"PETITE CAPRICE": INNOCENCE, ORIGINAL SIN AND THE COLONIAL MOTHER AND CHILD

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At the end of the Victorian period science as well as sentiment demanded attention to the ideal of childhood innocence. Few writers, however, defined precisely what this by now over-worked concept might mean. For ardent followers of Rousseau, Froebel and other more recent advocates of educational science, innocence was defined primarily in opposition to original sin. Far from a knowing little adult in need of correction the child was a tender plant all too easily crushed and tainted by corruption. This in turn was seen to demand avoidance of Puritan ideas of enforcing obedience by breaking the will, long declared to be punitive and ineffective. Children should be sheltered from such ideas and ruled not by fear of a vengeful God but by kindness and love. For psychologists on the other hand innocence meant a kind of vigorous, raw primitivism. According to the latest scientific theory the child was a little savage whose development mirrored the evolution of the race, a prey to all kinds of unconscious instincts and impulses including sexual ones. These two schools of thought nevertheless shared the view that mothers and teachers must take care not to "force" the child; even to demand unquestioned obedience was considered harmful because it could check the development of a desirable "self-reliant spirit" (Wright 17; Key 45, 123-25, 292-96; "The Training of Children" 17; "Mistaken Mother's Love" 5-6). Paediatricians in contrast were uniformly committed to a rigid and punitive model of child-training. Though justified in terms of saving the hapless child from the pernicious influence of superstitious old women, malicious midwives, ignorant mothers and germs, this model's emphasis on plain food, fresh air, regular bowel movements and a rigid daily timetable measured by the clock actually looked back to Puritan notions of a need to deny all bodily appetites and master self-will (Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood* 132-47).

Perhaps the main point of agreement among these various experts was the fact that childhood was defined primarily in terms of sexuality and that there had been an unfathomable mismanagement of this issue on the part of their immediate predecessors, the obtuse Victorians. Recent research has shown that very early in the Edwardian period everything perceived as "Victorian" was cast into a particularly negative mould. To be Victorian was not merely to be old-fashioned, it was to be out of touch with modern, scientific realities. This was the case especially with respect to sex. The Victorians were said to have been particularly heartless in these matters, forcing a grim, Puritanical silence on themselves and their children and pretending to a lofty spirituality and indifference which marked them out as hypocrites and prudes. Thus Edwardian educationists saw themselves as liberating children from the fog of ignorance by expertly enlightening them on sexual matters; psychologists saw themselves as casting new light on how repression of the sexual instinct might cause undesirable phobias to crop up later in life in various menacing forms; doctors saw themselves as expertly teaching children how to manage their sexuality automatically and thus conserve their sexual power for eugenic reproduction. All claimed to be introducing a new and

welcome liberation from the grim, anti-macassar inhibitions of the Victorian era, a stereotypical model which until recently has remained remarkably influential and intact.

Yet most of these supposedly new sexual theories were no novelty, having originated during the Victorian era or even earlier. As Foucault has argued, far from "a massive censorship beginning with the verbal proprieties imposed by the Age of Reason," the nineteenth-century had seen unprecedented discussion of sexual issues (34-35). Newer studies have added that Victorian respectability was far from uncompromisingly dour. Rather Victorians of all classes tolerated a far greater range of attitudes and practices than scholars have allowed, while their everyday world was permeated with suggestions of ribaldry and eroticism. Even where Victorians were silent on the subject of sex this should not be taken to mean that these people were the coy hypocrites that later writers declared them to be; nor can they be held responsible for creating inhibitions, phobias or taboos. This was the case especially with child sexuality. Even the most romantic interpretation of the concept of childhood innocence did not preclude sexuality; indeed by fetishising purity, romantics made the child attractive yet forbidden. As Henry James so graphically suggested in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) this process may have functioned so as to inculcate voyeurism and arousal. The fact that children were sometimes seen as complicit in their own sexualisation and hence a danger to themselves may have had the same effect. Childhood was relished precisely because it was so insecure and ephemeral, forever in danger of being defiled or slipping away as cuteness; simplicity, playfulness and trust were lost in the inevitable onslaught of puberty and the trials and responsibilities of adult life. It was assumed that once lost innocence could never be restored, and some children were perceived as intrinsically less pure than others. Thus the perceived innocence of the child helped generate discussion of exceptions to that model, in turn creating the knowing little adult and the subversive child (Kincaid 34-37, 65-79; Mason 1-17; see also 128, 170-72).

While invaluable for casting new light on the stereotype of the "Other" Victorians, these new studies of Victorian sexuality have not always addressed that stereotype's implications for the politics of gender and race. Yet our new understanding of the Victorians as actively engaged in the construction and expression of sexual knowledge has profound political implications in both of these areas. As Stoler has shown the fear shared both by the Victorians and the Edwardian sexologists (who took them to task) that the servant would corrupt the child reflected the anxiety that children would imbibe the moral values and even the physical characteristics of people imagined to comprise a lower racial type. Much of the doctors' regimented "sanitary" formula for child-raising was based on this fear of racial contagion and the notion that other races "spoilt" rather than disciplined their young. Manifestations of sexuality in white children were thus taken as a sign of foreignness which must be overcome so that the child learned to define itself as different from and superior to such lesser species (Stoler 138-57). Work by Poovey and others suggests that the stereotyping of the Victorians as repressive was highly gendered. Certainly in the influential writing of Butler and Gosse (in an attack which commenced during the Victorian era itself) fathers were seen as every bit as repressive and cruel as their wives. Nevertheless it was initially Victorian middle-class mothers and especially feminist women who were targeted as ill-equipped to deal with

the complicated training of the innocent child (Poovey 24-49; Fee 632-46; Spongberg 2-11).

Occurring throughout Western societies both in Europe and overseas, these allegations were of particular importance for the history of childhood. The stereotype of the Victorians as "frigid" and inept had a marked influence on how childhood was and still is perceived and remembered. This article explores the problem by examining the origins of the backlash against Victorian child-rearing in Australia where the racial and gendered implications of the stereotype were particularly marked.

Victorian Mothering and Sexual Repression

Other than defining themselves as modern, realistic and sexually uninhibited, a second factor which the various Edwardian experts on child-rearing held in common was the view that children were too vulnerable and important to be left in the care of mere women. For them childhood was defined not only in terms of sexuality but of malleability which in turn suggested the enormous importance of child socialisation to national efficiency, racial fitness and controlling the direction of political and cultural change. As A.W. Rudd informed the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science: "The Church hammers away at the adult with little effect. The State has all it can do to keep him straight. Why not try to do more with the child and the youth? He is plastic and mouldable and responsible to the best influences if we can only bring them to bear at the right time and in the right way" (774).

The result was a new emphasis on professional training for both mothers and teachers who now must walk a fine line between discipline and spoiling. Some writers even went so far as to question the medical insistence on cleanliness and regularity in child-rearing, arguing that dirty children were more healthy and that any mother who repressed their natural instincts merely because of her wish to keep them dainty and immaculate robbed them of their birth-right—a happy childhood ("Dirty Children are Healthy" 11). Numerous self-styled experts re-worked Froebel's dictum: "Children are never naughty, they are merely mismanaged or misunderstood" (*Mothers in Australia* 12). Mistakes made by the mother apparently caused not merely a weakened will, but pathological mental abnormalities which appeared in that particularly problematical period, adolescence, or very soon afterwards. As Maybanke Anderson warned, if mothers left their children's mental development in the hands of God their children would grow up "with only half their possibilities developed—not idiots, but not nearly as intelligent as they might have been" (10). This was a loss not only to the child but to the nation, and applied especially to boys. When an ignorant mother taught her child to "sit still and smother his instincts" society "lost an inventor and gained a draper's assistant" (18).

Further reinforced by the popularisation of Freudian ideas, these concepts of maternal mismanagement and repression have heavily influenced both recollections and fictional accounts of colonial childhood. Even feminist Miles Franklin writing in the 1950s suggested that her mother and grandmother attempted to graft an outdated, snobbish code on her as a hapless child. In her recollections of growing up at Brindabella in the 1870s all instincts and passions were firmly repressed. Mother and grandmother demonstrated no affection for children, and there was no profanity,

gluttony, vulgarity, no tantrums and no treats. Corporal punishment in the form of "a sharp switch stripped of leaves and applied round the calves of the legs" was freely applied. In contrast the father was portrayed more appealingly. Where the women outlawed fantasy and fairy tales because they were not true, he had more "imagination" (7; see also 10, 24, 25, 36-37). Even more virulent was Norman Lindsay's depiction of his mother. The daughter of a Wesleyan missionary, she apparently kept handy a "section of buggy whip" for purposes of punishment and enforced her grim, straitlaced concept of conduct and morals upon the family. "I do not recall that she ever indulged sentiments of affection to us, or consorted with us in any sort of lightsome mood" (Lindsay 18). Similarly John Hetherington contrasted his adventurous "romantic" father, who had been to the West Australian gold rush in the heady days of the 1890s, with his serious, oppressive mother whose "morals were as firm, as fixed and inflexible as the Ten Commandments" (39). In fictional accounts a happy, carefree life was possible only where maternal espionage was reduced. Thus George Johnston's brother Jack, having managed to evade the surveillance of a career-minded, neglectful mother, emerges as egalitarian, heroic, a "sunburnt Icarus, a free man" (309).

Childhood Innocence and the Social Contract

Yet this stereotype of the repressive mother and home inhibiting the freedom and joy of the innocent child was profoundly inegalitarian and undemocratic. As in Europe and America the Enlightenment's declaration of the goodness of human nature and hence of the child had initially been associated with egalitarian political ideas. Logically and tactically the older, opposite idea that infants were born burdened with the sins of their forefathers was linked to the rigid, authoritarian concept of a god-ordained social and political hierarchy which denied the citizen the right to rise in society according to merit. It was no coincidence that the same political scientists who theorised the social contract were also of central importance in evolving the doctrine of the rights of the innocent child. Whether visualised in terms of Locke's empty vessels waiting to be filled up with desirable attributes and values or in terms of Rousseau's Emile born artless and free but soon corrupted and manacled by society, the innocent child was a potent symbol of opposition to authoritarian forms of government and to the political power of both established church and inherited wealth.

The concept of original innocence was also the key means by which the new free society would be produced, directed and controlled. The elevation of the child as the key to social progress had been fundamental to the empowerment of the middle-class man of property and to the speeding up of technological change. Privileged little boys like Emile had to be expertly trained in their exercise of their new freedoms, otherwise anarchy would occur. Moreover, in the new "free" society which these theorists were envisaging, political and economic power would be made available only to competing white men of property. Women, working-class and colonised people had to be trained to accept this and understand that despite its rhetoric of freedom, the social contract's concept of liberty applied only to the white, middle-class male (Pateman 2-14; see also 24-35, 77-102).

Nevertheless one result of the political ideology of innocence was to create a new importance for white middle-class women as nurturers and mothers. Given that only

through the new, protective and child-centred education was it going to be possible to mould the free yet self-regulating citizen, it followed that this process must begin with new, empathetic parent-child relations in the home, assisted by romantic and evangelical approval of "feminine" characteristics such as passion, imagination, spontaneity, sensibility and fervour (Jalland 18-38; Davidoff and Hall 25-27; see also 107, 117, 155). By the mid-nineteenth century childhood ideology had gone beyond the idea of the son's right to challenge the authority of the father to include an argument for white middle-class women's rights as first educators of the pliant child. This process was also assisted by the spiritualisation of the child. According to Wordsworth the child was more than merely innocent, but actually holy and full of grace. Far from being born sinful, the new-born child was now close to heaven—though, as in Rousseau, this spirituality could soon be destroyed by insensitive, brutal education in school and home. Further developed by the Victorians, especially Dickens, by the 1850s the child was a suffering yet redemptive figure in touch with higher knowledge and sensibilities lost to the hardened adult yet able to inspire and rekindle the spark, as in George Eliot's *Silas Marner* for example (Coveney 91-173; Cunningham 41-78).

Fig.1 The Redemptive Child
***Australian Home Companion and Band of Hope Journal* 6 (1861)**

Feminising Childhood Innocence

Assisted by an evangelical emphasis on family worship and the separate spheres the spiritualisation of the child meant that religion itself was gradually feminised and domesticated while home and family were elevated to the realm of the sacred (Welter 138-51; Smith-Rosenberg 1-29). Despite a nominal adherence to original sin, evangelical women in particular used the ever-increasing emphasis on the importance of childhood to overturn traditional notions of the female as a profane, irrational creature, perhaps even likely to destroy her spouse and children. Femininity was redefined as spiritual, holy, politically and morally important, and the mother became known as the "Angel in the House" guarding home and family against the perils of the outside world (Davidoff and Hall, 115-24, 147, 167, 485). These dangers included sexual arousal, along with alcohol and other substances thought likely to incite it, and exploitation in the workplace and on the street (fig.1)

Fig.2 "Homewards"
Illustrated Australian News 11 July 1883

Despite the fact that the idea of original sin was crucial to evangelical religion, this feminised idea of innocence was rapidly taken up in temperance tracts. Here the imperfections of the world are represented as largely caused by the sinfulness of men. It is the father's intemperance, violence and selfishness which breaks up the home, though

there is always the chance that a little child can save the situation. One look at the cherubic child can reform the most hardened sinner and reinstate temperance, goodness and family affections. Notwithstanding the mother's idealisation as moral guardian of the angelic child, the one factor to which children remained highly vulnerable was early death. With rates of mortality soaring till at least the 1880s infectious disease was the one intruder which even the most vigilant mother could not necessarily keep at bay (Mein Smith 8-35). While in England images of children faint, fragile and close to death were mainly set in the home, in Australia the "Bush" was often taken to represent these collective evils, enticing children away from both mother and virtue and leaving them to perish in what was seen as a savage wilderness, unaided and alone (Jalland 119-42; Kociumbas, "Babes" 1-31) (fig.2). Though the private sphere in which children were to be raised was ideally remote from the corrupting influence of the city, the Australian bush was seen as a moral wilderness, a symbol of temptation and danger to the purity of the innocent child. It was thought that the happy, well-ordered home would guide children and servants alike towards desired goals by methods based not on fear or force, but sentiments and love. The innocence of children was seen as highly vulnerable, likely to be lost should they stray too far from the protective confines of mother and home (fig.3).

This feminisation of child and home involved a redefinition of masculinity as well as of political authority and even a transformation of the masculinity of God himself. To elevate and sanctify a feminised child was to question earlier ideas of female carnality and responsibility for the Fall, a radical departure which eroded male power in the domestic sphere. At the same time God himself was transformed into a less awesome and more friendly figure, while heaven became an ideal version of the child-centred home. In secular verse for children, often written by women, even the innocent infant might now be envisaged as the sovereign of the household replacing the father, with many playful suggestions that all members of the household were slaves to infant will (Parkes 88). Middle-class women were also able to claim a motherly expertise in the education of other people's children and to invade the public male "sphere" as powerful authorities in the "rescue" of the waifs and strays eking out an existence on the city street. They also enjoyed special status as nurturing healers of the sick, especially in the early colonies where other sources of assistance were not available. Thus Mrs King was renowned for her work in vaccinating children, and Mrs Thomas Rutledge was considered the best bone-setter in her district (Ryan 17; Rutledge, 20).

The concept of original innocence further challenged patriarchy in its notion that in spite of being better equipped for the public sphere, the male captain of industry himself should be compassionate, merciful and affectionate, kind to animals, protective of the weak and opposed to slavery of all kinds. This moral definition of manliness was vital to the authority of the new middle classes to govern, it was the way in which they justified their superiority both to the perceived idle rich and the allegedly depraved working class. Yet as attempts by churchmen to define a more "muscular" kind of Christian male affirmed them, this notion challenged the older ideas of manliness based on self-interest, sexual virility and martial aggression (Davidoff and Hall 21; see also 30, 110, 451). It also opened the way for more egalitarian relations in the home between fathers and children, as religious radicals like Australia's Reverend Charles Strong made

clear. Founder of the Australian Church, Strong placed particular emphasis on God not as a ruler, but as a loving, merciful parent, ruling by example and by love. Strong also spoke of the "sonship" of Jesus and the importance of family worship within the home (Badger 63, 230, 234, 285, 311).

Fig.3 "Music"
"A protection against vice, /An incentive to virtue"
***Australian Etiquette* (1995)**

The State as Father of the Holy Child

All these challenges to patriarchy were especially influential in nineteenth-century Australia, not the least because of the absence or disaffection of fathers. In addition to a demographic shortage of women, early maritime and pastoral industries and the inducements of gold-seeking had taken men away from families and churches to a lawless frontier where conditions had rarely been conducive to godly and "feminine" behaviour, whether applied to indigenous people, animals or even nature. Measures like the provision of free state education for the young were therefore seen by liberals and radicals as vital to counteract the influence of convictism and bolster the family as a godly and moral force. Charles Pearson informed a Victorian enquiry on public education in 1877-78 that "the State is the natural guardian of children against their parents," and "much of the progress of civilization consists in limitations of the parental right, from old times when the parent might expose the newly-born infant or sentence the grown-up son to death, to later times when the State watches that the child be vaccinated, clothed and fed, and not tasked beyond its strength" "Report on the State" 38-9; *National Life and Character* 226). By education of the young in a child-centred "common Christianity" reformers also hoped to harmonise sectarian divisions and prepare the "rising generation" for participation in the self-governing democracies which, for white male and female voters, were in place by the end of the Victorian era.

This usurpation of the father's authority by that of the state could be empowering to mothers, as seen for instance in legislation attempting to enforce fathers to pay maintenance to their deserted families left behind in the cities and towns while these "romantics" sought their fortune in the bush. Indeed liberal secularism could be just as effective as evangelicalism in elevating women, for both philosophies revered motherhood along with the holy child. Thus for Catherine Spence, South Australian feminist and reformer and author of *An Agnostic's Progress* (1884), the idea of innate depravity was linked not only to patriarchy but to the churches' proscription of divorce, birth-control, and their tolerance of the stigma of illegitimacy which blighted the lives of so many innocent young. Accordingly, she declared, the doctrine of innate human sinfulness was "one of the most paralysing dogmas that human fear invented or priestcraft encouraged" (63).

While the influence of such feminised ideas of innocence on actual family practice is difficult to glean, their theoretical presence may be charted through changes in material produced to amuse and instruct the colonial child. In Britain as early as the 1820s numerous songs sanctifying mother and home gradually replaced alternatives dwelling on judgment and hell-fire, while the image of God changed from malevolent creature of authority to beneficent family man. As many of these hymns were written or translated by women they can be taken as an index of growing female endorsement of these ideals. These new themes were present in material published in the Australian colonies by the 1880s, and hence we can reasonably assume they were used and endorsed by colonial women much earlier. By 1904 Methodist conversion to the concept of original innocence was signalled in a new hymn book containing twenty-nine hymns for "Children and Young People" and for "Family Worship," many written by women. "Many changes have taken place in the Christian conception of the spiritual and ethical needs of childhood," the 1911 *Methodist School Hymnal* affirmed, "the songs that

satisfied our ancestors, and awed and instructed their children, would not satisfy the teachers and scholars of to-day" (1). Often the wives of clergymen, these hymn-writers routinely portrayed the child as an innocent abroad, a lamb in danger of straying outside the fold and falling prey to the corrupting influence of Satan. Though hymns emphasising the meekness of children had been present at least since Wesley, now it was the tempter not the child who was essentially villainous. Children were encouraged to identify with the infancy and boyhood of Jesus, and stories of Christ's concern for and kindness to children also became popular themes in the making of which Jesus was transported from humble child to loving parental figure (Kociumbas "What Alyce Learnt" 24-25).

Radical secularists, who established special Sunday Schools or Lyceums where their children might receive a religious education without being subjected to frightening tales of eternal damnation, were especially vocal on the subject of the powerful role of the mother in influencing and protecting the vulnerable child. They claimed that in their Sunday Schools "the exercises and instruction are made as attractive as possible to the children, and love, not force, is the motor to discipline and obedience" (*Harbinger of Light* January 1876: 939). In addition to lessons on the need for industry, frugality, temperance, charity and modesty, from Schiller the children learned that "a country of true homes is a country of true greatness. A beautiful home, musical with loving voices, is the nursery of heaven." They recited: "Thy mother is the guardian angel of thy life; her virtues are registered indelibly upon thy heart" (Terry 50; *Harbinger of Light* October 1874: 711). This did not mean, however, that mothers should over-indulge the susceptible child: "Conductor: Loving mothers are those who really love their children, not those who show how little they care for them, by spoiling them. Lyceum: If all parents loved them, all children would be happy, the world would be as one family, want would be unknown, crime disappear, and earth a real paradise"(Walker 196-98).

A similar emphasis on good children ruled by mother love characterised mainstream secular children's literature. While heavily sentimental and carrying a daunting message for girls regarding their inescapable destiny as self-sacrificing mothers, the feminine, domestic sphere appeared as a positive symbol of permanency and importance in an otherwise flawed and fluxing world:

> A mother's heart is ever
> Affectionate and true,
> And naught but death can sever
> The love she feels for you.
> The world though cold and dreary,
> Breaks not that sacred tie;
> Her voice is always cheery,
> To save you she would die.
> ("A Mother is a Mother After All" 71)

Fig.4 "Naughty Boys Fighting"
***Cole's Funny Picture Book* 1 (1879)**

A century of criticism of the unabashed didacticism of much Victorian literature for children has obscured the radicalism of its early condemnation of boyhood belligerence (fig.4). This relentless moralising and spiritualisation of child and home were destined soon to fall into acute disfavour among literary and pedagogical experts on children's reading needs. "It ran through England like a sickly fever," wrote J. Harvey Darton in 1932 of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, the ultimate story of the saintly child which appeared in 1886. "Nine editions were published in as many months, and the odious little prig in the lace collar is not dead yet" (239). Yet so much talk of good and holy children did not mean that at the time the feminised ideal of innocence was resented, nor even that sexuality was denied. Indeed innocence itself could be sexualised. Thus homely family magazines like the *Band of Hope Journal* and *The Illustrated Australian News* could at once produce hagiographic images idealising the sanctity of the mother and voyeuristic ones which, to the modern eye, seem to eroticise the child (fig.5). Viewing Victorian childhood through the lens of twentieth-century child-rearing theories we find much that seems freakish and transgressive, and we attempt to explain this in terms of Victorian repression and denial (Kincaid 5, 34). Yet in doing so perhaps we reveal nothing about the past but merely uphold the influence of post-Victorian theory on how childhood in that era is represented.

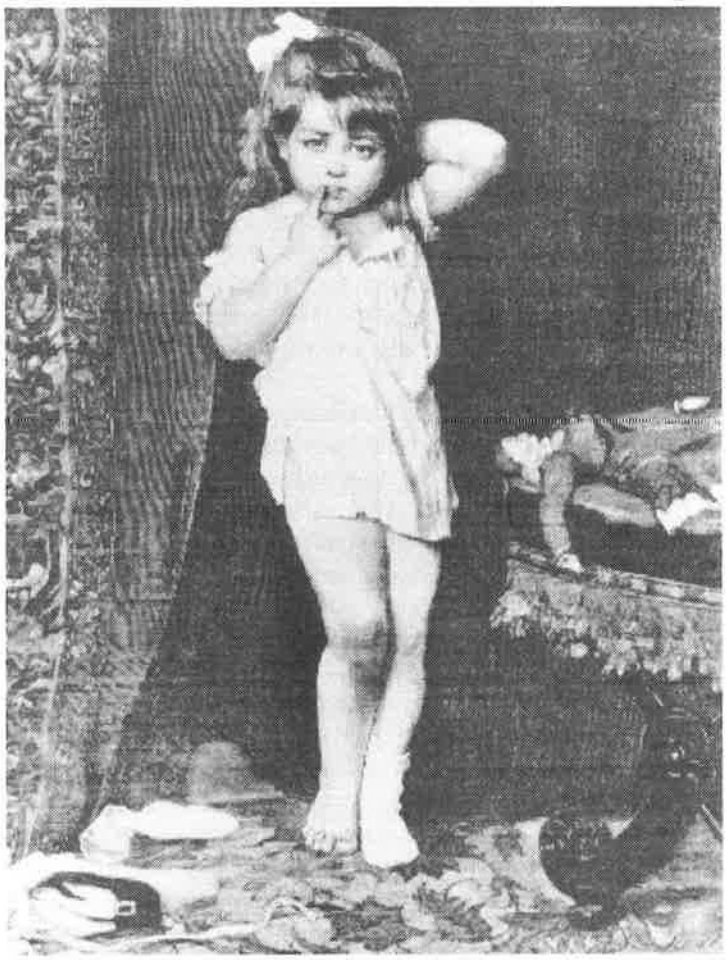

Fig.5 "Petite Caprice"
***Illustrated Australian News* 31 March 1888**

Masculinising Innocence: The Bush Legend

As in England the empowerment of women and domesticity achieved by the feminised ideal of innocence came under attack, first from supporters of a more "muscular" Christianity and then from a range of Darwinist and medical theory. These postulated that notions of the innocence of children were unrealistic, hypocritical and effete, out of touch with the laws of evolution and survival of the fittest. Far from little angels, little boys in particular were not gender neutral. The "popular idea that children are 'innocent', while it is true with respect to evil *knowledge*, is totally false with respect to evil *impulses*; as half an hour's observation in the nursery will prove to anyone," intoned Herbert Spencer in 1861 (135). Muscle must be given priority over mind, and ignorant mothers prevented from over-educating and encouraging "precocity" not only in infancy but in youth. Prey to a range of dangerous instincts, children were cruel, selfish, and competitive—especially boys. Their sexuality needed to be expertly managed,

exhausted, and displayed, especially in vigorous outdoor activities which liberated them from the cloistered world of mother and home. It followed that for the male middle-class child a certain amount of adventurous truancy must now be allowed. Though there was no single concept of Victorian middle-class manliness, gradually it became considered mandatory to extract such boys from the protective care of their mothers by early puberty lest they become weak and effeminate, and to initiate them into the fraternity gangs which were, it was said, natural to this turbulent stage of growth (Mangan and Walvin 1-5, Park 7-46). Mother-blaming theories, along with a more standardised ideal of heterosexual masculinity, were pronounced by the end of the Victorian era and grew in the inter-war period. The mother's fall from grace was further accelerated after 1945 with the popularisation of the ideas of Winnicott, Bowlby and Spock.

From the 1880s and 90s these ideas were adopted with a special relish by the bush nationalist school of male intellectuals in Australia (Rowley 76-96; Hoorn, 98-111; Lake, 1-15; Allen 64-91; Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood* 41-42, 76-77, 144-45). Firmly associating mother and family with "wowserism" and the repression of male camaraderie, creativity and initiative, the result was an extraordinary stereotyping of colonial motherhood as sexually inhibiting and mindlessly inept. To these masculinist writers and artists domesticity and religion alike were seen as inimical to manliness and as entailing the loss of male freedoms. This backlash was endorsed by medical and scientific theory and also by clergymen themselves. Anxious to avoid being seen as over-domesticated or effeminate, clergymen promoted the bush legend and various masculinist activities which celebrated physical prowess and took men out of the company of women (O'Brien 437-57). At the same time the bush nationalists also celebrated a more robust and less spiritual child, privileging naughtiness, belligerence, and larrikinism in the white male as distinctively Australian and lampooning both the good mother and her redemptive child. These privileges of misbehaviour were not extended to girls, nor could mothers or daughters represent the national type. Certainly writers and artists occasionally celebrated the trials and hardships of the pioneer mother, seeing her as struggling to make a "civilised" home in an indifferent bush. At the same time, however, any radical overturning of this framework was not countenanced. Thus in nationalist fiction women engaged in the outback home-making struggle, like Henry Lawson's Mrs Spicer, were sometimes pitied but more often lampooned, while girls like Ethel Turner's Judy or Joseph Furphy's Mary who aspired to the larrikinism or autonomy of the male bushmen were punished for their transgression, often at the hands of the bush itself (Lawson 48-72; Turner, 179-80; Furphy 89-92, 233-47). A degree of mischief and larrikinism was now to be tolerated in white middle-class boys (fig.6).

This new celebration of an uncivilised, energetic masculinity and the equation of it with anti-feminist ideals did not mean the end of the fragile, malleable child in need of protection from a harsh and sinful world. This notion had proved far too vital as a justification for child-saving, that is intervention by the authorities in families judged as unfit to have the care of the vulnerable young. Long an important justification for "rescuing" convict and Aboriginal children in Australia, this image continued to inform child welfare policy. Accordingly even the most radical Bush nationalist could not resist

occasionally reworking the image of the lost child (Kociumbas, "Babes in the Bush" 1-31).

Much more uniform and enduring was the critique of "Victorian" motherhood. Even in early popular film mothers were always left out of the main action and never shown engaged in any intellectual or artistic activities. Though duly self-sacrificing and altruistic they were invariably asexual and confined to the home, their main activity being the difficult task of snaring reluctant marriage partners for their daughters. One recent study has shown that in cinematic versions of family sagas, where births were often featured as significant, only the arrival of a boy could lead to improved fortunes. The birth of a girl spelt doom (Pascoe 297-98).

Fig.6 "Robbery Under Arms"
***The Bulletin*, 16 June 1894**
MOTHER (in a panic): 'A-ah! you little wretch, take it out!'
HER ELDEST: 'All right mum; give us a shillin' then.'

While the sexism of this nationalistic attack on women's empowerment as mothers has often been noted, its implications for Australian ideals of childhood have been less thoroughly explored. Yet the points of confluence between the writers' and artists' ideals of freedom, fraternity and heterosexual masculinity, and the sexologists' stereotyping of the Victorian mother as repressive and incompetent, created a particularly trenchant attack on the New Woman in Australia. This was the more so

given a particularly numerous and powerful medical profession and a tradition of intervention on behalf of the impressionable child by the paternalist state. family size instead of declining birth-rate? or even declining inclination to have large families? Combined with anxieties about the declining inclination to have large families, white Australian mothers became stereotyped not only as repressive Victorians but as out of touch with nationalistic and racial ideals.

What was new in the Edwardian period therefore was not a radical, modern investigation of child sexuality but a growing attempt by science and the state to use existing theory to erode the power of the Victorian mother and her "priggish" child. In the circumstances it is little wonder that so many recollections of white Australian childhood were and are so critical of mother and home. While the overturning of the stereotype of repression has come too late to affect the way in which Victorian child-days are remembered, perhaps scholarly re-investigation of sources which reveal nineteenth-century mothers' own viewpoints may yet achieve this.

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