theme and its performative delivery.

The Manager's Daughter, written for Jean Margaret Davenport, was first performed in Richmond in 1836 as part of a double bill with *Douglas*, in which she also performed Young Norval, the role which made Master Betty famous. Jane Goodall has placed it in a tradition of 'protean farce' initiated by *The Actor of All Work* written for Charles Matthews in 1817.[420] There was keen competition amongst performers over who could impersonate the most roles in any one play, and the younger the performer, the greater the triumph. Jean Margaret's rival, Clara Fisher, had previously acted only a total of five different roles in *An Actress of All Work*.[421] Although it has proved impossible to establish Jean Margaret's exact date of birth, the script describes the character of Jean Margaret as 'a young lady nine years of age'.[422] A playbill announcing performances of *The Manager's Daughter* at Ashford the following year, on 8 June 1837, states that Miss Davenport, 'styled the most astonishing JUVENILE ACTRESS of the day' is nine years old.[423] It seems therefore, that even before Dickens' Crummles manufactured the eternal youth of his phenomenal daughter, the age of the first Jean Margaret Davenport remained fictionally suspended.

The plot centres on how the precociously talented Jean Margaret saves her father from financial ruin. Mr Davenport, the manager of a troupe, has asked his actors to perform that evening for his benefit. They refuse to work for no pay. Jean Margaret, sensing her parents' desperation, offers to supply a juvenile company selected from her school friends, to perform the benefit. This is forbidden, so she decides on a different course. She disguises herself as five different characters in succession, giving her a total of six roles altogether:

> Hector Earsplitter, a caricature sketch of a growing Yankee, Miss Effie Heatherbloom, a blossom from the Highlands, Fergus O'Botherwell, a genuine specimen of an Irish bogtrotter, Paul, a minstrel boy from *la grande nation*, Sassinella Thespis, an exquisite model of a first-rate genius.[424]

Each of these remarkable children is promised work by Mr. Davenport, and sent to wait in the greenroom. He goads the discontented members of his company with the news that 'if you cast your eyes into the green-room you will see a group of Lilliputians that will make you as envious as you are high.'[425] The plot remains open-ended: the adults are not manipulated into agreeing to perform, nor are the 'children' rehearsed in a new piece. Instead, Jean Margaret steps forward to confess:

> Yes, in my person you behold them all; I know that you will forgive the cheat, and that papa will over-look my presumption. (*Advances.*) But what will my patrons say? ah, I fear not them! My efforts were to save a father.

And never yet in such a holy cause,
Did kindly hands withhold that sweet applause,
That which more joyously nought the ear can bless,
For, ah, it carries tidings of success![426]

What had been presented as the prelude to the resolution of Davenport's financial difficulties becomes the resolution itself. This is the final, retrospectively achieved, fusion of the boundaries between theatrical fiction and theatrical fact.

In *The Spoiled Child* and *Home for the Holidays*, childhood is marked as a discrete phase of development by the protagonists' off-stage attendance at school, and this remains the case in *The Manager's Daughter*. But school is no longer the primary marker of childhood's unique transitional status. Instead, what is brought to the fore as a defining feature of her childishness, is her capacity for play. Both school and playfulness are signalled by her first appearance:

Enter Margaret singing, with a large doll in her arms.
Air – *Merry Swiss Boy*

Oh, my doll! pretty doll, what a darling you are;
How I doat on those pretty blue eyes!
Such a head! Lips so red! – it was dearest mamma
Who gave you to me for a prize;
And I will keep you all my life,
And you shall be another doll's wife.
Oh my doll, etc.

Oh, Papa! Look at my new doll; I shall be the envy of the entire school – Where's ma? -Oh! There she is, and weeping! – Oh! Mamma, what's the matter? [*Runs to Mrs Davenport*]

Mrs Davenport. Nothing, my child, nothing; play with your doll, there's a good girl; you are not old enough to understand the cares of this life.[427]

The character's entrance with her doll chimes with the historical report given by a former member of Davenport's company of how the troupe's talents were advertised on arrival at a new village venue:

Davenport would pick out a lodging which all the churchgoers would have to pass on Sunday morning. He would dress up the infant phenomenon and make her sit dancing a big doll where she could be seen in the window, and the people would stand in groups open-mouthed in wonder at the baby who played

> with her doll in the morning, and trod the boards at night as Macbeth. Then the whole family formed in procession with prayer-books in their hands and the vanity of earthly joys in their faces, and went to church. Davenport went first, his wife behind, and the phenomenon in the rear, and always managed to reach the church just after everybody was seated, and marched up the aisle to the communion table in a style of pure melodrama, thus attracting the attention of all to the phenomenon.[428]

The carefully staged pictures of character and actor with their dolls emphasises childishness and sets up the possibility of audience astonishment at the contrast between the display of innocent juvenility and the subsequent proficiency of her performances. The conjunction of child with doll also suggests an iconic identity between the actor and her toy. She is both an agent of play and a thing to be played with. One of the characters in *The Manager's Daughter*, the female lead of Davenport's company called Miss Desborough and played by Miss Desborough pours scorn on Davenport's assertions that he is forming a juvenile company to make his adults redundant by asking him 'Pray has your wonderful assembly of living puppets arrived yet?'[429] This designation of child actors as 'living puppets' suggests a larger vision of the stage child. The interchangeability of child with puppet allowed it to be seen as the subject of a kind of primitive animism in which the theatre child was regarded with a mixture of marvel, suspicion and contempt. Jean Margaret's particular mirroring of her doll further suggests that the qualities of ideal beauty for which Jean Margaret cherishes her doll, 'those pretty blue eyes!...Lips so red!', were precisely the features which the audience enjoyed about her own stage presence. The doll's foreseen integration within a network of doll marriage betokens childhood's ludic imitation of adult roles; it brings forward that capacity for play, or the child's 'mimetic tendency', in a manner which contrasts with that of Jean Margaret's male predecessors. The imitations of adult behaviour in which Little Pickle and Victor Pleyel had engaged tended to threaten the social status quo. This was particularly the case with their apings of adult sexuality. Little Pickle proposes incest and Victor teases with the possibility of adultery, but Jean Margaret foresees marriage, the perfect containment of her eroticised appearance, blue eyes and red lips, within the adult order.

The early establishment of Jean Margaret's intimate connection with her doll looks forward to the use of the adjective 'clever' to describe the theatrical accomplishments of herself and her school fellows later in the play. The conventional nineteenth-century appellation 'clever child actress' suggests something mechanical about the performance style of children, trained to mimic moves and utterances without fully embodying them, so that they appeared on stage in a sense like dolls. This early training was seen to leave a trace in the style of adult performers. For example, a biographical article about Amy Roselle, digressing on the subject of

theatre children, asserted: 'the training they are necessarily subjected to in a theatre imparts to their style a staginess which they afterwards find it impossible or at least very difficult to throw off'.[430] So when Minnie Terry 'again proved herself the most natural child-actress we have on the stage' in *The Pharisee* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in 1890, her acting style contrasted with the more mechanical representations familiar from the work of other children.[431] The vogue for child actors had an impact on the acting style of older women, and encouraged deliberate infantilisation of adult acting style. This had its counterpart in the culturally conventional infantilisation of women which made the title of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* so resonant. The composition of *The Doll Dramas* by Constance Milman in 1890 for domestic performance by children was a logical development of the perceived iconic identity of theatre child and doll. The whole complex configuration of doll, juvenile and adult performer is epitomised within that collection by *The Doll's Drama*. It is set inside '*a Room in a Doll's House*', its cast comprises the entire range of youth and age, animate and inanimate creature, with which the performance style of Victorian theatre children had come to be associated. [432] From this perspective, Milman's *The Doll's Drama* can be viewed as the teleological fulfilment of the Dickensian 'Infant Phenomenon', drawn from the accomplishments of the historical Jean Margaret Davenport and her fictional counterpart in *The Manager's Daughter*.

Following the introduction of Jean Margaret with her doll, the plot of *The Manager's Daughter* moves quickly to facilitate the performer's display of virtuoso skill. Her father is surprised by her offer to supply an acting company selected from her school friends, but she reminds him that they have had some experience of acting from their end-of-term show, in which she herself excelled as Richard III: 'remember how I acted at our breaking-up. – 'A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!'[433] This vignette enables the real Jean Margaret to rival her famous predecessor Clara Fisher whose interpolation of Richard III in her performance of Lord Filmnap in 1817 'drew all London'; by inviting comparison, attention is drawn to the performer rather than the fictional role and it is another way of asserting the primacy of 'acting' rather than plot.[434] Jean Margaret continues to plead with her father for permission to bring her school friends to his assistance with the claim 'a great many of my school fellows are very clever'.[435] She uses the term 'clever' in this context to mean skilled in acting, according to its conventional use in the period, rather than to denote intellectually bright. Indeed it seems that acting comprises the entire educational syllabus at her school, to which Jean Margaret refers in her last disguise as Sassinella Thespis:

Enter Margaret, fashionably attired.

Margaret. Did you call, Sir?

Davenport. No, child: I don't know your name.

Margaret.	Didn't your daughter tell you, it was Sassinella Thespis at your service? [*Curtseys.*]
Davenport.	Oh, then, you are another of her schoolmates?
Margaret.	[*Curtseying, and speaking with much simplicity*] Yes, Sir....
Davenport.	Your governess allows you to get up private plays amongst you?
Margaret.	Yes, sir?
Davenport.	And you are all very clever?
Margaret.	Yes, Sir – no, Sir – some are, and some are not.
Davenport.	I should scarcely suspect you of belonging to the former class.
Margaret.	[*Altering her style to one of full of spirit and vivacity*] What, you were misled by my diffidence; but, pardon all boldness, and you shall no longer complain of that. I can be gay and full of sport; but, you know, Sir, little girls should not always be so.
Davenport.	You are right, my little dear – I should like to be present at one of your entertainments.
Margaret.	You would laugh rarely, Sir, at some of us; there was Miss Jacqueline Stubbs, for instance, in playing Lady Anne, spoke thus. (*Speaks in a drawling school-girl's voice – one speech of Lady Anne commencing with 'hung be the heavens with black'*) Then there was Master Signor Snuffle in playing Douglas, declaims in this way, [*Imitates*, 'my name is Norval.'][436]

Sassinella's account of her school activities permits Jean Margaret to extend her repertoire of display still further. Its range suggests that her real school is the theatre, further closing the gap between fiction and reality. Sassinella's stated awareness of what was appropriate demeanour for little girls, and her knowledge that skill in acting departs from the norm, develops Jean Margaret's careful negotiation at the start of the play. Here she was caught between what her father forbids her to do and what she can still achieve without open defiance:

> What is to be done! This is the most serious thing that has occurred since I broke my last doll's nose; I wish I had been let go for my school- fellows – ah, I have it; I shall represent them *all* myself; papa didn't forbid *that*...[437]

In an era when it was seen as the divinely ordained duty of children to obey parents, Jean Margaret is as anxious to remain virtuous as she is to use her initiative.

The characters she impersonates are all stage stereotypes: the Yankee, the Scot, the Irish, the French and finally the English stage child, 'model of first-rate

genius'. Beyond the obvious point that such clearly defined types allowed the actress to develop sharply differentiated styles of performance and to rely on established modes of representation, all of them, with the exception of Sassinella, represent national identities with which the English either had or continued to have relationships of sovereign conflict. The American War of Independence (1775-1783) was not a distant memory, the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) had ended merely some twenty years before the play was staged, while the Scots and the Irish exhibited long-standing restlessness under the yoke of Westminster, not subdued by the Acts of Union of 1707 (Scotland) and 1800 (Ireland). Each type presented poses a potential threat to the hegemonic stability of the era. Their parodic impersonation by a juvenile enacts a diminution of the threat, a belittling achieved by the comic caricature of national identity, and by the divertingly small body of the actor. Jean Margaret's parody of herself, the stage child, in the shape of Sassinella Thespis, acts out the ultimate containment of the precocious child whose ambitions are simultaneously admired and mocked by both her on-stage auditor Mr Davenport and the theatre audience.

This drama of containment is framed by the paradox that Jean Margaret's prolonged enactment of deceit entails the successful performance of her filial responsibility, and may be justly forgiven:

> if I can deceive him [Mr Davenport], there is a probability of deceiving the company also, who will then be frightened into remaining with him, lest they lose their salaries; I shall then be enabled to repay the debt of gratitude which I owe my parents; – let me hasten to the wardrobe.[438]

Following the model of *The Spoiled Child*, there is one moment in *The Manager's Daughter* when the animatedly savage types represented by Jean Margaret merge into their sibling identity of the arcadian child. This is in her appearance as the orphaned French minstrel boy:

> Pardonney un garçon, madame; I am one leetle orphan shield, widout no fader and no moder. Good people, tell me if dis be le place where one grande lady and gentlehomme pay much large money to hear de moosic and de dance, and to see de pretty song. [439]

He tells his tragic story, in which his family was caught up in revolutionary fighting and he witnessed the death of both parents, by the end of which Mrs Davenport declares 'the boy has made me cry like a simpleton' and she offers him shelter and food.[440] Innocence and vulnerability must be protected, and elicit a reflex response of sentimentality. This contrasts with the spirit of brash adventure which characterises Jean Margaret's other characters, for which her first, the Yankee boy Hector

Earsplitter, may serve as an example:

Tragedian.	It strikes me, young gallant, that you are given to fibs!
Margaret.	Oh, yes! It's an accomplishment I'm proud of; there's not a chap east of New Jersey as can lie like me! I'll bet a diamond mine to a sunbeam, that I'll lie, and tell you I lie and yet you shall believe the lie, all the time that I am lying.
Tragedian.	Bragodocia – prove your words!
Margaret.	Well, you are a right down arnest, slickaway, bang up, prime, tarnation good sort of a chap! Now, I calculate, no lie can be bigger than that, and yet you'll believe it, I reckon.[441]

The multiple identities assumed by Jean Margaret self-reflexively exhibit the stage child, and beneath that, the generic child, indulging in role play as preparation for adulthood. Her dialogue here, drawing attention to its status as a 'lie', also carries dramatic irony. The audience knows that Jean Margaret is doubly 'lying' since she is not really the character she pretends to be. The deeper irony is that the lies of her dramatic dialogue symbolise the wickedness of the disobedient child, original sin, and the self-serving drives of the young. The monstrous infant flaunts itself. Yet a final question remains. Is it an act of cruel punishment, subordination and assimilation to train the historical Jean Margaret Davenport like a 'living puppet' to strut about the stage as parodic versions of herself, trumping them all with her caricature of the theatre child in Sassinella? Or does the play represent the liberation of the child from the tyranny of adult control by the subversive vitality of her roles? What, ultimately, drew applause from contemporary audiences? A picture of assimilation, or a picture of unrestrained freedom?

Whatever the precise sources of her appeal may have been, Jean Margaret Davenport remained a darling of the stage for some years after the first performance of *The Manager's Daughter*. On 31 March 1837 she performed in a triple bill at Portsmouth Theatre as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, in the title role of *The Manager's Daughter*, and Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child*, with her parents in the supporting roles.[442] Her curious afterlife as the 'Infant Phenomenon', Ninetta Crummles in *Nicholas Nickleby* returns her to the stage. The narrative was dramatised even before Dickens had finished all the serial episodes and the earliest adaptations appeared before the Crummles had been introduced. Jean/Ninnetta is therefore absent from Stirling's two-act farce *Nicholas Nickleby* staged at the Adelphi in 1838, from Mellon's comedy *Doings at Do-The-Boys Hall* for the York circuit in 1839 and from Moncrieff's three-act drama *Nicholas Nickleby and Poor Smike* at the Strand in 1839. She first appears in *The Savage and the Maiden* a one-act farce by Horncastle staged in New York at the Olympic in 1840 and subsequently in many of the nineteenth-century adaptations of the novel staged in England.[443]

Et in Arcadia Ego: The Spectacle of the Dying Child

When D' Oyly Carte was fêted for his first experiment in full scale juvenile production with the *Children's Pinafore* in the winter of 1879, amongst individuals singled out for praise was the six year-old 'Midshipmite, he creates a roar whenever he struts across the deck'.[444] 'Our Captious Critic' in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* chose to end his eulogistic review by noticing this performance by the youngest member of the cast:

> Last, and for once in a way really least, is Master Augustus Fitzclarence, who plays the part of Tom Tucker, a midshipmite; truly he is a marvel of youthful preciosity, and finds more difficulty in clambering up the (to him) mountainous quarter-deck ladder than he does in commanding the men under him![445]

A favourite with the public, there was a national expression of grief when he died shortly after the run of the *Children's Pinafore*. Clement Scott wrote a sixteen stanza ballad called 'The Midshipmite' to commemorate the boy's achievement and brief life, published in *The Theatre* on 1 May 1880.

Stanzas one to five tell how a young couple married (as a 'runaway match') in Sevenoaks Church one spring day. Stanzas six and seven tell that a year after marriage they had a baby boy, and that the husband died. Stanza eight recounts the young mother's struggle to raise her son, concluding, 'And there wasn't a soul to pity the fate of the destitute actor's wife.' The narrative of the Midshipmite begins in the transitional stanza nine:

> For six long years, as I live, 'tis
> true, in the midst of the city's din,
> She slaved and starved for her baby-boy,
> and her soul was free from sin;
> And at last they said for the actor's child
> they had found on the stage a part,
> So she said, 'The gift that an artist gave
> I will dedicate pure to art.'
>
> They took him away from his mother, and
> Her heart was sick and sore,
> Though her baby-boy was the life and soul
> of 'Her Majesty's Pinafore;'
> Whenever the theatre rang with cheers and
> echoes with wild delight,
> A heart in the gallery shook with fear
> for the fate of the Midshipmite.

For the boy was odd, old-fashioned, and
over-clever, 'twas said,
He was full of the strangest fancies,
and complained of an aching head;
And one day, half in earnest, and possibly
half in fun,
He asked, 'Who will help us, mother, when
the 'Pinafore' ceased to run?'

'Twas the close of a heartless winter that
chang'ed to a cheerless spring,
With wind in the east that struck with
a chill the child at the draughty wing,
When the mother found, to her horror, the
boy was too ill to sup,
And he said in a curious manner,
'The 'Pinafore' run is up!

'Give me a kiss, my mother, and put
me away to bed,
For my limbs they ache; and I shiver;
I've pains in my throbbing head,
I feel tonight so weary.' And out of
his tuneful store
He murmured the airs, in a childlike
way, of 'Her Majesty's Pinafore.'

'Oh, say that you love me, darling!'
she whispered, pale with fears;
But he murmured, 'Hardly ever,' as he
kissed away her tears;
And then, as a nightmare vision the
mind of a sleeper haunts,
He said, 'You'll be kind to my cousins,
my sisters, and my aunts.'

On the ship that had been his playground
he sailed to his rest at last,
With a cheer for his baby comrades as
he clung to the yielding mast;
And he moaned out, rack'd with

torture, as the sands in the hour-glass ran,
'Well, in spite of all temptation, your
boy is an Englishman!'

They buried the little sailor, quite
close to his father's side,
Seven years from the day in Sevenoaks
Church his mother was made a bride.
So there's the story of that which is! God
knows what might have been;
And this is the reason why Margaret
Gray is walking to Kensal Green![446]

The poem evokes many of the conventional Victorian postures over the dying child, common in literature between 1840 and 1910.[447] Literary treatments of the final visionary experience of the dying child conventionally focus on a shining garden of Paradise, as in *Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842), death of Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre* (1847), death of Paul Dombey (1848), death of Little Willie in *East Lynne* (1860). These descriptions may influence each other and, as the dialogue of *East Lynne* allows, may be indebted to painterly visions such as those by John Martin in *Plains of Heaven* (1851–5, Tate).[448] However, this Midshipmite does not see beyond his own theatrical set, the ship becoming invested with metaphysical significance by the context of the poem. But it was a haunting death, its public memory still so vivid nine years later that Lewis Carroll, defending the stage as a profession for children under the age of ten, felt compelled to assert, in passing parenthesis, 'the pathetic death of the tiny Midshipmite in 'Patience' (sic) was due to causes quite unconnected with stage work.'[449] The death of Augustus Fitzclarence played into the hands of social reformers who wished to remove young children from the stage, an effect compounded by its attribution by Scott to a chill caught in the draughty wings of the theatre.

The metaphysical significance of the boy's death was a reminder, like Poussin's mysterious paintings *Arcadian Shepherds* in which beautiful and classically costumed youths inspect a tomb inscribed with the words *et in arcadia ego*, that even in arcadia there is death. 'One and all, little ones, I thank you for your excellent performances. Pray remain always children. Don't grow up into big actors, full of envy, spleen and malice.[450] For once, this wish, voiced by 'Our Captious Critic' in response to *Little Goody Two-Shoes*, was granted. Augustus Fitzclarence would never grow up; his was a death which conquered death, 'for the image in which one leaves the world, is that in which one moves among the shadows.'[451] Leigh Hunt, exploring the same idea in his essay 'Deaths of Little Children' asserted:

> The other children grow up to manhood and womanhood, and suffer all the changes of mortality. This one alone is rendered an immortal child. Death has arrested it with his kindly harshness, and blessed it into an eternal image of youth and innocence.[452]

The death of Augustus Fitzclarence enabled the Midshipmite to stand as an icon of eternal youth, pointing adults the way towards transcendence. As Wilde stated in 'The Selfish Giant': 'And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, 'You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise.'[453]

Cellier's account of D'Oyly Carte's next juvenile production, the *Children's Pirates of Penzance*, explores the immortal longings engendered by a juvenile company composed of fifty-four children aged between ten and thirteen drawn from the lower middle classes. Lingering over the cast list of principals who appeared in the *Pirates of Penzance*, he comments:

> Some have continued to pursue the theatrical career they started so auspiciously; but the majority have been swallowed up in the vortex of London and been reduced to nobodies in particular.
>
> Recalling to mind that bright and merry crowd who gladdened us all by their sweet singing and winsome acting, some of us may instinctively feel a pang of regret that those delightful children should ever have been forced to grow up into men and women of everyday life.
>
> But some of us say the same about kittens:
>
> "Kittie, Kittie!
> What a pity -
> What a dreadful pity that
> You, who are so pert and pretty,
> Should become a nasty cat!"[454]

This is more than a meditation on mortality and a conventionally vain sense of *tempus fugit* by which the ephemeral nature of theatre production, here today and gone tomorrow, functions as a metaphor for life itself. The sense of time, racing and cruel, is enhanced by the knowledge that the years between performance and the memory by which it is recovered will have changed these child performers more markedly than it has changed the then already adult Cellier himself. But the author is simultaneously dwelling on the unusual status which members of this company enjoyed. By implication, the children on stage were larger than life, 'somebodies' rather than 'nobodies', not of the same order as future 'men and women of everyday life'. The cast list itself suggests the dual identities inhabited by the performers:

General Stanley . . . MASTER EDWARD PERCY
Pirate King . . . . MASTER STEPHEN ADESON[455]

For a while Edward Percy was General Stanley, and General Stanley was Edward Percy. In this, the cast list is like every other cast list, only the appellation 'Master' distinguishes it. But this prefix is crucial, for it highlights the public nonentity of the performer in relation to the role played. Master Edward Percy was not an 'Infant Phenomenon', he has no glamorous theatrical career to draw crowds. The boy's identity is taken over by that of the fictional character, and the fleeting interchangeability of the two lifts the real boy into the realm of art. The relevance of the *ars longa, vita brevis* dictum for the status of the juvenile actor was recognised by Wilde when he described the death of Sybil Vane in of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

> The girl never really lived and so she has never really died....Mourn for Ophelia, if you like. Put ashes on your head because Cordelia was strangled. Cry out against Heaven because the daughter of Brabantio died. But don't waste your tears over Sybil Vane. She was less real than they are.[456]

Growing up, leaving the theatre, the house of illusion, Cellier's juveniles, like Sybil Vane, have fallen from grace. But equally and paradoxically, they were less than human, likened to animals, the 'nasty' cat masquerading latent within the 'pert and pretty kittie'. It is a momentary meditation in which Cellier savours the uniquely precious transience of this production, and brandishes the memory of it as a plea against growing up, even as an icon to withstand death and vanishing into 'the vortex'.

The compelling image of the dying child was enshrined in Mrs Henry Wood's enduringly popular novel *East Lynne* (1861). Enthusiastically reviewed in *The Times* in January 1862 it was first dramatised in New York at the Academy of Music later that year.[457] A second American version was commissioned from Clifton W. Tayleur by the actress Lucille Western who wished to play Lady Isabel. This premiered at the Winter Gardens in New York on 28 March 1863. Despite an initially hostile reception, Western's performance of the role helped to secure her fortune as it became an annual event in New York for the next ten years, and it formed the centrepiece of her provincial tours during the same period. Tayleur's version was used for the first British production of the play in London in 1863. Fourteen Victorian versions have been identified by Adrienne Scullion, in her 1996 edition of the W. T. Palmer script performed at the Nottingham Theatre Royal on 19 November 1874.[458] These, together with countless revivals, testify to the popular and legendary status of this material.

The instabilities of the script can be adduced from Henry Herman's account of how Wilson Barrett generated his script for performance at the Olympic Theatre:

> he found no manuscript of the play was in existence....The play lived only in the memory of the actors, and to obtain a new manuscript these were called together and a private undress performance was given, whilst a short-hand writer, seated in a private box, took down the speeches verbatim. In this way a new prompt-copy was obtained.[459]

The story is corroborated by John Coleman who describes how Wilson Barrett's company decided to boost box office income, by mounting an unscheduled performance of *East Lynne*, only to find that nobody had the script. They sent to London for a prompt copy 'written down from memory'.[460]

The melodrama tells how Lady Isabel is seduced by a scheming rake, bears his illegitimate child, is abandoned by him. Believed by her family to have died, she returns to the home of her childhood and marriage in East Lynne, disguised as the governess Madame Vine. There she witnesses the death of her son Willie before staging her own death in the presence of her former husband. Two features of the play contributed to its enduring appeal: the depiction of the remorseful fallen woman and the staging of her son's death.

Lady Isabel is herself presented as a childlike woman, protected after the death of her father by the paternal figures of his executor and her husband. Her vulnerability is symbolised by her pseudonym 'Vine', a clinging creeper which requires careful nurture and support to flourish. Once she becomes aware of the full extent of her plight, she prefers death to desertion and disgrace:

> My name is never mentioned, I am mourned as one dead. Oh, would that I had died when I might have heard kind loving voices as my spirit passed away from earth to heaven! My husband, my children! – Oh, never again to hear *him* say 'Isabel, my wife!' Never again to hear *their* infant tongues murmur the holy name of '*mother*'! Lost, degraded, friendless, abandoned, and alone! Alone – utterly alone – for evermore! (*Sinks on her knees despairingly as the curtain falls*)[461]

This is the tableau on which Act II ends, and it ushers in her final punishment and brief reprieve of the last Act.

Her representation of the act of dying as a moment of transition between earth and heaven anticipates what is revealed by the death of Willie. But whereas Lady Isabel imagines familiar voices lifting her into the unknown, the dying child is able to mediate perceptions of the afterlife to those left behind:

> Act III, scene iii
> *Bed-chamber, moonlight streaming through window on to bed.*
> WILLIE on bed, JOYCE by side

WILLIE: Joyce, where is papa?
(MADAME VINE *at door*)
MADAME VINE: Is – is – he worse, Joyce?
JOYCE: I'm afraid he is, and he will not last long. Ah! well, he'll be better off, poor child.
MADAME VINE: Yes – yes; though it is a sore trial to see those we love fading away; there are worse – more bitter partings on earth than death. I think he is dropping off to sleep again, poor dear....
WILLIE: It will not be very long to wait, will it, Madame Vine?
MADAME VINE: Wait for what, my own darling?
WILLIE: Before they all come – papa, and Lucy, and Archie, and we all meet, where papa says there is no more pain.
MADAME VINE: Not long, my darling; oh, not long!
WILLIE: Do you think we shall know everybody there, or only our own relations?
MADAME VINE: My child, we cannot tell that, we must trust to our Father in heaven, who knows what is best for us.
WILLIE: Do you think my mama will be there? I mean my own, my very own mama; she who is gone away.
MADAME VINE: I hope so – if – if she is forgiven!
WILLIE: And shall I know her, I have quite forgotten what she was like; shall I know her?
MADAME VINE: I hope so, I do hope so; but there – there, my darling, do not talk any more now, try and sleep. (*Pause*)
WILLIE: Where are you, Madame Vine?
MADAME VINE: Here, my sweet boy – here!
WILLIE: I cannot see you, I can only see a bright shining light like the sun on the waters, and beyond that, oh! such a beautiful garden full of flowers, and I seem to hear music and sweet singing, as I've heard papa say the angels in heaven sing. (*Pause*) Are you there now, Madame Vine?
MADAME VINE: Yes darling?
WILLIE: I cannot see you or hear your voice. I cannot hear the singing of those voices in the shining garden. There! – there! (*Points up and falls back, pause*)
MADAME VINE: Ah! the sweet young face is calm as – as – if – in death. His little heart has ceased to beat for ev-. Oh! no! not for ever! Speak to me, Willie! (*Throws off her disguise*) This cannot be death so soon; speak to me, your broken-hearted mother. Oh! Willie! my own darling! my own – my –
JOYCE *enters*
JOYCE: Oh, Madame Vine, what is this? (*She starts up and faces* JOYCE)
MADAME VINE: Oh! My child is dead! (JOYCE *starts back in amazement*)
JOYCE: My dear Lady Isabel! Not! – not dead?

> ISABEL: No, Oh, would that I were dead.... Oh, that I had died and been spared this agony. Oh! my boy! – my boy! (*Sobbing on body of child*)
> JOYCE: Do – do come away lady! Mr Carlyle is coming with his wife, for the love of heaven come away! If they find you here, thus –
> ISABEL: I care not now, oh, my Willie!
> Oh, Willie, my child dead, dead, dead! and he never knew me, never called me mother! (*Falls sobbing across the body as* CARLYLE and BARBARA *enter*) (Curtain)[462]

Here the death of the child, speaking of the life to come, brings about the immediate resurrection of the mother. Enabling her to recover her identity as Lady Isabel, she can act out the death she craved on confronting her disgrace. The last scene of the play is a duologue between the dying Lady Isabel and her former husband, of whom she begs forgiveness. She pleads that she may survive in his memory as 'a happy innocent girl' rather than as the iniquitous woman she became.[463] Her retreat into childhood at the moment of death signifies the expiation of her sin through punishment and a recovery of grace through repentance. The death of little Willie was experienced by contemporary audiences as the climax of the play, an event so vividly drawn that it could be remembered as a self-contained mini-drama; but the scene is placed at the nexus of a complex figurative arrangement designed to recuperate the penitent fallen woman. Her resurrected identity signals her rebirth at a higher level of moral awareness.

Three children (or two with doubling) were required for the staging of *East Lynne*, since Willie has two siblings, Lucy and Archie. Two of them make a pathetic appearance at the end of Act I, to underline the dreadfulness of Lady Isabel's desertion.[464] The second significant appearance of a child occurs at the end of Act II scene i: '*[L]ittle boy* ARCHIE *runs in*,' from a musical party held by Carlyle, his second wife and their friends, audible from the stage space:

> MADAME VINE *catches him in her arms and sits in a low chair, or on a stool, carresses him fondly*) You will learn to love me I hope. I am very fond of – (WILSON *enters*) *Ah!* (*Confused*) You are surprised no doubt to see me so overcome. But I once had a dear boy so like him – oh! so like him! and this dear child made me think of my – my irreparable loss.
> WILSON: You naughty little monkey, how dare you run away in this manner?
> MADAME VINE: Oh, pray do not scold him.
> WILSON: Oh, ma'am, you've no idea what he is; he's getting too audacious and rumbustical for the nursery. Come here sir, I'll speak to your mama about you. (*Shakes boy away from* MADAME VINE)
> MADAME VINE: Oh! do not beat him, I cannot bear to see him beaten.

WILSON: Beaten! If he did get a good sound one it's no more than he deserves. You come along, sir, do. (*Jerks him out of the room.* MADAME VINE *with difficulty restraining her emotion*)
MADAME VINE: My own child! and I dare not say to a servant, you shall not beat him.
(BARBARA *sings one verse of 'You'll remember me' during the foregoing, so that the last three lines are heard after* MADAME VINE *has said 'You shall not beat him'*)
BARBARA: 'Some recollection be
Of days that have as happy been.
Then you'll remember me.'
MADAME VINE: Does he remember me?....[465]

The issue of the child from the harmonious off-stage space into the mimetic arena, followed by his abrupt departure, affords a microcosmic and domesticated version of the relationship between immortality and mortality. It is only in an unseen but apprehendable realm that contains 'some recollection...of days that have as happy been' that the nostalgic yearning for home, reconciliation and peace can be satisfied. The child, in this case Archie (the displaced 'monkey' who is too 'audacious...for the nursery'), is the resonant intermediary between these two realms of experience and imagination or belief.

This brief encounter between estranged mother and child anticipates the climactic representation of Willie's death. Archie's clinging to his mother, and the force of his removal, looks forward to Isabella's clinging to the dead body of her son; through the echo of the physical gesture the infantilisation of her role is compounded. The yearning for reconciliation, given to Madame Vine in her encounter with Archie, is later transferred to the dying Willie when he hopes for a heavenly reunion with his family in which everybody will be fully 'known'. Isabella's disguise as Madame Vine functions as a metaphor for the necessary estrangements of mortality which can only be overcome in the perfection of the afterlife. Auerbach comments, 'the dying child repudiates the lie of others' lives, embodying instead our lost original perfection.'[466]

She argues that in performance, when Little Willie was conventionally played by a girl, 'Willie threatens to become a mutable being, like his mother, his inviolate identity dissipating into a play of roles.' To guard against the mutability manifest in the theatre through the discrepancy between role and performer, she claims that 'his integrity needed cosmic ratification: the popular concluding tableau of Willie and Lady Isabel sitting blissfully in Heaven on a cloud guaranteed his death the spiritual authority it had by definition in the novel.'[467]

It can, however, be argued that this tableau transforms Heaven into theatre. Rather than an assertion of transcendence, this heavenly vision emphasises the

spectacular and convention-bound nature of the concluding show. It cuts the divine down to size and makes theatre a visionary end rather than a means to enable vision. The ambiguity of what the dying theatre child represents is captured by the fable 'Tatters' Debut' which appeared in the *Era Almanac Advertiser* in 1888:

> We never knew whence he came, to whom he belonged, or what his right name was. He was the adopted son of Tom Williams, the head carpenter, and had been in the theatre for two years before most of us had joined the company. He had more than once said that he 'never had a father or mother,' so we imagined that he had been deserted, like many another poor waif, had drifted through the stage-door....The name he was first called – evidently from his then ragged appearance – had stuck to him, and he was known as 'Tatters' by everyone connected with the place. A bright little fellow he was, too, all smiles and laughter.....He was about ten years of age, I should guess, but he was far in advance of that, both in manner and intellect. What wonder that...he should want to become an actor. He surprised me one day, as I strolled in to rehearsal, by running up to me, clasping my legs with both his arms, looking up into my face – his countenance more than usually bright and shining – and shouting. 'Oh, Mr. D'Arcy, sir! I've got a part! I've got a part!' 'I'm very glad indeed,' I replied....'I'm going on in the pantermine, and I'm goin' to say somethin', too!'....I am sure no debut under the most auspicious circumstances was ever looked forward to, talked about, and dreamt about more than 'Tatters" appearance in the forthcoming pantomime of Aladdin. I found out that our stage-manager had wanted a youngster for the Princess's black page. Somebody had suggested 'Tatters'....
>
> He was in ecstasy. He counted the weeks till Christmas....'I hope I shall do it well, Mr. D'Arcy, sir,' he said to me one day; 'it 'ud be sich a bad job if the pantermine was spiled!'....This anxious fear on his part proved to me that his whole heart and soul was in his work, and that he would do his very best, just as if the credit of the whole production rested upon his shoulders.
>
> Time went on, the parts were distributed, and 'Tatters' had received his....We thought it would please the little fellow to have a real 'scrip' to study from, like the other members of the cast (he was not able to read fluently, but could spell out and understand both print and writing)....He was wild with pleasure. He capered about with the wildest glee imaginable, waving the manuscript above his head. The part was a short one, but that mattered little to 'Tatters'; he was really an actor now, and was happy....His business was to wave off all who approached too near the Princess, and say, 'Stand back, sah!' It was quite fun to hear him at all times repeating these three magic words to himself....Another source of delight was the fine pale-blue satin costume, braided with gold lace, which we had taken care to let him know was being made for him....

> My pen fails me to describe the way 'Tatters' behaved on Boxing Night while waiting for his cue to enter. He had only to wait till the second scene, but his impatience was painful to witness, and one could tell by the expression of his face that it seemed to him ages before the 'demons' were done with....His turn did come at last. A grand entrance had been arranged for him. He was put to sit cross-legged upon a canopy over the Princess's chair, which was carried by four black slaves, one at each corner. With a large fan he majestically waved the crowd back and spoke his words, 'Stand back, sah!' Whether it was the comical way he said them, or the pretty figure he looked, I don't know, but he took the fancy of the audience at once and they gave him a hearty round of applause. His eyes caught mine...and the childish look of intense delight upon his face will never fade from my memory....In passing the upper wing, out of sight of the audience, one of the front-corner men caught his foot against something, then stumbled, and finally fell upon one knee. Tatters was hurled from his seat – where two minutes before he had looked so happy – with terrific force against the wall, and fell with a dull thud upon the stage, the blood streaming the while from a great wound in his head....With sickening fear I picked the little chap up, not knowing whether I bore a corpse in my arms or not. They wanted to take him to the hospital, but my rooms were nearer the theatre, and as my landlady was the kindest soul in the world, I sent him there.... I hurried home....What a change in a few hours! They had washed him and bound up his head....It brought tears to my eyes, and I found myself weeping like a child....In an hour or so I heard him murmuring to himself. I stooped to listen, and in the awful silence heard these words, 'Stand back, sah!'....he was regaining consciousness. He knew me at once, and said, 'Mr. D'Arcy, sir, I'm so hot!' He sat up in bed, and I put my arm round him. He took my disengaged hand in both of his, and remained quiet for some time. Suddenly he looked up into my face and whispered, 'Oh, Mr. D'Arcy, I did do it well, didn't I?' 'Yes,' I chokingly replied; 'you did, my child.' A pleasant smile lit his face as he fell back. He had breathed his last!
>
> Poor little 'Tatters!' he had played his part to the best of his ability and he was satisfied.[468]

In this story theatrical performance displaces heaven, and forecloses ascent to the afterlife. 'Tatters' is the foundling child. Displaced, alone, of mysterious origins, he belongs to the recognisable class of poverty-stricken 'waifs', depicted conventionally by his ragged dress, his cockney accent, and his inability to 'read fluently'. But for all his social disadvantages, he is 'all smiles and laughter' and uncannily mature. His one ambition, to become an actor, is fulfilled in a moment of transfiguring glory when he is blacked up, costumed in blue and gold, carried on top of the royal litter and specially applauded by the Boxing Night audience. His

new skin colour emphasises the child's embodiment of the primitive, a signifier of both metaphysical and social dimensions of his status. It links him with the 'savages' of the distant Empire, evolving out of arcadia into time, and with the host of waifs and orphans, including theatre children themselves as reformers represented them, who required literal and spiritual cleansing. The juxtaposition of Tatters' black skin with his glorious costume bearing the conventional colours of heaven, compounds his performing image as a cipher of arcadia. 'Hurled' from these exalting heights, 'Tatters' instantly loses consciousness and is laid to rest on his death bed. He has achieved his personal ambition to be an actor, and he has fulfilled a primary function of the stage child, to incarnate the possibility of immortality by pointing to the arcadian origins to which he returns. The story, called ironically 'Tatters' Debut', tells how his beginning is in his end, and that his end is in his beginning.

If this death were to follow the pattern observed in that of Little Willie and his fellows, Tatters would have been allowed to articulate visions of the life to come, to mediate in death as in life between time and eternity. But the narrator withholds such consolation, and instead shows the boy entranced and captivated by his performance, leading narrator and reader back to the moment of his theatrical triumph. By substituting theatre for heaven, does this little story suggest the illusory aspect of conventionally pious representations of the child's access to heaven? Does it suggest that the kind of vision granted to the dying Willie in *East Lynne* is a hoax of Pied Piper proportions?[469] Or does it point to a transcendent quality of theatre itself? Does it posit the stage as a place where immortality becomes visible, and where children, as ageless vessels of innocence, purity and trust are uniquely prized signifiers of the alpha and omega of life?

These ambiguities point towards a shift in the signifying power of child death which occurs when it is given Naturalist treatment. Gerhardt Hauptmann in *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (1893) received its first significant production in London by the Play Actors' society at the Scala Theatre on 12 April 1908. The translation, *Hannele*, was by William Archer; Hannele was played by Miss Winifred Mayo and her mother by Cicely Hamilton. The production was applauded by H. M. Walbrook reviewing for the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

> Hannele, the step-daughter of a drunken ruffian, Mattern, has run away from home, and attempted to drown herself in the smithy pond, but has been rescued by a forester and brought to the village poor-house to die. The doctor finds her body covered with scars, and another of the characters remembers that when her dead mother was prepared for the grave she was in a similar condition – the work of the same inhuman devil. And, left alone for a few dark minutes, the child has visions in the dark. The form of her step-father stands beside the bed roaring and threatening, until she is almost insane with terror; then that of the

> dead mother appears, having come from Heaven to bid her child be of good cheer. Angels of light, with shining wings, gather about her and tell her of the joys that are in store; and when they have vanished, and she sees a figure shrouded in black sitting in the opposite corner of the room, his hands folded over a great sword, and his eyes fixed steadfastly upon her, she knows it is Death. Finally, the Saviour Himself appears, surrounded with beatific forms; and amid a chorus of melodious song, she is received into Heaven.
>
> ....For our own part we find it a bitter and disturbing comment on a social system of which such matters as the torture of Hannele and her mother, the degraded wickedness of Mattern, and the general sordid vice and poverty of what we call the 'submerged tenth' are seemingly an inevitable part, and a system in which all the happiness that can be assured to even its most innocent victims must be found in the life to come....one comes away from it possessed with a sorrow and anger beyond expression in words. We cannot recall any other modern drama which so rings the alarm in the chambers of the soul.[470]

By the late nineteenth century, and certainly by the early twentieth century it appears that the comforts offered by the Evangelical tradition in response to child death were outmoded and unacceptable. It was no longer sufficient to suggest that the best of life was to be experienced after death, and that rewards for virtue were deferred to the hereafter. Only Peter Pan could declare with conviction that 'To die will be an awfully big adventure'. Hauptmann and his British interpreters in 1908 present child death as an absolute loss, and use the powerful images of the afterlife as an ironic commentary on the social evils associated with poverty. What remains constant throughout these ideological manipulations of the depiction of child death is the deployment of the child as the embodiment of primal innocence with the power to evoke the pageantry of immortality. Furthermore, since the stage child incarnated immanent transcendence, it allowed its own performance to become a metaphor for the afterlife. Heaven was displaced by theatre.

4
Pantomime: An Audience of Children

> A pantomime, what fun! what jollity! what gorgeous Pageantry, what Fairy Transformation Scenes, what troops of merry children crowding to the sight, accompanied by parents whose hearts beat with pride and joy, as they watch the dancing lights of pleasure in their darlings' eyes, and the exclamations of rapturous delight, with which they gaze at the brilliant scene.
>
> When the curtain, however, falls, and the excited little ones return to their happy homes, and still under loving care sink to sleep in their downy beds, how few persons, we fear, give a thought to that curtain's reverse shadows, or inquire into the well-being of the human machinery which provided their evening's amusement.[471]

Victorians considered the pantomime, opening on Boxing Night and running often until April, as an entertainment for children, a Christmas treat. Class differences between children on either side of the footlights may not have been so acute as Barlee's observation suggests. A reviewer for the Drury Lane pantomime of 1892 declares that the theatre was 'packed from ceiling to floor with high and low, aristocrats and the plebs, family parties and loving couples, critics and dilettanti, all of one mind, prepared to welcome Sir Augustus Harris's pantomime, *Little Bo Peep*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Hop o' My Thumb*,[472] while both Mrs Fawcett and Augustus Harris assert that juvenile performers were not 'gutter children' but came from lower and lower middle class backgrounds.[473] It is likely that class differences were more significant at matinee performances than in the evening. Mrs Fawcett observed that:

> during the pantomime season a very large number of afternoon performances are provided for the children of our own class; and I think that if we require afternoon performances for them, we may also require afternoon performances for the sake of the children who are acting.[474]

Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow have suggested that the introduction of regular matinee performance of the Christmas pantomime was pioneered by Smith at Drury Lane from 1852 onwards.[475] They note that both George Eliot and Clement Scott observed 'large numbers of children' in the audience of these matinees. Some theatres offered half-price tickets on the door to 'children and schools' for matinees, as advertised by the Princess's Theatre for its production of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1887-88.[476] Occasionally free seats were offered to children's charities; for example, to mark Burns's birthday, 'the directors of the Crystal Palace Company invited the children of the Royal Caledonian Asylum to the afternoon performance of the pantomime *Robinson Crusoe*, which the little folk hugely enjoyed.' [477] Pantomime was widely accessible, and visits appear to have been an experience shared by the nation's youth, excluding only the very poorest.

Many commentators concurred in the view that the success of a pantomime was measured by its capacity to delight children. Henry Morley stated of the Drury Lane pantomime in 1853 that it:

> seemed to give great pleasure to all the eager young critics present, and this of course is the merit of a pantomime. To the juvenile world indeed the Drury Lane manager more peculiarly addresses himself, the monarch of the introductory burlesque being no other than an enormous humming top...[478]

Theatre historian T. Edgar Pemberton remembers of his boyhood that 'in those days I was only taken to the theatre at Christmas time, and that would be on the now matinee-superseded function known as 'juvenile night,' when for the sake of little folk, the pantomime would be followed instead of preceded by the soul-stirring drama of the evening.[479] His backward glance suggests something of the evolution of pantomime during the nineteenth century, from a carnivalesque addition to the normal evening bill to a spectacle which at its most elaborate in Drury Lane during the 1880s could extend to fill an exhilarating five hours. That even in its beginnings pantomime did not appeal exclusively to children is evident from Pemberton's note that special programming concessions were made to accommodate 'little folk'. Edgar Taylor, introducing the first translation of the Grimm tales in 1823 asserted, '[popular fictions are] like the Christmas Pantomime, ostensibly brought forth to tickle the palate of the young, but are often received with as keen an appetite by those of graver years.'[480] Adults enjoyed the saturnalia too, but the presence of children in the audience provided a reassuring license for the excesses and fantasies of the form, allowing the grown-ups a brief escape from rationality. As Barlee suggests, children in the audience provided their accompanying adults with a lens to view the show, a feature demonstrated graphically by F. Bernard's engraving in the *Illustrated London News*, 'My First Pantomime – When Grandfather Took Us Children to Sadler's Wells'[481] which depicts 'grandfather'

watching not the show, but the excitement of one of the children on his arm. George Eliot found that her enjoyment at the pantomime matinee was enhanced by sitting amongst children: 'How pretty it is to see the theatre full of children! For we went in the day-time, in child fashion. Ah, what I should have felt in my real child-days, to have been let into the further history of Mother Hubbard and her Dog!'[482] Eliot suggests that the pleasure taken by the old in the delights of the young was not simply altruistic, but coloured by nostalgia. The 'eager young critics' provided their elders with a view on to an inner identity, a past or imagined childhood craving occasional expression and release. Leopold Wagner asserted that it was in watching juveniles perform and children in the audience applaud them 'that we fancy ourselves young again, and wish we could recall that happy state of innocent childhood and delight.'[483] Clement Scott agreed that

> [t]here is nothing that children like better than to see children act,' and developed this view to broaden his definition of children, stating, '[t]he Lilliputian scenes in the pantomime are always the most popular; and the manager has only to introduce a baby columbine, a youthful clown, and a boy pantaloon, to set the whole house in laughter.[484]

Pantomime, Scott concluded, was for the 'delight...of children of all ages and sizes.'

The presence of children on stage and in the audience effected a transformation of the sensibility of spectating adults, made possible by the revered status of the idealised child in nineteenth-century culture. Far from being intellectually marginal to the popular business of pantomime, these arcadian evaluations of childhood had direct bearing on the pleasures marketed by the Christmas theatre industry. A vivid account of the rejuvenating power of pantomime is given by Elizabeth Robins Pennell in her explanation to children of the conventions of the genre. She describes her visit to *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* at a Drury Lane Saturday matinee:

> I thought I had come in good time, but once inside the door I heard the loudest, merriest singing, so that a short delay at the ticket office made me quite impatient.
>
> When I was shown to my seat, to my surprise the curtain was still down. The music, however, had begun, and, looking around, I saw that the great theatre was packed from top to bottom with children, and all were singing an accompaniment to the orchestra. Box above box, balcony above balcony, was lined with little faces; mothers and fathers, older brothers and sisters, thoughtfully taking back seats, while I don't know how many schools had emptied their children into the pit....

> 'God save the Queen! struck up the band. 'Long may she reign over us!' sang the children.[485]

The children in the audience are already in action: their infectious enthusiasm and unselfconscious anticipation heightens Pennell's 'impatience' and then soothes it away as she deliberately participates in their excitement. The duet between performers and audience continues into the performance. Pennell describes how children join in the chorus:

> 'You're all very fine and large, because you've heaps of cash,'
>
> sang Cogia to the wealthy sister and brother. And then all the children came in with the chorus,
>
> 'You're all very fine and large,'
>
> as if they had lived in the same street with Ali and Cassim all their lives, and the leader of the orchestra turned round and kept time for them.[486]

Audience participation legitimates the saturnalian reversal of roles, empowering the audience with the invitation into the magical, wish-fulfilling world of Ali Baba. It also domesticates that world, making the audience children feel at home there. Boundaries between stage and auditorium are physically breached during a chase scene, when the monkey tries to escape the donkey:

> Quick as a thought [the monkey] springs up to the opera box close to the stage, and off he runs on the very edge of boxes and balcony. Little lookers-on jump back with frightened faces. But the donkey is after the fugitive and soon overtakes him...Then both sit and rest, the monkey seizing a programme from the nearest child to fan itself...[487]

For Pennell, and the adults she represents, the 'frightened faces' testify to the thoroughgoing suspension of disbelief maintained by childhood fantasy but impossible for the adult imagination to achieve. Its manifestation adds to the charm of the experience for the grown-ups, and is part of the performance of innocence for which Leopold Wagner valued the presence of children in the pantomime audience. More formal dispensation of sweets through the disruption of the boundary between actors and audience takes place during the Harlequinade. Joey the Clown:

> brings from the nearest shop a small barrel, from which he takes handfuls of toy crackers and flings them to the nearest children in the audience. A little girl in white is perched up on the front seat of a box. 'There's my little sweetheart!' he cries in his cracked voice, and throws her one....No matter what changes there may be each year at Drury Lane, the clown never forgets his barrel of crackers. [488]

Pennell's account includes a description of the set-piece performance by the Drury Lane juveniles:

> Cogia...brings home all the stray children she finds in the street.
>
> She is not pretty to look at....But, to make up for it, nothing could be prettier than the screaming, laughing children who gather round her. I fancy it is because they are little Eastern children that they wear such queer long sage-green gowns, with broad belts and jaunty caps.
>
> Now they must go to bed, says their adopted mother. Will they be good children? 'Yes, indeed! as good as good can be.' But once her back is turned, the fun begins. Off come gowns and belts, blue petticoats and caps, and there they are in long white night-gowns and tasselled night-caps. In another minute they are sitting on the floor pulling off their shoes, and all the time they are singing, and, whenever they have the opportunity, dancing in time to the music.
>
> Clothes are carefully folded; each seizes her pile, too big for some tiny arms, and a shoe drops here, a cap there; but the little ones dance bravely in and out – not to bed, however, for here they are again, now armed with pillows. Our pillow-fights at school, as I remember them, were very rough and ugly compared with this fairy game, in which the figures dance to and fro, and white pillows wave up and down as yellow curly heads and dangling tassels dodge them.
>
> How the children in the pit and boxes applaud! While they are still clapping, the children on the stage run out and bring back a lady in black, and there is more applause, for she it is who has taught them to go singing and dancing to bed. Whenever the children are applauded at Drury Lane, and you may be sure they always are, they bring forward their dancing-mistress, as if to remind you that to her must be given all the praise for what they do.[489]

Pennell's observation of applause by the children in the audience signals to her juvenile readers that this aspect of the performance is exclusively for their benefit, and she endorses Scott's assertion that 'there is nothing that children like better than to see children act.' However, she also demonstrates an adult pleasure in the spectacle by permitting herself a nostalgic visit to her own childhood, contrasting her memory of pillow-fighting with 'this fairy game'. She relishes the way in which a recognised feature of her youth is idealised. It is, however, not merely the pillow-fighting which is transfigured. The children themselves, supposed in the story to be 'stray children' and their roles performed, so theatre reformers would have us believe, by juveniles who really are neglected and exploited, are 'prettier' than Cogia, incarnations of the exotic Orient. Even their naughty behaviour is glamorised: the 'fun' of the pillow-fight is heightened by their promise to be 'good'. Their anarchic energy is made visible but also contained by choreography.

The applauding children find their enthusiasm ambushed by the surprise entrance of the 'dancing mistress'. She steals their expression of delight in transgression, now turned into admiration for the skill which generated and controlled it. Katti Lanner's appearance is an opportunity for the staging of authority, a reassuring reminder for adults and children alike, of the theatricality of the event.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the conventions of pantomime shifted towards more explicit entertainment of adults. This was marked by the deployment of music hall performers and their more bawdy routines, and by the use of prolonged spectacle. These two features defied the understanding and the patience of children in the audience, and were often decried by hostile reviewers who wished for the restoration of 'pure pantomime', not, it seems, simply for the sake of the children. During the 1880s Augustus Harris established himself as the doyen of pantomime, setting the measure for the nation's Christmas entertainment by his activity at Drury Lane. A review of Harris's offering in December 1887 indicates that his extravagant ambition for the form incurred a certain aesthetic cost:

> Towards the close of the performance...which was not reached last night till nearly twelve o'clock, there was sung a couplet to the effect that
>
> To give the biggest show and to keep it on the go,
> That's what's the matter with Augustus!
>
> ....'Puss in Boots' is undeniably a very big show indeed – a show so big that it threatened once or twice to become unmanageable...There are, we suppose, limits to the number of brilliantly arrayed supernumeraries who can be got on and off the stage and marshalled for their evolutions without an awkward wait now and again and a palpable delay of the action of the piece.[490]

It was written by E. L. Blanchard (1820-1889) who began his prolific and influential career as a pantomime librettist in 1844. He supplied Drury Lane with the pantomime 'book' from 1852 until 1888, while writing for other managements during the same period. He suggested that the intense pleasure of his youthful experiences in the pantomime audience provided an imaginative resource throughout adult life. Blanchard placed his reminiscences in an article, 'Some Memories of a Harlequin', which began in elegiac tone, remembering a lost form:

> Time ruthlessly shatters the magic mirror of life into which we peered so delightedly in the days of our boyhood....Even when illusions are dispelled, it is something to remember that we once fell under their influence, and found ourselves all the happier in consequence. Boys born sixty years ago had, at least, one source of delight which the children of a later generation will never know. In the days of the past, when we were taken to the theatre for our holi-

> day-treat at Christmas, the true hero of our imagination was Harlequin. He was not reduced, as he is now, to a mere incident in a supplementary comic scene, coming at the end of an elaborately spectacular entertainment; but was the one object impatiently waited for by the younger folk when the slight fairy tale, represented in dumb show, was brought to a swift conclusion. Harlequin would then perform his feats of transformation continuously through a long series of adventures, in which we were all greatly interested, by a steady succession of surprises of the most astonishing kind; and as every trick had a sort of political, or social, significance, a vast amount of information about passing events was concurrently imparted to the youthful spectator, who was generally found abstractedly burying the little knuckles of his fists in the folds of his chubby chin, while fixing his eyes on each new attitude of the nimble wonder-worker.[491]

Blanchard's sense of loss was engendered both by the perspective of an old man looking back on his youth, and by the knowledge that the form itself had been superseded.[492]

As Blanchard's memories become more personal, vitality replaces elegy in his descriptive tone; he begins to relive his childhood enthusiasm for the Harlequin 'Ellar' (whom he preferred to the Clown Joseph Grimaldi), whose performances he had known since babyhood and could remember from the age of three:

> That Mr. Ellar was an ordinary mortal I refused to credit during the whole period of my elementary studies at a preparatory school in Lincoln's Inn Fields, notwithstanding the almost incredible statement of one of my small fellow-pupils that he knew where that mysterious personage lodged, and had once seen him walking down Great Queen Street with an umbrella under his arm. To such a firm believer in fairy mythology as myself these attempts to develop, by any process of evolution, a supernatural entity into a shower-of-rain-fearing pedestrian, met with the scorn they merited....[493]

Relishing the sweets of childhood, which ranged from the taste of 'a floury confection called 'White Parliament'', to his unshakable conviction that Mr Ellar inhabited a supernatural world coexisting with his own, Blanchard describes how he tried to perform the same magic tricks and acrobatic feats as his hero, always undeterred by failure. Throughout his youth he continued to follow the annual antics of Mr Ellar from the other side of the footlights, until the Boxing Night of 1836 when he was working backstage at Covent Garden on the pantomime of *Harlequin and Georgey Barnwell*. Mr Ellar, then aged fifty-six, was Harlequin, and Blanchard came face to face with him in the prompter's box, handing back his magic wand. He saw 'a decrepit old man', struggling with the rigours of performance:

> I thought of the childish faith I once had in the magical powers of that wand, and how little I knew of the flaps, lines, and pulleys so ingeniously arranged to produce the requisite effect. During the run of the pantomime it was painful to note the physical exhaustion which followed even the slightest exertion of his powers; and one evening in the following February he smote his wand upon a scene intended to represent the enlargement of every newspaper consequent on the removal of stamp-duty, and fainted in my arms before the stage-carpenters could reveal the size of the tremendous broadsheets supposed to be the result of the potential bat. What a host of boyish memories were then recalled![494]

Blanchard invested the creative energy of his adult life in writing pantomime scripts designed to facilitate the effortless display of magic which had coloured his own childhood by extending his perceptual range from the possible to the impossible while sharpening a healthy sense of political irreverence and a recognition of the theatricality of current events. His inexhaustible inventiveness was remembered by the former manager of Drury Lane, Edward Stirling, who asserted that during the 1850s 'Blanchard's pen never tires...never tired the numerous visitors, whether boys and girls, or 'children of a larger growth',[495] while a critic for *The Theatre* in 1881 could announce with impunity that *Mother Goose* 'is written by Mr. E. L. Blanchard, a sufficient guarantee that nothing is wanting as far as the book goes.'[496]

The benefit performance held for Blanchard's widow at Drury Lane on 2 June 1890 closed with a lengthy poem by Clement Scott celebrating his theatrical career and friendships. This culminated in an acknowledgement of his commitment to entertain children, played out by the surprise entrance of the eight year-old Minnie Terry, child star of the era:

> MISS MARY RORKE
> 'How he loved children! years and years
> He toiled for them ere work was done;
> He made them dance away their tears,
> And filled their little hearts with fun!'
>
> MISS KATE RORKE (*listening*)
> 'Hush! some one knocks! a voice I hear,
> A baby voice above this din: (*Goes to the door*)
> Oh! such a pretty little dear!
> A fairy! may I let her in?'
>
> *Enter* MISS MINNIE TERRY *dressed as a Fairy* (*with a Wreath of Flowers and a Bouquet in her hand*).

'I am a child from Fairyland!
A gift of flowers my sisters send!
They bid me kneel and kiss the hand
Of all who loved the Children's Friend!

'Oh! give her these, and place this wreath
Above his face: but let her know
She must not weep, but write beneath -
'The Children's gift who loved him so!'[497]

The appearance of Minnie Terry was a reminder that Blanchard, in conjunction with the taste and management of Augustus Harris from 1879 to 1888, scripted pantomimes which required more children for their execution than those of any other pantomime librettist. One reviewer of Blanchard's work in 1883 began with the conventional 'children who go to a pantomime like nothing better than to see children act,' but he went on to invest this insight with a motivating significance for Blanchard's style. 'Indeed, this is one of Mr. Blanchard's pantomime hobbies, and the children trained by Madame Katie Lanner (*sic*) made such a success last year that, of course, they will be on the stage again.'[498] He also observed that 'You children of larger growth' were equally entertained and manipulated by the hosts of stage juveniles.[499]

When Dickens edited the *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* in 1838 he revealed that he, like the young Blanchard, had been captivated by sustained fantasies of the parallel but equally real world of the Harlequinade:

> As a child, we were accustomed to pester our relations and friends with questions out of number concerning these gentry; – whether their appetite for sausages and such like wares was always the same, and if so, at whose expense they were maintained; whether they were ever taken up for pilfering other people's goods, or were forgiven by everybody because it was only done in fun; how it was they got such beautiful complexions, and where they lived; and whether they were born Clowns, or gradually turned into Clowns as they grew up. On these and a thousand other points our curiosity was insatiable. Nor were our speculations confined to Clowns alone: they extended to Harlequins, Pantaloons, and Columbines, all of whom we believed to be real and veritable personages, existing in the same forms and characters all the year round.[500]

While Blanchard emphasised his love of the magic created by Harlequin, Dickens extends our understanding of the potency of the form by identifying two further elements of its power: it was a luxurious and extravagant world governed by neither need nor time. In an article for *Household Words* in 1852 he expands on the appeal of the Harlequinade's defiance of natural and political laws. It is a world:

> where babies may be knocked about and sat upon, or choked with gravy spoons, in the process of feeding, and yet no Coroner be wanted, nor anybody made uncomfortable; ...where every one, in short, is so superior to all the accidents of life, though encountering them at every turn, that I suspect this to be the secret (though many persons may not present it to themselves) of the general enjoyment which an audience of vulnerable spectators, liable to pain and sorrow, find in this class of entertainment.[501]

The carnivalesque suspension of convention and law liberates the imagination. The children in the pantomime audience could enter a magical world of infinite possibility, while the adults were invited to escape into a world of anarchy and subversion. The genre offered a picture of freedom in which good triumphs over evil, love endures into the happy ever after, and material constraints were of no consequence. The conventions of pantomime performance tended to elide social differences across the divide of the footlights and within the auditorium. By appealing alike to children and 'children of larger growth' age differences were similarly obscured, and the audience was constructed as an ideal body of children.

5
Classifying the Juvenile Actor

The Climbing Boy: Sweeps, Actors, and the Visibility of the Working Child

Running in tandem with the manifold representations of the child on stage during the Victorian period is the narrative of debate about child labour. Lord Shaftesbury is the politician most closely associated with pioneering legislation to ameliorate working conditions for children during this period, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'The Cry of the Children' (1844) won immediate popularity as a literary condemnation of the plight of these exploited workers. Children who worked in the entertainment industry were, however, overlooked by politicians until the 1870s, and they were the last group of children to be protected by legislation. When finally they were recognised as workers, and protected by the Act of Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1889, Mrs Fawcett placed resistance to this classification in the contexts of other employments:

> It is to be noted as a characteristic of the gradual spread of this principle [that children under ten years of age are not to be employed at all] of our legislation from trade to trade, first to children in mines...that the representatives of each trade in turn thought it 'little less than a crime' to apply the restrictions upon juvenile labour to their own business. When the master chimney-sweeps were forbidden to use little naked bleeding children to clean chimneys, they said the risk of London being destroyed by fire was indefinitely increased after the prohibition....In this respect the theatrical profession has not been in any way exceptional.[502]

At any time during the late eighteenth century and until the 1870s it is likely that more children were employed in theatres than as chimney sweeps. But middle class and cultured ideologies about children and childhood obscured the fact that theatre

children were workers, whereas the labour of sweeps, or 'climbing boys', with their sooty looks and acrid smell, was impossible to overlook.

Paradoxes in political thinking about children who worked in entertainment are nowhere better illustrated than in *The Climbing Boy. A Comic Drama with Music In Three Acts*, by Richard Brinsley Peake, first performed by the English Opera Company at the Royal Olympic Theatre in 1832 and which enjoyed revivals during Victoria's early reign, notably at the Victoria Theatre in March 1838, at the Olympic Theatre in March 1844 and at The City of London Theatre in 1847. The central character is a young chimney sweep, always performed by a girl. In 1838 the role was filled by the eight year-old Rebecca Isaacs (d. 1877, aged 47) and in 1844 by Miss Goodwin. The play tells the story of how a young boy, sold as an orphan into the chimney sweep business four years before the action of the play begins, is reunited with his aristocratic mother and discovers the legitimacy of his birth. The potential sentimentality of this rags to riches story is constantly undercut by its comic treatment in dialogue and situation, while the play as a whole throws a spotlight on questions about the treatment and employment of children.

Written during a period of agitation to regulate child labour, *The Climbing Boy* offers strong protest against the use of children as sweeps. It was first performed in the same year that George Smart's mechanical device for sweeping chimneys became available and affordable, rendering the use of children unnecessary. In 1834 legislation was passed to prohibit the employment of children under the age of ten as sweeps; this was followed by two further attempts at law making, in 1840, and 1864, to curb the practice. It was not until 1875 that the employment of child sweeps was finally eradicated, when Lord Shaftesbury empowered police to deal with infringement.[503]

In Act II scene i the Boy puts his own case:

> (*A short piece of descriptive music, accompanied by the rattling of the shovel. The* BOY *cries without, 'Sweep! Sweep!' The music continues. The* BOY *descends from the chimney with a brush and seraper in his hand; he shakes himself, and pulls his cap from over his face, looking around with wonder.*)
>
> BOY: Oh, dear! This is not the chimney I went up! I have come down the wrong flue; how they will thump me! Bless my soul! It is a bed-room; what shall I do? I dare not get up again for I was almost suffocated in struggling through the narrow brick-work. What, if I went to the door yonder, and called out 'Sweep!' (*crossing.*) No, they would say I came here to steal something (*sobs.*) Oh, what a miserable life I lead! I, who recollect a kind nurse, and a comfortable home, when I used to lie down on a bed (*looks at the bed.*) What is the matter with me? The bed was very like that (*creeping towards the bed.*) I could almost swear that I have slept in this room – ay, fifty times – and in this bed (*draws the*

> *curtains, which he blacks with soot by his touch.*) In this glass, too, I used to peep at myself (*goes towards the dressing table.*) I haven't seen my face in a glass since I have been a filthy sweep (*looks at himself and utters a cry of horror.*) What a fright! (*sobs.*) They used to call me 'pretty boy;' what would they say if they saw me now? (*retreats from table, the toilet cloth discovered soiled.*) Oh, la! Oh dear! (*sits on a chair thoughtfully.*) I am thinking how my hard-hearted master will beat me on the head with a shovel, for coming down the wrong flue. He will be in a thundering passion. What is to be done? (*discovers the dirt.*) Oh, mercy, here's a chair I have made dirty! (*Attempts with his brush, and then with his sleeve, to wipe the soot off; makes it worse; tries to erase the black from the toilette cloth and curtains.*) There, now it is all over with me. I shall catch it. – Perhaps I had best jump out of the window, and put an end to my misery at once (*turns, and suddenly perceives the portrait.*) Oh, goodness, how my heart beats! Now I know – now I am sure – that picture! (*kneels down and sobs.*) Yes! Oh where is she now? (*Hysterically.*) Look at me! Smile at me! Remember me – mother! mother! Mother![504]

The episode participates in a strong literary pedigree and was most likely to have been inspired by a similar incident in Charles Lamb's 'The Praise of Chimney Sweepers' in *The Essays of Elia*.[505] It looks forward to a kindred story in Mayhew's chapter about sweeps in *London Labour and the London Poor* which he dates as having taken place in 1804;[506] and most famously it anticipates Charles Kingsley's treatment of the mistaken entrance by Tom into Miss Ellie's bedroom in *The Water Babies* (1863).

As a piece of theatre it is a technically sophisticated suite of soliloquy and stage business to test the power of any actor. The audience is first ambushed by the surprise entrance of the boy from the fireplace, an illegitimate form of entry which suggests the wrongfulness of the child's employment. Monologue quickly establishes the physical hazards of his work and the cruel treatment he receives from his master, but running in counterpoint with the boy's heart-rending account of his life is the mounting comic tension of the sooty mess which he spreads around the pristine bedroom with his every move.

The recognition scene in this episode works on several levels. Through the boy's iconic recognition of himself in the mirror and of his mother in the portrait, the audience understands that this is the child for whom his grandfather Sir Gilbert Thorncliffe and the villainous butler Jacob have been searching since the start of the play. But the moment of self-consciousness achieved by the boy when he recoils from his grimy face in the mirror does not extend to any kind of indexical self-reflection concerning the plight of the performer herself. The scene clearly represents the invidious nature of the employment of children as sweeps; by extension, it could point to an equally questionable set of circumstances about the

employment of children as actors. But it is as though the girl at work in the business of impersonating a boy at work is herself completely invisible, utterly obscured by the role she plays.

The conventional sentimentality of the lost boy's yearning to be reunited with his mother on which his soliloquy comes to rest is quickly interrupted by the entrance of Mr Strawberry. His recent election by default and against his will as an MP has brought him to London; Sir Gilbert, Mr Strawberry's friend, has supplied him with his own manservant Jacob, and furnished accommodation in Westminster which used to be inhabited by Sir Gilbert's daughter Rosalie. Mr Strawberry, anxiously in search of a good cause to take up as the subject for his maiden speech, finds himself presented with a convenient political opportunity:

> (MR. STRAWBERRY *opens the closet-door, and appears with his neck bare, a cloth over his shoulders, his sleeves tucked up, and an open razor in his hand.*)
> MR. STRAWBERRY: Heyday! What the deuce is all this? (*The* BOY *jumps up, sees* MR. STRAWBERRY *with the open razor, and alarmed, runs and folds himself in the white bed curtains, and peeps.*) Come out, you unhappy black imp! Come out, I say!
> BOY: You will kill me?
> MR. STRAWBERRY: I kill you, poor boy? I? Alas! What has the world come to that I should be suspected? Do I look so terrible? Oh! I forgot. (*Closes the razor and puts it away.*) Come out, you little imp!
> BOY: (*Creeps out and falls on his knees.*) Oh, Sir, if you have any mercy in your heart, forgive me!
> MR. STRAWBERRY: Forgive you, for what?
> BOY: For coming down the wrong flue.
> MR. STRAWBERRY: Do not fancy that I will hurt you, poor wretch! You are cold, I dare say, and hungry?
> BOY: I am, indeed. But master says, we are to be bold fellows, and never mind cold or hunger.
> MR. STRAWBERRY: I can't overcome the human impulse I feel. Here's an object upon whom I can bestow my proper charity! Do you know, my little fellow, that I am a subscriber to the Association for alleviating the miseries of Climbing Boys? Come here; give me your hand – give me your hand, I say! Tell me, how came you in your present situation?
> BOY: I came down the chimney.
> MR. STRAWBERRY: I know that – I mean, did your father consent to your becoming a sweep?
> BOY: I never had a father.
> MR STRAWBERRY: Poor wretch!

BOY: I remember my mother! I think I do.
MR. STRAWBERRY: Well, and who was she?
BOY: She was a lady. But don't say I said it.
MR. STRAWBERRY: Why not?
BOY: Because master and the other sweeps knock me about so, if I ever mention it; they sneer at me, kick me, and call me 'Gentleman Billy'.
MR. STRAWBERRY: Gentleman Billy! Poor Gentleman Billy! What say you to being relieved from your rags and soot?[507]

The comic encounter of two innocents, strangers to one another, and to their immediate environment, is teasingly interwoven with further revelations about the abuse suffered by the boy. The child's literal responses to Strawberry's probing provide welcome deflation, shifting the potential pathos of his plight into bathetic situation comedy and preventing sentimentality from obscuring the hard-hitting political implications of the interview. In raising the question of parental consent and responsibility in relation to the boy's employment, Strawberry touches on an issue relevant to all child labour but which only became prominent in the assessment of juvenile actors from the 1870s onwards.

Their exchange continues with further revelations of the boy's habitual fearfulness and important information for the development of the plot, contained by the hilarity of the boy's attempted exit up the chimney:

BOY: Oh, Sir! I would pray for you for ever, and -
MR. STRAWBERRY: And what, poor boy?
BOY: I was going to say I would sweep all your chimneys for nothing. I had a mother who nursed me kindly: who – (*turns towards the picture.*) Should she be living! Sir! might I be so bold as to ask – how I tremble! – if you know who that lady is?
MR. STRAWBERRY: An odd question. No, I only came from the country to this ready furnished house last night. Why do you inquire?
BOY: Sir! I – I – He never will believe me (*aside.*) Oh! good gentleman – that is the picture of my nurse, and I think, my mother; it is, it is, indeed.
MR. STRAWBERRY: (*with emotion.*) Eh! what? And shall I perhaps be the means of restoring a lost being to his mother, too (*Rings bell violently.*) It must and shall be done without a moment's delay. (*Extravagantly excited.*) I am in such a rage at the cruel degradation of these little black human specks, that I could in a paroxysm tear my shirt to pieces. Ugh!
BOY: (*Apart.*) He is going to send for master, and he'll break my back! I'm off. (*The BOY is hastily making his way up the chimney. MR STRAWBERRY runs after him and pulls him down again by the legs.*)

> MR. STRAWBERRY: Come down I say, you naughty boy! Can't you be quiet and let me do a kind action? No, the cruel treatment this poor child has received has blighted all his hopes of humanity! I must positively speak to him harshly to make him comprehend my meaning. (*In a threatening manner.*) You little rascal! do you hear? – I intend to buy your time of your master, have your skin washed, give you some new clothes, send you to school – there that has made an impression on him! and – (*looks at his hands.*) confound it, he has made an impression on me![508]

The 'impression' made on Mr Strawberry is the culmination of the slapstick joke in which the sweep, with a kind of inverse Midas touch, has been turning to soot all that he touches. But there is a serious point to it. The MP is now branded with the same mark that makes a pariah of the boy, and so is made visibly complicit with his plight. The spreading of the soot is a metonym of the collective social responsibility for the conditions of the chimney sweep's life. The boy is the victim of inhumane work practices to which his society has consented. Strawberry now wishes literally and metaphorically to wipe away the stain, and by cleaning himself he begins to remove the evil from society. The butler's entrance ludicrously confirms the dark contract between man and boy:

> *Enter* JACOB L. H. – *he starts*
> JACOB: The devil and Doctor Faustus!
> MR. STRAWBERRY: Well, Jacob, what are you staring at?
> JACOB: Oh, this is the little chap they are making such a bother about in the next room; they have lost the little chimney-sweep they sent up; his master thought as how he had gone to sleep, so he lighted a straw fire in the grate to bring him down again.
> MR. STRAWBERRY: Lighted a straw fire beneath the poor wretch to bring him down! This clenches the affair: Jacob...I intend to patronise this unhappy soot-coloured natural production. Wait here till I have settled the point with the inhuman wretch to whom he is sold or apprenticed. Be kind to him, or, exemplary as you are, I will give you warning without a character. (*Exit* L. H.)[509]

Here is the first instance of an adult showing responsibility for the child's welfare. Strawberry's determination to wash him, clothe him, and send him to school is a manifestation of a wish to protect children; his desire 'to patronise' the boy is a metonym for State intervention. This became a more dominant note in politics during the century, and was eventually established with the passing of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act in 1889, while the question of a child's right to free education was not settled until the Education Act of 1891.

A turning point in the plot, this lengthy scene draws together issues about the treatment of children that have been raised at previous moments in the play. The exposition had dwelt on the vulnerability of children, painting a picture of adult neglect, exploitation and selfishness. We are told that four years previously Sir Gilbert removed his grandson from the care of his daughter Rosalie, believing the boy to be illegitimate. He gave the boy to his butler Jacob who was paid a stipend for the child's maintenance. Jacob in turn passed him on to a poacher, Dan Slinker, and kept the stipend for his own family. When Sir Gilbert discovers that the boy was not illegitimate, but born in wedlock to his abruptly widowed daughter, he orders the immediate recovery of the boy and his restoration to his mother. Jacob is faced with the problem of tracking him down:

> JACOB: Where is the little boy I paced in your protection four years ago?
> SLINKER: Ha! Ha! Ha! What do you call *placing under my protection*?
> JACOB: Where is he?
> SLINKER: How should I know by this time – four years ago!...The boy may be sent to Botany Bay for picking pockets -
> JACOB: Bless my heart! Tell me, how did you dispose of him?
> SLINKER: He was *disposed* of – let that satisfy you.
> JACOB: Disposed of! and did not your compassion -
> SLINKER: Compassion! was it a time for me to compassionate a stranger's brat, when seven of my own flesh and blood were fighting and scratching for the pen'orth o' bread I could throw among 'em...
> JACOB: But the boy – Slinker, I will reward you nobly, if you can lead me to him.
> SLINKER: Impossible – I drove the little fellow, in a higler's cart, to Lunnun – and there I *abandonated* him.[510]

The boy is a pawn, first spirited away by Sir Gilbert to maintain family honour, then sold by Jacob to the poacher, and finally 'abandonated' in London. Self interest, whether motivated by pride or greed, has governed his fate. Even the language used to describe this sequence of events emphasises the passivity of the child in these dealings. He is at all times acted upon, completely powerless. Slinker's comic mislocution 'abandonated' highlights the boy's misfortune. The two asides which follow indicate how the course of this conversation is dictated by the particpants' wish to protect themselves rather than to find the boy:

> JACOB: Undone! (*Apart.*) How shall I face Sir Gilbert?
> SLINKER: (*Aside.*) I shan't let out the secret that I sold the boy to a chimney-sweep – or old wicked will ax me for his share of three sovereigns![511]

Unable to find the real boy, Jacob hits upon the idea of substituting his own son, Dick, similarly aged, as a way of saving his skin and furthering his son's opportunities by equipping him with wealthy relations. The role of Dick, like the Climbing Boy, was always played by a girl. It functions as an eerie double or alter ego to that of the Climbing Boy. Dick never speaks. He is entirely passive, asleep when first mentioned. 'It's a shame to wake him...he has recited '*How doth the little busy bee*,' and gone bang to sleep, two hours ago' says his mother when Jacob informs her that Sir Gilbert wishes to see Dick immediately.[512] The boy is hustled there and then into the carriage for London and taken to Rosalie who of course rejects him as an impostor. The extreme passivity of this role, ranging from unconsciousness to interchangeability, mirrors the true situation of the Climbing Boy which cannot be obscured by all his comic energy and loquaciousness. Another image of the Climbing Boy's vulnerability, his status as a subject who is acted upon rather than as an independent agent, is afforded by Jacob's account of how chimneys are swept 'in the country', where 'we be humane':

> JACOB: We do it there with a live goose, tie his legs together, shove him head foremost down the chimney; he flaps his wings, and we do lug him up and down with a rope.
> MR. STRAWBERRY: What!
> JACOB: If the chimney be very wide, we take two live geese.[513]

Jacob, comically oblivious to Strawberry's outrage at this treatment of geese, is sketching a conventional town/country dichotomy, contrasting the humanity of country ways with the inhumanity of the town. The comedy allows the underlying comparison between climbing boys and geese to be made palatable. Trussed and replaceable, for Jacob the bird only differs from the boy in the way it shows its distress. The flapping of the wings is crucial for the cleaning job; boys, on the other hand, were trained not to exhibit fear in this situation.

The denouement in Act III scene III opens at the London mansion of Sir Gilbert. Rosalie had sent for her portrait to be brought from her apartment which Mr. Strawberry is currently occupying, to her new residence with her father. The Boy watched the workmen remove the picture, and followed them in the hope of finding his mother. When the scene begins the stage is empty and '*the portrait is discovered against Table*.'[514] Its position makes a convenient hiding place for the boy when he arrives: 'So I've made my way in to the house where they have brought the picture – this has been an eventful day for me – some one comes. (*He hides behind the table.*)' When his mother Rosalie enters she says, 'I will attempt a ballad I taught my poor lost boy to sing'. The final *coup de theatre* is pending.

> *The* BOY *sings the last line, behind the picture:*
> ROSALIE: Merciful goodness! The voice of my child!
> *The BOY runs forward and kneels before Rosalie, uttering 'Dear Mother! Mother!'*[515]

The boy comes to life by running out of the picture frame. Reunited with his mother he is restored to his true identity. The family portrait is complete and harmonious. But no such fate awaits the performer of the role. Her situation as a worker rhymes perfectly with that of the character she represents. Yet it seems she does not simply impersonate an 'imp', 'ape' or 'devil', terms conventionally used to describe child sweeps, but blacked-up as an actor, she incarnated them. It would be some forty years after the last revival of *The Climbing Boy* before the child actor could burst from the picture frame of the proscenium arch to demand recognition as a worker from the audience.

A dynamic and engaging juvenile role lies at the heart of this play, and its success, manifest by frequent revivals during the 1830s and 1840s, depends largely on the abilities of the child who plays the Climbing Boy. While the play deploys comedy and other techniques to make a specific protest against the employment of children as sweeps, no more general points about child labour are attempted. Even so, many of the issues which were raised during the 1880s, in the political controversy over juvenile theatre workers, already lie latent within the script. The play shows images of vulnerability and of the financial exploitation of children by their parents or their guardians, it stresses the value of access to schooling and suggests dangers to children when safety of working conditions were neglected or intrinsically hazardous. These are all themes that were readdressed when the employment of children on stage became as controversial as their work as sweeps.

Coming into View: Theatre Children and Charities in the 1870s

Theatre children were first identified as a group in need of attention by the social reformer Ellen Barlee and her friends. She describes how in 1873 she began to invite the pantomime children at Crystal Palace, aged from four to fourteen, to her own home for tea.[516] Soon she was given permission to use rooms on the Palace premises for a weekly children's tea and religious instruction:

> a few ladies were at once enlisted in the cause. From the first party of children, one, the Fairy, a child of five years old, was redeemed at once from stage life, and placed in an orphanage to be trained as a servant. She was a dear little affectionate creature, quick and apt to learn, and being an orphan, was handed over to me by her aunt, who was glad to be relieved of the charge of her maintenance. An amusing and touching incident occurred some six months later in connection with 'my fairy'. I was attending the usual meeting in Exeter Hall on

> behalf of the various 'Homes for Destitute Children'....During an interlude between speeches, I heard a slight movement above me, and looking up noticed a wee child who was clambering over the forms in great haste.
>
> I did not at first recognise 'my Fairy,' owing to her improved condition and the neat costume of the 'Home' she belonged to. Soon, however, a warm little hand was placed in mine, and a bright little face lifted up, when she whispered: 'I saw you, Teacher, and I wanted to thank you for the happy home you sent me to.' And then she nestled down at my feet.[517]

From stage fairy to domestic angel, this is one of the many stories of successful transformation which Barlee offers her readers throughout the book.

To complement the evangelical activity of what had become the Theatre Mission, Barlee claims that some redemptions were thanks to the activity of the Theatrical Letter Mission. This was founded in 1876 with offices in King Street, Covent Garden. Monthly letters were written by lady volunteers:

> both to actresses and to ballet-girls and children. [She claims that] at the present day [1884] no less than 700 ladies are engaged in this monthly correspondence, whilst 2,500 professional actresses and children are thereby reached, and the offer of salvation lovingly brought to their notice.[518]

Barlee quotes a sample letter, which was sent 'with Christmas wishes to a little ballet-girl':

> DEAR FRIEND
> Will you accept my best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year?...
> There is such a beautiful Christmas promise in connection with this thought in the 91st Psalm: 'He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust....
> Ah, perhaps you will say: 'In my profession I shall require another kind of dress this Christmas, besides this warm one!
> There is a story told by the great actress Fanny Kemble, in one of her letters.
> She was preparing for her part in the dressing-room of some provincial theatre, and suddenly she heard a noise outside the window, which was destitute of blind or shutter. Looking out, she saw a crowd of ragged children jostling each other in their delight at the unexpected sight of her glittering dress and ornaments. Good-naturedly she got up and tried to show herself more fully, but her efforts were not crowned with success, for she only heard one sentence, viz., 'Oh, how I wish them windows was cleaner!'

> Surely we can never think of Heaven without words of that sort rising to our lips. Ah! how I wish the windows in my soul were brighter and more transparent, and how I wish that there was not so much dirt between me and Heaven!...There, dear child, do earnestly pray, in the consciousness of your own inability to do it for yourself: 'Oh, merciful Jesus, cleanse for me the windows of this soul of mine, give me sight, let me see Thee with the eye of faith. Let me creep beneath the loving shelter of Thy wings and there in the darkest and stormiest days of this worldly pilgrimage, shall I have courage to press onward through the rains of sorrow, wind, trial, tempest of doubt, until through Thine infinite mercy I shall reach Home, and spend with Thee a happy Christmastide and the year that shall be for ever new' Rev. xxi. 6.
> God grant it for you and your faithful friend.[519]

The illustrations have been chosen to appeal to the child's perceived value-system. Pride taken by girls in their glamorous costumes was often noted, particularly by those critical of the scant attire which ballet-girls and supernumeraries were sometimes required to wear, so the letter-writer has attempted to build her religious analogy by drawing on an area of the child's experience that is both familiar and attractive. The reference to Mrs Kemble was also designed to win the recipient's sympathy since it was believed that many child actors idolised adult stars and wanted to be like them when they grew up. But there is something oddly self-defeating about the structure of the Mrs Kemble analogy, meant to point the child towards God by using a version of the Platonic and Pauline metaphor of seeing through a glass darkly. But instead of directing attention away from the evil temptations of stage life, it encourages voyeurism, while according to the terms of the binary opposition established by the trope, Mrs Kemble is equated with the Heaven which the ragged children and the letter recipient are struggling to see clearly. The Evangelicals themselves had absorbed the culturally contemporary metaphor of theatre as Heaven, communicated by the performing child.

By the early 1880s the Theatrical Mission was a well-established charity with reading rooms and lending library at 21 King Street, Covent Garden. These rooms were:

> open all the year round from 2 to 9 daily for girls between rehearsal and performance. No payment required. The mission includes tea and social meetings, band of hope, sewing and kindergarten classes, and provident bank.[520]

The managing committee handled an income of £252. 4s. 6d. between January 1880 and March 1881, and registered 5,700 attendances at the reading rooms between October 1880 and October 1881, claiming a weekly attendance of 150. It made on average 2,000 book loans annually, and its members wrote up to 800

evangelical letters monthly to girls and young women in the acting profession. While the object of the charity was primarily religious, seeking to 'rescue' girls from the theatre and to convert as many as possible, it also afforded shelter and food to tired children and young women in the centre of the district where hundreds of them worked, and claimed that it wished 'to interest and instruct, morally and intellectually, theatrical employees in their spare hours.'[521]

The work of the Theatrical Mission was well-known beyond London, and respected both by apologists and critics of child labour in the theatre. Its work satisfied real physical needs, and it continued to flourish into the 1890s.[522] William Mitchell interviewed a theatre worker in Glasgow whose professional life had been devoted to the 'training and drilling' of girls aged from four to fourteen. 'He referred to a benevolent society in London which got the names of all the children and ballet-girls employed at theatres, and charged itself with looking after them.'[523] Mrs Fawcett mentioned the Theatre Mission's 'Convalescent Home' in a speech to the Denison Club on 4 May 1887, maintained, she asserted 'for the purpose of sending children there who are overdone by their theatre work'[524] and she referred to the case of 'a little girl of eight, who had been employed in theatres since she was four, very nearly died a year ago from debility, brought on by overwork.'[525]

Lady Jeune was keen to bring forward reasons why children should continue to work in theatres but became somewhat embarrassed when she had to consider how they were fed during their long hours of work. She admitted that most children did not bring sufficient or nourishing food with them to work, that the eating-places near the theatres were 'not adapted for children' and that the coffee-houses where three or four children might club together to get their dinner were not, in her view 'fit for such young children'. It was with some relief, then, that Lady Jeune was able to introduce the work of the Theatrical Mission into her argument:

> The Macready Institute in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, was founded to meet this want, and it has done a good work, but owing to the curious mistrust English working people have of any institution founded on a religious basis, or attempting to introduce religious teaching in its work, it hardly seems to have achieved as much as one would expect in the direction in which it was originally intended to move.[526]

The cynicism with which the religious aspect of the diet was received by the Mission's clients, is captured in a dramatic duologue, through the voice of a ballet-girl of twenty-seven years' experience, by Arthur Matthison:

> '*What's that circular I've got?*' Oh, it's a 'call' to go to be conwerted with tea and buns and a flourish of crumpets, at Hexeter Rall. I've often been reform'd

> with muffins and tea and things, and I'm that willin' to be conwerted simlar and regler, that I lapsis into sin again immegent. '*Go?*' O'course I shall go; it pleases them, and don't do us no harm.[527]

Others regarded the missionary zeal of this charity as meddling and insulting. H. C. Shuttleworth, editor of the anonymously published *The Diary of an Actress* stated in his introduction:

> This book may help to make clear the fact that members of the dramatic profession are no worse, if no better than other people. There is no more need of any special 'mission' to them, than of a mission to lawyers or clergymen...There are still well-meaning folks who libel the stage as 'an unhallowed calling,' and who do their utmost to disgust young actors and actresses with their art.[528]

Legislation: The Children's Dangerous Performances Bill, 1879

The Theatrical Mission was not alone in noticing the plight of juvenile performers during the 1870s. In 1872 Parliament drafted legislation to protect a particular group, child acrobats under the age of sixteen. Attention had been drawn to this sector of employment by a few highly publicised incidents such as Blondin's proposal to wheel his own child in a wheelbarrow along a wire suspended a hundred feet above the floor of Crystal Palace. That was stopped by a letter from the then Home Secretary, Sir George Lewis, to the Crystal Palace management stating that he would hold them personally responsible in the event of an accident. The Lords also took note of the death of a fourteen year old boy when he fell from a high trapeze 'in a provincial town,'[529] and Lord Shaftesbury read out a letter he had received from a seventeen year-old acrobat about the pain he endured at the hands of his father in being trained for his profession between the ages of four and nine.[530] But on this occasion the House withdrew the Acrobats' Bill because it was felt that the terms 'acrobat' and 'acrobatic performance' were insufficiently defined to pass into meaningful or enforceable legislation.

This parliamentary discussion coincided with a religiously motivated dissemination of the belief that circus performers and their children were superstitious heathens, dirty, thieving and lazy, a threat to the values of the decent Christian middle class. *The Little Acrobat and His Mother: A True Story* was published by the Religious Tract Society in 1872. Far from being a distressing account of how a young boy supported his ailing mother through the tribulations of a cruel career, it mounts a sustained attack on the values of small-scale, nomadic circus life, demonstrating to its own satisfaction the need for missionary work amongst this iniquitous social group. The only value which it shares with the more circumspect polit-

ical debate which had principally concerned itself with allegations of cruelty to children and the physical risks they sustained, was that such work 'must be demoralizing to them.'[531] Lord Buckhurst, who made this claim, did not elaborate upon it.

The Little Acrobat and His Mother, on the other hand, is only too eloquent on the subject of demoralization. The story is set in Germany, and it charts the relationship between the little acrobat, who is twelve years old but looks ten, and his delinquent mother. They are members of a small circus troupe, but 'she was so dirty and idle that the leader only retained her for the sake of her son, who by his cleverness and agility contributed more than anyone to fill the purse.'[532] To reinforce the metonymic significance of the story, the boy has no name except 'acrobat', although he is assigned the name of Fritz by a supposedly philanthropic and evangelical school-teacher who kidnaps him and places him in his asylum for orphans. Mother and son are depicted as being exceptionally close, creating an environment of their own which stands apart from that of conventional society. The mother's only virtue 'which a life of hardship and sin had left in the heart of this poor woman, was love for her child'[533] and for the boy, 'living in such depraved society, and treated so harshly, how could any good enter into the heart of this poor child, except the one sentiment of love for his mother?'[534] Although the story emphasises that the mother's feelings for her son are economically motivated, their mutual capacity for love is the key factor in facilitating their Christian conversion centred on the gospel of love. Once the boy has fallen into the hands of the asylum leader and, after much resistance and suffering at separation from his mother, he is converted and used as bait to win his mother over to God. Their reunion comes when the boy is on his death bed. He just manages to gasp the good news that they can prolong their togetherness in heaven if she follows him in his belief, before they die in one another's arms.

The ideological force of the narrative is structured by the dual stories of what befalls mother and son when they are apart. Having established their thieving and therefore sinful ways early on (the boy steals food to feed his mother, she steals silver spoons to ingratiate herself with the troupe leader), they are separated by the forces of law and order which place the boy in prison for stealing the food while his mother runs away and waits for him. The boy is released from prison by the asylum leader who had noticed him during his street performance; his narrative is then concerned with the sorry account of how he is forcibly educated, disciplined and taught the creeds of Christianity, deprived alike of freedom of movement and belief, classed as an orphan because his mother does not measure up to the definition of parent acknowledged by civil society. The mother's story concerns her weeks of fearful waiting for her son. After a fierce and physical fight with the troupe leader over the silver spoons, she is left alone to make herself a den in the fields, too afraid of legitimate society to approach the town to claim her son.

During this time she is shown to be superstitious and sinful, reading cards to direct her way, using herbal remedies to cure her wounds from the fight, stealing food whenever she can. She is literally beyond the pale of civilisation. Her behaviour explains the depraved values inherited by her son, and demonstrates that only he can have sufficient influence with her to save her soul. The narrative reunites them at the moment of death, by which they are justly punished for their mortal sins, but mercifully rewarded for their ultimate insight by the promise of a heavenly after-life. Two things are striking about the ideological confidence of this tract. First, its construction of the nomadic lifestyle of circus performers as dominated by heathen values, and secondly, its unwavering conviction that to intervene in the relationship between circus parents and their children is justified on religious grounds alone. Other narratives of child abduction are told from a different perspective. *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* (1795-6), *Fairy Phoebe* (1887) and *An Acrobat's Girlhood* (1889), together with plays such as Sims' *Master and Man* (1889) depict the kidnapping of vulnerable children by circus managers, and appear to demonstrate the iniquity of this method of appropriating the juvenile materials of the trade. From the evidence of *The Little Acrobat and His Mother* it seems however that the forcible removal of the child from its domestic environment is not, itself, viewed as the crime; what matters is the end to which that means is directed.

Towards the end of the 1870s parliamentary concern was again expressed about the nature of children's participation in some circus and music hall acts held so dangerous as to pose serious risks to their lives. The result was the passing of the Children's Dangerous Performances Act, debated in the Commons and the Lords during 1879 and coming into effect on 1 January 1880. The Bill was first presented on 29 April 1879 by the Earl de la Warr, and the first debate was held on 23 May 1879. He began by outlining the remit of the Bill, which was to prevent the employment of children under the age of fourteen in 'gymnastic, athletic, or other performances of a kind which would endanger life or limb.'[535] The initial drafting of the Bill was well intentioned but illustrates the difficulty of getting Members of Parliament to focus accurately on the real issues: its remit covered only children performing in circuses and totally neglected those at work in music-hall. This was pointed out by Earl Beauchamp during the first debate, and rectified in the subsequent redrafting. The Bill proposed that the responsibility to assess risk to juvenile performers lay with the Court of Summary Jurisdiction, and imposed fines on whoever employed the child for such purposes, or on the child's parent or guardian who permitted the child to be so employed. To counter the criticism that if children did not begin to practise such performances at a young age they would be unable to perform them in later years, Earl de la Warr made the simple but value-laden assertion that 'that would be no great loss to the community.'[536] He argued that the children were not 'voluntary agents' and that they 'were compelled to take part...and risk their lives for the gain of others'. This kind of argument strength-

ened an emerging view of children as agents possessed with moral and political rights protected by legislation that could override the demands of individual parents, guardians or employers.

He went on to animate his case with various illustrations drawn mainly from music-hall acts in which children as young as six performed dangerous acrobatic feats. These included the widely reported accident suffered by a twelve year-old boy in a Birmingham music hall:

> One of his feats consisted of being propelled in to the air from an apparatus placed on the stage. The machine went off rather unexpectedly, and the little fellow was hurtled into the air, and one of his legs was broken and severely lacerated. These children, in their professional education, were subjected to a system of torture from the earliest period.[537]

The accident described here had been reported in *The Times* on 9 April 1879, following an investigation into the events by the Watch Committee of the Birmingham Town Council. This committee heard that the twelve year-old Master Bishop was performing his act known as the 'Shooting Star' at the Coleshill-Steet Concert Hall:

> He had got into the apparatus in the usual way, and some explosive composition was put in at the star end to cause a blaze when ignited. Bishop was asked if he was ready, and on replying in the affirmative, he was propelled by a spring out of the apparatus and fell from twenty to thirty feet into a net which was spread across the centre of the hall. A rope, over which the boy had some control, caught his knee while in a bending position inside the apparatus and is supposed to have forced off the cap. On rising to walk Bishop was observed to limp in the net and rub his leg, and when he reached the stage it was ascertained that his knee was injured. He was removed to the General Hospital, where he remained an in-patient, suffering from a fracture of both bones of the right leg and an extensive lacerated wound, exposing the right knee-cap. The lad was not burnt.[538]

The Times report added that the next morning one of the proprietors of the hall 'took the apparatus down and sent it out of the town'. Despite the sound and public telling-off received by the guilty equipment, local concert-hall proprietors were informed by the Town Council that in the event of a fatal accident occurring in one of their halls they would be liable to prosecution for manslaughter.

Following the address by Earl de la Warr there were three important contributions to the debate, illustrating conflicting social attitudes to children. First to speak was Earl Beauchamp who 'very much doubted whether any great compul-

sion was really exercised on the children who took part in the performances in question.'[539] His belief, that children naturally enjoy play and performance, together with his underestimation of the technical disciplines required for any kind of professional performance, would recur in the debates of 1889 in relation to the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Bill.

Next to speak was Lord Aberdare who was the only one to voice radical views. He stated:

> that a legislation had prohibited the employment of young children in some of the most useful manufactures of the country, because that employment was injurious to them, *a fortiori*, there was a case made out for preventing the employment of children at dangerous performances.[540]

This was an insight of major significance, not developed at all in the immediate debate. But it sounded the first rumblings of principled opposition to the employment of young children in theatrical performances that would become the dominant note of reformists during the 1880s. The last contribution to the discussion was from the Earl of Shaftesbury who made the obvious but necessary observation that:

> it was not during the performances that the greatest mischief was done...It was in the training of the children from the age of four and five years up to fourteen that the severest torture was inflicted on them.[541]

He repeated this point on 29 May 1879, and again on 19 June 1879, whenever the Bill came up for consideration. On the latter occasion he spoke at greater length, criticising the Bill's focus on performance and its neglect of training. He illustrated what he regarded as the torture involved in training with reference to

> what was called in the slang terms, the 'back-slide trick.' This training commenced when the children were very young, and taught them to completely hoop their bodies. This was neither dangerous to life or limb; but yet it inflicted an immense amount of torture upon the unfortunate victims for the amusement of the people and was a fearful detriment to their health and strength in after years.[542]

For all its inadequacy, the Bill was passed on 24 July 1879. Although the Act was relatively ineffective, it pointed towards more focused debates of the next decade.

Ellen Barlee joined Lord Shaftesbury in condemnation of the back-slide trick, and to encourage her readers to share her disgust, described in detail how children learned to do it:

> A child as young as four or five years of age, the younger the better, after being given over to the trainer, is placed in almost a nude state on the ground, in front of a ladder, its little feet being arrested from slipping forward by wedges of wood fixed to the floor. The child's arms are then raised over the head and brought backwards, until by straining its hands it can clasp the highest rung of the ladder which is of a height adapted to the purpose required. The victim is then kept in this position, not being allowed to move either hands of feet, but encouraged to strain the body backwards as much as possible. To aid its efforts the trainer places one of his hands behind the child's back, rubbing the spine downwards all the time with the other.
> This exercise is repeated daily for some considerable time until the backbone yields gently to the strain. The child's hands are then placed on the second rung of the ladder, and further efforts of the same kind are made until, little by little, the body becomes sufficiently flexible to reach the rung unaided.
> After many weeks of training, one by one, each downward rung of the ladder is thus compassed, and the first important step in Contortionism is gained, as the child is now able to touch the ground behind him with his hands thrown back over his head...[543]

By approaching the finished product of the apparently miraculous 'back-slide trick' through the perspective of Barlee's rhetorical strategy, the exhibition piece is dissected and deconstructed to the point where nothing of it remains. The reader apprehends only the bitty learning process in which the child is presented as 'victim' with control over its body that is anything but astonishing. What is actually happening between the child and the ladder is almost impossible to visualise, and the overall impression for the reader both of what is represented and its syntactical means of representation is of something immensely cumbersome. The hocus pocus of Barlee's rhetoric has transformed the breathtaking dynamic of gymnastic display into an episode from the torture chamber. Changing product into process she dismembers the trick, in order to expose the disfigurement of the child by which such feats are achieved. The only thing that remains firmly in the reader's view is Barlee's political agenda. Her rhetorical treatment of this training process inspired the novelist Lucy Taylor who copied it almost word for word in her fictional polemic *Fairy Phoebe*.[544] Taylor exploited the disjunction between the impersonal account of the training and its personal, physical embodiment by one of her characters, the 'Human Serpent'. The young girl's serpentine performance and its devastating effects on her are witnessed with horror by the newly recruited Phoebe.

Barlee ends *Pantomime Waifs* with an appendix 'Juvenile Acrobats', a lengthy citation from the Earl of Shaftesbury's address on the subject to the House of Lords on 3 August 1883. Shaftesbury was motivated to speak because recent press notices and his own private correspondence indicated that the 1879 Act was not

just being ignored, but that 'at this time the evil prevailed to a greater extent than it ever did before.'[545] He cited examples from present practice in circuses and music-halls, together with interview evidence from adults who trained as children. They claimed that their youthful experience was 'torture', they mentioned 'floggings', 'cruelties' and 'hardships', and stated that every accident was hushed up to keep the public ignorant of the real dangers involved. He compared legislation and practice in Britain with that on the Continent and in America, stating that there the law was 'stringent and well observed'[546] and that children were prohibited from public appearances as acrobats or gymnasts until they were sixteen. Having outlined the unacceptable present situation at home, and compared Britain unfavourably with other parts of the world, Shaftesbury then sought remedies. He listed a number of options which new legislation or reinvigorated observation of the existing Act could achieve, arguing that it should be forbidden to apprentice children for such services, and that particular watch should be kept over workhouse children who were easily preyed upon.

Letters to the press provide evidence that Shaftesbury's disquiet about breaches of the law was well founded. Nearly two years after the Children's Dangerous Performances Act came into force *The Times* published the following 'pitiful story', a letter from R. D. M. Littler:

> Doubtless many of your readers have either seen or read the advertisement of the 'Original and Genuine Troupe of Beri-zoug-zoug Bedouin Arabs', who performed...at...the Royal Aquarium, Westminster. They were highly spoken of at the time by many of the journals, and were, doubtless, deemed by most to be, as they pretended, 'genuine Arabs.' Many of the tumblers were very young, very agile, and very clever, but I suspect that few of those who saw them, or of those who criticized them, had a notion that, out of the 20 juveniles, 14 were not Beri-zoug-zoug Bedouins (if there are such persons), but were of a very different tribe – viz. the common street Arab of London. Still less did any one suspect that they had been sold into slavery as abject and as brutal, too, as any probably which exists anywhere in the world. Yet so it is...

The author explains that a month earlier he had been in Constantinople where he was informed, via the British Consulate, of a complaint by a British citizen about the treatment of two of his sons in this troupe. He went on to investigate, and continues the letter with his findings:

> 14 English boys, all born of London parents, had been sold at ages varying from three years and 10 months to six years, for terms varying from 10 to 14 years, to a French Arab, calling himself Hadjali ben Mohammed, for sums from 30s., to 50s. each. The method of the sale was a duly stamped deed of appren-

> ticeship, which recited that each of these unhappy infants 'of his own free will and accord...testified by his executing these presents, doth put himself apprentice,' etc., and on the back is a receipt signed by the parents for the miserable blood money. In all cases Hadjali binds himself to find proper food and clothing, and in some to find proper education. These poor lads have been with their owner half over Europe, and are now in Constantinople, and this is their condition as I saw it. They were housed in a Turkish house in the most Turkish quarter of Stamboul. In the absence of their owner, I succeeded in gaining admission. The stench from the lower floor was past description, and absolutely intolerable....
>
> I saw these poor little creatures on a 'surprise' visit. They were huddled together in a room about 15 ft. square, the sole furniture of which was a few boxes containing their tumbling dresses. They were horribly dirty, barefooted, and clad solely in a pair of baggy Turkish trousers and an old filthy man's shirt. There was no washing place in or near the room. There was no bed, and they told me they were fed from a large round tin pot with some stew or skilly, the solid parts of which they tore with their hands, while the liquid part they drank from pannikias. They never tasted tea, coffee or any other drink than water, and had no food other than this disgusting mixture and bread. They were never allowed to dress decently save to perform, nor were they ever allowed to quit the house save for the same purpose. They had no toys, games, or amusements, nor were they allowed any other pastime but practising their acrobatic performances.
>
> All had their heads and many their bodies covered with scars, partly the result of their owner's brutality, partly of wounds from falls caused in learning their miserable trade. Few of them could speak English. Some could speak French, and some nothing but Arabic....[547]

Littler continues by stating that when he reported the state of affairs to the British Consulate in Constantinople action was taken to register all the boys as British subjects. They were asked if they wished to return home, and all said yes, although the next day when they were brought to the Consulate they withdrew the request. One of them revealed that they had been beaten and starved into this recantation and all but two, brothers whose father was willing to receive them in Britain, had to remain with Hadjah ben Mohammed. The Home Office was consulted about how to proceed, and in the meantime Littler contacted Dr Bernado in London who agreed 'in the most benevolent terms' to house the boys temporarily. The Foreign Office suggested that the Home Office be requested for funds to relieve the boys, but Littler's inquiries drew a blank. Administrations move more slowly than acrobats, and while paperwork was shuffled from desk to desk the troupe was poised

for a tour to the interior. Alerted to this possibility, the British Consulate negotiated its way to repossess as 'distressed British subjects' the remaining twelve children. With a view to their repatriation they were housed temporarily in a Home for Sailors, on the look-out for vessels to England.

Littler announced that in the absence of both Government aid and parental care, the boys were urgently in need of support. A Fleet Street bank, Gosling and Sharpe, opened an account 'The British Beri Zoug Zoug Fund', to which Littler invited the public to contribute. The money was to be managed by the Rev. James Baird of the Vicarage, Southgate and the Lord Mayor of London offered to be a trustee and to publish a list of subscribers in early December. For several years following, Christian reformers continued to refer to the scandalous cruelty exposed by Littler in their efforts to purge Londoners of their taste for entertainments that incurred the suffering of juvenile performers.[548]

Despite public outcry at such revelations, and Shaftesbury's intervention in the Lords, the fashion for young acrobats continued well into the 1880s, as a rather milder letter of concern in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 1885 illustrates:

> Sir – a circus has just lately come to Oxford, one that is probably well known to most people, by name 'Ginette's Circus.' As usual there are several boys attached to this circus, and out of a natural curiosity a friend of mine asked one of the managers how they were trained to perform so well. The man, without the slightest amount of feeling, replied that they were made to perform their various feats surrounded by men holding whips, who each time they failed lashed them severely, till sometimes their backs were one mass of blood...My friend also managed to speak to one of the boys, who, by all appearance, had been a gentleman's son, and who corroborated the man's statement....[549]

Expressions such as these were supported, as Steedman has demonstrated, by expert medical investigation and evidence published in a sequence of articles in the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* during the early 1880s.[550] The situation of these children was taken up by the British Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children after its foundation in 1884, and the major cumulative effect of these different areas of discourse was to demythologise the mystique of the acrobatic profession and its juvenile members which had been so pervasive just ten years earlier. Together they paved the way for the more comprehensive legislation of 1889.

Temperance and The Victoria Coffee Music-Hall: Catering for a Juvenile Audience

For all her hostility to the working conditions of pantomime children, Barlee harboured no absolute opposition to the employment of children in theatres, nor did she preach any simplistic rejection of theatre itself:

> That the Drama, purged of its demoralising association, might be turned into a mighty lever for exalting public taste is quite admissible. Once let the public voice demand a higher tone of morality, and that higher tone must follow.[551]

She cited the prison conversion of the dying boy Josephs in Charles Reade's *It's Never too Late to Mend* as an example of how the theatre can disseminate the Christian message, and she praised the child role of Nana in Reade's *Drink* as a powerful message of temperance.[552] Barlee's commitment to the Temperance Movement led her to observe with interest the enterprise of the Coffee Music Hall Company founded in 1879 to offer an alcohol-free alternative to the music-hall environment, and her interest in the interaction of theatre and children lends her account of this chapter in the history of the Old Vic a unique focus.

When the lease for the Victoria Theatre in the New Cut, Lambeth, became available in 1879, John Hollingshead, manager of the Gaiety Theatre, saw the opportunity for a new venture. He put his entrepreneurial vision to transform what was then regarded as the den of theatrical iniquity into a 'Coffee-Music-Hall Palace' to various friends including, most crucially, Emma Cons. Together they drew up circulars outlining their plans to create a place of 'purified entertainment....to which men may take their wives and children without shaming or harming them.'[553] Hollingshead noted with characteristically businesslike equanimity:

> eventually I found that my connection with the Gaiety Theatre was not considered a good and safe qualification for me to take a leading part in carrying out my idea. Being a philosopher, I left it in the capable hands of Miss Cons, and have watched its rise and well-deserved progress with that interest which an abandoned parent takes in the career of a prosperous and proper child.[554]

Emma Cons was, as Barlee stated, 'no novice in the science of class elevation.'[555]

She was an experienced and widely-respected philanthropist, motivated by a powerful 'devotion to the cause of temperance.'[556] In 1879, aged 41, she was already the managing director of the innovative South London Dwellings Company, and lived amongst six hundred tenants in the newly built Surrey Lodge in Lambeth, a place which she designed to provide good sanitary housing at affordable rents for some of the poorest families in the district. Her philanthropy was well focussed; she already had twenty years' experience of working with the

London poor to improve housing, having joined forces with her fellow art student Octavia Hill who managed Ruskin's artisan dwellings in Marylebone. One reason why Emma Cons preferred well-managed activity over 'indiscriminate charity' is given in a story which she told her niece and biographer Lilian Bayliss:

> As she entered a room, in one of her courts, she saw a figure lying rigid under a sheet; children were huddled weeping in a corner and their mother, who was breaking up the only chair for firewood, told Emmie that her husband was just dead. The sight of so much misery was more than Emmie could bear; she did all she could, emptied her purse into the poor woman's hand, and left her and the hapless children, asking herself what else she could do to help them? As it happened, she forgot her umbrella when she left the room...and went back to retrieve her missing property – but, as she opened the door of the house of mourning, an astonishing sight met her eyes. The sheet and the figure beneath it had vanished; and the husband and father – recently a corpse – was dancing round the room clasping a half-filled gin-bottle, while his 'widow,' likewise restored to cheerfulness, was imbibing her share of the gin from a broken cup. Emmie's sense of humour never failed her and she could not help laughing at the trick that had humbugged her and paid for the bottle of gin; but she resolved, there and then, that she would never again give money.[557]

This scene is a kind of real-life parody of the most famous scene in Charles Reade's play *Masks and Faces*[558] in which Peg Woffington feeds the artist's starving children and their mother in their garret home. 'She makes them once more happy by insisting that Triplet shall play on his fiddle whilst she dances for their amusement.'[559]

At the cost of between £3,000 and £4,000 for refurbishment The Victoria Coffee Music-Hall opened with a variety show on Monday 27 December 1880, with the six-year old Lilian Bayliss in the audience and Dutch Daley on stage.[560] This period in the Old Vic's development is well documented in standard accounts of the theatre's history; unique amongst them is Barlee's testimony, in which she declares:

> [a]mid the amusements of the newly organised Music-Hall, children have not been forgotten, the more so as it was for the better cultivation of juvenile taste that the undertaking had been started.[561]

Recognising the power of theatre to influence behaviour, Barlee describes the effect which performances at the unreformed Victoria Theatre had on children:

> The attendance at this theatre gave the initiative to thousands of juvenile minds of either sex. The precociously sharpened intellects of these children needing but such stimulants to make them walk in the footsteps of the stage heroes which they saw represented, until their conduct tainted the very atmosphere of the courts in which they lived.[562]

The Victoria Theatre had acquired a reputation for sensationalism and crudity. The historian John Booth quotes from the *Theatrical Times* of 1847 which announced:

> [t]he vulgar and ignorant, such as those who throng to the Victoria to witness atrocious melodramas fit only for an audience of felons, care not what an actor is so as he is but vociferous and tears a passion to rags.[563]

Barlee contrasts the kind of play in which the children at Surrey Lodge engaged before and after the transformation of the theatre:

> One evening Miss Cons's attention was arrested by what she thought was a desperate quarrel between a number of children in the Surrey Lodge Square, and as she approached the scene of action, she saw one child was being held down on the ground, while another was banging her unmercifully with a log of wood.
>
> Fearing some terrible trouble would follow, she hastened to divide the combatants, but was informed by the children looking on: 'It wasn't a real murder; only they was a-doing what they had seen at the _____ Gaff the night before.' The poor child who was to be murdered in play, nevertheless, was much hurt.
>
> Shortly after the McDonald family had given their Pilgrim's Progress Recital, the change in these children's rough play was noticeable; for, instead of a game of murder, a select few were seen imitating the scenes in the Pilgrim's Progress, taking the characters and acting it out amongst themselves gracefully.[564]

Emma Cons sought to accommodate the needs of local children not simply by maintaining an alcohol-free environment and opening the theatre café during the day but also by programming special children's entertainments:

> On Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons there are, therefore, special performances at the Hall adapted to the amusement of juvenile minds. I attended lately one of these gatherings. There must have been near 1000 children present, a large proportion of them with the 'home baby' in charge. The behaviour of all the party was most decorous; while what interested me much were the number of working men who were pointed out to me as having volunteered to give up their time to keep order in the Hall.[565]

A pamphlet, blending advertisement with annual report, circulated by the Council of Directors and signed by Lord Mount Temple about the financial position and programming policy of the Victoria Coffee Music-Hall in May 1882 corroborates Barlee's observation of the plan for dedicated children's entertainments. She gives an account of what these consisted of: '[s]inging, doll ventriloquism, suitable plays and farces such as 'Home for the Holidays,' with other entertainments, and dancing, the latter being both graceful and decorous.'[566] While she notes the impact made on local children by the McDonald's *Pilgrim's Progress*, this does not appear to have filled the children's slot:

> [a]mong other tentative high-class entertainments, the McDonald family gave three of their Pilgrim's Progress Recitals, and although the audience was composed mostly of rough, unlettered men, who were kept three full hours, their attention never flagged.[567]

Lord Mount Temple's circular makes a feature of the way in which the Hall catered for children:

> On Saturday there is an Afternoon Entertainment for children, to be discontinued during the summer months, admission (for children) to pit and gallery 1d., or to reserved seats 2d. About 500 children usually attend. Occasionally, arrangements have been made for admitting schools and large parties of children to the balcony. Schools, varying from 20 to 1,200, have been catered for at special rates, tea and entertainment being provided at 6d. a head, a small expense considering the amount of pleasure given.[568]

As part of the advertising contained in this pamphlet, Lord Mount Temple gives press notices, one of which was selected to emphasise the child-friendly atmosphere of the Hall:

> The entertainments provided at this Hall have been of such a kind as to enable children to enjoy them. Consequently we found whole families taking their tea and coffee and enjoying the performance, and it was most creditable to the establishment and to the visitors to witness such good order and good humour.[569]

The 'good order' of proceedings was maintained in part by the rigorous censorship which Emma Cons and the Board of Directors imposed on all of the proposed acts before they were staged. In keeping with the purity which they sought to disseminate, they kept a careful eye on the conditions of labour for juvenile performers who appeared at the Hall:

> the dress of the dances is limited to 'ankle-length'. Young girls are not encouraged to make engagements with the Manager, and only the services of such children accepted as are accompanied by their parents.[570]

The efforts of philanthropists and reformers to focus on children within the theatre industry during the 1870s continued during the next decade when public conflict over these issues became acute.

The 1880s: A Decade of Debate

During the 1880s the agendas of three nationwide campaigns to improve the quality of children's lives converged on the issue of the employment of children in theatres. School Boards across the country, empowered by the Education Acts of 1870 and 1876, sought to ensure the regular school attendance of all employed children amongst whom theatre children formed a special category; the work of The National Vigilance Association fought for the moral welfare of children employed in what was regarded as an arena of particularly high risk; The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children acted to protect children from all forms of abuse, and theatre work was held to constitute a particular kind of cruelty. Eventually these three groups began to work together, raising public awareness and putting pressure on the Government. It was through the agency of Millicent Garrett Fawcett, herself active in all three campaigns and cherishing principled objections to the employment of children in theatres, that the common interests of these organisations joined forces.

Fawcett's political career is generally associated with her energetic campaign for woman's suffrage and her foundation of the anti-militant National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). Married to the Liberal MP Henry Fawcett in 1867, and his widow from 1884, she was well connected in Westminster and London Society. On three occasions she used her influence to campaign for the rights of children. First, she supported her friend W. T. Stead, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in his efforts to raise the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16. Following his exposure of the extent of child prostitution in the capital, published as a series of articles headed 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' during July and August 1885, Fawcett helped to found The National Vigilance Association to guard against the sexual exploitation of girls and women. Secondly, in 1893 she took up the case of juvenile victims of sexual assault, campaigning for them to be allowed to be accompanied by an adult during cross examination in court. Thirdly, and most important for the discussion here, is the fact that from 1886 onwards she concerned herself with the conditions of employment of theatre children. She used every method available to her to publicise the situation of young theatre workers, and conducted combative dialogue with the public through the press and directly with Members of Parliament who of course knew her well as the widow of their respected colleague. Her fundamental position was simply stated:

> surely it is absurd that a child of less than ten may not be employed, say to pick gooseberries in a garden, but may be employed all the year round, up to ten or eleven o'clock at night, or later, as a performer in a ballet at the Alhambra or the Aquarium.[571]

In 1890 she was referred to as the person 'whose knowledge of the subject, combined with realising sympathy and imagination, is superior to that of any other person in the land who has attempted to understand the life of children on the stage.'[572] Fawcett's authority in this sphere was recognised by the Royal Commission on Elementary Education which called her to give evidence about the employment of children in theatres on 8 June 1887.

It was during the summer of 1887 that public debate about the issue became conspicuously heated, and the pressure groups in which Fawcett was involved joined forces. A report of a meeting held about 'Children in Theatres', given in the *St. James's Gazette*, illustrates the confluence of these various campaigns:

> A meeting of ladies was held yesterday afternoon at the home of Mrs Frank Morrison, at 8, Cromwell-houses, South Kensington, in support of a movement the object of which is to make it illegal for children under ten years of age to be engaged in performances at theatres and pantomimes. There was a very large attendance. Mrs. F. Morrison, who presided, remarked that there was one practical way in which parents could help this movement, and that was by refusing to go to any theatre where troops of young children were made a feature of the performance. Mrs. Ormiston Chant said there were known to be 10,000 children employed in connection with pantomimes throughout the country. The physical strain of this work on very little children was exceedingly heavy, and she had personally known cases in which it had led to fatal results. Miss Davenport Hill, a member of the London School Board, also addressed the meeting. She understood there was a clause in the Education Act which forbade the employment of children under ten years of age, and she would do her best to get the members of the Board to put that clause into operation.[573]

The success of this staged drawing-room event in gaining the attention of the press might seem to be diminished by the sense of feminine gentility that emerges from the way in which the meeting is reported, a gentility that seems to circumscribe the power of the ladies' arguments and tends to keep private what threatens to spill into the public domain. Mrs Morrison's appeal to the private morality of parents sounds particularly meek in this context, although it is an argument used with greater force elsewhere. The other named speakers were skilled and experienced activists. Mrs Ormiston Chant had been on the Preventive Sub-Committee of the National Vigilance Association since its foundation in 1886, and Miss Davenport

Hill was amongst the first women elected to serve on the London School Board in 1876 and one of its most outspoken members. What happened next, in the pages of the *St. James's Gazette*, altogether changed the tenor of the public discussion, and introduced much fiercer publicity before the matter finally reached Parliament in 1889.

Lewis Carroll, provoked by what he viewed as the ladylike incompetence of these arguments, wrote an immediate reply. His donnish incivility masks utilitarian ethics and his own vested interests in the continued presence of young children on the professional stage which are developed in the latter part of the letter:

> I spent yesterday afternoon at Brighton where for five hours I enjoyed the society of three exceedingly happy and healthy little girls, aged twelve, ten and seven....we spent a long time on the pier,...we even made an excited raid on headquarters, like Shylock with three attendant Portias, to demand the 'pound of flesh' – in the form of a box of chocolate drops, which a dyspeptic machine had refused to render. I think that anyone who could have seen the vigour of life in those three children – ...would have agreed with me that here at least was no excessive 'physical strain', nor any imminent danger of 'fatal results'!
>
> But these, of course, were not stage children? They had never done anything more dangerous than Board school competition? Far from it: all three are on the stage – the eldest having acted for five years at least, and even the tiny creature of seven having already appeared in four dramas!
>
> But, at any rate it is their holiday time, and they are not at present suffering the 'exceedingly heavy strain' of work on the stage? On the contrary. A drama, written by Mr. Saville Clarke [*sic*], is now being played at Brighton; and in this (it is called Alice in Wonderland) all three children have been engaged, with only a month's interval, ever since Christmas: the youngest being 'Dormouse', as well as three other characters – the second appearing, though not in a 'speaking' part – while the eldest plays the heroine 'Alice' – quite the heaviest part in the whole play, and I should think, the heaviest ever undertaken by a child: she has no less than 215 speeches! They had been acting every night this week, and twice on the day before I met them, the second performance lasting until after half past ten at night – after which they got up at seven next morning to bathe![574]

The rhetorical structure of the letter is designed to shock the reader with the news that these energetic and playful girls were theatre children who had been working for six months out of the previous seven, both in London and now on tour in Brighton, and in roles that made significant demands on their physical and mental abilities.

What Carroll may inadvertently have revealed to his London readers, was that *Alice* was no longer being performed only as a matinee as it was when it premiered at the Prince of Wales's, but was now also on the evening bill. The London billing of the play had been selected partly out of sensitivity to the needs of the young performers and also for the benefit of the anticipated juvenile audience, but once on tour the box office success of the play made evening performances irresistible to the management. Fawcett used the afternoon billing of *Alice in Wonderland* in her evidence to the Royal Commission on Elementary Education to set an example of the kind of employment of children under the age of thirteen which she would deem acceptable:

> A very successful play was mounted in that way this winter, 'Alice in Wonderland.' It was worked in the afternoon at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, and some other play took its place in the evening; Mr. Bruce, the manager, rather made a point of it; he was aware of the objections felt, by some, at any rate, to the employment of young children at night, and pointed out that, in that case, the employment was not at night, but only in the afternoon, and that therefore the dangers to which the children were exposed were not so serious.[575]

A further revelation about the lives of the three happy theatre children entertained by Carroll on Friday 15 July 1887 was that, although all of them were of school age, none of them could have attended school during the afternoons for at least six out of the seven months since this celebrated matinee production started.

Privately Carroll held other views. In his diary he had recorded on a number of occasions how fatigue affected his young friends. Visiting the Coote family on 17 January 1877, he noticed of Lizzie (at that time 13 or 14 years old), who was performing in *Little Goody Two-Shoes* at the Adelphi, 'she does not look as if the Pantomime season agreed with her, poor child, and she has blue marks under the eyes which tell of late sitting up.'[576] These are the results of a pantomime which ran for matinees only during the Christmas holidays, and when it moved to the evening bill in early January, dismissed the children by 8.00 pm. On the subject of exposure to immorality Carroll held strong views. On 5 October 1878 after watching *The Two Orphans* at the Olympic, he noted that 'Lizzie Coote had a 'fast' part, which she played only too truthfully.'[577] The hazards of scripted immorality were coupled with potential risk behind the scenes. On 22 March 1879 he had voiced concern about the future of three sisters, Kate (b. 1869), Sarah (1868–1956) and Jessie Sinclair (1865–1952) whose father was a comic actor of twenty years' standing and whose mother had recently died. He first met the girls while their mother was still alive, and then he wrote ' 'Sally' is quite as beautiful by daylight as gaslight, and as sweet as Jessie.'[578] After the death of Mrs. Sinclair, he wrote:

> They will need guidance and prayer, perhaps more and more as years go on, and specially if they take to the Stage, with all its peculiar perils.
>
> I know some other children in that profession, and some who are grown-up, and though I am quite sure that actresses may be, and often are, as good and noble as any woman can be, yet the Stage has risks of its own, and most for those who have, like dear Sally, the dangerous gift of beauty. Of one actress, whom I once knew as a child, I afterwards heard news that grieved me to the heart – she had better have died, a thousand times better. May God in His mercy keep little Sally from such harm![579]

During the months May, June and July 1887, more people came to share Carroll's privately expressed worries about the effects of stage work on children. A turning point in debate about theatre children was reached. Arguments became fierce, positions entrenched. Firm pressure was put on the Government to take action, if only to save itself from the embarrassment of watching the flagrant flouting of its own legislation with regard to compulsory school attendance. But how did the debate reach this point? How had the individual societies and associations conducted themselves before uniting their efforts in 1887?

6
Theatre Children and the School Boards

The conflict of interests between the idea of children as cheap labour and the idea that children could serve the nation's economy better if they were educated and healthy took some time to resolve during the nineteenth century. Factory and Workshops Acts, introduced from 1819, regulated the age from which children could work, the type of work they could do, and the hours of their employment. The first Elementary Education Act was introduced in 1870 and further Acts were put in place in 1873, 1874, 1876 and 1880. These operated in conjunction with the Coal Mines' Regulation Act (1872) and the Factory and Workshops Act (1833-78), to regulate both the hours of education of employed children and the hours of their labour. School Boards were established across the country to manage educational activities within local authorities, but they only had jurisdiction over schools which were subsidised by the local rates and at which it was forbidden to teach any 'religious catechism or religious formula which is the distinction of any particular denomination.'[580] Although Board Schools were subsidised there was still a fee for attendance: the maximum fee was 9d per week, while the average fee in England was 3d per week. Alongside Board Schools there were Voluntary Schools. These were not subsidised by the rates, the attendance fee was generally higher than 3d per week, and they were at liberty to teach the religious creed of any denomination.

From 1876 onwards attendance at elementary school was compulsory for children aged between five and thirteen, with a complex variety of compromises affecting children aged between ten and thirteen to make it possible for them to be engaged in paid employment while attending school as 'half-timers'. But for theatre children, the liberal wording of the legislation meant that it had virtually no impact on their working lives. Section 9 subsection 2 of the 1876 Act stated:

> No offence is committed if it is shown to the satisfaction of the court –
> That such employment by reason of being during the school holidays or during

> the hours during which the school is not open, or otherwise, does not interfere with the efficient elementary instruction of such child; and that the child obtains such instruction by regular attendance for full time at a certified efficient school, or in some other equally efficient manner.[581]

As long as rehearsals and performances did not take place during the school day, children of all ages could combine school with stage work. Furthermore, if parents chose to send their children to a voluntary or private school rather than a Board School, the fees would be higher but the progress of the children would not be subject to the same level of inspection and scrutiny and they could argue that their children were being educated 'in some other equally efficient manner'. Fawcett described the provision for exceptions from school attendance as 'a finger-post to point out the road along which the proverbial coach-and-six was bound to travel.'[582] The problem was that the elastically worded Education Acts of 1876 and 1880 were being expected to achieve more than was realistically possible. The barrister and member of the National Vigilance Association Charles Mitchell, giving evidence to the Royal Commission on Elementary Education about the employment of children in theatres, explained how he had consulted the parliamentary debates about the 1876 Education Bill in Hansard, in order to recover a sense of the spirit in which the Act was passed. Mitchell suggests that certain Members of Parliament believed that the Education Act would operate in conjunction with the Factory Acts to secure prohibition of the employment of children under the age of ten:

> The Factory Acts absolutely prohibit the employment of children under 10 years of age in any of the employments which come under those Acts. Yesterday I was looking in Hansard at the debates on the Act of 1876, and from the remarks of Viscount Sandon, who brought in the Bill, and Mr. Mundella, and Mr. Forster, and Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth, all of them evidently thought that the Act of 1876 would absolutely prohibit the employment of children under 10 years of age in other employments...it does not seem to have occurred to anybody at that time that the second sub-section of section 9, which is the fatal one, would allow the employment of children under 10 years of age.[583]

It also seemed to have escaped notice that children under the age of five remained unprotected by the Education Act from employment in any work not covered by the Factory Acts, and that this group of youngsters was very much in demand in the theatre industry. The eleven years of experience that came between the passing of the Education Act in 1876 and the Royal Commission on Elementary Education in 1887 demonstrated that there were significant weaknesses in the school attendance requirement, supposed both to ensure a continuous education for each child and to

protect them from premature labour. It was rapidly becoming clear that only a change in the law would remedy the situation.

Responsibility for prosecution of parents or employers for the non-attendance of children at school lay with the School Board. Despite overwhelming evidence that theatre children were poor attenders there is only one instance of prosecution of a theatrical employer on record between 1876 and 1887. This consisted of a summons brought by the London School Board against the theatrical agent Wybrow in 1878, heard by a magistrate called Mr D'Eyncourt and which caused all the children under the age of ten which he had supplied to a particular theatre to be dismissed from the production.[584] Clearly prosecution was not a policy consistently pursued by the School Board and the irregularity of its response made individual prosecutions difficult to sustain. Sometimes the Board chose more informal methods of bartering, as was undertaken by the Westminster Board which:

> came to an agreement with the managers, that if they would not employ any children under nine, the elder children would be freely allowed half-time during the month or two for which the season lasted.[585]

The non-attendance of theatre children, and prosecution for absences must be placed in context because they were not alone in failing to turn up for lessons. In fact they constituted a minority in what was a massive problem for the School Board. The Royal Commission heard evidence about absenteeism and the reluctance of magistrates to prosecute. One witness, Mr R. Balchin, headmaster of Nunhead Passage School, stated:

> I find that at the Lambeth Police Court thirty summonses are allowed every fortnight for East Lambeth district; that there are 75,000 children in that district, and that 20 per cent...are absent;...that gives, out of 75,000 children a continuous absence of 15,000. From that 15,000 children being absent it appears that those whose duty it is to enforce attendance can only take out one summons in 500, which is singularly insufficient; also that it is an extremely difficult thing even to get those summonses; the magistrates are a law unto themselves upon this question.
>
> The magistrates of London certainly seem to set their face against the proper working and carrying out of the Education Acts. They are continually making such remarks as this....The superintendent was speaking about a boy who attended wretchedly; the magistrate asked what he was doing, and the superintendent said, 'He goes about with his father, he leads his father's horse; and the father employs him in looking after the business about the street as a sort of costermonger, so that he is never at school.' The magistrate said, 'And very likely he is receiving a better education than he would have done at school;' and all

> the people behind began clapping. The magistrate thought he had made a fine remark, and he, no doubt, considered that he had gained some popularity.[586]

Instances of this kind were multiplied throughout the period of enquiry. It could even be argued that the system depended on a significant proportion of absenteeism. Class sizes were reckoned to be on average 45 and teachers struggled to cope. Many members of the profession said that they were seeking alternative employment, and children who did attend school, left at the earliest opportunity. The average length of a child's school life decreased rather than increased after the Education Acts of 1876 and 1880.

Throughout their enquiry, the Commissioners were constantly probing to establish reasons for the School Boards' reluctance to prosecute parents and employers for the absence of children from school. Fawcett asserted that:

> There is a constant contest going on between the school board and the managers of the theatres on this subject. It is a sort of battle. The managers withhold all the information they can, and they get as complete control over the children as they can. For instance, one of the school board officers told me that they go to a theatre before the pantomime season commences and ask for a list of the children who are about to be employed. The manager is very suave and polite in his manner, and says that he would be delighted to hand in a list, but that no list exists, that no children have been engaged, and that he does not know what children he is going to engage. It may be true to the letter that the children are not at that time actually engaged, but it is not true to the spirit, because it is practically known what children are going to be engaged, though the engagement is not finally concluded until the very night that the pantomime commences. Then if the school board takes action after the pantomime has commenced, the manager of the theatre poses as an injured person who has gone to great expense in catering for the amusement of the public, and then, after he has incurred this expense, he is pulled up by the school board.
>
> And in consequence of that, the school board hesitates to prosecute?
>
> I cannot tell you from what motives the board hesitated to prosecute.[587]

Setting aside the frustrating question of prosecution, Fawcett was keen to describe to the Commissioners, and to the public, ways in which theatre managers gained 'as complete control over the children as they can'. In her first article on the subject of theatre children and education for the *Contemporary Review*, which marginally predated her interview with the Royal Commission, she stated:

> the more vigorously the School Board and their officers do their duty in insisting on regular attendance, the more surely do those who are profiting by the

> children's labour say to the parents, 'you must take your child away from the Board school or other certified elementary school and send her to a private school.' These private schools sometimes exist as a sort of *dépendence* to a theatrical dancing school; the fees are 10d. to 1s. a-week, for the reason that when the fee is over 9d. the school ceases to be an elementary school as defined by the Education Act, and the children attending it are therefore removed from the jurisdiction of the School Board.[588]

Fawcett's suspicions about the obduracy of magistrates, the weakness of the School Board and the pragmatism of theatrical managements were confirmed as well-founded in the early months of 1889 when the London School Board put forward a number of prosecutions of theatrically employed children, their parents and their employers.

On 28 January 1889 *The Times* reported on events at the Croyden Petty Sessions where the manager and the secretary of the Crystal Palace Company, Oscar Barrett and William Gardner, had been summoned at the instance of the London School Board on 26 January to answer for the employment of seven children under the age of ten and nine children aged between ten and thirteen. They were charged with not having obtained evidence from the School Board that the children had achieved the appropriate certificates in their educational Standards to permit them to work. Barrett contended that he had opened an elementary school on the premises of the theatre, provided books, employed two certified teachers, Miss Mary Anne Quinn and Miss Catherine Islip, to instruct the two dozen Palace children between 11.00 am and 2.00 pm every day when they were not required by the ballet master Signor Francesco with whom he had 'made a distinct agreement' that children who did not attend school would not be allowed to take part in the pantomime. He also claimed that he provided 'sufficient and safe transit for the children to and from their homes' and that he provided them with a meal every day at 5.00 pm, adding that 'they found their own dinner'.

The counsel for the Palace argued that the management was not seeking to evade the Elementary Education Act and thought they were complying with the law by opening the school and seeking to look after 'the comfort' of the children. He further stated that when the children were required for evening performances they were generally sent home by 9.30 pm and that whether there were one or two performances a day, their school work suffered no interference. The court agreed to take the case of one eleven year-old girl, Bessie Trevesick, who lived with her parents on Greek Street, Soho, as a test case. Miss Islip produced her register which showed that Bessie had been at school every day except one since the school opened on 7 January, argued that she was being 'efficiently educated' and would certainly pass her Fifth Standard in the School Board examinations. To test this claim Bessie, also present in court, was asked 'a difficult question in arithmetic'

by one of the magistrates, which she answered correctly; 'she also read a few lines of a poem well, and was complimented by the Bench.'

The counsel for the Palace rested his case here, but was challenged by the barrister representing the School Board. He stated that Miss Islip was not a certified teacher, her experience having been acquired exclusively in private schools. The presiding magistrate, Sir Thomas Edridge, drew the session to an abrupt and perhaps surprising conclusion, by announcing that the 'magistrates did not consider the child to have been efficiently educated as required by the Act' and requiring the defendants to pay 2s. 6d. and 13s. costs. However, the other cases were 'adjourned in view of an improved arrangement at the Crystal Palace,' giving the theatre management the benefit of the doubt.[589] The smooth talking on behalf of the Palace, which did its best to obscure the exceptionally reduced hours of Bessie's school day, and managed somehow to overlook the effects of fatigue that would follow from regular late nights and two performances on matinee days, not to mention the time Bessie would need to travel between Soho and Crystal Palace, cut little ice with this magistrate on her behalf. This was a decision, despite the adjournment of the other cases, which marked the beginning of difficult times for the Palace children.

The same players met again at the Croyden Petty Sessions on 2 February 1889 to consider the adjourned summonses. Startling news was communicated by the School Board. During the short interim the Board had been informed by Crystal Palace of its decision to withdraw all children aged between five and thirteen from performance in the pantomime. This was to come into immediate effect. Having settled the question of costs, Edridge announced that he wished to 'make one remark':

> He would be sorry to see any impediment thrown in the way of children obtaining something to enable their parents to maintain them, if such an arrangement could be made without interfering too much with their education. He reminded Mr. Walker [solicitor for the School Board] that the law did not require children to be taught at a Board school; therefore, if children were employed, and in the meantime their education was efficient, that was all the law required. He had observed in the public Press that the parents of many children who had been employed in pantomimes had been summonsed on account of those children not being at school. He hoped that in the present cases the School Board would be content, and not take any further action – at all events, as against the parents in respect of their children being absent from school. It would be very hard upon the parents.[590]

A phyrric victory for the School Board, Edridge's handling of the adjourned cases seems to represent a complete reversal of his response to the test case of Bessie the

week before, and it is tempting to suggest that his open hostility to the School Board was influenced by cases that were heard during the intervening time.

The difficulty experienced by the London School Board in gaining authority in the courts, was shown by the outcome of a hearing at the Marylebone Police Court reported in *The Times* just three days after the initial events at Croyden. The parents of two girls, Louisa Steer aged nine and Ada Viercaut aged thirteen who were both performing in the Drury Lane pantomime, were summoned to answer for the non-attendance of their daughters at school. Louisa's absence from school dated from 12 November 1888 and Ada had not been to school since October. Augustus Harris was represented by a solicitor, and the teacher appointed by Harris to run the Drury Lane School, Miss Edith Collins, brandishing her teaching certificate, appeared as a witness. The solicitor described the school conditions at the theatre, and Miss Collins stated that Louisa had been attending for the past three weeks and Ada for the last fortnight. The School Board Superintendent argued that that did not excuse the girls' long absences in the autumn of 1888. The magistrate adjourned both cases 'sine die', informing the Superintendent that 'if a first-class school was set up and a first-class education was given' there was no reason for complaint. With regard to Ada, the magistrate continued:

> Assuming that the child had only been under instruction during the last fortnight, it only showed that the School Board had neglected its duty in allowing the child to be away from school for so long a time previous to that. Nothing was done until the child began to earn something for her parents, and then this summons was taken out.
>
> The reply was that 'they had to deal with 80,000 children', which received the laconic response from the magistrate, 'that might be so'[591].

Fawcett sprang to the immediate defence of her publicly weakened ally with a letter in *The Times* on 4 February 1889 in which she condemned the closing remarks of Sir Thomas Edridge. Although she provided further evidence of absenteeism amongst school-age children performing in theatres, her main concern was to raise issues of the larger principles involved, and so exonerate the overworked staff of the School Board. First she considered the political question of whether, in the light of existing Factory and Education Acts, school-age children should be allowed to work, claiming that:

> We are now reaping the results as a nation of this twofold protection of our children. There is a lower death-rate, a decrease of intemperance, pauperism, and crime, especially of juvenile crime; and there are many evidences of an increase of thrift among the people, and the spread of a higher type of refinement and civilisation among them.[592]

Secondly she challenged the philanthropic belief that poverty could be alleviated by permitting parents to live on the earnings of their children. She argued that this simply weakened the responsibility that parents owed their children and constituted another form of charity which might cure immediate symptoms but which fostered long-term problems of parental self-indulgence and laziness. She cited the instance of:

> a man earning good wages as a tailor [who] sent three of his little girls on the stage; as soon as he was sure of the 35s. a week they brought in between them, he gave up work and 'went on the drink'.[593]

A few weeks later he became an applicant for public charity as one of 'the unemployed'. Fawcett closed her letter by setting aside the inflammatory words of Sir Edridge and focussing instead on his actions. 'It appears to be tolerably plain from recent decisions that have been given that the employment of children under ten is illegal.' In her triumphant invocation of legal precedent she turned on Augustus Harris. He of course had not withdrawn children from performance, and his school appeared to have further facilitated their stage appearances. She declared that the quarrel was no longer between him and the School Board, 'but between Mr Augustus Harris and the law of England'.[594]

A puzzle remains about the different policies adopted by Oscar Barrett and Augustus Harris with regard to their deployment of pantomime juveniles in February 1889. Why did Barrett capitulate so quickly, and apparently, unnecessarily? Had the Crystal Palace management simply sensed which way the political wind was blowing, and so laid off its juveniles once the novelty of its pantomime for the season 1888-89 had worn off? Or were the two managers seeking in different ways to win the same propaganda war, and to avert the likely Parliamentary debate by influencing public opinion to their advantage? The Palace dismissal was followed by a sentimental letter in *The Times* under the headline 'My Money Paid the Rent' in which an 'eye-witness' member of the theatre management described the tearful scenes of dismay when the children were informed after the Saturday night performance that they could no longer take part in the pantomime.[595] This account elicited sympathetic public response, illustrated by correspondence in *The Times* on 9 February 1889 when 'moral reformers' were accused of 'taking away the children's bread and giving them a stone'.[596] In the context of such emotive rhetoric the alternative view, printed alongside it, sounded severe and unfeeling. It warned against shedding tears of 'false pathos' and asked, 'is it not time that people gave up this false sentiment that the stage is a school for morality, and, as a profession, equal to medicine or the law?'[597] Did Barrett gamble that he would win enough public support to reinstate his juvenile troupe? Harris, on the other hand, maintained his elementary school, continued to use juveniles, and did his best to

turn the conflict into a dispute between himself and Fawcett. His method appeared to enjoy the support of local magistrates.

The School Board was persistently thwarted by the lack of support which it received from the courts on the occasions when summonses were taken out against theatre children. In May 1889 it presented a deputation to the Home Office to express dissatisfaction with its persistently unhelpful reception by magistrates, and requesting legislative change to lift the burden of responsibility from the School Board for the pursuit of theatrical non-attenders. Lord Cranbrook told the deputation that he thought it would be difficult to get a Parliamentary consensus on this issue, and that no Government Department would wish to act alone.[598] This was followed in June by the publication in *The Times* of the names of 38 signaturies out of a possible 53 members of the London School Board expressing the opinion that a new law was necessary to protect school-age children from employment in 'theatres and other places of public entertainment'.[599] The deputation and the petition represented just a fraction of the extensive discussions that were by then taking place behind the scenes between the National Vigilance Association, The London School Board, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, to ensure that the matter did indeed find its way into the House of Commons.

Augustus Harris, as the producer of London's most spectacular pantomimes during the 1880s, was reputed to employ up to 200 children per show. The school on the premises of Drury Lane had been a target for Mrs Fawcett since 1887 when she dubbed it unequivocally a 'sham'.[600]

> It is probably no injustice to Mr. Augustus Harris to say that this is his first appearance before the public in the character of an enthusiast for education. It is difficult to repress the suspicion that the object for which the school was started, especially as the fee is 1s. a week, was to remove the children from the control of the School Board, with their meddling officers and their tell-tale teachers, who care a great deal more for the children and their education than they do for the profits resulting from the Drury Lane pantomime. No accusation is made that the law is broken; but the net spread by the Education Act has a hole in it through which any one sufficiently interested in obtaining the labour of children under ten can do so.[601]

She went on to refer to an article in the *St James's Gazette* about this school which, though written 'in quite a friendly spirit towards Mr. Harris and his scheme,' provided, in her view, damning evidence about the value of the education provided there. The journalist reported:

> The school is in a corner of the paint-room, partitioned off with old scenery and theatrical frameworks... With its 'door in the wall' nicely painted, and the make-

> believe Venetian blinds over it, the exterior of the Drury Lane academy is a little suggestive of a delightfully roomy doll's house. 'Children's School' painted on the door adds to this effect. But when once you are inside, all such notions are dispelled...[T]he young ladies' seminary at Drury Lane has been fitted up according to the demands of the Code and with all the latest improvements. When I entered, the school was comfortably filled with scholars, who were busy copying the word 'minimum' from a brand-new black board. Nearly all the furniture was new, indeed, and each scholar had new school-books, new slates, etc. A duly qualified schoolmistress superintends the lessons; and she has power to dismiss a child for non-attendance or other fault, she seems to have no difficulty in keeping her flock together and in good order. And then, dismissal from the school implies dismissal from the pantomime. Judged by the roll-call, some eighty per cent of the children on the books were present, their ages varying from mere babies who could just walk up to girls of eleven who could solve staggering sums in arithmetic. All were happy-looking and 'tidy'. The school hours are ten to one daily, and the scholars – they are all girls – attend regularly. The first care of the schoolmistress was to divide her pupils into classes, and age was not much of a guide here. One of the older girls is employed ostensibly to teach a few of the smaller ones their alphabet, but really to learn it herself. In the 'advanced' class, they spell readily – some of them – ...and they seemed to enjoy multiplying £73 2s. 11d. by 564, or dividing £3,941 4s. 2½d. by 83. I also heard them reading and reciting....The youngest child present delivered herself, correctly and with obvious delight, of a long poem concerning two thoughtless kittens....and as the girls bade their schoolmistress a polite 'Good-day' and filed off, there was nothing to suggest that in half an hour they would be attired as monkeys.[602]

Fawcett's use of this evidence is hostile, as she chose to emphasise only the negative aspects of the enterprise and was keen to point out that the teacher, though qualified, had only a 'third-class certificate'.[603]

She objected to the temporary nature of the school environment, neglecting the account of how the location had been made attractive and overlooking the report that new equipment had been bought. Instead she drew attention to the fact that 'some of the elder girls are amongst the most ignorant',[604] and ignored the sense that significant achievements in reading, writing and arithmetic were made in what appeared to be an orderly and harmonious atmosphere of learning. Her neglect of the day to day successes of the romantically decorated Drury Lane Theatre school room was motivated by long-term worries about the effects of the undertaking. First, schools of this kind undermined the authority of the School Board, with potentially deleterious effects on a national scale for the status of universal elementary education. Secondly, they proffered an immediate and superficial solution

to the question of where theatre children were to acquire an education, without meeting their needs in any substantial way. And finally, schooling that was crammed into an already full working day, prolonged the stress and exhaustion suffered by these juvenile theatre workers.

She offered an update on the activities of this school two years later in 'The Employment of Children in Theatres'. This time she had more substantial evidence from the School Board to draw on:

> The school accommodation at Drury Lane was thus commented on by a Board inspector in February 1888, – fifteen children were present: 'The premises are wretched and even dangerous. Persons are constantly at work just outside the canvas walls of the schoolroom, and often the noise is so great as to drown the voice of the teacher. Most of the children appeared to suffer from cold on the day of my visit. There are no proper registers, and only one set of reading-books.'
>
> This year the housing of the school was greatly improved, and the children met in a warm comfortable room; there were, on January 15, 1889, twenty-three children on the roll (out of the 150 to 200 employed); only fourteen, however, were present. There were *no registers* kept of their attendances, but this was remedied later, and duplicate registers were furnished to the School Board for the twelve weeks from January 12 to March 30. These registers showed that the children under ten made fewer attendances than would have been required of them had they been attending a Board school. I believe that a school has also been started for the children at Crystal Palace; but out of an estimated number of something like a thousand children employed in theatres and music-halls in London alone, school accommodation has been provided at the theatres for considerably less than forty. The actual average attendances would probably not amount to thirty.[605]

She contended that the daily registers of theatre children at 'ordinary schools' revealed a similar record of non-attendance:

> one child attended twenty-five times out of a possible ninety-one; another attended thirty-four times out of a possible ninety-one, and was late twenty-nine times. [In conclusion she argues] But this is a matter not requiring the support of an army of figures. Every one must know that a little child of less than ten years old cannot be actively at work day after day and night after night in a theatre, and be at school regularly too.[606]

Fawcett's attacks on Harris and the school at Drury Lane became the subject of a sharp exchange of letters between them, published in *The Times* during February 1889.

The Editor gave Fawcett the last word in this particular sally, when he published her summary of their epistolary encounters on 8 February 1889:

> Mr. Augustus Harris says in a letter in your columns to-day that the statements contained in my letter of February 5 about the employment of young children in theatres are 'wild, unfounded, and libellous;' but he does not specify any particular statement of mine to which these epithets apply....I repeat that Mr. Harris's school, and other schools inside theatres, were never opened till the association with which I am working (which is not the Moral Reform Union but the National Vigilance Association) began a determined effort to get the law put in force to stop the illegal employment of children in theatres....[607]

She did not repeat her designation of the Drury Lane school as a 'sham', cautioned perhaps by Harris's threat of libel, but she retained the suggestion that its foundation was a hasty piece of window dressing made in response to a new political climate. But Harris's school was not without supporters, even outside the theatrical profession. The following week *Punch* joined the fray with a satirical cartoon entitled 'All Work and No Play' which depicted fantastically costumed children in a palace of pleasure, resolutely enjoying themselves.

When Harris took part in a deputation of theatre managers to the Under-Secretary of State, Mr Stuart Wortley, to represent the interests of the theatre industry with regard to its employment of children in preparation for the parliamentary debate on the subject, he made a point of referring to the establishment of the Drury Lane School and Fawcett's objections to it:

> The school at Drury Lane had been inspected. He was informed at first that 'the school was not suitable;' he found that the desks were not of the right shape; that was altered, and the education was then correct. (Laughter.) When some of these children were summoned to Marlborough-street it was found that they only attended school regularly when engaged at the theatre.[608]

Harris appeared as a kind of double act with Katti Lanner. She said:

> the children under her were from five years old upwards. It was not true that at Drury Lane there was anyone under the age of three. The children were at school from 9 (or, in the case of the younger ones, half-past 9) till a quarter or half-past 12. The rehearsals were taken between that time and a quarter to 2. At 2 the children returned to school, and at half-past 4, if necessary, the rehearsals were resumed. On the occasion of morning performances the children attended school till 1 o'clock, and took their books with them to the dressing rooms for the purposes of learning the next day's lessons.[609]

5. The School Board & Pantomime Children, *Punch*, The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark N.2706 d. 10, 16 February 1889, p. 83

The deputation was supported by two members of the London School Board, General Sims and Mr John Lobb who 'had taken up the question from purely philanthropic motives, and not as a question of gain,' and they endorsed the claims that theatre work posed no serious conflict with the demands of conventional school education. But from Lanner's evidence about their daily timetable, it is difficult to see how this could be a credible. Conflicting information about the duration of this routine compounds the problem of assessing the extent to which schooling was affected. Henry Irving, also part of the deputation, claimed that most children were employed by him for no more than two months in the year, while Harris and Lanner said that the children were employed in the pantomime from Christmas to Easter and that they went on to summer engagements at Crystal Palace or were sent on tour to other centres such as Glasgow. Harris used his account of the children's continuous employment to counter another of Fawcett's complaints about the system: ' The children were engaged from year to year all the year round, and were not, as Mrs. Fawcett had stated, thrown out into the street after learning all that was bad.'[610]

For all the controversy about the foundation and value of the school at Drury Lane, it became an established and long term feature in the theatre, outlasting several generations of managers. A positive account of it is given in *Cassell's Magazine* in December 1904:

> I was much pleased with the schoolroom – a large, cosy-looking room, bright with firelight, where the 'panto' children regularly learn their lessons under the supervision of a properly-appointed mistress. The children themselves were really charming, quite the best specimens of their class that I have ever seen, and I was told that they are singularly bright and capable. So far as I could see, their profession tends to do them good rather than harm; they are most carefully looked after, they are treated with the greatest possible kindness, they are lifted clean out of the mire and misery and evil association of the London streets, they learn the law of order and discipline, they are accustomed to beautiful surroundings and to charming music, they are taught to be courteous, they learn to be athletic, and in a hundred different ways their welfare is looked after, and they themselves are strengthened and quickened and enabled to fight the battle of life; and the school is a special hobby of Mr. Collins, who has the well-being of his small assistants close to his heart.[611]

A further article, also in *Cassell's Magazine*, asserts that the school is run in accordance with School Board requirements, names the teacher as Mrs Harper who had charge of the school under both Augustus Harris and Arthur Collins. A photograph of her smiling face further personalises the endeavour of the school and helps to inspire confidence in its educational standards.[612]

Whatever the educational standards of this private school and others like it, life was arduous for those children who continued on the registers of Board Schools while they were rehearsing or performing in the theatre. Fawcett collated evidence about the school lives of theatre children, publishing some of it in 'Holes in the Education Net', and delivering still more of it to the officers of the Royal Commission on Elementary Education in 1887. She declared that teachers:

> are quite unanimous that children who act night after night in the theatres are too tired when they come to school to give their full attention to their lessons. The head teacher of the Infants' Department of the Hart Street Schools, Drury Lane, says on this point: 'They (the theatre children) seem very tired in coming to school, and I have never exacted the same amount of work from them as I did from the others.' The head mistress of the Board School, Clare Market, gives an instance of a child of twelve, who acts every night in 'Harbour Lights.' She comes regularly to school, but is 'fit for nothing from fatigue.' This head teacher says she cannot speak strongly enough of the mischief resulting to the children, mental, moral, and physical, resulting from their early engagement in theatres and pantomimes. The head teacher of the Board School, Greystoke Place, Fetter Lane, says: 'There is no doubt their health suffers.'[613]

London was not alone in hosting the problem of 'pantomime children' since the form of entertainment in which they participated was no less spectacular in the provinces than in the capital.

The Theatre Royal in Glasgow, like Drury Lane, employed scores of children as supernumeraries every Christmas from the 1860s onwards. The Glasgow School Board was alert to the situation and discussion of how to deal with the numbers of children applying for exemption from school attendance because of theatre work first enters the Minutes of the Glasgow School Board on 8 September 1884. Before considering the debates conducted in Glasgow, it should be noted that the Education Laws were different in Scotland from those in England and Wales. Under Sections V and VI of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1878, it was stipulated that children under the age of ten were allowed to apply to the School Board for exemptions from school attendance for the purposes of casual employment, but the time they took off school was not to exceed six weeks in any one year. It was also stipulated that employment was prohibited after nine o'clock at night between April and October and after seven o'clock at night between October and April.[614]

Fawcett drew the attention of the Royal Commissioners to the Scottish law and to the methods of containing the problem of theatre children adopted by the Glasgow School Board in June 1887.[615] But she argued that she would not be satisfied by the implementation of the Scottish law in England since it made no provision for private schools, leaving institutions such as that established by Augustus

Harris free to pursue their own ends.[616] The Royal Commissioners were sufficiently intrigued by the Scottish law, and sufficiently ignorant of it, to request Fawcett's supporting witness, Charles Mitchell, to supply them with a special brief on the Scottish Act of 1878.

Fawcett was in direct contact with the Convenor of the Glasgow School Board, William Mitchell, and therefore aware of the difficulties which he encountered in seeking to ensure regular education for the children under his jurisdiction. These included his own School Board's lax interpretation of whether the six weeks' grace were taken from the school year or the calendar year, which meant that theatre children were absent, with apparent consent, for twelve weeks in the calendar year.[617] An investigation of the Glasgow School Board Minutes reveals tha he encountered as many obstacles from his own committee and its advisors, as he did from the theatre profession itself. A Minute for 8 September 1884 documents an unfolding drama of civic dissent:

> Pantomime Children
> In accordance with a resolution of the Board in Committee on 24th January last, the Convenor stated that the time had come for taking the Subject into Consideration....[He] suggested that, previous to any application to the School Board for exemption from the prohibitions of the Education Act, a Circular be sent to the Managers of Theatres, informing them that it has come to their knowledge that such children are engaged for rehearsals in connection with the pantomime, and that such exemption will not be granted in the future without some understanding being come to with the School Board as to the regulations under which the Children will be so employed.[618]

Heated discussion followed when the Convenor moved that this Minute be confirmed by the Board.

One of the committee members, Rev. Robert Thomson asked the Board 'to resolve to refuse to grant exemption in all such cases'. Nobody seconded him. But on 13 December 1886 Thomson made a special speech in committee drawing attention to the recently published investigations by their Convenor into the working conditions of children in the Glasgow theatres. Mitchell's conclusions were published both in the journal *Good Words* and in the chapter 'Pantomime Children' of his own book *Rescue the Children* (1886) where they are contextualised by other chapters about abused, neglected, starving and sick children for whom, Mitchell argues, the State must take special responsibility in the absence of domestic care. On the basis of Mitchell's evidence Thomson again called for immediate and absolute refusal by the Board to grant exemptions from school attendance to children working in pantomimes. This time his motion was carried, by 9 votes to 3, with Mitchell abstaining.

Mitchell's published findings present a picture of the working conditions for children in the Glasgow theatres from observations made during one entire season, noting both positive and negative aspects of this employment. He began by stating the responsibilities invested in the School Board by the Education (Scotland) Act of 1878 to regulate the casual employment of children under the age of fourteen:

> It is provided in the Act that exemption from its penalties during six weeks of any one year may be applied for and granted by the School Board. Such exemption had partly for its object the employment of children at pantomimes during the holiday season. With considerable reluctance has the School Board fallen in with applications for such a purpose, and only on the understanding that school attendance will not be interfered with, that special oversight will be taken of the children, that a meal will be provided, and that on no occasion will they be later in getting away than ten o'clock.[619]

The dialogue established between the Glasgow School Board and the city's theatres, together with the conditions set by the Board, so impressed Fawcett that she later wrote:

> The National Vigilance Association has drawn up a form of suggested conditions and restrictions which it thinks should be insisted upon before any license is granted for the employment of children under ten. These conditions are based mainly on those that have been enforced for some years back by the Glasgow School Board in regard to theatre children in that city. They have been shown and have been unofficially approved by the authorities of the Home Office.[620]

Her reference was to remarks made by Lord Herschell in the House of Lords on 8 August 1889 to Amendments to the Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. He argued to regulate theatrical employment of children over seven years old, suggesting:

> the Court might be empowered to grant a license during such hours and subject to such restrictions and conditions as it might think fit. I have been led to that opinion having observed what has been done by the Glasgow School Board. That Body grants exemptions to the children, authorising them to take part in these entertainments, stating for what time they shall be employed, and making regulations for the purpose of ensuring that they shall be properly taken care of.[621]

Mitchell's theatre visits, made during the rehearsal period and again during the run, provided evidence that these conditions were being met by managers. He was

pleased to note that the children were even being fed during the course of the evening:

> when there is a somewhat lengthened interval, a favourable opportunity is afforded for giving the children a meal. On one occasion we returned to the dressing-rooms about half-past eight to see two-and-thirty little girls enjoy their supper. It was no imaginary Barmecide meal, but a good repast of meat and potatoes.[622]

The nightly provision of a meal for the children was reassuring for reformers, and anticipated the custom at Crystal Palace during the winter of 1888-89.

Before Mitchell's suggestions for stricter regulation could be brought into effect, they had to pass through further eschelons of the Glasgow School Board, which emerged as far from unanimous on the issue. The School Attendance Committee had to be consulted on the subject of whether or not to grant exemptions to pantomime children. They took advice from 'Mr Foulis, the Board's legal agent in prosecution cases' on his interpretation of how the Education Act empowered the School Board. His report, minuted on 17 October 1887, stopped Thomson and his followers in their tracks. Foulis took the view that the Education Act permitted application for exemptions precisely to cover situations such as those affecting pantomime children, 'and although the Board had power to refuse such applications, it would be looked on as an arbitrary exercise of that power.'[623] Foulis's recommendations were accepted by the School Board by 11 votes to 2.

The advice given by Mr Foulis in 1887 to block the radical proposal by the Glasgow School Board was, as the Royal Commission on Elementary Education of 1887 revealed, completely in line with the position adopted by magistrates in England at this time. But Thomson was one of the two people who rejected the legal advice on grounds dictated by his own observations. These he had made known to the School Board in Committee (a body constituted to receive and approve the minutes of the School Board) as early as 2 October 1884:

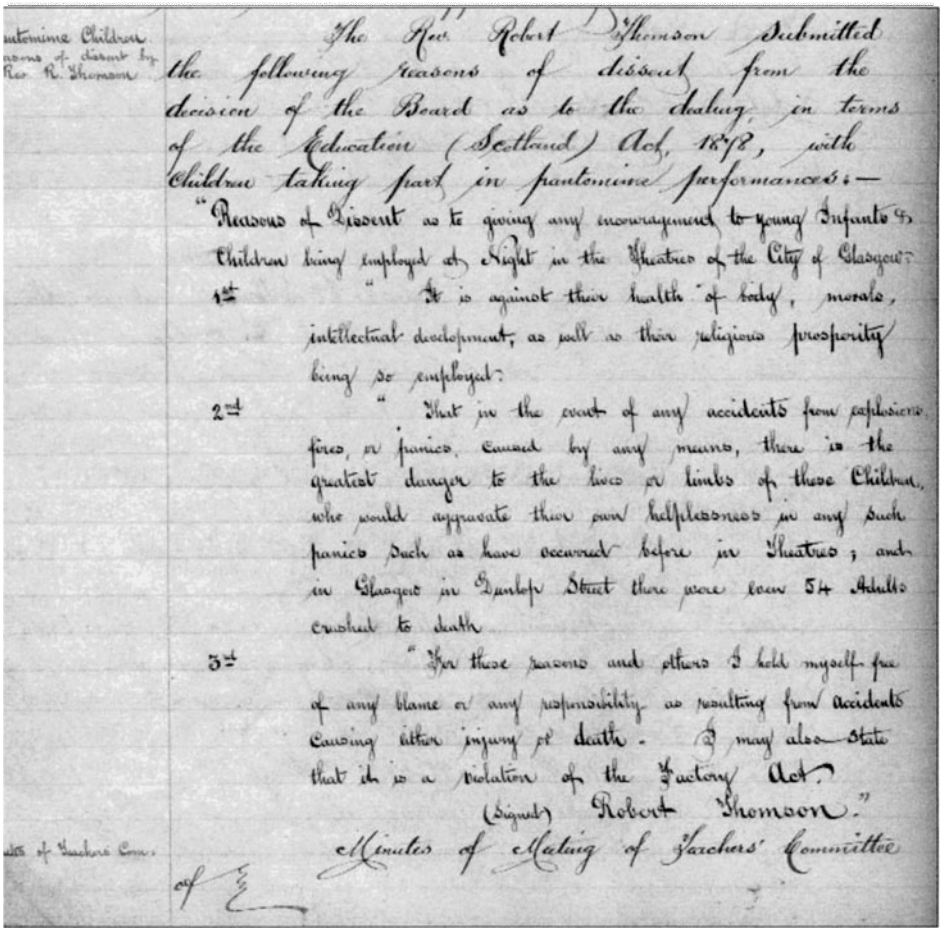
> Pantomime Children. Reasons of dissent by Rev. R. Thomson.
>
> Reasons of Dissent as to giving any encouragement to young Infants and Children being employed by Night in the Theatres of the City of Glasgow:
>
> 1st. It is against their health of body, morals, intellectual development, as well as their religious prosperity being so employed.
>
> 2nd. That in the event of any accidents from explosions, fires, or panics, caused by any means, there is the greatest danger to the lives or limbs of these Children, who would aggravate their own helplessness in any such panics such as have occurred in Theatres; and in Glasgow in Dunlop Street there were even 54 Adults crushed to death.

> 3rd. For these reasons and others I hold myself free of any blame or any responsibility as resulting from accidents causing either injury or death. I may also state that it is a violation of the Factory Act.[624]

Thomson anticipated the arguments which were to sway Parliament five years later. His first set of reasons were those that contributed to the most heated public discussions as the decade advanced, while his last point, that the employment of children in the theatre was a violation of the Factory Act was an area of contention which even split the House of Commons from the House of Lords during the lengthy debate of 1889. Taken together, his doubts illustrate all the points which were discussed at such length by both reformers and apologists, north and south, throughout the 1880s. Yet it was the educationalist and reformer William Mitchell who stated most succinctly the limitations of school life and the need, therefore, for children to find a nurturing environment beyond the classroom which, in his view, the theatre did not supply:

> The education of children does not mainly consist in what is acquired at school. Their mental and moral faculties are being educated imperceptibly by all the varied influences which surround them. Scenes of excitement, improper language, bad company – an immoral environment: these all constitute schools and schoolmasters carrying an education forward without fee or reward. Ay, an education which will mould and fashion future children more than will be done by the six standards of the Code.[625]

This was a belief shared by members of the National Vigilance Association and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It justified the cooperation of these two bodies with the School Boards in to the campaign to reform the working conditions for children in theatres.



The Rev. Robert Thomson submitted the following reasons of dissent from the decision of the Board as to the chaling in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1872, with Children taking part in pantomime performances:—

"Reasons of Dissent as to giving any encouragement to young Infants & Children being employed at Night in the Theatres of the City of Glasgow?

1st "It is against their health of body, morals, intellectual development, as well as their religious prosperity being so employed?

2nd "That in the event of any accidents from explosions, fires, or panics, caused by any means, there is the greatest danger to the lives or limbs of these Children, who would aggravate their own helplessness in any such panics such as have occurred before in Theatres; and in Glasgow in Dunlop Street there were lean 54 Adults crushed to death

3rd "For these reasons and others I hold myself free of any blame or any responsibility as resulting from accidents causing either injury or death. I may also state that it is a violation of the Factory Act."

(Signed) Robert Thomson."

Minutes of Meeting of Teachers' Committee

6. Rev. Thompson, Reasons of Dissent, Minutes of Board in Committee. D–ED 1/1/2/3 p. 141 Glasgow City Archives and Special Collections. Mitchell Library. Glasgow

7
Vigilance and Virtue

'If among these surroundings a girl remain pure in heart, it is simply nothing short of a miracle of grace.'[626] This statement by F. C. Burnand, prolific author of burlesque and editor of *Punch*, embedded in an article called 'Behind the Scenes' in *The Fortnightly Review* in January 1885, dismayed his fellow theatre professionals and confirmed the worst suspicions of outsiders about back stage dirt. It was a resonant claim, repeated loud and clear by campaigners against the employment of children on stage. In 1886 it was quoted by William Mitchell in *Rescue the Children*.[627] In 1887 it was quoted by Fawcett in her evidence to the Royal Commission on Elementary Education to corroborate a statement she had taken from the Rev. J. Cumberledge of St Paul's, Covent Garden, that the theatrical employment of children meant their 'utter ruin – not one in a hundred escapes.'[628] When Fawcett added, 'I think that coming from a man who knows the stage as well as Mr. Burnand, is a striking piece of evidence'[629] she identified both why members of the theatrical professions felt betrayed by an insider's denouncement and why onlookers felt justified in their efforts to shame the profession. When Fawcett's use of Burnand's evidence was challenged by one of the Commissioners who also remembered that statement but thought Fawcett's interpretation of it misrepresentative, he provoked a detailed revision of Burnand's article which confirmed her original position.[630]

The problem with Burnand's allegation for apologists was exactly as Fawcett said and as theatre manager John Coleman, one of his most vigorous and well-qualified opponents, recognised, was that it 'carries with it all the weight attached to an experience, as author, actor, and manager.'[631] Burnand's article stung Coleman with the need for an immediate public response to redeem his profession with an insider's view. The first reflex of his argument is to attempt to establish a hierarchy amongst theatres, and to position Burnand's experience as belonging to the distinctly lower end of this: 'Candour, however, constrains me to say that this experience has not been acquired in the highest school of art, or of artists.

Burlesque, at the best, is not an elevating or an ennobling school in which to study that question.'[632] The equation of houses of high art with high morals is hardly convincing, so from the first Coleman admits some truth in his opponent's view.

Nevertheless this kind of stratification, linking high culture with the virtue of all participants, was commonplace, as evidenced by the cross-questioning of Fawcett by Canon Gregory during the investigations of the Education Commission:

> Have you ever come in contact with the girls who work in this sort of way in the lower theatres, such as there are about the Westminster Bridge Road? – I have heard a great deal about girls acting at the Grand Theatre, Islington; I think that is rather a second-rate theatre.
>
> Is there not a second-rate theatre not very far from Canterbury Hill, where a good many children are employed? – I believe there is, but I cannot give any facts with regard to that particular theatre.
>
> The girls that you know chiefly would be girls who are engaged in the higher class of theatres? – They go from one theatre to another. For instance, one mother I saw had her child first at the Standard and afterwards at Drury Lane, and she said that the Standard was a much more respectable theatre than Drury Lane....She said that when she went down to Drury Lane and saw what was going on there, she immediately resolved to take her child away.
>
> Could not your society obtain information as to what is done at the lower theatres? – We have endeavoured to acquaint ourselves with as many theatres as possible, but we have not made any special division between high and low. A theatre like Drury Lane for instance takes rank, I suppose, as a high class theatre; yet we hear that the class of persons with whom the children associate there is very prejudicial to them....I do not think East London has much to boast of. I heard that there is a very bad lot of boys standing outside the Grand Theatre, Islington, waiting for the children coming in and out...I heard details with regard to their conduct which led me to suppose that it was as bad as anything could be.[633]

Fawcett is more circumspect than her questioners about making judgements to yoke dramatic genre with the morality of the theatre workers who produce it and even claims some evidence to the contrary. Coleman, however, sticks to his belief in the inevitable parity between good art and good morals and then, for good measure, permits himself a redefinition of the term 'actress':

> There are women who come on the stage to show their diamonds and their fine dresses; there are creatures who court the glare of the foot-lights to enable them to display as much of their persons and as little of their costumes as certain

> managers will permit. But I refuse to regard them as types and representatives of English actresses.[634]

The more vigorous his denial of Burnand's claim, the more he supports it. Coleman purports then to consider the moral tone within theatres which he is prepared to recognise as such, and lingers for a moment over the Savoy:

> The 'atmosphere of moral contagion' which surrounds this theatre may be surmised from the following illustration. A few months ago a certain gentleman who occupied a private box, threw a bouquet on the stage, containing a note with an impudent proposal to one of these young girls. He was immediately taken by the neck and thrown out into the street without the slightest ceremony, save that he was recommended to go to Bow Street for a remedy for this summary process of ejection – a remedy of which, hitherto, he has steadily declined to avail himself.[635]

Coleman's article, rushing to the defence of his profession and his colleagues, unfortunately offers no conclusive evidence to counter Burnand's attack. Yet it destabilises the traditional cliché of actress as whoring threat to the virtuous stability of family life.[636] Instead Coleman simply exhibits the outrage felt by many theatre workers at the double bind in which society held them, idolised on stage, spurned off stage. In 1852 Charles Reade's character Peg Woffington (based on the eighteenth-century actress) stated the dilemma most succinctly in *Masks and Faces*:

> You forget, sir, that I am an actress! – a plaything for every profligate who can find the open sesame of the stage-door....But what have we to do [*walks agitated*] with homes, and hearts, and firesides? Have we not the theatre, its triumphs, and full-handed thunders of applause? Who looks for hearts beneath the masks we wear? These men applaud us, cajole us, swear to us, lie to us, and yet, forsooth, we would have them respect us too.[637]

Reade was not alone in seeking to redeem the actress through the medium of theatre itself. Tom Robertson also challenged her conventional stigmatisation, by focussing the plot of *Caste* (1867) on the marriage between a 'ballet girl' and an aristocrat.

This play is traditionally viewed as a critique of the British class system, its rigidity summed up by the character Sam Gerridge:

> People should stick to their own class. Life's a railway journey, and Mankind's a passenger – first class, second class, third class. Any person found riding in

> a superior class to that for which he has taken his ticket will be removed at the first station stopped at, according to the bye-laws of the company. [638]

Gerridge's principled opposition to inter-caste marriage is contested by the happy union of the ballet girl Esther Eccles and the aristocrat George D'Alroy, while Robertson's selection of this social example to make his general point can also be viewed as a specific attempt to rehabilitate the actress. The playwright equips Esther with all the conventional accessories of disrepute: the dead mother, the drunken father whom she has to support, the use of charm and physical allure to advance her career at an early stage:

> mother died when I was quite young. I can only just remember her. Polly was an infant; so I had to be Polly's mother. Father – who is a very eccentric man (GEORGE *sighs deeply* – ESTHER *notices it and goes on rapidly – all to be simultaneous in action.*) but a very good one when you know him – did not take much notice of us, and we got on as we could. We used to let the first floor, and a lodger took it – an old German – Herr Griffenhaagen. He was a ballet-master at the Opera. He took a fancy to me, and asked me if I should like to learn to dance, and I told him father couldn't afford to pay for my tuition; and he said that (*imitation*) he did not vant bayment, but dat he would teach me for noding, for he had taken a fancy to me, because I was like a leetle lady he had known long years ago in de far off land he came from. Then he got us an engagement at the theatre. That was how we first were in the ballet.[639]

But her virtue shines through all circumstances, and she overcomes opposition from George D'Alroy's family and friends to succeed as aristocrat and mother by the end of the play.

Although the developing relationship between Esther and George lies at the heart of the plot, it is sidelined by the dramatic business, vitality and intellectual poise of Esther's younger sister Polly, also a ballet girl, played in 1867 by the sixteen year-old Marie Wilton. *Caste* is a star vehicle for whoever takes the part of Polly Eccles. The sharp-witted charm and common sense of her character construction achieves more for the effort to recuperate the figure of the actress within the play than the sentimental plot of Robertson's drama. It is Polly's youth which gives her a license to say what older characters are more guarded to utter.

By the mid 1880s, in the light of Burnand's accusation, Coleman's defence, and the related anxieties of social commentators, a major shift in thinking about the status of the actress begins to emerge. An extraordinary reversal of perspective begins to be disseminated. The theatre 'girl' is no longer perceived as a threat, but is represented as the potential victim of the scenario. She has to be protected. It is the impudent gentleman in the audience who is thrown out of the theatre, the bad

boys loitering outside the Grand in Islington who have to be avoided. A new picture emerges, so powerful that The Earl of Galloway could state without jest in the House of Lords on 5 August 1889 'I believe that employment of this kind for children is the best thing in the world; it takes them out of all danger and evil of every sort.' [640] Rather than creatures who prostitute themselves both on and off the boards, actresses, having been infantilised by critical and popular discourse for so long, are aligned with the children who work with them, and are presented as legitimate workers in need of protection. It is as if the theatre children, themselves in need of chaperones, take on precisely that protective role in relation to their elders.

Reade had already exploited the dramatic potential of the paradox whereby children operate as moral shields for their elders in *Masks and Faces* where Woffington's generosity and playfulness in relation to Triplet's starving children provide her with a passport of virtue to condition the audience's interpretation of her character throughout the rest of the play. Her famous plea to look 'for hearts beneath the masks we wear' would carry no force if the audience had not already witnessed her dynamic interaction with the Triplet children. The scene in which she feeds them, plays with them and dances with them is where the audience is made privy to Woffington's 'real' character; it is both the structural and the moral centre of the play, an indulgent moment of Victorian sentimentality, a favourite with audiences and always reviewed by critics on the many occasions of the play's revival. It is Woffington's behaviour in these intimate circumstances which makes her appear more sinned against than sinning in the convolutions of a plot designed to shame her as an adventuress.

This crucial scene, at the beginning of Act II, begins by establishing the real hunger experienced by Triplet's three children. Set in their humble garret, Triplet, seated at a desk centre stage, is trying to write the comedy that will solve their financial ills:

Boy. Oh, dear! I am so hungry!
Girl. And so am I.
Triplet. That is an absurd remark, Lysimachus, not four hours after breakfast.
Boy. But father – there wasn't any breakfast for breakfast!
Triplet. Now I ask you, Mrs. Triplet – how am I to write comic scenes, if you let Lysimachus and Roxalana there put the heavy business in every five minutes?
Mrs. Triplet. Forgive them, the poor things are hungry!
Triplet. Then they must learn to be hungry in another room.[641]

The point is laboured in order to magnify the relief which Woffington is soon to bring. The sentimentality of the scene is heightened by the comic tone of the chil-

dren's efforts to please their father and his efforts to deny reality which give way to open expression of pathos: 'I *suppose* heaven is just, I can't know it, till it sends me an angel to take my children's part; they cry to me for bread, I have nothing to give them but hard words....[*He sobs...*].'[642] Soon an unexpected visit by Peg Woffington breaks the domestic stalemate. 'Wasn't somebody inquiring after an angel? Here I am!'[643] She pretends to have come to sit for her portrait which Triplet is painting, but her real motive is to feed the family. Assessing the situation in an aside:

Woffington. They are in sore distress, poor things! [*she offers Mrs. Triplet wine*] Mrs Triplet, I have come to give your husband a sitting for my portrait, will you allow me to eat my little luncheon in your room? I am so hungry. Pompey! [her servant] run to the corner and buy me that pie I took such a fancy to as we came along....

Boy. Mother, will the lady give me a bit of her pie?

Mrs. Triplet. Hush, you rude boy.

Woffington. She is not much of a lady if she doesn't! Now children, we'll first look at father's comedy....Now children! who helps me lay the cloth?

Children. I, and I! [*They run to dresser.*]

Mrs. Triplet [*half rising*]. Madam, I can't think of allowing you.

Woffington. Sit down ma'am, or I must use brute force; [*in Mrs. Triplet's ear*] shake hands with distress, for it shall never enter your door again. [*MRS. TRIPLET clasps her hands. WOFFINGTON meets the children with table-cloth, which she lays.*] Twelve plates, quick! twenty-four knives, quicker! Forty-eight forks, quickest![644]

A party atmosphere develops, during which Woffington hides a ten pound note in Triplet's coat pocket and jokes with the children:

Boy [*confidentially*]. Comedy is crying. Father cries all the time when he writes his comedy.....

Woffington. Till we [*cuts a large piece of pie, and puts it on child's plate*] put a different idea into their stomachs. Come, trinquons! as they do in France. [*Fills glasses, and touches hers with those of the children, who crowd round her with delight.*]....Mrs. Triplet, [*she rises, bottle and glass in hand*] I must prescribe for you too. A wineglassful of this elixir six times a day till further notice. Success to your husband's comedy! What's this? [*Sees fiddle in cradle.*] A fiddle, as I'm an ex-orange wench! [*Giving it to TRIPLET.*] Here, Triplet, a jig – a jig. [*TRIPLET takes fiddle.*]

Peggy has not forgotten how to cover the buckle. Come, young ones – [*TRIPLET plays. She dances a jig with the children*] – more power to your elbow, man – shake it, ye sowl! Hurroo!...Business! – my picture is to be finished. Mrs. Triplet, we must clear the studio: – take your cherubs into the bedroom.

Mrs. Triplet [*seizes her hand*]. Oh, madam! may the blessings of a mother watch over you in life and after it, and the blessings of these innocents too!

Woffington. Pooh! pooh! let me kiss the brats. [*Kisses them. Aside.*] Poor things!

Boy. I shall pray for you after father and mother.

Girl. I shall pray for you after daily bread, because we were so hungry till you came.

Woffington [*putting them off, SR. 2nd Exit.*] There, there. Exeunt mother and cherubs. Music for the exit, Trippy – the merriest you can extort from that veteran Stradivarius of yours...[645]

This is the set piece of the play which made it such a popular favourite, running for 103 performances when it first opened at the Haymarket in November 1852 and then transferred to the Adelphi. The role of Peg Woffington was played by Mrs. Stirling; Lysimachus and Roxalana Triplet played by Master Caulfield and his sister Emma who went on to be a professional music-hall performer in 1860. It is also the scene which transfigures the character of Peg Woffington who, as Dutton Cook remarks in a review of a late revival of the play at the Prince of Wales's in October 1875,

> is a frail creature enough, forced to plead guilty to many sins and shames...she is kind-hearted, generous, sympathetic, and genial; she delights to soothe the sick and to cheer and help the unfortunate, she wins her way to the hearts of the audience....[646]

Without this exhibition of generosity, without the earned blessings of mother and children, without the enacted rediscovery of her own childhood and spirit of play, Woffington would be nothing more than a conventionally jaded actress in search of true love, her social 'guilt' outweighing her emotional vulnerability. By transforming the Triplet circumstances she transfigures herself, and the blessings bestowed by mother and children confirm her virtue.

The link between actress and child is made emblematically by the location of the fiddle in the cradle, where Woffington sees it and is prompted to ask Triplet to play them a jig. His playing contrasts with that which he had attempted before she arrived, when he had played '*a merry tune dolefully*'[647] before Lysimachus placed

7. Supper in Triplet's Garrett, John Coleman, *Charles Reade as I Knew Him* (London: Treherne & Co., 1903), The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, shelfmark EFL N65 1 COL, facing p. 100

the instrument in Cleopatra's cradle. Finding a fiddle where a baby should be, Woffington conjures music that takes her back to her own girlhood as an orange-wench at the fairs where she first met Triplet. The youthful vigour and abandon of her jig in the garret releases childhood pleasures in the whole company, and they all embody by the innocence that properly belongs only to Lysimachus and Roxalana who exit as 'cherubs', young partners to the 'angel' of Woffington's initial entrance. Children and their pleasures form a moral shield for the adult woman, and this trope works both within the fictional frame and beyond it since Woffington crucially represents the figure of the actress. Many reviewers observed that although Peg Woffington was a real actress and the story is set in about 1750, Reade rejects historical accuracy in his representation of her character. It is precisely this departure from history that permits the role to assume a larger significance. It is women who act, here Mrs Stirling, later Mrs Bancroft and Ellen Terry, and by the force of metonym, their female colleagues, whose good reputations are affirmed and enhanced by this interaction with children who are both fictional characters and real infants on stage. By staging a secular version of the feeding of the five thousand Reade aligns actress, child, and miracle-worker, and deploys one of the stage child's most powerful factors of appeal, its capacity to embody an abstract era of arcadian innocence.

For social reformers it remained the case that the Caulfield children who impersonated the young Triplets were pawns in an argument. They were being used in the entertainment industry for local effect, however large the ideological scope of what they represented. There was only one group of children believed by the most cautious of observers and the loudest of scaremongers to be safe from the risk of moral contamination. These were children who were born and bred in the theatre. Taking sides with Coleman, E. Lynn Linton, who became notorious for her stigmatisation of the New Woman during the 1890s and was one of the most combative opponents of change to the social role of women, argued bravely if uncharacteristically for 'The Stage as a Profession for Women' in *The National Review* three months after Burnand's article was published:

> bred to the boards from birth, the women can be, and are, as blameless as a nest full of doves. Father and mother and brothers are all there to watch, to guard, to check, to protect – if need be, to avenge. They themselves, these doves in tights and spangles, know all the nets spread by outsiders, and the pitfalls dug behind the scenes; and they escape where others are caught and fall in...They are so accustomed to the whole thing from the beginning that it is all impersonal and mere 'business,' no more shocking to the moral sense than is the lowcut and sleeveless bodice of the present day to the ordinary lady. They have never had anything to get over; consequently they have never dropped part of their moral furniture in the scramble.[648]

William Mitchell asserts,

> [t]here are families and professionals connected with the stage whose character needs no certificate from me nor from any one, but they themselves will be the readiest to admit, possibly with pain, that there are temptations connected with such employment peculiarly hazardous in the case of young girls.[649]

Even F. C. Burnand admits:

> There is one sort of girl to whom all this does no harm, and that is the girl who comes of a hard-working professional theatrical family, who has been decently brought up in the middle of it all from a child, whose father and mother are in the theatre, thoroughly respectable people, and as careful of their daughter's morals as though she were the niece of a bishop.[650]

And a letter by Henry Irving submitted to Lord Dunraven, read out during the parliamentary debate of 1889 about the hazards posed to children in theatres, asserted:

> the earliest years in a theatre are often of infinite value to members of our calling, and I do not hesitate to say that some of our most distinguished actresses owe their success very largely to the fact that they were brought up in a theatre, and that the stage was to them both a nursery and a school-room.[651]

Every author gives the same two reasons to justify these assertions: the presence of a chaperone, usually a family member, and the recognition by the child herself of the risks in her working environment.

Burnand's scandalising article was published after a year of particularly heated contention about the respectability of the acting profession, which itself coincided with the publication of Barlee's *Pantomime Waifs*, its central construction of the theatre child as victim ('waif') and its claims that children working in theatres were constantly exposed to the workings of prostitution and at risk of falling into the same trade. She argued that between engagements, girls would earn extra money by posing for pornographic photographs; alternatively, believing themselves to be answering adverts to take up acting positions in Europe, they were easy prey to be sold into brothels on the Continent. Such adverse publicity came just months before Stead's revelations about child prostitution in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of summer 1885. The movement for social purity believed it had good reasons to focus on theatre children.

This was the point at which the National Vigilance Association was founded. It was a response, Fawcett states in an early history of the Association, to 'sex problems and sex relationships [raised] by Mrs. Browning in her 'Aurora Leigh' and especially by the great work of Josephine Butler.'[652] Children in theatres were on the agenda from the beginning. Its first Annual Meeting was held on 16 November 1886. It began with a report of the general concerns and activities of the Association which included the following statement under the heading 'Pantomime Children':

> The attention of the committee has been called to the position of children employed in pantomimes, and careful enquiries have been made as to the effects of this class of employment upon their after life. It is not thought that there is much cruelty in the ordinary sense involved in this practice; though the country which passed the Factory Acts will not ultimately permit children of three years old to be kept till midnight performing under gas in theatrical exhibitions; even the amusements of the people must give way on that point. But no one has any doubt that the moral effect on older children so employed is disastrous. Some school authorities have, in vain, endeavoured to stop the system; children cannot act all night and go to school fresh in the morning. But it will take a good deal of rousing of the public conscience to bring reform in a matter which touches the pleasure of so many. The mothers like it; it brings money.

> The children like it; it is more exciting than school. The public like it; it is pretty and amusing: and if it poisons the souls of the girls, the general public will say – 'Well, after all, we must have our Christmas festivities'. Perhaps the best course would be to begin by placing these young people during pantomime time under the special care of ladies, who could protect them at least from some of the incidental dangers of the business; there is no need to allow bad men or bad women to wait for them at the stage-door. It is an unpleasant, but a wholesome service, and would lead to action more decisive. Steps in this direction have been taken in at least one provincial town by the Branch Committee of this Association.[653]

In proposing to supply chaperones for girls at risk, the Association was copying the internal dealings of theatre families, and it was as though these young actresses were being adopted, like it or not, by the National Vigilance Association.

The Association grouped itself into subdivisions and it was the business of the Preventive Sub-Committee to evolve strategies for the best protection of theatre children. Their first task was to investigate for themselves the conditions in which theatre children lived and worked and to assess the extent of risks associated with their employment. They did this by consulting young women who had had juvenile theatre careers, by observing children currently engaged in the theatre, and by consulting schoolteachers and theatre managers:

> The great preponderance of evidence thus obtained has forced the Committee to the conclusion that although the children are, as a rule, kindly treated, their employment under the age of 14 in public theatres is fraught with dangers, physical and moral: they contract in numerous instances mortal chest diseases, the late hours and daily attendances at the theatres are disastrous to their schooling, and to great numbers their employment means absolute moral ruin.[654]

The threat of 'ruin' or worse lurking to catch the theatre girl and her seniors was thought to be real. In January 1886 *The Echo* reported the murder of a twenty-eight year old 'ballet girl'. The woman was French, named Marie Aguetant, and her murder took place in Paris. The reason why this was reported in the London press was because it recalled the 'Great Coram Street Tragedy' which had taken place some years previously. The article described how Marie Aguetant had recently joined the corps de ballet at the Parisian Eden Theatre, 'but for some little time would seem to have led a dissolute life', supplementing her theatre income with prostitution. She was murdered by a client, 'a well-dressed man'. According to the concierge it was not unusual for Marie to return home late at night with clients. 'Her paramour found the body of his mistress extended on the carpet...with nothing on but her

nightdress, her throat being cut and the floor deluged with blood.'[655] It is a gruesome story, unambiguously presented as a tragedy designed to disturb London readers with the knowledge that a similar event had happened close to home before and could occur again.

Lucy Taylor's novel *Fairy Phoebe, or Facing the Footlights* appeared in 1887 and is a thinly disguised fictionalisation of Barlee's *Pantomime Waifs* designed to illustrate the multiple hazards which confronted children at work in the theatre. In the course of tracking the journey of an orphan as she is abducted by the managers of a troupe of theatre children and acrobats and is trained to earn her living on the stage, the reader is entertained to a catalogue of disasters in which the lion-tamer is eaten by his lions, the juvenile tight-rope walker falls during a performance and dies of consumption contracted in the unhealthy working conditions, the juvenile trapeze artist falls to her death, the fairy chorus catch fire, and young girls take to drink and prostitution. Phoebe is five years old when she wakes to find herself in her new environment, and in the company of the slightly older child Spangles:

> The children were alone when Spangles' sister came in. Phoebe was astonished at the entrance of what appeared to her to be a very distinguished lady. Jessie, a tall, fine-looking girl, with a splendid figure and striking face, was showily dressed and wore an abundance of gaudy ornaments. Some of her clothing, too, was evidently costly and altogether unsuited to her rank in life. She flung off a handsome cloak, and came eagerly to her sister's side.[656]

Jessie tries to persuade her little sister Spangles to give up stage work for some other kind of employment:

> 'There's other work to be had,' faltered Jessie; 'matches and flowers, and' – 'Nonsense,' returned Spangles stoutly, with a decision and determination beyond her years; 'I won't do anything of the kind. Matches indeed! I'd soon starve on that; and I like the dancing, I tell you. You put me to it, and you've been in it yourself, and you're just as grand and as rich, and as happy as you can be. Some day I'm going to be just like you, and then we'll live together again, and be ever so happy.'
>
> Jessie changed colour at her sister's last words, and a slight shiver, unnoticed by the child, passed over her. Translated into words, the look would have meant 'God forbid.' But she opposed her sister's wishes no further, and even the feeble passing effort to save the little girl from such a life as her own was soon abandoned, and apparently forgotten...[657]

The economics of stage work for these two orphans, Jessie and Spangles, made it impossible for them to contemplate alternative means of survival. The relatively

high wages which children earned legitimately in the theatre was a powerful factor in their motivation (or that of their parents) to persevere, and the longer they stayed in theatre work the more likely it was, so reformers argued, that they would find prostitution a convenient way to augment their income. The situation of these two characters seems to illustrate Fawcett's claim that: 'these girls find any ordinary work very humdrum after the excitement of the stage, and that they are virtually, to a great extent, unfitted for the ordinary employments of life by their stage work.'[658]

The suspicion that the stage door also issued into the brothel was common, and was even aired in the House of Commons when MPs discussed whether young girls should be employed in the theatre. Mr Winterbotham made a public apology:

> As my words caused a great deal of pain to virtuous girls who follow this employment, I wish to withdraw the words I used to the effect 'that the great majority, when they ended their dancing days, entered upon lives on the streets.' I wish to withdraw publicly what I said publicly; but, at the same time, I do not desire to withdraw my grave protest against this door being specially opened to little girls to enter a profession full of danger to their purity and morality.[659]

Fawcett was alert to the impact which dangerous role models of older actresses could have on impressionable young girls, and she describes two examples of well-known prostitutes:

> It would certainly be a rather startling development of religious revival that would bring a Miss Jocelyn Montague and a Miss Nina Montmorency, who make five toilettes a day, whose persons are adorned with diamonds, laces and furs, who drive a smart victoria by day and a neat brougham by night, on the modest salary of £2 a week, if they trooped in crowds as applicants for admission to Mrs Jeaune's [*sic*] home. One who has first-hand...knowledge of theatre life during rehearsal, has written of the dazzling image of these houris that are constantly in evidence before the eyes and mind of the pantomime child.[660]

Miss Annette Bear was one of Fawcett's most active assistants in collecting evidence and she began by looking at the obvious flashpoints of risk: the kind of company kept by the children in the dressing rooms, in the green room, at the stage door and on the journey home after the show. She discovered that although access backstage was supposed to be restricted, door keepers could be bribed to permit entrance, or to reveal a child's name and address to anyone interested enough to pay for it. This does, however, conflict with Lewis Carroll's experience when he tried to enter back stage at the Globe in 1889:

> I went round, according to promise, after the 3rd Act [of *Richard III*], to see the children. Mrs. Bowman brought them to me in the door-keeper's office, no one being allowed in the dressing-rooms – an excellent rule.[661]

Dowson, on the other hand, described how a meeting in January 1890:

> I...met Image and Horne at midnight outside the "back door" of the Alhambra! & was introduced to various trivial coryphées. There was something eminently grotesque in the juxtaposition. Horne very erect & slim & aesthetic – & Image the most dignified man in London...waiting in a back passage to be escort to ballet girls.[662]

One of Bear's most alarming discoveries was the story of how a seven year-old girl made her way home after work, reported by Fawcett:

> The child, when first I visited her, was suffering from a weak throat and general debility, occasioned by the over-fatigue resulting from the performances at Drury Lane in the evening and school in the morning. After she had begun to recover a little, she was taken for the open-air ballet at the Crystal Palace. She performed in this for four months (six, if rehearsals are included), with forty-three other children of about her own age. They performed in the open air, in low dresses and elbow-sleeves, till November. The child was sometimes extremely fatigued when she arrived at Ludgate Hill on her return from the Palace. The time of her arrival there was usually between ten and eleven at night. Her legs and ankles were often so swollen that she could only walk very slowly. She felt frightened at having to go through the streets late at night by herself, as her mother could rarely meet her. Once, when she was alone, she was attacked by two men in Fleet Street: at this instant, her mother and uncle, who were on their way to meet her, came up, and her uncle knocked one of the men down; the other ran off. Another night a man persuaded her to go with him, and promised her cakes if she would do so. The child ran away as fast as her tired legs would carry her. After this she said she generally, on her way home, tried to keep behind a gentleman in a high hat who was going in her direction. She believed that if anyone attacked her, he (the St. George in a high hat) would protect her. During the last three weeks of the Crystal Palace ballet, her mother, who is engaged at the bar of one of the London theatres, and has, besides, other employment during the day, has engaged a girl of thirteen (!) to meet the child and come home with her.[663]

The open air display in costume designed to reveal the child's body, would have made the girl an easy target to follow from the performance, and her physical

exhaustion could have made it more difficult for her to escape from assault. The mother's effort to quell her child's fears by employing a thirteen year-old chaperone was nothing more than a gesture, and this, together with the account of the mother's own work commitments, suggests the extent to which the family was caught in a poverty trap.

In the absence of chaperones Annette Bear took it upon herself to accompany some of the children home after performances at Crystal Palace, partly to ensure their safety and partly to find out more about their lives. She found that they were more frequently met on 'pay night' than on other occasions, but many of them were always unaccompanied, as she described in a letter to *The Times* in February 1889:

> One night last winter I and a friend visited the Crystal Palace pantomime, where there were between 20 and 30 young children, all girls, from five to 14, on the stage. They danced in two ballets. In the first they represented shrimps, pearls, and seaweed, the pearls being exhibited in flesh-colour tights. In the second they appeared as little Red Indians in dark skin tights decorated with feathers. After the performance all the children left the theatre with the black on their eyes and the paint on their faces, just as they had been on the stage. No one came to meet them, and they divided up in groups and strolled about the Palace. My friend and I accompanied one of these groups into a third-class carriage of the train leaving for London at 10.30. There were perhaps a dozen children of all ages in our compartment. The younger ones were dreadfully fagged, and were evidently dead beat; they leaned listlessly against the carriage or against each other in attitudes of complete exhaustion. I was totally unprepared to find the children so excessively fatigued, more especially as they had not had the usual afternoon performance as well as the evening one on this occasion. The elder children were more lively and excited, and some of them were uproarious. None of those we were with had anyone to meet them at the Palace, and very few at Ludgate-hill Station, whither we were bound. 'Mother comes sometimes when she can,' or 'Nobody comes to meet me,' were the usual replies. I was told afterwards that parents make a special effort to meet their offspring 'on pay nights.' The elder children appeared in one or two instances to be looking after the younger ones. One girl of 12 complained she had to take a child home every night. She pointed to a poor, pale, neglected little mortal of seven in a red knitted hood, who had excited our sympathy by her miserable appearance. Night after night throughout the bitterest weeks and months of the winter season their weary way consisted of two railway journeys (from the Palace to Brixton and from Brixton to Ludgate-hill), and thence on foot to Drury-lane, where they would arrive about midnight supposing they missed neither of the trains. The second chaperon I talked to was aged ten, dreadfully white and ill-looking, with a bad throat. She told me both her sisters, aged six and 12, had been sent by the-

> atrical agents to perform in the pantomime at Leicester. This child had under her charge a rosy-cheeked, black-eyed mite of five, who had been a 'shrimp' in the pantomime, and who began her professional career at the age of four. She earns 6s. a year, and is the only child of her parents, who are small shopkeepers.....I sat next to a picturesque child who looked about seven; she lay back against the carriage so utterly exhausted that it seemed almost cruel to ask her questions. She said she had been a 'pearl' in the pantomime; she had to go home quite alone, and had to get to Gower-street by train. In order to do this she must change again at Holborn-viaduct and get into her third train. From Gower-street she would have to walk to Great Coram-street. Nobody ever came to fetch her, and she was very frightened at going through the streets alone. 'I suppose then,' I said, 'you run all the way.' 'No, I don't,' she replied, 'I am too tired; my legs ache.' Her head dropped and she fell asleep. My friend went on with this child and found that everything was exactly as she had said; she was left utterly unprotected and in her exhausted condition to find her way home through the dark streets alone. The sister of this child, aged five, was performing throughout the winter at the Glasgow pantomime. At Ludgate-hill my attention was attracted to another of the children – a young girl of 12, with large bright eyes and highly rouged, who was dancing a breakdown inside the station and calling out, 'I'm out on the spree.' This child said she expected 'a gentleman' to take her home, whither I accompanied her....[664]

Fawcett later completed the story of what happened when Annette Bear reached home with this child whom she dubbed the 'Modern Cinderella':

> The mother thanked Miss Bear for seeing her child home, but on Miss Bear saying something of what she felt as to the dangers of the life for such a child, the mother said she felt no fear and could see no harm; as for the child acquiring an early knowledge of evil, the mother thought this was a positive advantage, for she said, 'The children learnt so much evil that it taught them to take care of themselves'; and she added, looking at Miss Bear, but with a sideward movement of the head to indicate the child, 'She knows a deal more than you do' of the evils and dangers of life.[665]

What emerges from Bear's lengthy account of the cumbersome homeward journey from Crystal Palace is an extraordinary system of networks, combining railways, child chaperones, and distant theatrical engagements for absent family members. The narrative is steeped in a sense of impropriety, given by the midnight hour and the theatrical costuming of the children. It is a version of James Thomson's 'City of Dreadful Night' (1880), anxiety heightened by the narrator's memory of the notorious case of Elizabeth Armstrong, Stead's thirteen year-old 'prostitute' of 1885.

It was not just outside the theatre where the need for chaperones was felt. Fawcett quotes evidence given by her arch enemy on the subject of the employment of children in theatres, Lady Jeune, to indicate that responsible parents recognise that their children are at risk inside the theatre during rehearsal and performance, and take the necessary steps to support them. Jeune had been describing the loving relationship between a mother and her daughter who was performing in *The Silver King*:

> Mrs. H...never let her out of her sight....never let her act with any one whom she did not know well and felt her child was safe with; but above all, she never let the child go to the theatre without her, and when Florrie went with Miss Mary Anderson to America, her mother left her husband and the other children and went with her child.[666]

Fawcett concludes from this account that

> these rigid and incessant precautions are necessary then, in the opinion of those who have the best means of judging, for the safeguarding of a little child in the theatre, even in a company presided over by a lady so thoroughly *sans reproche* as Miss Mary Anderson.[667]

Anderson herself recalls advice given to her own mother by Charlotte Cushman who was encouraging her juvenile theatrical aspirations: 'Be her friend...Give her your aid; no harm can come to her with you by her side.' [668]

The Association stepped up its activity and public profile with regard to theatre children in the autumn of 1888. It began by making this issue the subject of drawing-room meetings held in conjunction with the Moral Reform Union and followed these with a series of articles by Fawcett in the *Echo* to publicise the investigative findings of the Association about the lives of theatre children. These articles were reprinted and circulated to all London magistrates and to members of the newly elected London School Board, all of whom had been questioned by members of the Association during the process of election about their views on the subject of the employment of children in theatres. 'Fifty-four replies were received in which the candidate declared himself favourable to the application of the principle of factory legislation to theatre children.'[669] As a result of this lobbying in the winter of 1888 the School Board began to issue summonses against theatre managers whose employment of children interfered with their school attendance. This was the first time such action had been taken by the School Board since 1878. A consequence of the concerted efforts of the School Board was, according to the National Vigilance Association, the premature closure of the children's pantomimes at the Court Theatre and the Globe in the winter of 1888-89. Both shows, *Little Goody*

Two-Shoes, a version by Rosina Filippi at the Court, and *Alice in Wonderland* at the Globe, were performed by predominantly school-age children.

In the spring of 1889 the National Vigilance Association began to collaborate on the issue of theatre children with another pressure group, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, on whose behalf the Rev. Benjamin Waugh was preparing a Bill for the protection of the physical and mental well-being of children. The National Vigilance Association had to persuade him that the employment of children in theatres constituted a special kind of cruelty, worthy of a unique clause in the proposed Bill. This was not plain sailing, as the following letter from Benjamin Waugh to Charles Mitchell demonstrates:

> I am very sorry to learn from you that I am so much misunderstood on the theatrical children question. The opinion attributed to me is not only not true, but is precisely the reverse of true. Our Bill does not deal with theatrical employments (except in the case of children under the age of ten years) because it is a Bill for the prevention of cruelty; and I can propose no clause which has not its reasons in facts of my own knowledge. Of cruelty to theatrical children, which would be cruelty in the ordinary use of the word, I, as yet, have found none. Of facts more deplorable than any so-called cruelty, there are plenty; and, personally, I would rather see a bleeding wound now and then in girl children than see, what is almost inevitable to them, in the kind of life to which, to girl children, the stage is a wide-open door.
>
> Your work is far greater than mine, as much so as the soul is greater than the body; it is greater from the personal point of view, it is so from the national point of view. Still, I cannot secure your ends in a Bill dealing exclusively with the prevention of cruelty, as that word is understood to-day.[670]

Waugh's anxiety was that contention over the definition of cruelty would frustrate the parliamentary progress of a Bill which was set to benefit Britain's abused children. He was at first reluctant to jeopardise or to delay their relief on behalf of an unusual species of employed child which had been left unprotected by the Factory Act of 1880. This Act was supposed to regulate the employment of children aged between five and ten in workshops, factories and trades, but did not include the theatre in any of its categories. An Act to regulate child labour seemed to Waugh to be a more appropriate instrument for the control of children's work in the theatre, than one which legislated against cruelty.

It was an extraordinary paradox in Victorian thinking which eventually determined that the employment of children in theatres was better classed as cruelty than work, although this was by no means a foregone conclusion. As early as 1865 *The Times* printed a letter from a member of the audience distressed by watching children perform a ballet in a pantomime, a letter calling for a new Factory Act to

prohibit young children from professional theatre performances. The idea that legislation concerned with labour was the appropriate instrument for measures regarding theatre children was voiced throughout the parliamentary debate of 1889. Lord Dunraven emerged as the chief advocate for theatre professionals and the maintenance of the *status quo* within the industry:

> My contention...is that even if it be advisable to prohibit the employment of children under ten years of age in theatres such prohibition should be effected by an amendment in the Factory Acts, and not by a Bill for the prevention of cruelty.
>
> If Parliament enacts in a Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children that children under ten years must not be employed in theatres, it is obviously the opinion of Parliament that...such employment subjects them to cruel treatment.
>
> Now, I maintain that since no charge of cruelty on the part of the employers has been suggested, much less sustained, a gross injustice will be inflicted upon them if this portion of the Bill is allowed to become law.
>
> Lord Granville argued that what I may term constructive cruelty existed – i.e., that playing in theatres had, on account of the late hours and heated atmosphere, a prejudicial effect upon the physical and moral development of children amounting to cruelty...I shall, however, on Tuesday next prove that the very reverse is the case.
>
> The whole meaning of the Bill is that absolute physical suffering is inflicted upon children under certain circumstances and on certain occasions. The Bill deals with the ill-treatment, neglect, abandonment, and exposure of children...and provides...the punishment for such an offence....
>
> I therefore maintain that, even if the House of Lords is unanimous in considering it advisable that children under ten should not be employed in theatres, the proper course to pursue is to deal with the matter by an amendment to the Factory Acts....[671]

Lord Dunraven was more concerned to protect the good reputation of his friends in the theatre such as Henry Irving, D'Oyly Carte and Augustus Harris, than to act in the interests of the children they employed, but even so there was an undeniable logic to his position with regard to the question of cruelty that many of his colleagues in the House refused to accept in such clear terms.

One factor in creating this paradox was the evidence emerging from the Royal Commission Enquiry on Elementary Education in 1887, and from parliamentary debates surrounding both the Children's Dangerous Performances Bill in 1879 and the Prevention of Cruelty Bill in 1889, that many refused to accept that a child's contribution to dramatic spectacle was appropriately viewed as labour. Theatre

children were not working, they were playing; they were exceptionally lucky to be paid for doing something which they found so enjoyable. Obviously it was impossible for a Factory Act to legislate against children playing. This point is put in the Commons, on 10 July 1889 by Mr Addison, supported by Mr Labouchere who argued: 'a theatre...is...- a sort of educational system united with amusement. In fact, a theatre is a sort of Kindergarten.'[672] Although in the context of a Bill for the prevention of cruelty it was absurd to legislate against play, it seems that the illogicality of this position was more palatable than overtly to shake the foundations of belief that children's natural playacting was spontaneously delivered on stage and that this involved no training, drill or preparation which the children themselves did not perform with delight.

Such thinking provided the perfect matrix for the astute management of a campaign by Fawcett, Bear and Charles Mitchell of the National Vigilance Association to define cruelty in such a way as to make it fit the Bill. Certainly Fawcett had been explicit about her interpretation of what constituted cruelty in her evidence to the Royal Commission:

> I think that in itself the fact of young children of four or five years of age, and throughout the period of school life, being engaged to act night after night, and day after day, in a theatre, is in itself, without exaggerating terms, a cruelty to children.[673]

She makes her case by pointing to aspects of vulnerability associated with performance, such as long hours, hazardous journeys, unhealthy conditions, without suggesting that the children are cruelly treated in the theatre, and without classifying what they do there as either work or play.

Finally Waugh agreed to insert a clause relevant to theatre children into his Bill and after some modification and much debate the Act for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children came into force on 1 November 1889. In readiness, Charles Mitchell and Mr Bewes, drafted a statement of the conditions which should be met on application for a license to employ children aged between seven and ten. Their document, which was adopted by the legislation, shows how facility in manipulating legal rhetoric can achieve results that exceed the letter of the law.[674] The way in which common sense is itemised not only reflects the practical deficiencies discovered by Annette Bear and her colleagues on the Preventive Sub-Committee, but it also makes the whole procedure of applying for a license seem cumbersome. And this is exactly what the National Vigilance Association hoped to achieve as it celebrated the 'considerable difficulties thrown in the way of the employment of children aged between seven and ten.'[675]

These restrictions had to be taken seriously by employers. An application for license to employ seven year-old May Hannan, in June 1890, was heard by

Alderman Batty Langley and Mr J. Mallinson, in Sheffield Town Hall. It was made by Mr Neal acting as proxy for Charles Arnold, the proprietor of a company engaged to perform for twelve days in Sheffield. Arnold's company was on its way from an American tour and would return directly to America. May Hannan was playing a starring part opposite Mr Arnold in a play called *Hans the Boatman*. This had premiered in Sheffield under the title *Sheffield's Baby* and was clearly a local favourite; the current application was brought about because Mr Tearle, lessee of the local theatre, wanted to complete the first year of his management with this play. May Hannan had appeared in Sheffield with Mr Arnold on three previous occasions, and she was represented by Mr Neal as 'probably the best-known child actress of the day', having been on the stage since she was two and having toured India, Australia, New Zealand, Europe as well as America. She had not worked in England since early 1888, and this was the first application for a license on her behalf in response to the new legislation.

The magistrates were informed that she was under the care and protection of Mr Arnold who had contracted with her father ('at present in England') to be responsible for her lodgings, clothing and education before taking her to Australia. Her mother was dead. May was in good health and well looked after; he brought a photograph to prove it.

> 'Of course,' Mr. Neal continued, 'it might be said the child would be taken care of because she was a very important factor in the company, for their own interests if for no other. The girl had won the affections of all those with whom she was surrounded, and she would be properly looked after if the license was granted.[676]

The play was eminently suitable for her since it had actually been written for her and Mr Arnold. The sticking point was the fact that she was required on stage right up to the final curtain, and this would not be until 10.15 p. m.. 'It would suit Mr Arnold better if the magistrates could extend it a quarter of an hour' since licensing regulations stated that children must have vacated the theatre by 10.00 p.m. The magistrates did not wish to grant the license in the absence of all parties directly concerned. They decided to hold over their decision until the company had arrived in Sheffield and they could question May herself. After this lengthy process the license was granted.[677]

This example illustrates the first step in a relatively rapid sequence of legislative impediments introduced through the 1890s and early 1900s to further regulate the theatrical employment of children. An article on 'Fairies of the Footlights' in *Cassell's Magazine* of December 1909 notes:

> There are recognised agencies which act as intermediaries between their parents, the education authorities, the police, and the magistrate. The rigorous laws of the latter-day fairyland may not be lightly transgressed. The safeguards of the little ones are all-embracing. The aspirant is taken by an agent before 'His Worship,' who asks exhaustive questions. The parent must appear. No licenses are granted for children under ten. Special licenses must be obtained for children under fourteen. The education department must be satisfied that instruction in human lore shall not be neglected.
>
> When on tour to the great, grimy provincial towns the precautions are redoubled. The licenses have to be renewed in every city. A governess-matron accompanies the troupe, and it is her business to give them schooling, and generally to stand in *loco parentis*.[678]

This article refers facetiously to the Prevention of Cruelty Act, 1894, which prohibited the employment of children under ten, and regulated that of older children by licensing granted by police magistrates. This was followed by the Employment of Children Act 1903 which continued to deploy the system of licensing already in place. In 1904 a new Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act required a magistrate's license for children aged between ten and eleven, and permitted employment of children aged between eleven and fourteen until 9.00 p. m., after which a magistrate's license was required. Detailed accounts of this successive legislation are given in the three editions of A. A. Strong's *Dramatic and Musical Law*, published by the *Era* in 1898, 1901, and 1910.

8
Theatre and Cruelty

The first British branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded in Liverpool in 1883. It was widely regarded with suspicion since it appeared to empower itself to intervene in a most private domestic relationship, between parents and their children, and it did so without the backing of parliamentary legislation although, as was reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 'the right of parents to maltreat their children is a liberty...with which one need not be too careful about interfering.'[679] Enlisting the support of the Liverpool Town Council, School Board, police and magistrates, its lack of direct authority was compensated for by other more powerful institutions and by-laws. The primary concern of the Society was to protect children from physical violence which they might suffer at home, but at the end of its first year of existence it published proceedings which broadened the definition of cruelty and suggested a more ambitious scheme to contest potentially abusive relationships between children and their parents or guardians.

The first annual proceedings contained eight definitions of the word 'cruelty', which included 'all treatment or conduct by which morals are imperilled or depraved'; seven definitions of 'prevention'; and the term 'children' was held to encompass 'boys and girls of tender age, but may, in case of need, be extended to include all young persons who are unable to protect themselves.'[680] The Liverpool Society had been particularly impressed by laws that existed in the State of New York to prescribe the duties of parents towards their children, and published a lengthy extract from the American code, from which it emerged that 'employing children as rope-dancers, or acrobats, or in begging is a misdemeanour.'[681] The British view that the relationship between parents and children was unassailable could no longer go unchallenged.

Theatre reformers were quick to seize on the implications of the Society's broad definition of cruelty which encompassed not just physical abuse but also violation of a child's mental and moral wellbeing. The emphasis on parental responsibility

spelt out by the dissemination of the New York State code on this question also strengthened the framework within which critics of the theatrical deployment of child labour couched their arguments. The express prohibition of the employment of children as rope-dancers and acrobats in America fuelled growing public disquiet in Britain about such activity, and supplied a new and more broadly-based rhetoric of cruelty with which to air it.[682] Barlee's *Pantomime Waifs* was published just one year after the foundation of the Liverpool Society and it was immediately reviewed in *The Sunday Magazine*, a journal edited by the Rev. Benjamin Waugh who was one of the nation's prime movers against cruelty to children. That review begins by making the general point on which Barlee's work was based, that the amusements of one class of children are dearly paid for by another, altogether more dispossessed, class of children:

> Few disclosures would be more startling to most of us than that of the miseries we inflict upon others by our amusements. In no department of life is more evil wrought for want of thought and want of knowledge. And those upon whom these miseries chiefly fall are exactly the class whom we are all most concerned to shield from misery, namely, little children. More than this, the persons most responsible for the evil are often those who would be last suspected, and who would never suspect themselves – people of high culture, of refined instincts, of tender susceptibilities and of warm sympathies. Take, for instance, the spectators of a Christmas pantomime at one of our West-end theatres. These are mainly persons in the higher and middle walks of life, who have been well educated and delicately nurtured, and would shudder at the sufferings of a little bird or a stray dog. They bring their children, who are being carefully trained in all gentle amenities, to witness what appears to them one of the most innocent and delightful of spectacles, and the sight of their little ones' enjoyment of the scene is to them an exquisite pleasure. They never dream of the dark cloud of misery which lies behind the fairy pageant, out of which the juvenile performers have come to brighten the holiday of the better-conditioned, and into which they will be again presently plunged, unfollowed by a thought or care on the part of those to whose amusement they have ministered.[683]

After outlining many instances of the hazards and neglect suffered by juvenile performers on which Barlee builds her case, the reviewer draws to a close by stating: 'I have left myself no space for describing the revolting cruelties that are practised upon these infant forms in training them for acrobatic performances, and even for the representation of such characters as the monkey in *Robinson Crusoe* or the wolf in *Red Riding Hood*.'[684] He introduces the term 'cruelty' to refer not just to acrobatic training, but also to other forms of theatrical representation by children, specifically to roles which require them to wear 'skins'. Lord Shaftesbury had spo-

ken in Parliament about an eye-witness known to him who investigated 'shrieking and piercing cries' heard late at night and discovered a group of children being beaten by women 'into skins too small for them because the children would be required...to represent monkeys and devils at an adjoining theatre.'[685] Barlee had accounted for the casting of children as animals because 'their human intelligence enables children to *act* as well as represent the character of the individual animal required.'[686] If children in skins are defined as 'acting' rather than as passively representing, the gate is gradually opened for cruelty to apply to the full range of acting undertaken by children in theatres, although Barlee was keen to exonerate the 'Theatrical Profession itself, the more so, as the sin and misery so much to be deplored in connexion with its juvenile members lies more... in its outside associations and surroundings, rather than within its doors.'[687]

To make the link between children's theatre work and cruelty completely unambiguous to readers of *The Sunday Magazine*, the same issue which reviewed *Pantomime Waifs* contained an article by Hesba Stretton called 'The Prevention of Cruelty to Children. An Appeal to the London Society'. This was prefaced by a picture of a little girl selling matches in the snow which seemed to illustrate some of the conditions endured by pantomime children described in Preston's review:

> They must not stay in the theatre; they must turn out into the winter's cold and go anywhere, anywhere, so long as they are out of the way. To cellar, or garret, or doorstep, or wherever they can find a place from which they are not ordered to 'move on'. If it is wet they get drenched and chilled to the bone.[688]

It is a portrayal that has more in common with aesthetic and sentimental conventions for the representation of unwanted children than with the documentation of where children go between rehearsals or performances. But such descriptions within the review emotively called 'Pantomime Waifs', and the illustration to Stretton's piece, assert the subliminal if misleading link between homelessness, neglect, poverty, and juvenile theatre work. Stretton's article concluded with an editorial note:

> We very gladly give a place to this powerful appeal issued by the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, by our well-known contributor, more especially, as in our article on Pantomime Waifs there is a striking illustration of one branch of the work this new society is needed to take up.[689]

Stretton's appeal for charity begins by outlining various forms of cruelty recognised by the Society. Having itemised beating, starving, neglect and exploitation for begging, street selling and street sweeping, she concludes with two instances aimed at the theatre industry:

> we call it cruel to torture the tender bodies of little children in order to train them for acrobats, or any so-called amusement for the public, which imperils their life or limbs; we call it vile cruelty to train up little girls to an immoral life.[690]

Hesba Stretton was active on behalf of the London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children from its inception which followed closely after the foundation of the Liverpool Branch. In 1889 she published a tract for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge which took the form of a sentimental novella called *An Acrobat's Girlhood* in which she painted a grim picture of her heroine's acrobat life and early death.

The story is told in the first-person by the acrobat's big sister, as an authentic and authoritative warning against the horrors of this profession for children. The heroine, Trixy, is twelve at the time of their mother's death, after which the children watch their father sinking further and further into alcoholism. The following year, on a day trip to Margate, two well-dressed foreigners approach the father, having watched Trixy play on the beach. The gentleman says:

> 'I think we could put her into a splendid way of getting her living...a way she could make a fortune in, and yours too, if she was in our hands for a year or two...In a year's time she'd be making two pounds a week'.
>
> 'That's more than I get myself,' said father.[691]

We are informed that the father's wages were 37shillings a week; the initial situation of the financial need of a lone father raising three young girls is established. The avarice of the weak was commonly blamed by reformers as a motive for putting children into this kind of work, while the evident wealth and courtesy of the foreign couple were equally conventional signifiers of the financial exploitation of children by adults, and the duplicity practised by managers whose good manners woo children from their parents into a regime of torture. Ruth, the eldest sister, is intuitively suspicious, invoking the wisdom of her dead mother:

> There was no doubt they were rich...but...there was something bold about the lady, such as mother would never have liked. They seemed to look at Trixy as if she was nothing but a beautiful animal they wanted to buy; not a girl whose mother had prayed for her ever since she had been a little baby in her cradle.[692]

Trixy is taken away by Mr and Madam Lafosse and trained as an acrobat. In order to maintain the first-hand account of her experiences, Stretton turns to the epistolary form, introducing letters from Trixy to Ruth describing what goes on behind closed doors:

> Madam gave me a black eye, and I meen to serve her out. He was that mad with her, and called her a fool, spoiling my buty, he said. They give me plenty to eat, and setterer, so don't you fret. He slaps me sometimes, only not hard, and I don't care a straw. They're ever so much worse with the rest. There's a little tiny girl of four as little as a baby; Madam dragd her downstairs from the top of the house into the cellar, and when the baby came out one of her finger nails were torn off. That was in London before we came to France...Don't let Nancy or little Nell be accrobats....[693]

Authenticty is preserved by the faulty spelling and syntax, while in the tradition of the dramatic monologue, the speaker reveals more about herself and her situation than she knows. It is manifest from her writing style that she has been prematurely removed from education, and the gradual degradation of her moral sense is equally evinced through her attitude of defiance towards her employers. All is not entirely lost as she maintains sensitivity towards younger children at risk and her own sisters. The emphasis on the foreign nationality of Trixy's employers invokes the commonly held belief (for which there was some evidence) that Continental acrobat managers poached British children since this kind of juvenile employment was already outlawed elsewhere in Europe.[694]

Once Trixy has been suitably trained the troupe returns to London for engagements at the Aquarium and the Oxford, and she makes a brief visit home during which her physical deterioration becomes clear. She invites Ruth and her father to attend the Boxing Day performance:

> She could not come down to keep Christmas with us, because all the troupe had to get a good rest, and get up their strength for double work on Boxing Day. It seems to me as if all good people would think much of children at Christmas-time, when our Lord was born a little babe into the world; more than all of poor children, for He was poor. I did not know then, but I know now, that for the sake of amusing rich children, poor little creatures have to toil and suffer, and be cold and hungry, some of them even to death, just at Christmas-time![695]

Stretton makes capital out of conventional Christmas sentimentality. If children are being treated cruelly, the time of year at which it occurs is obviously irrelevant. However, the seasonal employment of children as extras in spectacular pantomimes made their stage presence highly conspicuous, and in the context of the religious worship of the Christ-child the audience could be deemed to have a heightened sensitivity to the social plight of young performers.

The association between Christmas and the giving of alms to the poor, particularly to children, was well established in Victorian culture, enshrined most famously in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Published late in 1843, stage versions began to

appear early in 1844 and Dickens attended rehearsals for Edward Stirling's production at the Adelphi which opened on 5 February. It is evident from Dickens' interventions in the production of this play that, despite the strength of his conviction that needy children deserved middle class charity, he intended his Christmas message to be delivered without causing pain to the audience. Stirling remembers:

> Thinking to make Tiny Tim (a pretty child) more effective, I ordered a set of irons and bandages for his supposed weak leg. When Dickens saw this tried on the child, he took me aside: 'No, Stirling, no; this won't do! remember how painful it would be to many of the audience having crippled children.'[696]

Another commentator on Dickens' view adds, 'but for artistic rather than sentimental reasons the objection was sound – a dead weight of local fact could easily distract from an imaginative issue.'[697] Stirling's desire to enhance the representational pathos of the poor crippled child was overturned by Dickens' determination that nothing should detract from the escapist fantasy of his happy ending in which the reformed Scrooge nurtures Tiny Tim as a 'second father' and regularly celebrates Christmas with a generous heart.

Christmas culture was being manufactured with a veneer of social conscience. An anecdotal digression about the performance of Tiny Tim by the girl credited as 'Miss Maynard' in the Adelphi *Carol* reinforces this. The actor playing Bob Cratchit, Mr Toole, reported how, as part of the business of the play:

> every night at eight o'clock for forty nights I had to serve a goose and plum pudding. Mr. Webster [the Adelphi manager] provided a real goose and a real plum pudding, which were served smoking hot for Mrs. Cratchit and the seven little Cratchits, including, of course, Tiny Tim. The children always had enormous portions given them, and all ate heartily every night; but what troubled me was the conduct of the little girl who played Tiny Tim. That child's appetite appalled me. I could not help noticing the extraordinary rapidity with which she consumed what I gave her, and she looked so wan and thin, and so pitiful, that her face used positively to haunt me. I used to say to myself before I began, 'Well, Tiny Tim shall have enough this time, at all events,' and I piled her plate more and more each evening until I remember she had on one occasion more than half the bird, besides potatoes and apple sauce. It puzzled me to know how she could even carry it away to the fireplace, where she sat on a low stool, in accordance with the story, much less eat it.
>
> To my amazement she carried it and cleared her plate as quickly and as eagerly as ever, pushing forward for plum-pudding with the others. I grew alarmed and spoke to Mrs. Alfred Mellon, who was playing Mrs. Cratchit, respecting this strange phenomenon.

> 'I don't like it,' I said; 'I can't conceive where a poor delicate little thing like that puts the food. Besides, although I like the children to enjoy a treat ' – and how they kept on enjoying it for forty nights was a mystery to me, for I got into such a condition that if I dined at a friend's house and goose was on the table, I regarded it as a personal affront – I said, referring to Tiny Tim, 'I don't like greediness; and it is additionally repulsive in a refined-looking, delicate little thing like this; besides, it destroys the sentiment of the situation – and when I, as Bob, ought to feel most pathetic, I am always wondering where the goose and pudding are, or whether anything serious in the way of a fit will happen to Tiny Tim before the audience in consequence of her unnatural gorging.' Mrs. Mellon laughed at me at first, but eventually we decided to watch Tiny Tim together. We watched as well as we could, and the moment Tiny Tim was seated and began to eat, we observed a curious shuffling movement at the stage fireplace, and everything I had given her, goose and potatoes and apple sauce, disappeared behind the sham stove, the child pretending to eat as heartily as ever from the empty plate.
>
> When the performance was over, Mrs. Mellon and myself asked the little girl what became of the food she did not eat, and, after a little hesitation, frightened lest she should get into trouble, which we assured her could not happen, she confessed that her little sister (I should mention that they were the children of one of the scene-shifters) waited on the other side of the stage fireplace for the supplies, and that the whole family enjoyed a hearty supper every evening out of the plentiful portions to which I, as Bob Cratchit, had assisted Tiny Tim.
>
> Dickens was very much interested in the incident. When I had finished, he smiled a little sadly, I thought, and then shaking me by the hand he said, 'Ah, you ought to have given her the whole goose.'[698]

Although Dickens played a large part in constructing for his contemporaries the aestheticised image of the starving child, exemplified both by the manner in which Toole viewed this hauntingly refined child and the role she played, his response to this story shows that he, at least, was not taken in by it. For Dickens there was neither paradox nor shame that this little girl should appear so greedy.

Victorian audiences were used to seeing destitute children on the Christmas stage in the many fables of rags to riches that dominated pantomime fare. But that same theatrical culture actively discouraged them from imagining anything other than a happy ending or from thinking about the conditions of real destitution. As Toole's narrative demonstrates, reformers like Stretton had to spell out the possible link between representation and social reality. She had to undo the moral paralysis brought on by the kind of excessive aesthetic attention to appearance illustrated by Toole's response to Tiny Tim, and then she had to suggest suitable courses of action.

In order to elaborate her point about the structured class difference between the performers and the audience Stretton gives a detailed description of Trixy's act and various responses to it:

> On each bicycle sat a person all dressed in spangles, which glittered in the bright light.
>
> But at first I did not know which was Trixy; for she was dressed almost like a boy, in clothes so tight that my face burned again with shame when I did know her...Father looked vexed as well, and he never once said, 'That's my daughter.' She kissed her hand to us as she rode by, but he took no notice. But when it came to seeing her 'make a position' as they call it, twisting and writhing her body about in all manner of ways as if there was not a bone in it; especially when she did a favourite trick of facing Mr. Lafosse on his bicycle, and bending herself backwards till she made half a circle, and her head almost touched the handle, and her face was upside-down the way the bicycle was going, then I could watch no more, though the people cheered and clapped louder than ever. It is horrible to see any one you love in a position like that.
>
> 'Oh, mother!' said a little girl behind me, 'I should like to be a circus-girl.'
>
> 'The Lord forbid!' said her mother. I turned around to look at her. She was a pleasant, decent-looking woman, with a kindly face, and about as old as our mother was when she died. But what was she there for? And why had she brought her children to see girls do what she prayed God to forbid that her own children should do? I think women mock God when they pray a prayer like that.[699]

This is the ideological heart of Stretton's message. Ruth, unable to see Trixy that night because she had to perform the same act in two further venues, goes to sleep musing on the barbarity of the audience:

> I wondered how decent men and women can take such delight in such shows, and keep them going by paying to see them. It seems so savage, only fit for the heathen and Hottentots, not for Christian people living in England.[700]

These sentiments are repeated in various forms throughout the rest of the story which charts the sad decline of Trixy's health until she is laid to rest the following Christmas.

The objective of this propaganda is to make 'juvenile acrobat' synonymous with 'cruel treatment', so that the child's performance and its trappings of spangled costume and glamorous make-up actually come to signify not the product, the show itself, but the means of its production, the months of physical pain endured to ren-

der such display possible. There was precedent for this exchange of signification in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in March 1885 from someone who had witnessed the routine whipping of an acrobat boy during training:

> I never shall go into a circus again, for whenever the young gentleman in pink tights and spangles should appear smiling, his sallow cheeks smeared with rouge, somehow or other a horrible vision of a wealed back would come before my eyes and the swish of that terrible whip would sound in my ears.[701]

Those associated with circus work acknowledged this lifestyle. In 1883 Lewis Carroll wrote in his diary about Carrie Coote's big brother Edwin, 'now 18 years old, whom she [Mrs Coote] has not seen for 10 years, and who has been travelling with an acrobat company on the continent, and enduring very great hardships and cruelty.'[702] It was to disseminate such acknowledgement, to effect radical change in popular taste in entertainment that Stretton campaigned. In 1872 when Parliament debated the first Acrobats Bill, Lord Shaftesbury stated he:

> did not believe they would be enabled to prevent these exhibitions altogether by legislation; but that it was only by bringing public opinion to bear on them that they could hope to put down those abominable and degrading exhibitions.[703]

Shaftesbury was acutely aware after his pioneering work on the Factory Acts that laws could only be properly enforced when there was public support for them. Stretton's propaganda contributed to the change in popular perception which was to prevail seventeen years later.

From the mid 1880s campaigners for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children mounted an assault on attitudes to neglected, deprived and physically or mentally ill children and what amounted to their customary abuse. Cardinal Manning set the tone with his pioneering article 'The Child of the English Savage', published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1886, which was followed by the exposure of many injustices by Benjamin Waugh's 'Street Children' (1888), 'Baby-Farming' (1890), 'Child-Life Insurers' (1890) in the same journal and 'Prevention of Cruelty to Children' (1892) in the *Dublin Review*. Many other voices joined in the discussion including Mary C. Tabor with 'The Rights of Children', (1888) and Fawcett and William Mitchell. Reports of cruelty to children in the press took on a political aspect, no longer the random reportings of sensational misadventure or misconduct. So for example when the *Pall Mall Gazette* described suggestions by Lady Burdett-Coutts and Hesba Stretton to form a national society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children on 8 January 1884,[704] its account the following day of 'Cruelty by a Stepmother' who deliberately burned her stepdaughter's hands by rubbing them on the bars of the grate[705] and on 9 February the story of

'Serious Charges against Baby Farmers' who were found to be starving their infant charges to death[706] became items in a connected narrative, more than routine reporting from the police courts.

A rare example of direct theatrical representation of such cruelty is to be found in *Human Nature* a spectacular epic by Augustus Harris and Henry Pettit, staged at Drury Lane in September 1885. The immensely convoluted plot turns on a threat to contrive the death of the wronged heroine's son Frank Temple:

> A large fortune has been bequeathed to Temple's child, Frank, which, in the event of both their deaths, passes to Hawker, the lawyer. Needy and unscrupulous, he determined to compass the death of the boy, and having been instructed by Temple...to obtain a legal separation between him and his wife...he obtains a degree nisi with the custody of the child. Armed with this power, he gets possession of him from the mother and entrusts him to Joe Lambkin, a baby farmer, who is given to understand that £200 will be his reward if the child dies.
>
> Mrs. Temple's maid finds out where the child is being kept and 'arriving at the desolate farm where Lambkin lives, with the aid of Dick, another wretched little inmate left there to be 'done to death,' she carries off the boy. Later in the play, 'the poor little waif, Dick,...brought to London by the Lambkins,...worn out by cruel treatment, dies. Lambkin, to gain his promised reward, causes his death to be registered as that of Frank Temple.' Not surprisingly, 'the last scene is the reunion of husband, wife, and child at the parsonage, where retributive justice is meted out to Hawker and Lambkin....[707]

The play was relatively well received, and the only unconvincing feature of the plot was seen as 'the apparently easy manner in which the divorce is obtained,' suggesting that the representation of corrupt baby-farming did not stretch the imagination. It was however, noted that 'the death of poor little Dick could...be dispensed with,' not on grounds of sensationalism, but because 'it really helps but little towards the progress of the story'.

The theatre was potentially if paradoxically an instrument for encouraging debate and effecting social change, not just in relation to its own juvenile employees, but also with regard to the plight of other cruelly treated children. The popular journalist G. R. Sims seized the opportunity and collaborated on a sequence of melodramas designed to rally public feeling against certain aspects of child poverty and labour. These included *Jack in the Box*, written with Clement Scott in 1885 and staged at the Theatre Royal, Brighton in August, but not produced in London until 1887.[708] Its target was the exploitation of children by Italian *padroni* for the purposes of street performances and begging, the iniquity of these practices having been investigated by the Charity Organisation Society in 1877.

The juvenile lead, played by the eighteen year-old music-hall star Fanny Leslie, was the character Jack Merryweather, a cheekily robust fairground performer, used to track down the more passively abused and abducted child Edward who is controlled by the wicked Italian padrone Toroni. Jack, disguised as one of Toroni's new recruits, witnesses how the Italian horsewhips one of his reluctant juvenile acrobats. Jack's role is to mediate between the display of violent abuse and the audience; initially like them, he watches passively in order to assess the situation and is then moved to protest, directing the audience on what to do about its feelings of revulsion. It seems, however, that audience protest took the form of looking away, since *Jack in the Box* only ran for two weeks in London and the *Era* condemned the playwrights for misappropriating their medium:

> Inhuman cruelty and physical torture are for the law to deal with, not the stage. It is not the playwright's business to usurp the function of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.[709]

This scene was confrontational not just because it was extraneous to the plot and therefore appeared gratuitous, but also because, like Stretton and Bauman, it sought to put on show the process by which some juvenile performances were achieved. By shifting aesthetic attention away from the polished spectacle to what preceded it, these authors altered the signification of the, now unseen, final product itself.

Not all Victorians could claim to be squeamish novices when it came to the aesthetic treatment of horsewhipping children. A brand of pornographic literature specialised in depicting flagellation and often centred on subjects in the nursery or schoolroom.[710] In 1864 Swinburne and his cousin Mary Gordon collaborated on a novella which participated in this trend, *The Children of the Chapel* which was published only under his cousin's married name, Mary Disney-Leith.[711] The narrative strung together a sequence of graphically described beatings, administered as punishments to wayward, lazy or forgetful members of Queen Elizabeth's boy choir. The favoured recipient of these beatings is ten year-old Arthur, the company's new recruit, abducted by their Master while he was playing truant from school.

The final chapter describes the boys' performance of a morality play, attributed entirely to Swinburne, called 'The Pilgrimage of Pleasure', in which a counterpoint is established between the allegory on stage and the punishments administered off stage. The performance is finally engulfed by anguished cries from behind the scenes as Arthur, an obvious target cross-dressed as Vain Delight, receives the first blow. Arthur was being punished for losing control of the tone of the action when the audience laughed at the spectacle of Death:

> so earnestly chasing the little lively boy – for a thorough boy he looked in spite of all his female finery – with his jumping dodging movements. Both had got into the fun of the thing, and seemed disposed to prolong the scene, encouraged by the smiling faces of the spectators, without regard to the effect...by a mischance she tripped over her petticoat, and came down on her knees involuntarily. She picked herself up nimbly, and turning round caught the eyes of Will Byrd amongst the spectators, twinkling with sympathetic fun. It put the finish to Arthur's audacity. Shaking his hand at Byrd, he gave his concluding sentence, 'I am but Vain Delight!' with a triumphant laughing shout that rang through the theatre, and scampered off the stage, careless of his rent farthingale....[712]

The flogging which follows this zestful chase of the ambiguously gendered Vain Delight by Death is not a check to this scene but its culmination. 'No sooner was he off the stage than Gyles seized him, in vindictive fury, to visit upon him the anxiety and trouble that the whole night's affair had cost himself.'[713] Master Gyles functions as the authors' agent; habituating his charges to 'ten floggings a day is the least you may expect.'[714] Far from attempting to turn public opinion against the systematic beating of children in their training to entertain a monarch, *The Children of the Chapel* celebrates the means of torment by which the ends are achieved. While many readers would have been from a côterie, Mary Gordon claims in her Preface to the third edition of 1910 that 'after the tale – a favourite in its day – had run completely out of print, we often spoke of re-issuing it.'[715] The private encounter with the printed page is, however, far less confrontational a situation than the live enactment of child-flogging on stage in front of an audience. It may be that part of the audience's revulsion at Sims' portrayal of such abuse was conditioned by its recognition that what had been a private erotic pastime was turning into a publicly scrutinised vice.

Sims' next attempt to influence public opinion against the systematic exploitation of children in public performances was a contribution to the flourishing genre of acrobat literature. *Master and Man*, scripted with Henry Pettit, opened at the Prince of Wales's Theatre in Birmingham on 18 March 1889, before moving to the London Pavilion in September 1889 and on to the Princess's Theatre in December 1889 where it was well received and ran for 125 performances. This too contained an explicitly brutal flogging scene in which the abducted Little Johnny is forced to perform acrobatic tricks. Since newspaper reporting and public debate of the Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children peaked during July 1889, and the Act came in to force on 1 November 1889, the London staging of Sims' polemic coincided with the achievement of apparent consensus on this issue. The theme of the play was topical but safe; this too may have drawn the teeth from Sims' bite, and have contributed to its popularity.

Sims' contribution to the theatrical representation of juvenile acrobats and their families is sandwiched into an established British tradition which centred on adaptations of a French play by Dennery and Marc Fournier, called *Paillasse*, a sensation when it opened at the Paris Gaieté in 1850. Benjamin Webster, lessee of the Adelphi, immediately produced an English version called *Belphegor the Mountebank; or, The Pride of Birth* which opened at his theatre, with him in the title role, on 13 January 1851.[716] When Charles Dillon became lessee of the Lyceum he opened his first season with this play, using it as a means for Marie Wilton to make her London debut as Henri, the mountebank's son. A new version, called *The Mountebank*, was produced at the Lyceum on 17 April 1865 by Charles Fechter, with himself as Belphegor supported by his son Master Fechter in the key juvenile role. Yet another version, *The Acrobat*, adapted by Wilson Barrett as a star vehicle for himself opened at the New Olympic Theatre on 21 April 1891, with Edie King, 'clever and pathetic', as Henri.[717]

Barrett's *The Acrobat*, which significantly post-dated the work of Sims in this field, contains no suggestion that Henri is cruelly treated or that his acrobat family is corrupt.[718] The issues which Sims sought to raise have been forgotten in a haze of pathos. It is to Marie Wilton's recollection of her work in rehearsing the role of Henri that we have to look to gain even the faintest glimmer of harsh treatment. The stage-manager at the Lyceum had been helped by the Wilton family in the past, and Marie Wilton's mother sent her to the theatre expecting him to return the favour with work and kind treatment for her daughter. Instead, Marie Wilton remembers:

> He was always harsh to me, calling me to account for every small mistake in the roughest way. He knew that I was nobody, and I suppose he presumed upon it....
>
> It was at the Lyceum that I first became acquainted with Mr. J. L. Toole, who, although he had acted before in London, had still his fame to make, and was engaged for the comic part of Fanfaronade in *Belphegor*. During rehearsals he would often cheer me up with some kindly joke, and constantly after the second act (in which was my principle scene) he would whisper with a merry smile, 'Twenty pounds a week insisted upon, I think, after the first appearance.'
>
> Greatly to my relief, during the rehearsals of *Belphegor* my unamiable stage-manager was taken ill, and for days was unable to attend them. Oh, joy, he was ill, and we rehearsed without him! All then went smoothly; Mr. Dillon was so kind and encouraging that I went home rejoicing, hoping that the illness might last until the first night was over; but my enemy came back in three days, and I am uncharitable enough to own that never was I so sorry to hear of a recovery. However, when he again raised his voice to object, Mr. Dillon came to the rescue, and saved me from further trouble on that head.[719]

The crowning paradox of Sims' work was that, in seeking to sway public opinion against certain kinds of juvenile performance, he scripted so many roles for children and used them so liberally in his theatrical campaign. His collaboration with Pettit on the Adelphi melodrama *Harbour Lights* which opened on 23 December 1885 and ran for an astonishing 512 performances was a favourite point of reference for Fawcett in her efforts to demonstrate the incompatibility between stage work and school work.[720] However simulated the floggings and the starvings of Sims' host of juvenile characters might have been, the parts were still played by real children who were the supposed beneficiaries of Sims' use of theatre as a tool for political intervention.

Sims was not alone in his capacity to look in two directions at once. On 16 November 1892 the Trafalgar Square Theatre hosted a benefit matinee for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The programme was varied and included a one-act musical farcical comedy by Mrs Bernard Wishaw, and Gordon Craig playing Petruchio to Violet Vanbrugh's Katherine. The artistic deficiencies of the afternoon were overlooked because of its charitable cause, and there was one saving grace:

> The honours of the afternoon were gained by little Dorothy Hanbury – only eleven years of age – whose singing reflected the greatest credit on her teacher, Mme. Helen Townshend.[721]

Too old by a year to fall within the remit of Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, Dorothy Hanbury is unlikely to have started her career within the previous twelve months, but her capacity to draw and please crowds made her an attractive proposition even for this benefit matinee.

9
Conclusion: Dressing Up

Many of the objections against professional performance by children were also voiced against domestic and amateur theatricals: ' "This talent is dangerous," "Are you not afraid your boy will go on the stage?" or, "Is it not too exciting?" or, "Doesn't it make them vain?" '[722] Mary Anderson recalled a conversation with Cardinal Manning in which they agreed:

> in censuring the practice of acting plays in schools and convents for young girls. I have seen much harm done to children, dressed and painted and put before an audience of prejudiced relatives who...make the little creatures...painfully vain and self-conscious.[723]

Yet there was an extraordinary repertoire available for performance at home: charades, shadow plays, proverbs, living pictures, nursery rhymes, Bible dramas, fairy stories and pantomimes, toy theatres and simple readings were amongst the materials commonly used for home entertainment. And the janus-faced symbol of the child, the anarchic-arcadian primitive to be accommodated within civilised society, found as much expression in plays written for private performance as it did in the professional arena.

The nineteenth-century British traditions of scripted domestic drama for children shared the burden with literature for children to amuse and instruct. In this it was initially indebted to the pioneering French compositions of the Countess de Genlis whose collection of juvenile plays was translated as *The Theatre of Education* and published in three volumes in 1783. She took pains to emphasise the instructional value of her material. The 'Advertisement' pronounces a high-minded manifesto for the moral potential of these dramas:

> It is by repeated impressions on the imagination and feelings, more than by the most assiduous repetition of perceptive instruction, that habits of virtue are

> formed. These effects are produced with great advantage, by the species of writing which our author has so happily invented and so judiciously executed. In common with fable and narration, it exhibits moral truth before the youthful fancy in lively and pleasing colours, and obtains it a free admission into the heart by combining it with characters and scenes adapted to interest the passions: and besides this, it has the peculiar advantage, of engaging the attention, by the gradual unfolding of the plot; giving an air of reality to fiction, by character and dialogue; and affording an opportunity for exercising and improving the powers of memory and speech in dramatic representation.[724]

Implicit acknowledgement of the view that theatre could be morally damaging, both to watch and to perform, is linked with a sense of the vulnerability of the child's ethical development. The overarching design, therefore, was to make virtue appear attractive, not simply to reason but also to 'imagination and feelings' and to assert kinship with the morally respectable genre of fable.

The statement opens with an assertion about the way in which habits of virtue are fashioned, and presents 'repetition' as a founding principle of moral education. By distinguishing between the 'repetition of perceptive instruction' as less compelling than the repetition of 'impressions on the imagination and feelings' the editor harnesses one of the predominant experiential features of participation in dramatic production, that of the repetitive activity of rehearsal and performance, to the plays' promise to deliver virtuous off-stage behaviour and enhanced moral perception. The plots themselves are repetitive, and this too compounds the pedagogic principle underlying their composition.

Printed after the English 'Advertisement' for the collection is the 'Preface by the French editor'. This spells out in greater detail the programme for ethical development:

> Great difficulties were to be surmounted in making [these Comedies] interesting without the aid of intrigue, the play of violent passions, the contrast of virtues and vices...nor a single sentence to be uttered, which was not of itself a lesson or did not lead to some instruction.[725]

Hannah More's *Sacred Dramas* (1782), written in blank verse for performance by school children, participated in a similar educational project, as did Maria Edgeworth's *Little Plays for Children: The Grinding Organ* (1827) while broader educational benefits of participation in drama were recognised by some public boys' schools, amongst which the tradition of the Latin play at Westminster School was the most renowned.[726] By the 1890s anxiety about specific moral instruction had relaxed sufficiently to permit school Christmas shows which had no overt ethical or religious content, such as 'Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp' performed in

London at the Columbia Road Boys' School in December 1899. The journalist reporting on this event praised the way in which the children learned virtues of communal activity, shared goals, thrift and ingenuity.[727]

However, such liberality was not the norm for most of the century, and Christian resources were often deployed in the composition of domestic drama, particularly evident in the fashion for staging proverbs. *Acting Proverbs* (1858) is a series of short sketches designed to illustrate the 'truth' of particular maxims such as 'a rolling stone gathers no moss' or 'honesty is the best policy'. Children were often cast in comic roles, manifesting selfishness, naïveté, and ignorance, like the juvenile maid of all work, Sally, who asserts 'I don't want no teaching now, I don't, how to derange a table. That cloth aint straight...'[728] Almost contemporaneous with *Acting Proverbs* is the more saturnalian collection *Acting Charades* by Alexander and Henry Mayhew. Their Introduction makes it clear that charades were considered as a game rather than as drama:

> The young and old both delight in the game; and invariably choose it. The old people lay aside their dignity with a look of jovial martyrdom, and laugh more than anyone else; whilst – as if to apologise for their apparently unbecoming levity – they tell you 'they do like to see the young people enjoying themselves.'[729]

The purposeful nature of charades, the riddle of wordlessly enacting words, permitted their classification as game, yet as mime, gesture and action, theatre was their only means of communication. Theatre as game, tilting into play, is manifest throughout the script; the widespread popularity of this pastime, together with the impromptu nature of costume, set and direction may have helped to fashion the idea that acting by children was play, in the sense of a game, rather than work. All of these features are evident in, for example, the elaborate and localised first scene for 'Fireworks':

> Enter LITTLE BOYS with paper round necks and long pinafores on. They begin dancing about, and pointing to ceiling in direction of the Lady's house, to intimate that the kitchen chimney's on fire....Little Boys and Girls keep jumping about all the time, putting their hands up to the sides of their mouths, as if shouting fire.[730]

It was during a Christmas holiday while watching 'a party of young people, from about eight to twelve years of age' amuse themselves and their elders by acting charades that Julia Corner was inspired to script a sequence of short plays for children to perform at home.[731] She thought charades occupied the children constructively; she set about to build on this activity and to confront deep-seated cultural

hostility to the participation of middle-class children in theatrical events. Her contribution was instrumental in permitting domestic drama to distinguish between explicitly moral lessons and implicit educational value. She argued:

> [t]heir memories would be improved by the necessity of learning perfectly the parts assigned to them; and their ingenuity would be exercised in adapting their resources to the arrangement of the scenes to be represented....I am aware that some persons object to juvenile amusements that bear any affinity to theatricals; but this appears to me to be an objection that favours the present purpose, since most children of talent and lively disposition are fond of assuming imaginary characters, inventing incidents, and framing dialogue suited to the illusion. Acting, among children, is therefore no novelty; and if proper subjects be selected, and care taken that they convey some useful or moral lesson, I am convinced, from experience as well as reflection, that such performances would be calculated to do good rather than harm. Children want to be amused; and I believe that amusement is beneficial to them, provided it has no bad tendency. I also believe that a very important part of education consists in promoting innocent and agreeable occupation for leisure hours, in order to prevent any disposition to indolence, either of mind or body.[732]

She acknowledged, therefore, what Spencer would later call the 'mimetic tendency' in children, and argued that by judicious selection of the material to which this behavioural trait was lent, it could be used to keep children out of trouble rather than lead them into it. But there is more fun than preaching in Corner's work, and it seems that she has swapped the pill for the sugar.

Her publications offer ample advice on staging, which, if followed to the letter, would keep idle hands well occupied for sustained periods and require resources of more than just the imagination. The 'General Directions' explain how to turn one or two rooms into a theatre, and finishes with the exhortation 'actors should learn their parts very perfectly, and rehearse the play at least three times before performing it to an audience.'[733] Instructions on costume, make-up and props for her first play *Mother Goose* blend elaborate prescriptive detail with some prompts for local initiative:

> MOTHER GOOSE must first wear a pair of high-heeled shoes (if none are to be had of the fashion of Queen Elizabeth's reign common ones will do, with a pair of steel buckles on the instep, and something thick and square put under the heel of the shoe to raise it). A green or other coloured petticoat, and a red skirt, opened down the front with a long bodice and stomacher of the same, the point of which should be fastened over a full white apron. The old lady must also wear a black conical hat, which may be made of paste-board, covered with

> silk, and she must carry a stout staff in her hand....When MOTHER GOOSE becomes a fine lady, her clothes must of course be grander, and more showy, though made in the same fashion; and round her neck she must wear a large Elizabethan ruffle. Her hair must now be drest [*sic*] in high style, being combed back from her forehead into a knot at the top, ornamented with mock pearls or bead ribbon. She must also have large hoops, or huge paddings on each side, underneath the skirt of her dress. A long-handled fan, carried in her hand, would make the costume more complete.[734]

Corner's page devoted to 'A Few Hints To The Players,' is concerned with stage-management rather than acting style, and is characterised by similarly exacting attention to detail within the parameters of locally available resources. As production values they speak to families of a comfortable middle class. The relative wealth of the supposed participants justifies the only advice given on acting style within it. This occurs when Mother Goose, her son Colin and the mysterious stranger he rescues from the cold sit down together to eat:

> As the trio is not supposed to consist of very stylish folks, but rather of hungry peasants, the viands are dispatched in haste, and with little ceremony, the DAME and her SON replenishing the plate of the GUEST with great attention.[735]

The overt didacticism of the play is also tailored to this class, evident in moral tags throughout the dialogue, and decanted for good measure into a speech by the mysterious stranger at the end of the first scene:

> You must not grow ambitious, nor desire
> More than your reasonable wants require;
> But spend with care, and from your ample store
> A portion give unto the suffering poor;
> And what is over carefully lay by
> Against a season of adversity.
> But should you slight my words – grow proud and vain -
> Be discontented, and desire more gain -
> Ill-treat my present, and abuse your prize-
> Pass by the orphan, and the poor despise,
> Soon shall you have no golden eggs to sell:
> Take, then, my gift and counsel, and farewell.[736]

Middle-class morality structures the simple arc of the dramatic narrative. In scene one we meet the poor but virtuous mother and son, rewarded by the stranger's gift

of the goose which lays golden eggs. In scene two their virtue is tested and found wanting; they are now depicted as fabulously rich, but selfish and greedy, guilty of all the sins which the beneficent stranger had warned against. In the final scene the humiliated pair live out their punishment of deeper poverty. Remorseful, Mother Goose concludes with an exhortation to the audience:

> Oh! thoughtless mortal, my advice obey -
> Trust not in riches that will pass away.
> With such things as thou hast, contented be;
> Discreetly use what God hath given thee.
> Should He yet more bestow – of all thy pelf
> Not more than needful lavish on thyself:
> Help thou the wretched; comfort thou the old;
> Clothe the naked; do thou warm the cold,-
> And thou shalt be rewarded....[737]

Children's participation involved co-operation within a group, fostered a sense of mutual responsibility for the successful delivery of a common aim; it required some individual initiative, and the use of valued domestic skills such as sewing and the thrifty recycling of discarded household items for girls, and carpentry for boys. Memory was required in learning the lines, assisted by Corner's choice of rhyming couplets. The use of couplets also reinforces the sense of social and cosmic order, further manifested by plot distinctions between good and evil, vice and virtue. The question of theatrical impersonation, so dubious to middle-class morality, is handled with an assured sense of how the acting child's social imagination may be beneficially enhanced. All the characters are drawn from social classes alien to that inhabited by the actors, and removed from the present by the setting in a notional Elizabethan England.

Beyond the obvious features of ethical education available to the child by its participation in *The Little Play of Mother Goose* is the hidden influence of unseen authority controlling events. The play and its accompanying instructions carry a kind of scriptural authority: the printed words encode a blueprint for conduct which, if followed, will bring great rewards of adult praise and interest. Within the script is the enigmatic figure of the mysterious stranger, a visitor 'from fairyland'[738] who responds to the needs of mortals, rewarding virtue and punishing vice, an emblem of divine justice. Julia Corner's first play for children seems thoroughly to justify the apologia with which it was prefaced.

She followed *The Little Play of Mother Goose* with a variety of more complex versions of folk tales. *The Sleeping Beauty*, published in 1862, has fifteen named parts including a 'dragon of the woods', but the play maintains scrupulous outward respect for Christian morality. The title page informs readers that:

> The mode of naming the infant Princess is made somewhat similar to the custom observed by the Ancient Greeks, as it would have been irreverent to make the slightest approach to our own baptismal rites.[739]

Following the pioneering work of Julia Corner, the publication of stage adaptations of folk tales for domestic performance by children became acceptable and even fashionable. By the 1890s there were many anthologies of plays for performance by children, designed to meet a growing demand both at home and at school. Florence Bell was a dominant author in this field. Her culminating publication was *Fairy Plays and How to Act Them* which contained versions of fourteen folk tales based on stories by both Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen.[740] The scripts were prefaced by extensive advice on methods of rehearsing children for school or domestic performance and presumed adult involvement in the business of directing and choreography. She published songs written in 'rhymed doggerel' with 'accompaniments...quite elementary, so that any child of about twelve who is learning the piano ought to be able to play them,'[741] printed detailed choreography for dances designed by 'Mrs Marshall Burch', and step by step instructions 'for making an ogre's head' (for use in 'Jack and the Beanstalk') by 'Mr. Lancelot Speed'. She acknowledged particular problems of elocution and movement likely to be encountered by amateur juveniles and suggested ways in which a supervising adult could help the cast to avoid them.

Bell's educational drive is confirmed by her first experiments with this form which comprised dialogues in French, *Petit Théâtre des Enfants. Twelve Tiny French Plays for Children* with titles such as 'Les Aventures de Jeannot,' 'Les Paresseux,' 'Le Saucisson,' 'La Petite Fille qui n'aime pas la campagne,' 'Le Petit Garçon qui veut paraître savant'.[742] Most of these are written for two interlocutors, usually female, but there are some plays for as many as six characters with roles for girls and boys in equal numbers. Moral instruction follows a close second behind the design to train children in the enunciation of spoken French, as these brief dramatic encounters usually involve the correction of naughty behaviour by a disruptive child who is thoroughly chastened by the end. This was followed by *Théâtre de la Jeunesse. Twelve Little French Plays for School-Room and Drawing-Room*, a collection of more complex plays requiring casts of up to seven children and involving settings more suited to growing maturity such as '*Un Bureau Télégraphique*,' '*Une place de secretaire*,' or '*Chez le notaire*'.[743] Bell's next venture with this genre involved the recycling of old material and the development of new scripts in *Nursery Comedies. Twelve Tiny Plays for Children*.[744] Here she offered pieces translated from *Petit Théâtre*, such as 'Rather a Prig,' 'The Wigwam; or, the little girl from Town,' and 'Foolish Jack,' together with her own adaptations of traditional folk tales such as 'What Happened to Henny Penny,' 'The Golden Goose,' and 'Cinderella'.

The published work of Constance Milman who, like Bell, worked with children on amateur performances during the latter decades of the century, is not so overtly dominated by didactic concerns as that of her contemporary. Milman's account of her fund-raising enterprises as a Sunday School teacher surprise with their secularity. *Evenings Out. The Amateur Entertainer*, published in 1891, describe various forms of dramatic entertainment devised by herself and her three fellow Sunday School teachers to boost the coffers of the Sunday School or to occupy families of the congregation:

> These said 'Evenings' took place in the winter, and cheered up the short daylight and lengthened nights for both actors and lookers-on. The boys and girls enjoyed practising for the choruses, and hard-working fathers and mothers said they "felt brighter for weeks after one of them concerts."[745]

A variety of performances filled each of the evenings she describes, ranging from costumed tableaux of *Alice in Wonderland* accompanied by 'selections of the story explaining each scene', to enacted nursery rhymes, 'nigger banjo songs', violin solos[746] and an item called 'Advertisements: or The Rivals' which involved the detailed representation in tableaux form of 'well known soap advertisements. The following were represented in the flesh – Brooke's Monkey Soap, showing the old woman whose shawl had been in contact with a newly painted garden seat, "Cherry Blossom," and Pears' "Dirty Boy."'[747] Even in the church hall there was still an evident urge to commodify the child performers.

Milman's account of her last 'Evening' gives a sense of the texture of the event, reveals some sources of its pleasure, and suggests, incidentally, that her church hall activities offered a homespun version of Augustus Harris's jubilee display of infants at Drury Lane. She described how a fellow Sunday School teacher:

> charmed everyone by her rendering of "Childie!"....A. was dressed as an old lady in mob-cap, soft shawl, white hair, etc., and sat with a little girl kneeling by her, whose hair she stroked off her forehead caressingly, and to whom the pathetic ballad was apparently directed....
>
> As it was the Jubilee year we were not behind the rest of the world in loyalty, so we arranged a finale representing "Great Britain."
>
> Illness, marriage, death, the breaking-up of homes followed each other in the next few years.
>
> "Où sont les neiges d'antan?"
>
> Gone, never to be seen again; but,
>
> "Those sunny memories will not fade,

> Though winter with cold touch invade
> The hill-side and the bosky glade."
>
> The fatigues and small worries are forgotten, only the bright faces and hearty applause are remembered... [748]

One of the most salient features of Milman's description throughout this document is the excited pleasure which she and her fellow teachers took in arranging and participating in the performance with their pupils. She gives at least as much attention to the costumes worn by herself and her peers, together with the multitude of ingenuities by which they contrived to make the event cohere, as she does to the achievements of the children. Her detailed description of how to make shamrocks, her pride in her composition of the Jubilee verse, the jovial mention of the distribution of sticky buns at the end, are typical of the enthusiasm with which she greeted the whole event. The 'Evening' was conceived and delivered as much for the benefit of the instructing adults as for the children.

Milman's description of the performance of 'Childie!' holds a key to a major source of adult pleasure in this kind of performance. The artificially aged woman sings the 'pathetic ballad' while caressing the suppliant little girl at her feet. Youth and age are yoked together in this image, to lament transience and to celebrate youth. The kneeling girl adopts the posture of supplication in relation to the personification of old age, and age can do nothing more than establish a fond physical contact with the picture of idyllic youth, passive in the face of the inevitable progress of time. The hard facts of growing up and decay are feminised and made sentimental.

Milman's memory of the event, and the theatricality of the image, lift its conceptual content out of the flux which it demonstrates and make it something lasting and tangible, creating a tension between what is expressed and the manner of its expression. The lyrical yearning of the question 'où sont les neiges d'antan?', echoing with Cellier's account of his work with the juvenile cast of *The Pirates of Penzance*, is captured by Milman's brief account of 'Childie!', its pathos sharpened by the physical presence of a child on the set. While the image is sentimental, its performance is rescued from sentimentality by the delighted detailing of how it was constructed. The 'mob-cap, soft shawl, white hair, etc.,' theatrical signifiers of old age, are placed on the set by the energetic agency of the teachers who share with their pupils the childish delight in dressing up and, more particularly, showing that they are dressing up. The adults are liberated from the burdens of maturity by their participation in amateur events such as this, and they are able to demonstrate to themselves and others that the child kneeling by the side of old age is an externalisation of a constituent element of themselves, both real and desired. Milman's passing remark,

> there never were, and never will be, such entertainments again, and the memory of them is as bright as ever though the performers are fast growing elderly and grey and scattered in various parts of Britain[749]

reveals how her reminiscent focus lies with the adult ideology represented by 'Childie!'. There were, after all, only four years between the jubilee year of 1887 and the publication of *Evenings Out* in 1891, hardly enough time to turn the boys of the 'Farm-Yard Chorus' grey.[750]

Milman's skilled deployment of children in the liberating service of adult games is amply demonstrated by her sequence of six short plays for amateur juvenile performance published in 1890, *The Doll Dramas*. It is a sign that within the private, uncommercial space of domestic children's theatre a sophisticated critique of the dominant cultural ideologies concerning the value and significance of childhood, and the place of play-acting within it, began to take place. Her technique is epitomised by the construction of a central character in the play which lends its title to the collection, 'The Dolls' Drama', called Victoria. This 'doll' is to be costumed as a '"long-clothes" baby. Very long white skirts, sash and sleeves tied up with coral, bib.'[751] Victoria makes her entrance:

> [VICTORIA *shuffles in, stumbling over her long white petticoats; comes down* C.]
>
> Vic. Oh, Meg! oh, Peg! with anger I am wild.
> My lady's dressed me just like a child -
> Peg. A long-clothes baby! Oh, you poor pet.
> Vic. And leaves me in a horrid bassinet
> The live-long day, and when I try to walk
> I fall right down. (*Tumbles.*)
> Tin Sol. Ah, well! you still can talk.
> Vic. They've not at present tried my speech to gag,
> But really I feel tied up in a bag. (*Tumbles down again.*)
> Meg. It's very hard on you. Although your crown
> Was flattened by so often tumbling down,
> You made a splendid Queen, we always said.
> Vic. And now to be a baby-doll instead!

The comedy of Victoria's humiliating transformation from queen-doll to baby-doll is embellished as she launches into song, set to the popular music of 'Driven from Home', concluding:

> Who could foresee it? Who could foretell?
> Shorn are my ringlets and gone is my crown,

Low I have fallen, very far down.
No one can comfort me, none can undress;
No one can know my amount of distress.
Crownless and trainless, I seem in your eyes
Dressed as a baby, a Queen in disguise.[752]

The joke of turning an icon of the reigning monarch into a petulant, trussed-up baby is most piquant for the adult audience of this children's drama, sharpened by the parodic version of the music-hall song. Beyond the superficial humour is the same revelation as was achieved by the rendition of 'Childie!'. The infant is liberated from its adult disguise, the Queen is allowed to play like a child. The enacted situation is yet more complex, since the performer of Victoria is a child, pretending to have been an adult, now turned into a baby by the malicious intervention of the children whose doll Victoria is supposed to be.

Throughout 'The Dolls' Drama' Milman deploys her juvenile cast for the entertainment of an adult audience. The piece develops a careful strategy to animate a childish yet cultured sense of play within the spectators. It exposes and invigorates the infant latent within the adult, but, by the end, reasserts this feature of maturity as dormant. The action takes place during Twelfth Night, a traditional period of saturnalia, when, for the purposes of this play, toys come to life. If we accept the iconic identity of Jean Margaret Davenport and her doll exhibited in *The Manager's Daughter*, Milman's conceit offers a microcosmic view of the function of children on the professional stage.

The familiar nursery inhabitants, Meg and Peg (a pair of articulated dolls from Paris), Victoria, Tin Soldier and Woolly Rabbit find a stranger in their midst. This is Phyllis, a rather superior Dresden shepherdess. The costume description states that Phyllis has 'powdered hair and patches' and that 'faint lines and crows'-feet' are painted on her face, 'so as to look old'.[753] This elderly newcomer functions as an iconic representation of the spectating adult and it is Phyllis, not Victoria, who dominates the action. Her pastoral appearance externalises the conventional view of childhood as a period of arcadian innocence. Yet her status as a displaced stranger, keen to join in but always misunderstanding what the other toys are doing, parodies the conception of childhood as a period of pastoral bliss, suggesting that this is a feature of childhood evident only from the perspective of maturity. The construction of Phyllis allows Milman both to indulge the notion of childhood as arcadian idyll and to satirise it.

The play opens with Phyllis 'standing on a table'. She 'jumps down and comes forward.' [754] Her action states spatial domination and only as the drama unfolds is she gradually marginalised until, unable to find a place even on the mantelpiece, Tin Soldier suggests 'You'd better go, with all your empty state,/And see if you can't find a fitting mate,/Perchance among the ashes of the grate.'[755] Tin Soldier's

particular animosity against Phyllis has a double motivation. In the first act, during the expository introductions to the newcomer, Tin Soldier and Phyllis come into conflict over the issue of social class; she snubs his friendly invitation to sit down (because she can't sit down) by standing '*primly*' on etiquette: 'We've not been introduced;/ 'Tis very clear that you have not been used/As I have to a high society',[756] while he retaliates, eventually, with 'Poor dear, I think you do look rather thin;/P'r'aps china does not wear so well as tin.'[757] Phyllis's self-conscious and defensive introduction of the issue of class contrasts with the manner in which the other toys interact. Apparently innocent of social status, Tin Soldier is on intimate terms with his dancing partner Victoria, who for her part announces proudly that she was bought at a Bazaar called 'Charity'.[758] Class is demonstrated as an irrelevance for the indigenous inhabitants of the nursery, an intrusion of adult concerns in the business of play.

Tin Soldier's second reason for disliking Phyllis can also be seen as the result of adult interference in the toys' 'Bank Holiday' of animation. Drama requires a plot and it is Phyllis who introduces one. Act Two opens with the display of the toys dancing; everyone leaves except Phyllis and Woolly Rabbit. Conspiratorially she says:

> But only you and I are left. (*Looks round.*)
> 'Tis safe, I see there's no one by.
> Listen to me. I think there is a plot. [*Woolly Rabbit shakes his head.*]
> Aha! you shake your head, you think there's not!
> I'm sure Tin Soldier means the house to plunder....[*Exit Woolly Rabbit, beating his drum.*]
> I'm sure he's in the plot....I can't endure
> Not to be told the secret. I'm so certain,
> That I shall hide myself behind that curtain....'[759]

From her hiding place Phyllis overhears Tin Soldier inform Victoria that on 'The first wet day there'll be a great Review' of all soldiers and military toys in the school room.[760] He adds that the event is to be kept secret, and that he believes Phyllis is a 'spy'.[761] Equipped with this information, Phyllis deduces that 'Tin Soldier's planned to kill us all to-night'.[762]

She declares in soliloquy that 'I must not hide the truth, although it grieves/ My youthful heart when one so young deceives./But 'tis my duty. Fire! Murder! Thieves!'[763] She calls the other toys to witness a trial:

> Tin Sol. What does the Chinawoman now pretend?
> Vic. (*aside*). Remember, I shall always be your friend.
> (*Aloud*) If there will be a trial, I demand

My right as Queen to sit – (*Tumbles*) – I mean to stand.
I will be Judge, you, Meg and Peg, the Jury,
And Phyllis must explain her recent fury.[764]

The toys unite in hostility against the 'Chinawoman'. Undeterred, she delivers her pompous sermon, a Shakespearian parody which peaks with Portia's speech in the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, before descending into nonsense:

This quality of China is not feigned,
It cometh from the gentle Jew in Holborn,
Levi Benerth Keith. It is twice sold.
It selleth him that buys and him that sells.
'Tis nobbiest with the noble. It becomes
Crown Derby (genuine), when marked with the crown.
Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the tome, dull but voluminous,
Wears yet a precious binding on its back.[765]

None of this is relevant to the immediate cause, and much is literally incomprehensible. Its effect is immediate: '*During this speech the other actors gradually fall asleep, and* TIN SOLDIER *gives a loud snore*.' Phyllis outlaws herself by her 'dull but voluminous' speech. Her absurd homilies and arrogant intervention parody adult interference in children's games and meet a childish response from the listeners on stage. But while Phyllis sends the other characters to sleep, her behaviour is designed to arouse the cultured attention of the adults in the audience. Only the spectating adults can appreciate the wit of the self-reflexive play on the idea of plot or respond to Shakespearian satire.

Phyllis, the adult, is banished; proper nursery hierarchy is restored. The self-regarding primness of middle-class morality is made redundant and the idea of childhood as arcadian idyll is personified as an absurd sophistication. But just in case the resolution should offend, it involves a reaffirmation of the stabilising allegiance between the monarch and the military. Tin Soldier commands Woolly Rabbit to 'bring her crown and train, Victoria shall be our Queen again.'[766]

On the surface 'The Dolls' Drama' is a slight play. It is short; it offers speaking parts to six children of mixed ability, ranging from the policeman Woolly Rabbit who has only to utter 'Rub-dub', to the complex and demanding role of the shepherdess. However, within these parameters, it succeeds in staging a critique of the relationship between children and adults, and of cultural constructions of childhood which had caused public conflict in the years immediately preceding its composition. But while the structure of the plot seems to empower children, the consistent appeal of the action and the dialogue to mature understanding would seem

to disempower them, to render the performers pawns in a game played out for the benefit of adults. In its ideological complexity Milman's work represents a departure from the model of domestic drama for children established by Julia Corner some forty years earlier, a complexity which can be measured simply by the marked lack of quotable moral tags within the dialogue. There are no simple lessons to be learned through the performance of *The Doll Dramas*. This potential liberation from convention is confirmed by Milman's rejection of traditional fairy-tale material as the basis for her plays.

The impulse to compose domestic drama for children which carried a critique of ideologies which had prevailed until the passing of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act was taken further by Rosina Filippi in her 1897 collection *Three Japanese Plays for Children*. Like Milman, Filippi used the arcadian construction of childhood as a foundation in order to appraise it critically. The collection contains three plays, 'The Mirror', 'The Flower Children' and 'The Night of a Hundred Years'; each presents a supernatural element which supports the wishes or needs of children against the interests of their parents. 'The Flower Children' addresses the arcadian idyll most directly. It has speaking parts for six characters: Uyeshin, a gardener; Otama, his wife; Biobu, a goblin; Sunflower, a boy; Chrysanthemum, a boy; Lily, a girl. Otama laments her childlessness: 'I never see a flower but that I wish it was a child of mine, I never thread a bead but that I wish it was a year in its life, I never see a grain of rice but I think of a baby tooth'.[767] She is overheard by the mischievous goblin Biobu who responds

> No children? and is that the reason for your discomfort? Well, that is a trumpery thing to grieve about. Why, they would no sooner come than you would wish them gone, or they would wish to go themselves. Believe me, I am a wise old man, and know.[768]

Biobu becomes the stage manager, his performance punctures the solemnity of the gardener and his wife. The goblin frames the mortals' actions with a vision more ancient and more knowing.

The goblin makes magic: he drops bran, rice and tea leaf into three pots to conjure up the flower children:

> Chrysanthemum of the ragged locks, Lily of the pure white face, and Sunflower of the thirsty soul – rise up and call this woman Mother. [*A child rises slowly from each flowerpot*]. [When Otama sees them] *she runs towards the flowers as if to embrace the children – when Biobu pops his head round the corner again.* [Biobu scolds Otama]: Don't touch them, don't touch them, what are you about? You must let them come to you, not you go to them. [*Biobu disappears again. The children are now standing up straight in the flowerpots. They stretch themselves and shake out their dresses.*][769]

Sunflower wants to see the sun, Chrysanthemum does a wild dance. The children prove ungovernable and they have needs which their parents cannot satisfy. Uyeshin tries to impose order: 'Children, listen to me.' They reply together, 'Oh we never listen!'[770] Uyeshin continues his disciplinary speech, but he is undercut by the goblin: 'You have come to live with us – you must obey us, our lives are yours.' Biobu unperceived by the gardener comments in an aside, 'Wrong there; when the children come you must live their lives'.[771]

The flower children complain to their parents:

Lily:	Would you deny us light and sensation? Would you deny us water for our thirst? Would you bury our lives in yours? ah, mother you are cruel!
Otama:	(*anxiously*) You would not leave us, girl?
Lily:	(*sighing*) Alas! I cannot, till you wish me to.
Otama:	Ah! that will never be. I'll never part from you....
Lily:	You do not love us then, else you would let us go....
Children:	We wish to go, but you detain us. We wish to live our lives, yet you chain us to your own. We wish...
Otama:	(*sobbing*) Go – go – my darlings. [*All three children rise, embrace their mother, clap their hands, and wave them to their father as they go.*]
All Three:	Good-bye, dearest parents, good-bye till we meet again.[772]

Time moves forwards, and Biobu hands the couple a grey wig and a stick. Now elderly, Otama and Uyeshin admire the flowers in their garden and think of them as children. The goblin watches their progress and closes the play with his comments:

> Well, well, mortals are queer things and no mistake. There they go, smiling and laughing and happy. Ha! ha! I wonder what flowers they will turn into....Well, of all the absurd notions – she is turning into a heartsease – a rubbishy flower, no show in it at all – and he – why if he isn't turning into a potato – dear me, dear me! What a disappointment. Well, never mind, they have had their wish at last, and they were very kind to poor Biobu.[773]

Filippi estranges the British nineteenth-century conception of childhood as a period of pastoral innocence by relocating it in a realm of timeless Japanese myth. But the orientalism of her setting and dramatic technique does not disguise the indigenous quality of its final flowering: heartsease and potato are unmistakeably home grown products. And it is the parents, not their children, who return to the earth in this fashion, as if to suggest that the lyrical yearning for arcadia and its recovery through a particular view of children belongs exclusively to adult desire, and that

it is ultimately bathetic. 'The Flower Children' stages a kind of elegy for this ideology, ushering it out as something quaint but passé as the century drew to a close. The Flower Children themselves, Sunflower, Chrysanthemum and Lily, are drawn from the repertoire of fin-de-siècle images, familiar from the aesthetic posturing of Oscar Wilde and the textile designs of William Morris.

The aesthetes had appropriated the cultural idealisation of childhood and children: Pater's 'The Child in the House', together with his celebration of 'youth' in *The Renaissance* (1873), developed by Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890), Morris's utopian vision of cultural childhood in the neo-primitivism of *News From Nowhere* (1890), Dowson's 'The Cult of the Child' illustrate the complex and multiform symbolism of childhood amongst the avant garde during this period. The duplicity by which Filippi indulges the arcadian ideal while simultaneously ridiculing it extends to the detached aestheticism of her style. The japonaiserie of her technique participates in a fashion that was both popular and elitist, indicated by the range from *The Mikado* to Charles Ricketts' designs for the first, aborted, staging of Wilde's *Salome*.

Three Japanese Plays for Children was an exquisitely produced book and an exclusive commodity. It was printed on hand laid paper, illustrated in black and white by Alfred Parsons, and only 125 copies were printed. Viewed as an object, the book itself belongs firmly in the aesthetic tradition. Its lack of editorial paraphernalia confirms this position, places it as a successor to Louisa Macdonald's finely produced anthology of folktales *Chamber Dramas for Children* (1870),[774] and distinguishes it from the handbooks published by Corner, Bell and Milman. Yet the content of 'The Flower Children' runs counter to the form in which it is cast and is particularly evident in the character construction of the Flower Children themselves. Far from being charming, docile accessories in their parents' garden, they are unruly and insatiable. Their hunger for freedom from parental constraint is not presented as mere wilfulness, but as an appetite on which life itself depends. Lily's rebellious pleading 'Would you bury our lives in yours?' is supported by the physical representation of the children's failing health as they droop and whither.[775] Their choric utterance, 'we wish to go, but you detain us. We wish to live our lives, yet you chain us to your own' resonates beyond the play to reject the larger cultural construction of childhood on which their casting as flowers depends.[776] The Flower Children may be dressed like the pantomime extras of Carl Wilhelm's design, they may look like Morris wallpaper, but they assert their right to liberty from the ideology that facilitated this commodified appearance. They are last seen dancing happily from the stage, waving goodbye to their father. It is a fitting exit for a Victorian myth.

This study set out to explore a range of stage roles given to children by the Victorians, and to offer some account of the appeal of the child actor during this period. The substance behind the Flower Children's complaint, 'we wish to live our

lives, yet you chain us to your own', has been manifest throughout. Whether they were being trained, watched, admired or protected, theatre children were consistently manipulated by their guardians, employers or audiences. A reciprocal and evolving relationship has emerged between child roles on stage and in society. Fairies on stage became waifs in the discourse of moral reform; the invisible climbing girl of the 1830s became the school truant of the 1880s, their identities defined by absence for adults to complete. The final legislative paradox of this reciprocity survived into the twentieth century in the placement of regulation of their employment within an Act designed to prohibit cruelty to children.[777] No longer a response to the contingencies of 1880s politics, was this a confession of the continuing pleasure taken in those 'chains'? In the private space of amateur drama, where employment laws were irrelevant, many of the ideological trends concerning child roles paralleled those of the professional space. But in the drawing room rather than Drury Lane, the domestic audience was positioned as part of the drama, with a full view of the processes of performance; adults' construction of the roles their children played began to change.

Appendix A: Child Actors in Lewis Carroll's *Diaries* and *Letters*

Abbreviations: D *Diaries*, ed. Edward Wakeling; L *Letters*, ed. Morton Cohen

Adams, Ada often called Addie, stage name Ada Blanche. *Whittington and his Cat*, Avenue Theatre, 1883. '...was an excellent Whittington: she has real talent' (D.7.504, L372, n. 1)

Adeson, C. (a boy), Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance*, Savoy, 13 January 1885 (D.8.161); Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*, Prince of Wales's, 30 December 1886 (D.8.311)

Arding [no first name] 'looks about 2 years old, is marvelous in her self-possession' Act II, *Bootle's Baby*, 2 July 1888 (D.8.405)

Arnold, Blanche Alice in *Whittington and his Cat*, Avenue Theatre, 1 January 1883 (D.7.504)

Arnold, Julia Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella* at the Parkers, 24 April 1873 (D.6.275, L209, L382)

Barrie, Katie Oberon in Ben Greet's open air *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Devonshire Park, 13 August 1888 (D.8.417)

Bateman, Jessie (1877-1940) 'a very pretty page' in *The Merchant of Venice*, The Devonshire Theatre, 17 August 1892 (D.9.21)

Bateman Children, Kate Josephine b. 1842, Isabel b. 1844 (L198–9, n. 3)

Beringer, Véra (b. 1879) Lord Fauntleroy in *The Real Little Lord Fauntleroy*, 'wonderful naturalness and spirit' 18 June 1888 (D.8.400-01); 'losing her spirit and naturalness' 10 January 1889 (D.8.442); 4 July 1888 calls on her home then on Savile Clarke to discuss revival of *Alice* with 'either Véra or Isa [Bowman] as heroine' (D.8.408)

Bowman, Charlie b.1876 White Rabbit in *Alice*, Globe, 3 January 1889 (D.8.439), brother to Emma, Isa and Nellie

Bowman, Emma b. 1881 usually called Empsie, Emsie or Emmie, surnamed Holmes, her mother's maiden name; in two tableaux devised by Savile Clarke at

the Anglo-Danish Exhibition, 20 June 1888 (D.8.403); 'a little boy' in *Joseph's Sweetheart* in Brighton, 22 September 1888 (D.8.426); Dormouse and second ghost in *Alice*, Globe, 3 January 1889 (D.8.439); ragged child and General Punchikoff in *The Rose and the Ring*, 5 January 1891 (D.8.546); small part in *A White Lie*, Avenue Theatre 18 February 1893 (D.9.54); 'beautiful part...*very* long' in *The Little Squire*, Lyric, 6 April 1894 (D.9.139)

Bowman, Isa b. 1874 small part in *Alice* 1886; 'pretty as the little match-girl dying in the snow, as Tomelise and as a Japanese kitchen-maid' at Anglo-Danish Exhibition, 20 June 1880 (D.8.403); recommended to Savile Clarke (D.8.439, L710); 'a delightful Alice' in *Alice*, Globe 3 January 1889; 'little Duke of York' in *Richard III*, Globe, 28 March 1889 (D.8.451); 20 April 1889 (D.8.453); 11 May 1889 (D.8.455)

Bowman, Nellie (Helen 'Nellie' Holmes) b. 1877 small part in *Joseph's Sweetheart*, Vaudeville, 20 July 1888 (D.8.412); again 'very prettily as the little boy' in Brighton, 22 September 1888 (D.8.426); 'Clarence's son...sweetness itself' in *Richard III*, Globe, 28 March 1889 (D.8.451)

Burley, Minnie dancer in minuet, *The Rose and the Ring*, Prince of Wales's, 8 January 1891, (D.8.546-7)

Cameron, Violet (1863-1949) 'a graceful child' as Queen Mab in *The Children in the Wood*, Drury Lane 18 January 1873 (D.6.257)

Carlo, Phoebe b. 1874 '*looked sweet*' in *The Silver King*, Princess's, 28 March 1883 (D.7.525); took on role of Cissie 'very nicely', 15 May 1885 (D.8.197); little boy Kit in *Hoodman Blind*, Princess's, 29 August 1885 (D.8.234); discussed engagement as Alice, 30 October 1886 (D.8.304); 'splendid as Alice' 30 December 1886 (D.8.311, L657, n. 1); small part in *The Golden Ladder*, 11 February 1888 (D.8.381); Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Devonshire Park, 13 August 1888 (D.8.417, L581-2 n. 1, L644-5)

Charles, F. *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.202)

Clark, Evelyn *Twenty Minutes with a Tiger and Beauty and the Beast*, at the Simpsons' home, 8 January 1874 (D.6.310)

Clitherow, Maude 'acted very sweetly' in *The Silver King*, Princess's, 28 March 1883 (D.7.525)

Coote, Bertie b. 1868, younger brother of Carrie and Lizzie; 'hardly more than a clever baby' in *The Babes in the Wood*, Sadlers' Wells, 9 January 1874 (D.6.311); Clown in *Goody Two-Shoes*, Adelphi, 13 January 1877 (D.7.13, L270 n.1); 'as good as ever' in *Red Riding Hood*, Adelphi, 2 October 1877 (D.7.75); 'as usual' in *Robin Hood*, Adelphi, 31 December 1877 (D.7.91)

Coote, Carrie b. 1869 Columbine in *Goody Two-Shoes*, Adelphi, 13 January 1877 (D.7.13, L270 n. 1); visits her at home, 17 January 1877 (D.7.16); 'as good as ever' in *Red Riding Hood*, Adelphi, 2 October 1877 (D.7.75); 'the little Prince' in *Jane Shore*, Princess's, 30 April 1878 and 25 May 1878 (D.7.108, 114); Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Princess's, 9 October 1878 (D.7.142)

Coote, Lizzie b. 1862 small part in *Hop-o'-my-Thumb*, Brighton pantomime, 6 January 1874 (D.6.309); 'sprite' in *Froggy Would A-Wooing Go* (L262, n. 1); Zephyr in Surrey pantomime, 17 January 1877 (D.7.17); Area Jack in *After Dark*, Adelphi, 2 October 1877 (D.7.75)

Costello, Ada aged 9, in Hutchinson's and Tayleure's Circus, 19 August 1880 (D.7.287)

Craig, Edith b. 1869 in *Lady Barbara's Birthday*, Moray Lodge, 24 January 1883, a performance by six children (D.7.515)

Craig, Teddie, [Edward Gordon Craig] b. 1872, as above

D'Alcourt, Clara sister of more famous Dorothy, seen on stage in Eastbourne, 5 August 1888 (L712)

D'Alcourt, Dorothy b. 1880 'delicious Dormouse' in *Alice in Wonderland*, Prince of Wales's, 30 December 1886 (D.8.311); also oyster ghost No. 2 by 1 February 1887 (D.8.316); 'speaking Oyster, first fairy, first ghost, and plum-pudding' in *Alice*, Prince of Wales's, 3 January 1889 (D.8.439); touring as Little Lord Fauntleroy, visited Carroll during the tour on 24 June 1890 (D.8.517); see also L657

Edmonds, Emily played Anne Boleyn and Columbine in *Henry VIII*, Princess's, 16 January 1856 (D.2.22)

Edwards, Percy fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Devonshire Park, 13 August 1888 (D.8.417)

Elliston, Clara b. 1870 'leading child' in 'a pretty scene of children', *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Brighton, 4 January 1878 (D.7.92); 'one of four little sailors' in *Cinderella*, Brighton, 1 January 1879 (D.7.153); 'dress-making by day and acting by night' as a shoe-black in *After Dark*, Brighton, 20 June 1879 (D.7.182)

Elliston, Edith elder sister of Clara, 'is 8, and has already appeared in three Pantomimes' by 2 January 1879 (D.7.154); in *Aladdin*, Brighton, 28 December 1880 (D.7.313)

Evans, Polly aged 13, in Hutchinson's and Tayleure's Circus, 19 August 1880 (D.7.287)

Fane, Blanche 'very young and acted with amazing spirit' in *The Little Treasure*, Haymarket, 17 January 1856 (D.2.23)

Fearon, Beatrice and Maud '[t]o the Lathbury's for their children's party. The two Fearons, four or five Davies, and a pretty child named Ethel Barry acted Miss Edgeworth's *Organ Grinder*, and Miss Keating's *Beauty and the Beast*. Maud Fearon seems to have a real gift for acting' 12 January 1878 (D.7.95)

Foote, Lydia *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*, Olympic, 2 October 1863 (D.4.248)

French, Henri (aged 6½) and his siblings Marie (8), and Nellie (3) with Minnie (6, not a sister), stage name of a French family, performed on bicycles at the Rink, Eastbourne, on 4 August 1881. 'They are very clever and seem very nice children' (D.7.353)

Gilchrist, Constance usually called Connie, b. 1865, Harlequin in *Goody Two-Shoes*, Adelphi, 13 January 1877 (D.7.13); 'the most gloriously beautiful child' when visited at home on 10 April 1877 (D.7.29); skipping-rope dance at Westminster Aquarium on 2 July 1877 (D.7.45); Harlequin in children's pantomime *Red Riding Hood*, Adelphi, 2 October 1877 (D.7.75); 'as usual' in *Robin Hood*, Adelphi, 31 December 1877 (D.7.91); 'losing her beauty' as Siebel in *Little Doctor Faust*, Gaiety, 2 October 1878 (D.7.140)

Grattan children Goody and Little Boy Blue in *Goody Two-Shoes*, Adelphi, 13 January 1877 'seemed clever, but hardly worth the excessive praise' (D.7.13)

Hanbury, Dorothy hero in *The Little Squire*, 6 April 1894, 'a sort of "Lord Fauntleroy" play...a clever child of 12...but...a little 'common' for such a part' (D.9.139)

Hatton, Bessie b. 1875 'perfectly charming Prince of Wales: her enunciation is simply delicious', in *Richard III*, Globe, 28 March 1889 (D.8.451)

Henri, Jenny Sylvius in tableau, *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.202)

Hetherington, Dot oyster ghost and little sailor in *Alice*, Prince of Wales's, 1 February 1887 (D.8.316)

Hoare, Mabel child in *The Silver King*, 15 May 1889 (L905, n. 1); Prince Arthur in *King John*, Oxford University Dramatic Society, 6 February 1891, 'more refined and ladylike than the ordinary stage-children' (D.8.550, L905, n. 1)

Howard, Lydia b. 1864 starred in *Miss Lydia Howard's Entertainment*, Worthing, 4 October 1872 'a very clever child of 8' (D.6.236)

Hughes, Henri *The Silent Woman* at the Simpsons' home, 2 January 1873 (D.6.249)

Joel, Elsie Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*, 13 January 1885 (D.8.161)

Jones, Alice and her brother in *Twenty Minutes with a Tiger and Beauty and the Beast*, 8 January 1874 at the Simpsons' (D.6.310)

King, Edith Lillie Thornhill in *The Golden Ladder*, Globe, 11 February 1888 (D.8.381)

Lacy surname of twin girls who played fairies in *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.203)

Lee, Lillie fairy in *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.203)

Lewis, E. *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.202)

Lewis, Janet, Jessie, Kate and **Lucy** in *Lady Barbara's Birthday* at the Morris's home, 24 January 1883 (D.7.515-6) [Mrs Morris was Florence Maud Terry until her marriage in 1882 and Kate Terry is mother of the Lewis children]

Logan, Katie 'quite extraordinary' in *Goody Two-Shoes*, Princess's, 3 January 1873 (D.6.250); double act with her mother in farce *Bella's Birthday*, Princess's, 9 January 1873 (D.6.253); 16 January 1873 met 'strangely clever little Katie' after watching pantomime for the third time (D.6.256); Prince Arthur in *King John*,

Queen's, 2 July 1873 (D.6.281); 'poor part' in *Babes in the Wood*, Sadlers' Wells, 9 January 1874 (D.6.311); 'poor part as Magpie' in *The Children in the Wood*, Adelphi, 13 January 1875 (D.6.378)

Lyde, Elsie Leslie aged 9 played Little Lord Fauntleroy in Boston Museum Stock Company production, opened 10 September 1888 (L740, n. 1)

MacDonald, Lily and sisters **Irene** and **Winifred** in *Pilgrim's Progress* at the MacDonalds' home, 17 June 1879, Lily as Christina, Irene an angel, Winifred a shepherd boy (D.7.179-80)

Mallalieu, Mary b. 1880 Cissie in *The Silver King*, Brighton, 1891 (L864, n. 1)

Murielle, Gracie *Editha's Burglar*, Princess's, 29 October 1887 (L687, n. 2)

Neville, Kate and her sister **Loui** 'two little brothers' in *Olivia*, Court, 22 April 1878 (D.7.106, L313, n. 1)

Nicholls, Ernest and his brother **Willie** children of Christina in *Pilgrim's Progress* at the MacDonalds' home, 17 June 1879 (D.7.180)

Reynolds, Cecilia Antoinette *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867; Pearl in *Sylvius* (D.5.202)

Shute, Eva 'sweetly and simply' as the child in *Old Poz*, home of the Synges, Guildford, 27 December 1869 (D.6.104)

Simpson, Amy 7 years old in 1873 when she played the lead in *The Silent Woman* at her home and with her siblings Gaynor, Reginald and Walter, 2 January 1873 (D.6.249-50); also in *Twenty Minutes with a Tiger and Beauty and the Beast*, 8 January 1874 (D.6.310)

Sinclair, Sarah (the infant Cerito) b. 1868 'a lovely creature' in *Red Riding Hood*, Adelphi, 2 October 1877 (D.7.75); Cupid in *Robin Hood*, Adelphi, 31 December 1877 (D.7.91); fairy in *Cinderella*, Drury Lane, 6 January 1879 (D.7.156, L294 n. 1, L295 n. 3)

Smith, A. 'about five years old' as Queen Catherine in *Henry VIII*, Princess's, 16 January 1856 (D72-3)

Solomon Mr Mite 'only five ½, and very remarkable as an actor' in *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.202)

Speed, Kate b. 1863 and her sister *Mabel* b. 1865 in *Twenty Minutes with a Tiger* and *Beauty and the Beast*, the Simpsons', 8 January 1874 (D.6.310)

Terry, Kate b. 1844 Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Princess's, 22 January 1857 (D.3.14)

Terry, Ellen b. 1847 Mamillius in *A Winter's Tale*, Princess's, 16 June 1856 (D.2.83); Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Princess's, 16 December 1856 (D.2.124); Goldenstar in *The White Cat*, Princess's, 21 January 1858 (D.3.153)

Terry, Marion b. 1853 (also known as Polly and Marion Bessie) *Lessons for Life*, St James's, 24 July 1863 (D.4.225)

Terry, Minnie (Marguerite) b. 1882 niece to Ellen Terry, *Bootle's Baby*, Globe, 2 July 1888 (D.8.405); *Olivia*, Lyceum, 27 June 1891 (L950); fairy in *Cinderella*, Lyceum, 16 January 1894 (D.9.122)

Tinytoe, Annette *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.202)
Verdi, Lina *The Children of the King*, Court, 30 October 1897 (D.9.347)
Ward, Hettie principal boy dancer in minuet, *The Rose and the Ring*, 8 January 1891, (D.8.546-7)
Yarnold *Living Miniatures*, Haymarket, 2 March 1867 (D.5.202)

Appendix B: National Vigilance Association, Regulations for Employment of Children in Theatres, 1889

The Employment of Children in places of Public Entertainment and Amusement, under Sec. 3 of the Prevention of Cruelty to and Better Protection of Children Act, 1889.

SUGGESTED PARTICULARS AND EVIDENCE TO BE REQUIRED ON ALL APPLICATIONS FOR A LICENSE.

1. The Applicant must state in his application:-
   (a) The name, age, and address of the child.
   (b) The name and nature of the entertainment with the place of rehearsal and performances.
   (c) The dates when rehearsal and performance, respectively, will commence.
   (d) The time for which the license is asked, and the hours of the day during which the employment is desired.
2. Notice of the application must be served upon the Inspector, under the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, to whom the Secretary of State shall have assigned the duty of inspection, or the Chief Inspector of Factories at the Home Office, at least seven clear days before the application is heard.
3. The application must be supported by the evidence of a certifying surgeon, under the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, or some other duly qualified Medical Practitioner, to be approved by the Inspector or Chief Inspector aforesaid, that the child is physically and mentally well able without risk or injury to health to sustain the proposed part and undertake the employment (in addition to school attendance) during the time and hours proposed; and a Certificate to that effect shall be signed by such Certifying Surgeon or other Practitioner.
4. A certificate of birth must be produced and verified.
5. Evidence must be given that the child has not been employed for profit in any place of public entertainment, or at rehearsals for such employment, at any time within nine months before the date of the proposed employment, or the

rehearsals for the same; or not for more time during that period of nine months than will, with the proposed employment, make up a total period of more than three months.

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS SUBJECT TO WHICH THE LICENSE MAY BE GRANTED.

1. The child shall not be employed under any license or licenses, for more than three months in a year (including rehearsals).
2. The child shall not be employed in more than one performance, or one rehearsal, on any day.
3. The child must have left the theatre, or other place of employment, before 10 o'clock p. m.
4. The child must be escorted home from the place of employment by its parent or guardian, or by some fit person appointed by him. If no such person appears on any occasion to take charge of the child, the employer shall cause the child to be escorted home by some fit person.
5. A meal must be provided for the child during, or at the close of each performance or rehearsal.
6. The child be provided by the employer with a sufficient wrap or covering to protect it against cold when behind the scenes.
7. Such dressing-room and other arrangements behind the scenes shall be made as, in the opinion of the Inspector, will sufficiently provide for the health, comfort and moral protection of the children employed.
8. A matron must be appointed by the employer, who shall have special responsibility for the reception and dismissal of the children, and their health and kind treatment during their employment.
9. The Inspector may at any time require the child to be examined at the expense of the employer by the certifying Surgeon under the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, or some duly qualified medical practitioner, to be approved by the Inspector; and the employment shall be discontinued if such certifying surgeon or medical practitioner shall be of opinion that the employment cannot be continued without injury or risk to the child's health.
10. A copy of these conditions and restrictions must be hung up in the waiting-room where the children are to meet, and in the room where the children dress.
11. A breach of any of these conditions and restrictions will cause the license to be forfeited.

N. B. – The license does not supersede the provisions of the Education Acts, which still remain in full force.[778]

Notes

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388 19 December 1901, p. 4
389 ibid., p. 164
390 ibid., p. 163
391 *The Spoiled Child* (London: John Cumberland, 1826), p. 5
392 Mrs Jordan was so closely associated with this role that she was even rumoured to have written the play which premiered on her benefit night at Drury Lane on 22 March 1790.
393 Miss De Camp (later Mrs Charles Kemble) at Drury Lane in 1804; Miss S. Booth at Covent Garden in 1820; Madame Vestris; Miss Clara Fisher at the English Opera, 3 October 1826 (Clara Fisher was born 14 July 1811, made her stage debut as Lord Filmnap in *Gulliver in Lilliput* at Drury Lane in 1817 when she was six years old; source: W. D. Adams, *A Dictionary of the Drama* Vol I, A–G, London, 1904; see also *The Biography of the British Stage: being correct narratives of all the principal actors and actresses* (London, 1824)); Master Saunders, at the Haymarket on 4 October 1826; Jean Davenport at the Haymarket in 1837; Elizabeth Backous at Sadler's Wells in 1844; by Carlotta

Leclercq at the Grecian in 1846; Maria Ternan at Drury Lane in 1850; Amelia Smith at Astleys in 1860; Master Percy Roselle at the Olympic in August 1866 and at Sadler's Wells in December 1866.

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435 op. cit., p. 9
436 ibid., pp. 23–24
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438 ibid., p. 9
439 ibid., p. 20
440 ibid., p. 21
441 ibid., p. 12
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443 ibid., pp. 56–62
444 Clement Scott, *The Theatre*, 1879, p. 39
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446 *The Theatre*, 1 May 1880
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448 Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*, ed. Andrew Maunder (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 1999), p. 550
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450 *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 6 January 1877, p. 365
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