

Britons, Beasts, and Benighted Savages:
British Superiority in Nineteenth Century Children's Periodicals

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Literacy, Class, and the Relevance of Children's Periodicals:

An Introduction

Andrew Soboeiro

An intrepid British explorer outwits and escapes a horde of bloodthirsty African cannibals. The Royal Navy defeats a fleet of merciless Arab slave traders. A cabal of Indian thieves plots to rob a British official but fails because the thieves are too untrustworthy to cooperate. Stories like these frequently appeared in British children's magazines during the nineteenth century. Meant to entertain child readers and teach them moral lessons, these stories also reinforced popular racial and ethnic stereotypes, as well as the belief that white, Protestant Britons were superior to other peoples. By studying the stories published in nineteenth-century periodicals, I have illuminated the ways in which British children learned to conceive of race, ethnicity, and national identity.

Whether spreading their own opinions or appealing to those of their readers, children's periodical writers overwhelmingly portrayed British people as superior to all other races and ethnic groups. In doing so, they appealed to popular racial and ethnic stereotypes. According to most children's authors, the Arabs were primitive and nomadic, the Chinese intelligent but immoral, Indians superstitious and cowardly, and black Africans violent and simple-minded. However egalitarian their intentions, British children's authors of the late nineteenth century almost always reinforced these stereotypes. They differed over whether the source of this superiority was racial or cultural, as well as over the significance of the distinction between these types of superiority.

Historians have long explored the racial and ethnic implications of British children's books from the late nineteenth century. Tammy Mielke, for example, examines *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, a picture book published by Scottish-born author Helen Bannerman in 1899. Mielke argues that although the book reinforced many contemporary racial stereotypes, it was nonetheless progressive for its time. Whereas most children's books used black characters only as props for white protagonists, Bannerman made a black character her protagonist, presenting him as an intelligent, sympathetic agent. Mielke attributes Bannerman's relatively egalitarian racial views to her upbringing: "Bannerman's exposure to various cultures acquainted her with a wider view of the world than most women of her time would have had, equipping her with life skills which enabled her to thrive in cultures of which she was not a native."¹ By examining children's books like *Little Black Sambo*, then, we can get a sense of how nineteenth-century writers conceived of racial and ethnic difference, as well as how they communicated those views to their readers.

Children's books like *Little Black Sambo* may well have influenced middle- and upper-class children, but were out of the price-range of most working-class families.² Poor children turned instead to periodicals, which were inexpensive and available to most families without hardship. Weekly magazines such as *The Children's Friend*, *The Boys' Own Paper*, *The Girls' Own Paper*, *Jack and Jill*, and *Boys of England* each cost a penny per week, while *The Captain*, a monthly publication, sold for six pence each month.³ It was thanks to these low prices that, according to historian Alex Ellis, many children "did

¹ Tammy Mielke, "Transforming a Stereotype: *Little Black Sambo's* American Illustrators," Editor Lance Weldy, *From Colonialism to the Contemporary: Intertextual Transformation in World Children's and Youth Literature*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006.

² Alex Ellis, *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968, p. 125.

³ The Waterloo Directory of English Newspaper and Periodicals, 1800-1900.

not visit bookshops or libraries, but were able to obtain periodicals for a few pence from bookstalls. During that period [1870-1914] children's periodicals exerted an important influence on the growth of literacy.”⁴ The publication data demonstrates how widely read these periodicals were. *The Boy's Own Paper* sold 160,000 copies a week in 1879, while *Boys of England* sold 250,000 per week in 1885. *The Girl's Own Paper* and *Jack and Jill* each sold hundreds of thousands of copies a week at their heights, while *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, *The Children's Friend*, and *The Juvenile Instructor and Companion* sold in the tens of thousands.⁵ Children's periodicals reached a broad segment of the British public, making them a highly influential source of information for children of all social statuses. They had the potential to spread their racial and ethnic views to children throughout England.

The fact that these publications could present their racial views to so many children does not necessarily mean that they could have convinced those children of these views. It is difficult to determine just how much power these magazines had in shaping popular opinions, but there is evidence that they influenced their readers' thinking. According to Ellis, children's periodicals had a powerful and often negative effect on their audiences' reading skills. Their short-jerky sentences and lack of proper punctuation caused their readers to develop poor reading and writing habits.⁶ If periodicals were influential enough to change children's reading skills, their influence could have also extended to political and social views.

Modern research supports the idea that media can influence their audiences' opinions. According to psychologists Phyllis A. Anastasio, Karen C. Rose, and Judith

⁴ Alex Ellis, *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968, p. 78.

⁵ The Waterloo Directory of English Newspaper and Periodicals, 1800-1900.

⁶ Alex Ellis, *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968, p. 80-81.

Chapman, “the media may also subtly but powerfully create the very opinions they seek to reflect.” As an example, the authors cite a study of major news magazines from 1988 to 1992 in which “of those persons pictured in poverty, 62% were African American, which is more than twice the actual proportion of blacks who make up the American poor (29%).” As a result, “the majority of Americans overestimate the proportion of poor blacks... and this perception may lead to less public support for welfare and safety-net programs among white voters.”⁷ If periodicals influence adults' opinions today, there is no reason to assume they did not also influence children's opinions in the nineteenth century.

Just as the articles and stories published in periodicals would have influenced the opinions of their child readers, readers' opinions in turn influenced the kinds of stories that publishers were willing to print. Publishers had to create products that appealed to readers and their parents, so they tended to print stories that those groups found credible and agreeable. For example, according to historian Christopher Banham, *Boys of England* portrayed political issues in a manner “closely aligned with the beliefs and experiences of its working-class readership.” Given that “many working-class Britons felt embittered towards both nation and empire, complaining that overseas expansion diverted attention from much needed domestic reform,” *Boys of England* tended to ignore or even criticize British imperial policy.⁸ Children's periodicals also responded to changes in public opinion. According to historian J. S. Bratton, public interest in religion declined toward the end of the nineteenth century, so even explicitly Christian publishers tended to

⁷ Phyllis A. Anastasio, Karen C. Rose, and Judith Chapman, "Can the Media Create Public Opinion? A Social-Identity Approach," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8.5 (October 1999): p. 152-155.

⁸ Christopher Banham, "'England and America Against the World: Empire and the USA in Edwin J. Brett's 'Boys of England,' 1866-99," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 40.2 (Summer 2007): p. 151-171.

downplay their religious credentials. The Religious Tract Society, which published *The Boy's Own Paper*, *The Girl's Own Paper*, and *The Children's Friend*, "became so shy of the effect of the word 'religious' in their title that they issued books... as from 'the office of *The Boy's Own Paper*.'"⁹ By examining children's periodicals, we can understand not only how authors influenced children's opinions but also how they appealed to opinions that children and their parents already held.

⁹ J.S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction*, London: Croom Helm Limited, 1981.

Chapter I:

The Most Perfect Development:

Race, Culture, and the Basis for British Superiority

Virtually all nineteenth-century children's writers believed that the British were superior to other races and ethnic groups. Though some writers questioned British imperial policies and praised other peoples' accomplishments, virtually all tacitly accepted that Britain was at the top of the international pecking order and had a right to stay there. *The Boys' Own Paper*, for instance, lauded the Chinese for inventing paper, silk, porcelain, and glassmaking but made it clear that Britain was still "infinitely farther ahead in all points of real civilisation."¹ Humanity, these writers believed, was stratified. Other civilizations might have had some value, but they could not equal the British in artistic, economic, or technological achievements.

Children's periodicals unanimously portrayed a stratified humanity with Britain at the top, but this consensus broke down when they attempted to explain the nature of this stratification. For some, British superiority was inherent and racial, and no amount of training or religious conversion could bring others to this level. For other writers, British superiority was temporary and cultural. The "Scepter'd Isle" would master the world only until other peoples converted to Christianity and learned the arts of civilization. Still other writers and publications adopted a combination of these views, believing that the British were culturally superior to some groups and inherently superior to others. The question of whether the British were culturally or racially superior to any particular group determined

¹ "John Chinaman, and What John Bull Owes Him," *The Boys' Own Paper*, December 16th, 1899: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 12th 2014.

how authors portrayed British interactions with other societies. Each view had wildly different implications for missionary activity, imperialism, and other British policies and endeavors.

Race and Biology

The belief that humanity was divided into a permanent racial hierarchy was common among nineteenth century children's writers. Drawing on contemporary scientific theories, writers portrayed the British, and white people in general, as biologically superior to their non-white counterparts. In this view, other races' purported ignorance and barbarism was the result, and not the cause, of their inferiority. Barring some sort of evolutionary shakeup or divine intervention, British and Western dominance were there to stay. Other races might learn to serve Britain, or they might die out, but they would never have the same accomplishments.

Many publications accepted these theories of inherent British or white superiority, presenting it in varying levels of detail. The most detailed explanation comes from *The Family Tutor*'s 1851 article "On the Physical History of Mankind," which asserted that there was "more than one species of man inhabiting the earth." The author proceeded to list the many different ways to distinguish human "species," including "the colour of the skin, the character of the hair, ... the nature of the language spoken, [and the] habits of the people," deciding that head shape was the "strongest character by which one race can be distinguished from another." Based on head shape, the author divided humanity into three groups: "the first group are characterized by the *symmetrical*, or *oval* form of the head. ... The second form of the head is *narrow* and *elongated*. ... The third variety of

head, called the *square, broad-faced, or pyramidal*, is formed like the last, but it differs in the excessive outward development of the bones of the face.” Those with oval-shaped heads included people “from the Himalayan Mountains to the Indian Ocean, comprising all Hindostan, the Deccan, Persia, and Arabia. It also includes the countries of the north of Africa, and the whole of Europe.” Those with narrow-shaped heads included “the Negroes, the Alfours, the Papuas, New Zealanders, and Australians.” Those with pyramidal-shaped heads included “the Mongolian, ... the Eskimo, the primitive Americans, the Hottentots, the Finnish nations of Europe, the Chinese, Indo-Chinese, the Tungusians, Japanese, part of the Tartar races, and others of the northern Asiatics.”²

Having separated humanity into three main categories, the author proceeded to rank them. He or she described people with “*narrow and elongated*” heads as the least attractive, most “ferocious” race, those with “*symmetrical or oval*” heads as the most attractive, and those with “*square, broad-faced, or pyramidal*” heads as representing a middle ground between the other two. The author also ranked different groups within the same race. Within the race of people with “*symmetrical or oval*” heads, “it is amongst Europeans that this form of skull and face is met with its most perfect development. ... As an example of this form of the head and face not belonging to the highest types, we may give the Abyssinian.”

This author treated racial superiority as largely a matter of aesthetics. The oval-headed peoples, and particularly Europeans, looked better than other races, and by looking better they were better. He or she ignored intellect, athletic ability, or any other characteristics traditionally believed to be associated with race. The author did, however,

² “On the Physical History of Mankind,” *The Family Tutor*, 1851: *Butler Library Rare Books Collection*, Print.

associate “inferior” people with “an animal or ferocious character,” implying that “lesser” peoples were less human.

The Family Tutor had little regard for geographical or cultural distinctions between people or even for other forms of appearance besides head shape. The "Hottentots," or Khoi, for example, are a people from southwestern Africa, yet the article placed them not with other Africans but rather with eastern Asians and Native Americans. Similarly, despite New Zealand’s geographical and cultural isolation from Africa, the article placed "Negroes" and Maori in the same category. It likewise placed Abyssinians in the same category as Europeans, despite their origin south of the Sahara. Even Fins, despite their blond hair, blue eyes, and ample cultural similarities with other Europeans, belonged more with Native Americans than with white Europeans. The article was claiming, then, that one physical feature defined human populations. Any two groups with different head shapes, regardless of anything that they had in common, belonged to different "species of man."

The idea that race transcended continents and cultures and that two groups indigenous to the same area could be members of different races frequently arose in nineteenth-century periodicals. It often came up in discussions of the Abyssinians, who occupied an ambiguous place in contemporary racial hierarchies. Due to their lighter skin, “whiter” facial features, and Christian religion, many authors placed them in a different, and usually higher, category than black Africans. *The Children’s Friend*, for example, wrote that “the Abyssinians are not negroes, but a handsome race, of olive or copper-coloured complexion, half-civilized, hospitable, cheerful, but very lazy.”³

³ “Travels to Other Countries—The Soudan and Abyssinia,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

Likewise, *The Chatterbox* described the average Abyssinian as “a handsome man, well made, and nearly black. He is not a thick-lipped negro at all. His hair is not curled by nature.” It contrasted Abyssinians with “Ethiopians—black, naked, wild, haters of the established government, hunters of beasts of prey, serpent and lizard-eaters.”⁴ Like *The Family Tutor*, these publications associated racial superiority with aesthetics. Abyssinians were “handsome,” and this handsomeness set them apart from “negroes.” They were also superior in behaviour, being “half-civilized” in contrast to the “naked, wild” black Africans. Nonetheless, they remained inferior to “fully-civilized” Europeans.

Although *The Family Tutor* was unique for going into so much detail about the physical distinctions of race, most publications from this era indicated that there were at least some inborn racial differences. *The Chatterbox*, for example, maintained that in “intellectual endowments, the negro is greatly inferior to the white man.” In response to the objection that black people were only inferior to whites because they had not had the same opportunities, the author replied, “There are many negroes who have been educated and have received careful training, yet among these not half a dozen have shown any intellectual power.”⁵ This article did not mention physical features but made it clear that racial characteristics were unchangeable. If no amount of education could raise “negroes” intellectual abilities to the level of the “white man,” it followed that race played an important and permanent role in determining intellectual abilities. Similarly, an

Note: For some of the periodicals that I found on the online archive *Gale NewsVault*, publication dates for specific articles were not available. In these cases, I have extrapolated rough dates based on contextual information in the articles. This particular article states that the Emperor of Ethiopia is Yohannes II. Since Yohannes II ruled from 1871 to 1889, I have dated the article “circa 1880.”

⁴ “A Tour Round the World—Abyssinia,” *The Chatterbox*, June 4th, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

⁵ “A Few Words About Negroes,” *The Chatterbox*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

article in *Young Folks* described Westernized aboriginal Australians as “semi-domesticated,”⁶ while *Little Folks* called them “not far removed from the beasts that perish,”⁷ indicating that aborigines were not fully human. This implies that it was no more possible to civilize them than to civilize animals. These articles may not have specified which features set “inferior races” apart from “superior” ones, but whatever the nature of this separation, the authors believed it to be inherent.

Cultural Superiority: Gender

Whereas publications like *The Chatterbox* and *The Family Tutor* emphasized inherent racial characteristics above culture, other publications did the opposite. Children’s stories often chose to frame non-white, non-Western, and non-British societies as culturally inferior, in need of Western or British tutelage. The British were dominant not because God or biology had designed them that way, but rather because their values and practices were better. Other peoples could learn these values and practices under British instruction and gradually attain equality.

Although publications of this era portrayed many British cultural practices as superior, they placed particular emphasis on gender. Britons, they claimed, knew best which roles women and men should play in society. Other cultures’ views on, or lack of concern with, gender roles were ignorant and dysfunctional, deserving of mockery and condemnation. An article in *Young Folks*, for example, ridiculed Native Americans for not understanding gender pronouns, claiming that “anyone who has experience in teaching Indians or foreigners will appreciate their awful aptitude for confusing the

⁶ “Native Australians,” *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget*, August 10th, 1889: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 23rd, 2014.

⁷ “The Apostle of the Blacks,” *Little Folks*, circa 1890: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

gender of the personal pronouns.” The author quoted a conversation with a hopelessly gender-confused Native American, who said of her grandfather, “she full-blooded Frenchman” and of her grandmother, “he full-blooded squaw.”⁸ The “Indian’s” inability to understand gender pronouns—perhaps a result of a different emphasis on gender in her culture or language—was not a legitimate cultural difference. It was “awful” and deserved ridicule. There was no suggestion that gender pronouns were a peculiarity of the English language, much less that they might represent an excessive focus on gender on the part of English-speakers. Rather, gender pronouns were the norm and “Indians” were wrong for not understanding them.

Whereas *Young Folks* ridiculed cultural differences in gender, other publications took this issue more seriously. Other cultures’ views on gender were not just strange and dysfunctional; they were oppressive to women, who experienced tyranny and hardship everywhere in the world except the West. *The Girl’s Own Paper*, for example, said that the typical Arab man “will ill-treat his wife shamefully on the merest suspicion of her having for a moment received any visitor during his absence.” Under Islam, women experienced “a state of slavery” in which they “are not required to work, and have very few amusements or occupations. ... Their vacant aimless days pass by in an enforced idleness and uselessness that is sad to think of.” It blamed this oppression squarely on Arab men, who should have been the “natural protectors” of Arab women but instead “despise and ignore” them.⁹ Likewise, the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* commented on the “miserable and degraded condition” of the women and girls of India, saying, “brothers are allowed to beat and ridicule their sisters, and the mother dares not punish

⁸ “His Relatives,” *Young Folks*, March 5th, 1887: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 23rd, 2014.

⁹ “The Arab Girls of Algiers,” *The Girl’s Own Paper*, June 25th, 1887: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 14th, 2014.

them, lest she should be ill-treated by her sons if afterwards left in their power. Some mothers, when made angry by the cruelty of their husbands, will kick and beat their female infants, and others will *kill them to save them from the misery they must endure*.”¹⁰ Women, these publications argued, were in a debased condition in Indian and Arab societies. They found their own culture oppressive and would abandon it if they had the chance. Writers generally did not explore the possibility that Indian or Arab women might support their culture or find some aspects of it empowering.

Kind Words for Boys and Girls contrasted the lot of girls in India directly with that of girls in England. It asked, “when English girls are leaving school to enter upon the work and the joys of life in earnest, what are their sisters of corresponding age in India doing? Alas! Upon them the burdens of life began to press years ago, for they had no happy period of girl-life.” When young English women were first becoming mothers, “women of a similar age in India will be looking and feeling like old women, and not a few of them may even be grandmothers.”¹¹ English women, then, should have been happy to be English. Were they born in an inferior culture, their lives would have been miserable. Whatever deficiencies there may have been in the way that English men treated women were immaterial; there was no better culture for women.

By painting other cultures as oppressive to women, periodicals helped to establish why cultural differences had to be ranked. If Arab or Indian women simply performed different roles than those of English women, there would have been no reason to consider English culture superior. Only once it was clear that women were happiest in England and suffered elsewhere was there any reason to pity foreign women or try to change their

¹⁰ “Hindoo Female Children,” *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, September 1st, 1846: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 25th, 2014.

¹¹ “Other Girls,” *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, January 1st, 1886: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 8th, 2014.

cultures. Gender was thus central to explaining why English practices had to supplant their foreign, non-white, and non-Western counterparts.

Contemporary publications condemned foreign cultures' views of gender regardless of what those views were. As long as they were different from the views prevalent in Britain, they were harmful. Just as *The Girl's Own Paper* condemned Arabs for not giving women anything to do outside the home, other publications condemned cultures that gave women too much to do outside the home, particularly if what they were doing was manual labor. *The Children's Friend*, for example, condemned Abyssinian men for giving women physical tasks to perform: "The Abyssinians are... very lazy, leaving to the women all the hard work."¹² It made a similar criticism of Maori culture, in which "the women till the ground and perform all the drudgery of life. The only work the men will do, beside fighting, is to carve the doorposts and gables of their house."¹³ *Aunt Judy's Magazine* claimed that the typical Native American woman "has to do all the labour of the household, and it is found as difficult to raise self-respect in her as it is to convince the Indian that it is manly work."¹⁴ *Little Folks* asserted that letting women do manual labor was a feature of savagery, evidenced by "the men [of New Guinea, who] build houses, hunt, fish, hollow tree-trunks into boats, while the women—as is the case among nearly all savages—do the heaviest work, such as cultivating the fields, making mats and pots, and cutting wood."¹⁵ These publications assumed women did not want to perform manual labor if they could help it. If they did labor, it was because their

¹² "Travels to Other Countries—The Soudan and Abyssinia," *The Children's Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

¹³ "Travels to Other Countries—New Zealand," *The Children's Friend*, August 1st, 1876: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 14th, 2013.

¹⁴ "The Indians of North America," *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 21st, 2014.

¹⁵ "The Editor's Pocket-Book," *Little Folks*, January 1st, 1884: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

husbands were too lazy or too ignorant to do it for them. Writers did not entertain the notion that women might have found manual labour enjoyable or empowering; as far as they were concerned, these tasks were “drudgery,” and unsuitable for “the fairer sex.” Nor did any writers acknowledge that thousands of rural British women still performed manual labor; apparently, British culture was superior simply by virtue of opposing female labor. Working women, then, were as much evidence of injustice as battered women. In an ideal world, everyone would follow Britain’s model of gender relations.

According to historian Susan Thorne, the idea that British women were uniquely happy and liberated not only bolstered the moral case for imperialism, but also “siphoned off potential feminist pressures on metropolitan political culture.” British women who might otherwise have fought for their own rights at home were instead encouraged to defend the rights and save the souls of foreign women abroad.¹⁶ Children’s periodicals often took this position, encouraging their girl readers to choose missionary work over suffragist activism. *The Girl’s Own Paper*, for example, stated,

It is difficult for our free happy English girls to realise at all the misery and degradation of that position. There are some energetic souls in England who work hard to uphold the rights of women here; but if they could change places for a month with an Indian lady, even of very high rank, they would be quite contented with their own lot for the future.”¹⁷

The women’s rights movement, the author implied, suffered from a lack of perspective. If British women could only understand how much better their lives were than those of other women, they would have nothing to protest. Women’s rights activists would do

¹⁶ Susan Thorne, “Imperial Pieties,” *Missions and Empires*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹⁷ “Girls’ Work in the Mission Field,” *The Girl’s Own Paper*, October 22nd, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 14th, 2014.

better to fight for change among the battered women of India or the overworked women of Abyssinia, and leave ideal Britain alone.¹⁸

Cultural Superiority: Religion

Gender was a powerful indicator of British cultural superiority, but no element was more important than religion. Children's writers portrayed Protestant Christianity as the purest faith available, promising its practitioners hope in their present lives and happiness in the afterlife far beyond what other traditions could offer. With God on their side, Britons could feel confident that they had the best culture and made the best decisions, for how could God steer them wrong? Protestantism also justified imperialism as a tool to bring the gospel to "heathen" cultures.

Poems and short stories of this era often appealed to children to support missionary work through images of foreign children. These children, the authors claimed, were desperate for the gospel and would happily accept it if only Christians would teach them. "A Hindoo Girl's Lament," a poem published in *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, followed this trend.¹⁹ The narrator, a girl from an unspecified part of India, implored the children of Britain to support Christian missionary efforts in her homeland. Her people, she claimed, wanted eternal life desperately, but would never find it in their old religions.²⁰ Only through Christianity could the girl, her family, and all her people go to Heaven.

¹⁸ Periodicals of this era often encouraged girls to become missionaries when they grew up; c.f.- "Girls' Work in the Mission Field—India," *The Girl's Own Paper*, October 22nd, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 14th, 2014.

¹⁹ "A Hindoo Girl's Lament," *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, August 1, 1849: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 25th, 2014.

²⁰ At this time, "Hindu," sometimes rendered "Hindoo," was a demonym for people from India, and did not necessarily refer to practitioners of Hinduism specifically.

The poem began with a dismissal of any inherent racial differences between Indians and Britons. The girl stated that she lived in a state of “bitter sorrow,” but

Not because a darker skin
Is allotted me to wear,
For I have a soul within
Just the same as have the fair.

Brown skin was thus meaningless in the eyes of God. What mattered was the “soul within,” and Indians had souls just as pure as those of the British. The girl went on to express her love for her family, and in doing so established that she and her British counterparts were capable of the same emotions.

Those I love, too, are the same;
All the dearest ties I know—
Father, mother, (sweetest name),
Blindly on to ruin go.

Love for one's parents was an emotion that British readers would presumably have understood, and this commonality would have made it easier to identify with her. She presented familial love as a cultural universal; all peoples could recognize this emotion. This poem, then, presented an egalitarian view of humanity, at least in spiritual matters. If Indians could only learn the gospel, they would be just as happy and holy as their British counterparts.

Even as this poem portrayed Indians and British as racially equal, however, it left no doubt that British culture was superior. The few references that the speaker made to her own culture were unequivocally negative. She claimed that her “lot is poor” and that she suffered hardships “such as you can ne'er endure.” She did not explain what these “hardships” were, but were they poverty, abuse, or ignorance, it was clear that India offered its people a bleak existence. At no point did she indicate that Indian culture had any advantages over British culture, let alone that some girls might actually have been

happier growing up in India than in Britain. Life in India, she was convinced, was definitively less enjoyable than life in Britain.

The poem further dismissed Indian culture when the speaker indicated how easily she would convert to Christianity. The only reason Indians were not Christians already was that

We are not taught
Those bless'd truths you know so well—
Jesu's love and grace, who sought
Wretched souls to save from Hell. ...
Darkness spreads this land around;
Thousands after thousands die,
Knowing not 'the joyful sound.'

There was no sense that Indians might resist Christian missionaries or strive to hold on to their “dark” traditions. Rather, they would know the superiority of Christianity as soon as they heard its doctrines and would be definitively happier as Christians than as Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs. Nor was there any indication that Indians might be able to teach the British something valuable in return. Cultural diffusion apparently occurred in only one direction: Indians would gain salvation while the British would stay the same.

Christianity’s purported superiority to “heathen” religions helps explain another common theme in children's literature of this era: that even the worst abuses of imperialism were a net benefit to Britain's subjects. Writers often portrayed foreigners forgiving and even celebrating the legacy of slavery, the loss of their cultures, and forced separation from their families, because the benefits of Christianity outweighed all evils. In “A Negro Boy’s Prayer,” for example, an African child was captured by slavers and then rescued by the Royal Navy. While the boy was on their ship, the sailors converted him to Christianity. This experience prompted the boy to make the following prayer: “My

Lord Jesus, me tank thee that wicked man come and catch me; and that good King George's big ship come and catch wicked man's ship, and bring me here, and Massa Thompson teach me to read, and teach me to know thee.”²¹

As with the speaker in "A Hindoo Girl's Lament," this boy was spiritually equal to white people, but his culture was trivial. He was not angry or sad about being ripped from his home, and he didn't mind having to learn a new language and live among slavers. The end result was that he converted to Christianity, and nothing else was important.

Although he expressed no desire for his old culture, the boy did indicate that he missed his parents. He did not, however, ask to return to his homeland so that he could be with them again. Instead, he asked Jesus to “send more wicked man, catch father and mother, and send good King George's big ship, catch wicked man's ship, and bring father and mother here, and Massa Thompson teach them read, and teach them know thee.”

That the boy was willing to wish his fate on others indicated that he saw his new life as so superior to his old one that it was worth great sacrifice. He was not merely willing to tolerate enslavement and forced relocation in exchange for Christianity. Rather, he treated his experience as a good one, worthy of being shared with others. Life in heathen Africa was so valueless that he had no qualms about praying for other Africans to be forcibly removed from their homes, so long as they ended up converting.

Not only did Christianity make British culture superior in its own right, but the absence of Christianity helped explain other deficiencies in non-British and non-Western cultures. Many publications attributed other peoples' ignorant, abusive, or “savage” practices to religion. If only those peoples converted to Christianity, they would fix all of

²¹ “A Negro Boy's Prayer,” *The Juvenile Instructor and Companion*, 1850: New York Public Library, Print.

their other problems. In an article on infanticide in India, for example, *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine* claimed that the ultimate cause of infanticide was heathenism:

‘Oh, *cruel* Hindoo mother!’ all of you cry out; but I would rather say, ‘Oh, *ignorant* Hindoo mother!’ Poor woman! she did not know that God had given his Son to die for her, so she gave her babe as an offering to the Ganges. Oh! let us send her word of the glorious Gospel of God, and tell her, she need not throw her child to the Ganges, for God has given up his Son, and ‘*His* blood cleanseth from all sin.’²²

The article did not condemn Indian women and even implied that all women would commit infanticide under similar circumstances. The problem was not that Indian women were inherently cruel but rather that they lacked the proper knowledge. If only they became Christians, Indian women would take as good care of their children as British women did.

Besides making them better parents, Christianity would also make foreign peoples more rational. Children’s writers often portrayed Hinduism and other “pagan” religions as dysfunctionally superstitious. A story in *Young Folks*, for example, claimed that one of the reasons the British had such an easy time ruling India was that Hinduism was highly superstitious and irrational, making its adherents easy to dupe. In the story, an Indian soldier stole something. To catch the thief, the British colonel in charge distributed bamboo sticks to all of his soldiers, telling them that “Brahma” would lengthen the stick that the thief was holding. The colonel then collected the sticks and promptly ascertained the thief, who “salaamed to the ground before the dreadful ‘Sahib’ to whom Brahma had given such terrible power.” The colonel later explained to his officers that “those bits of bamboo were all exactly the same length to begin with; but the thief, fearing to get the

²² “The Hindoo Mother,” *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, December 1st, 1849: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 25th, 2014.

longest piece, bit off the end of his, just as I expected he would.”²³ The British ruled India, then, by exploiting the natives’ superstition. As long as Indians maintained their “peculiar” religion, they would never be able to govern themselves.

These periodicals' emphasis on Christianity made sense given their publishers. According to historian Alex Ellis, "the majority of children's periodicals were the products of religious organizations."²⁴ Among these organizations were the Religious Tract Society, which published *The Boy's Own Paper*, *The Girl's Own Paper*, and *The Children's Friend*; the London Missionary Society, which printed *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*; and The Sunday School Union, which issued *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*.²⁵ These organizations had a vested interest in ensuring that Christianity was a central part of the “civilizing mission.” The closer the connection between “civilizing savages” and “converting heathens,” the more important religious organizations would be.

Non-Protestant Christianity did not fare much better than non-Christian religions in periodicals of this era. According to contemporary writers, Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy were so corrupt as to barely deserve to be called Christian. *The Children's Friend*, for example, described the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as “nominally Christian, but made up of a mass of empty and unintelligible ceremonies. The country swarms with indolent priests, monks, and nuns. Education is utterly neglected, and the Ethiopic Church is the lowest branch of Christianity in the world.”²⁶ It said of the Russian

²³ “Catching a Thief in India,” *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget*, August 9th, 1879: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

²⁴ Alex Ellis, *A History of Children's Reading and Literature*, Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968, p. 77.

²⁵ The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals: 1800-1900.

²⁶ “Travels to Other Countries—The Soudan and Abyssinia,” *The Children's Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

Orthodox Church, “their cathedrals, monasteries, and churches are often of great size, and have almost fabulous wealth. The clergy, however, are seldom educated, and too often perform their mechanical rites with little real piety.”²⁷

The *Juvenile Instructor and Companion* described Catholic missionaries to Japan in a similar manner. Spanish and Portuguese priests “arrived in Japan, and taught the people about Christ, but they taught them also to worship the cross and the Virgin Mary. Thousands of Japanese were baptized, and were called Christians.” This effort persisted until the Japanese Emperor worried that Christianity was undermining his authority and decided to persecute the church. He commanded the Japanese “instead of *worshipping* the cross, to trample on it. To do either is wicked.”²⁸ This description implied that Catholicism was not only a lower form of Christianity but that it was just as bad as Japanese Buddhism. Catholic veneration of the cross and of the Virgin Mary was not merely misguided; it was “wicked” and comparable to blasphemy. The author did not seem to consider Catholics to be Christians at all. He or she wrote that the converts to Catholicism “were called Christians,” leaving open the possibility that they did not deserve this title. At best, Catholicism was a flawed and fallen form of Christianity, and Protestant missionaries were wise to target Catholics.

The need for Protestant mission work in Catholic countries was a common justification for British hegemony in Ireland. Writers often assumed that ordinary Irish people placed little value on Catholicism, following the religion out of habit rather than conviction. *The Juvenile Companion and Sunday School Hive*, for example, published an

²⁷ “Travels to Other Countries—Russia,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1875: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, September 9th, 2014.

²⁸ “The High-Priests of Japan,” *The Juvenile Instructor and Companion*, 1858: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

unnamed Protestant leader's account of an interaction with an Irish woman who had moved to the United States. The woman admitted that she had not been to mass or confession "for a good while" and that her children attended a Protestant Sunday school but insisted that she would never give up "our auld religion." After getting the woman to admit that all of her practices were essentially Protestant, the leader concluded that "our institutions and our Protestant atmosphere are working a great change, quietly, but rapidly and powerfully, on the minds of our papal immigrants."²⁹ Irish people thus had no compelling reason for remaining Catholic. This woman had, for all intents and purposes, converted to Protestantism but was too stubborn to admit it. So it was, the author implied, with all Irish Catholics who were exposed to Protestantism. Catholicism and Irish culture had no inherent value and would be jettisoned, in practice if not in name, as soon as a reasonable alternative presented itself.

To the extent that Irish Catholics did not convert as soon as a Protestant alternative arose, children's writers often assumed that the tyranny of Catholic authorities was to blame. *The Juvenile Instructor and Companion*, for example, told the story of a boy in Ireland who attended a Catholic school, where he was caught reading the New Testament. "The master struck the poor boy a violent blow, took away his Testament, *cursed* him, and asked him if he were going to turn heretic!" Later, another Irish boy received a copy of the Bible and "became so fond of it as to learn by heart a great portion of one of the gospels." A Catholic priest eventually confiscated the Bible, prompting the boy to defiantly shout, "you have not got it all; you can't take away from me what I have

²⁹ "An Irish Apple-Woman in America," *The Juvenile Companion and Sunday School Hive*, August 1st, 1860: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 24th, 2014.

learnt by heart.”³⁰ According to this author, the real oppressors in Ireland were the native Catholic authorities, not the occupying British. Ordinary Irish people, he or she assumed, wanted to become Protestants but were helpless against the power of the clergy. Apparently, the anti-Catholic legislation that Britain had imposed on Ireland was irrelevant.³¹ There was no indication that the Irish might voluntarily choose Catholicism over Protestantism, let alone that they might see British Protestants as oppressors and combine with Catholic authorities against them. Like the "heathens" of India and Africa, ordinary Irish Catholics were desperate for Protestant Christianity and would accept it as soon as it became available.

Race or Culture: The Implications of Superiority

The concepts of racial and cultural superiority were not mutually exclusive. If Britons were inherently more intelligent or more moral than other peoples, it only made sense that their culture would be uniquely rational and functional. Likewise, if a culture was dysfunctional or savage, many saw this as evidence that its practitioners were not intelligent. Nonetheless, contemporary writers usually emphasized one form of superiority over the other, and this choice affected the way they portrayed relations between whites and non-whites. Missionary activity, economic development, and imperialism had different implications if Britons were inherently superior than if they were merely culturally superior.

³⁰ “Popery and the Bible,” *The Juvenile Instructor and Companion*, 1852: : *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

³¹ C.f.- Robert E. Burns, “The Irish Popery Laws: A Study of Eighteenth-Century Legislation and Behavior,” *The Review of Politics* 24 (October 1962), p. 485-508.

Inherent white superiority entailed a reduced role for foreign missionaries. Many authors believed that some races were just too savage to be made Christians and ridiculed any missionaries who would try. *The Boys' Comic Journal*, for example, published the following cartoons satirizing missionary work:



Captions: 1. Missionary in Pursuit of Misguided African. 2. Misguided African in Pursuit of Missionary. 3. He's Got Him.^{32 33}

³² "Missionary in Pursuit of Misguided African," *The Boy's Comic Journal*, June 16th, 1883: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

³³ These three panels are part of the same cartoon, which is a single column. To save space, I have split them up.



Caption: 1. The Missionary: I am sent to do the benighted savage a good. I hope I shall get safely through to them. 2. One of the Benighted Savages—a lean and hungry one—sent to meet the missionary. 3. The Lean and Hungry One, two hours after meeting the missionary: Oh, golly! How bad I feel!³⁴

The message was clear: “savages” were indeed desperately waiting for missionaries, but only so they could eat them! If other races were inherently barbaric, trying to convert them was pointless and dangerous.

Though these cartoons were clearly meant in jest, more serious publications made similar points. *Beeton's Annual*, for example, claimed that black people were naturally bad at worship, lacking “the more solid or permanent sentiments of character.” Black people could never handle “solemnity of ritual [or] reflection on the supernatural, the mysterious, the venerable.” Their “colloquial” styles of preaching and penchant for “religious monkeyism of the wildest doings” made them unsuitable even for the “Roman Catholic religion, low as it is,” let alone for the “learned solemnities of the Anglican ritual.”³⁵ Christianity required intelligence and composure to be practiced properly, two qualities beyond the black race. The author did not completely dismiss the fruitfulness of sending missionaries to the “lower” races, but she or he made it clear that those races

³⁴ “The Missionary and the Benighted Savage,” *The Boy's Comic Journal*, February 27th, 1886: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

³⁵ “Sketches of Jamaica,” *Beeton's Annual—A Book for the Young*, 1866: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

would never achieve the same degree of enlightenment as their white counterparts.

Salvation, it seems, was segregated.

If it was difficult to reconcile missionary activity with a belief in racial superiority, it was virtually impossible to reconcile it with the belief that some races were destined toward extinction. In an article about aboriginal Tasmanians, for example, *Little Folks* praised British missionary George Augustus Robinson for his attempts to convert the natives to Christianity but indicated that his efforts were futile. Robinson “laboured to convert them to Christianity” but this was “hard work, for they were a little lower even than the natives of Australia, and must therefore have been not far removed from the beasts that perish. . . . Despite the heroic efforts of the unselfish bricklayer, not a single native of Tasmania is to be found in the wide world.”³⁶ The extinction of the Tasmanians, this author implied, was inevitable, making their conversion to Christianity impossible. The Tasmanians were neither intelligent enough to understand Christian doctrine quickly nor durable enough to learn it gradually. Sending missionaries to such people would never be fruitful; far better to focus on stronger races and leave the “beasts” to perish. This may explain why eighteenth- and nineteenth-century missionaries in the Americas and Australia were often more concerned with preaching to nominally Christian white settlers than to “heathen” indigenous peoples.³⁷ Missionaries could at least be confident that more “durable” white settlers would have time to reflect on and benefit from their message.

In addition to affecting portrayals of missionary activity, the belief that there were “stronger” and “weaker” races also affected the role of imperialism. Perceptions of the

³⁶ “The Apostle of the Blacks,” *Little Folks*, circa 1890: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

³⁷ C.f.- Susan Thorne, “Imperial Pieties,” *Missions and Empires*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

British Empire's value to its subjects depended on perceptions of those subjects' abilities. If subjects were capable of the same accomplishments and refinement as their white British rulers, the Empire could teach them to be civilized. Conversely, if they were inherently inferior, they could never hope to attain the same level of wealth and refinement. A publication's views on race, then, played a powerful role in the way it portrayed the British Empire.

Publications that assumed non-whites were inherently inferior usually foresaw a future for them in servile positions. An article in *The Boys' Newspaper*, for example, discussed the British Empire's attempts to pacify the Bhil people of Central India. It called the Bhils "a wiry, savage race, somewhat resembling the South African bushmen, in the fact that they were so degraded as to resemble a link between man and the wild animals they hunted for their subsistence." The British general James Outram, however, managed to "subdue" these people, "turning a savage, degraded race of marauding robbers into an efficient band of auxiliaries, and completely changing the character of the country, where but a short time before it was not safe for a traveller, even with a sturdy escort, to be."³⁸ These "degraded" people could become safe and could even take a subordinate position in the army, but there was they could not attain the refinement of their British counterparts. Similarly, an article in *Little Folks* said that the "Kaffirs" of South Africa would have to "give way before the superior prowess, organization, and intelligence of the whites." Due to the "Kaffirs'" low intelligence, they did not "bear a very good character for industry and perseverance, but when they do settle to work they make valuable servants, and are capable of holding their own even against the labour of

³⁸ "The Bayard of India," *Boys' Newspaper*, 15 September 1880: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

the white man.”³⁹ In a civilized South Africa, then, the black population would serve the white population. The British Empire could teach non-whites how to be good servants, but it apparently could not teach them how to govern a civilized country on their own. Power and dignity were the domain of the white man; all “Kaffirs” could do was make themselves useful.

Other publications indicated that non-whites could attain the refinement and civilization that white Britons enjoyed. *Chums*, for example, published the following cartoons foretelling the future of Africa:



Caption 1: When the "Cape to Cairo" railway is made, instead of fanatical dervishes in the Soudan, we shall probably see something like the above. The "camel" cab will doubtless be greatly patronized.

³⁹ "Friends and Foes in South Africa," *Little Folks*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

Caption 2: Further south—at Coppiwolli, for instance—excursions to the seaside will be a welcome change to tribe-fighting; while a hungry lion would be a great incentive to dilatory passengers to hurry.⁴⁰ These cartoons indicated that “Dervishes,” or ethnic Somalis, and Central Africans could eventually live the same lifestyles as middle-class Britons. They would travel, read the newspaper, and even take vacations. Some of the Somalis in this picture appeared to be working as servants, but they were serving other Somalis, not white people. Black people, then, would not be eternally subordinate, socially or economically, to white people. They would one day be able to enjoy the same privileges and leisure activities as whites—as soon as Europeans “opened up” their countries and taught them to be civilized.

The Children’s Friend made a similar point about the natives of New Guinea:

Missionaries are now at work teaching and spreading a knowledge of all useful arts among the natives. They have reconciled their tribal feuds, and are winning their confidence, and encouraging the arts of industry. ... May the time soon come when this mysterious island will be cultivated as it deserves to be, and the peace of the Gospel be spread over its villages. The natives are clever, and the island may one day become almost an Eden.⁴¹

The barriers to civilizing New Guinea, then, were cultural. Papuans had the cleverness to make their island an Eden but lacked the specific knowledge necessary to do this. Once white missionaries had taught them these arts and had encouraged them to abandon their violent “tribal” cultures, the Papuans could develop their island.

Conclusion

Although children’s writers agreed that the British were superior, there were many ways of conceiving of this superiority. Some claimed that Britons, and white

⁴⁰ “When Central Africa is Opened Up,” *Chums*, 17 May 1899: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014.

⁴¹ “Travels to Other Countries—New Guinea,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2014.

Europeans generally, were inherently, racially better than other peoples, naturally possessing greater intelligence, strength, and beauty. Other authors attributed British superiority to culture—Britons were better because of their religion, gender roles, and other practices that foreign societies could adopt. Some writers accepted a combination of these views, but most emphasized one of them over the other. The nature of British superiority played a central role in how writers depicted Britain's role in the world. The Scepter'd Isle could offer very different benefits to culturally inferior people than to racially inferior ones.

Chapter II:

A Lesson They Will Not Forget:Blurring the Lines between Race and Culture

Andrew Soboeiro

Is there no way of civilising these Indians? Must they forever lead their own wild forest life, or else become extinct? Many have been the efforts to make them adopt our ways, that they may live side by side with us, but they have hitherto been of small avail. ... Their end is at hand, [but they are] determined to keep their own ways or die.

-Excerpt from an article in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*¹

In the abstract, most children's periodical writers would emphasize either inherent racial characteristics or transient cultural practices as the basis for British superiority. The distinction between racial and cultural theories broke down, however, when writers attempted to make predictions about the future of particular racial and ethnic groups. Many writers claimed that human difference was primarily cultural, but proceeded to indicate that certain groups would never be civilized. Conversely, writers who believed in inherent racial difference often advocated spreading British culture to "superior" and "inferior" races alike, and condemned institutions like slavery that failed to give equal opportunities to all races. Racial and cultural ideas of superiority frequently overlapped, and writers could come to the same conclusion about a group of people's fate despite having wildly different theories about the nature of those people.

¹ "The Indians of North America," *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 24th, 2014.

This tendency for the distinction between race and culture to become muddled indicates that contemporary writers saw culture as more than a temporary, mutable influence on human ability. Values, traditions, and beliefs defined what a group of people could accomplish every bit as much as that group's inherent racial characteristics. Many authors believed that cultural attributes could mitigate, or even change, inherent racial characteristics, allowing less intelligent groups to become civilized and more intelligent groups to become degraded. One group might by nature be capable of civilization, but toxic practices could permanently exclude it from becoming civilized if its members were sufficiently ingrained in its culture. The idea that culture could have such a powerful effect on a group of people helps explain why cultural and racial theories were so hard to differentiate in practice. Both theories could define races as permanently inferior and definitively incapable of matching Britons' achievements.

Race, Culture, and Extinction

The idea that certain groups of people were destined to die out entirely was a common assumption in this era and often came up in children's stories about "savage" races. Writers assumed these groups would go extinct not only out of the belief that some races were inherently less fit to survive, but also due to the belief in extreme cultural inferiority. Some cultures, they claimed, were so toxic that they could completely destroy their practitioners' potential, transforming noble, intelligent races into savages who were so brutish that they could not survive in the modern world. Culture thus had powerful influence over humanity's destiny, with the potential to make or break races regardless of those races' inherent characteristics.

Contemporary writers identified aboriginal Australians as the most likely group to die out. According to popular racial hierarchies, aborigines were among the lowest “in the scale of civilization”² and unlikely to adopt the habits of “superior” white and Asian settlers. Without the “arts and knowledge” of Western society, they were unable to survive “the advance of civilization and the step of the white man,” and white settlers would “gradually improve [them] from the face of the earth.”³ Many saw the fate of aboriginal Tasmanians, who had all died by 1876, as a harbinger of death for aborigines throughout the continent.⁴

Native Americans were also frequent subjects of extinction prophecies, particularly the natives of the United States and Canada. *Aunt Judy's Magazine* claimed that “the Indian tribes are decreasing fast, and in another century there will be few left. It seems that the white race is destined to drive them out, and to possess the whole continent of North America.”⁵ *Boys of England* called Native Americans “a race which is fast disappearing before the all-grasping ambition of the white man.”⁶ According to these authors’, aborigines and Native Americans were not only inferior peoples incapable of becoming civilized but they possessed so little value that a civilized society had no use for their survival. Some groups simply were not suited for a civilized world. This is not to say that contemporary writers thought these groups had no skills. They frequently praised

² “Travels to Other Countries—Australia,” *The Children's Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 13th, 2014. See also “Aborigines,” *The Family Tutor*, 1851: *Butler Library Rare Books Collection*, Print.

³ “Adventures Among the Blacks in Australia,” *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, April 1st, 1869: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 21st, 2014.

⁴ C.f.—“The Apostle of the Blacks,” *Little Folks*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014; “Native Australians,” *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget*, August 10th, 1889: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 23rd, 2014.

⁵ Mrs. Magillicuddey, “A Trip to Lake Superior,” *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, circa 1870: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 21st, 2014.

⁶ “The Victim—An Indian Sketch,” *Boys of England*, May 15th, 1868: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 13th, 2013.

aborigines' "superhuman" abilities to track, run, and hunt,⁷ and admired Native Americans for their bravery.⁸ These skills sometimes made them interesting or useful to the white population in the short term, but they had no enduring value in a "civilized" society. Aborigines and Native Americans could not contribute to whites' civilization, so according to these authors, whites could not avoid killing them.

At first glance, the idea that certain races were destined to die out seems to reflect the view that there were inherent differences between the races. If the "savage" races had the potential to learn a more "advanced" culture and live on equal terms with whites, they would be able to survive in a civilized world. Only if they were unable to become civilized, due to a lack of intelligence or self-control, would it make sense to say that a group was doomed to extinction. Some writers did take this position. *Little Folks*, for example, claimed that aboriginal Tasmanians died out because they were "not far removed from the beasts that perish."⁹ Some races died out, the author implied, because they were closer to the animals than human—efforts to civilize them had as much chance of succeeding as efforts to civilize wild animals. The less chance a group had of becoming civilized, the less human that group was.

On closer inspection, however, the idea that some races would go extinct was compatible with a cultural view of human difference. Some writers believed that certain races were destined for extinction not because they lacked the necessary intelligence or restraint to survive, but rather because they as a people had chosen not to learn the skills

⁷ "Captain Twilight," *Stories of Pluck*, circa 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 16th, 2013; see also "Travels to Other Countries—Australia," *The Children's Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 14th, 2013.

⁸ C.f.- "The Victim—An Indian Sketch," *Boys of England*, May 15th, 1868: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 13th, 2013; "Tangoras the Redskin," *Jack and Jill*, June 6th, 1885: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print; "Traits of the American Indian Character," *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine*, 1879: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

⁹ "The Apostle of the Blacks," *Little Folks*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

needed for survival. *The Children's Friend*, for example, claimed that aboriginal Australians “are decreasing in number and unwilling to work,”¹⁰ indicating that these two phenomena were related. Aborigines were unwilling to work, not unable. The implication was that if they decided to work, they would be able to survive. *Every Boy's Magazine* expressed this view more explicitly, claiming that Australian aborigines “would not have accepted any other lot nor have adopted any customs of the whites” and would thus “soon have disappeared altogether.” The magazine asserted that aborigines did not try to change this fate because of their pervasive belief that “when all the black men are dead they will be born again in the form of white men.”¹¹ These publications did not completely reject inherent racial inferiority as a cause of the aborigines' extinction, but they emphasized cultural beliefs and choices over inherent racial factors. Some beliefs, the authors indicated, were deadly, leading whole races of people to refuse to become civilized and thus condemn themselves to extinction. This view implied that “inferior” races were to blame for their own extinction—aborigines had the opportunity to adopt white customs and become productive members of Australian society, but chose instead to hold onto their doomed culture. The problem was not that the whites had taken their land or imposed a new way of life on them, but rather that they failed to cooperate with this imposition.

In presenting the aborigines' deaths as a natural result of their inferior culture, outside of the hands of the British, these publications mirrored a broader trend in the British Empire. During the nineteenth century, and particularly after the discovery of gold in Victoria in the 1850s, white settlers carried out a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign

¹⁰ “Travels to Other Countries—Australia,” *The Children's Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 14th, 2013.

¹¹ “Woolly-Head Part I,” *Every Boy's Magazine*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 27th, 2014.

against Australian aborigines. According to Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, settler colonization in Australia “invariably meant displacement, if not extermination, of Indigenous peoples.” British and white Australian authors, however, described this ethnic cleansing as a “fortuitous” event whereby the aborigines “destined to fade away before the superior forces of civilization and progress.”¹² The British thus framed an active ethnic cleansing campaign as the passive acceptance of aborigines' tendency to “fade.” This narrative allowed them to continue to benefit from their colony without admitting that their empire was built on aggression.

Other writers were willing to blame white settlers for aborigines' purported impending extinction. An article in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, for example, echoed the belief that Australian aborigines were dying out because they were uncivilized but implied that at least part of the reason that they had not become civilized was that British settlers were violent, hypocritical teachers. The author related an example of the whites' murderous conduct. A British schooner encountered “two frail bark canoes, manned by six black fellows, and having as passengers four shipwrecked English sailors, whom the tribe had preserved from starvation... and cured them with medicines drawn from wild herbs.” The British invited the aborigines aboard, whereupon the aborigines tried to steal some of the equipment on the schooner. The British began shooting at the aborigines, killing several and driving the rest away. “Such was the lesson given to these ‘savages’ on the results of kindness and charity, a lesson which they will not forget.”¹³ According to this author, the British claimed to be civilizing and pacifying the aborigines but killed them so readily

¹² Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 15; 25.

¹³ George Carrington, “Adventures Among the Blacks in Australia,” *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, April 1st, 1869: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 21st, 2014.

and indiscriminately that it was clear they had no such pure intentions. The “civilizing mission” was nothing more than a euphemism for genocide. It was little wonder, then, that the aborigines would not cooperate with the British or adopting their “civilized” culture.

Even as the author of this article condemned the British for murdering the aborigines, he defended his own decision to shoot an aborigine on sight. While working in the Australian bush as a shepherd, he saw a “peculiar motion in a tuft of grass” and fired into it with his rifle.

A black form bounded two feet from the ground, and then rolled over behind the sheltering grass tuft. . . . One more shot, this time in mercy, and the ‘adventure’ was ended. . . . Self-defence it most certainly was, as the weapons which I found by the dead man’s side sufficiently proved.

The author not only approved of shooting aborigines but was willing to shoot one on an impulse; he confirmed that the aborigine was attacking him only in retrospect. He indicated that for their own safety, white settlers had to shoot aborigines on sight. This practice might set a bad example for the aborigines, and help guarantee their extinction, but it was preferable to letting the settlers be in danger. However unfortunate it might be that the aborigines would die out, the author believed that white settlers’ lives were more valuable.¹⁴

Many writers who did not believe that the “lower” races would literally die out still believed that their cultures would go extinct. It was not enough for aborigines, Native Americans, and other “savage” peoples to incorporate European technology and

¹⁴ Many contemporary writers echoed this idea white settlers had a right to kill Australian aborigines. See “Left-Handed Jack in the Wilds of Australia,” *Boys of England*, September 25th 1891: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 13th, 2014; and “The Boomerang,” *Boys of the Empire*, October 21st, 1889: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print. For a similar view of Native Americans, see “The Indian is Funny,” *The Boy’s Comic Journal*, March 21st, 1891: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print; and “Some Prize Essays,” *Little Folks*, circa 1885: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

Christianity into their societies. They had to abandon their old practices, assimilate into white society, and lose all traces of their old identities. *Kind Words for Boys and Girls* made this point explicitly in an article about Australia. It described a young aborigine named Pierrot who travelled to France:

[Pierrot] became a naturalized European, forgetting home and savage life. ... His dark colour did not prevent his suitable marriage; and not long ago it was found, on inquiry, that after several generations, Monsieur Pierrot's descendants were known as members of society in the South of France, Australian-born as he was. ... [This proved that the] myriads of human beings in that beautiful region may become improving members of our common family.¹⁵

Pierrot did not become a civilized aborigine; he ceased to be an aborigine and thereby became civilized. Civilizing the “savage” races meant making them indistinguishable from Europeans. Indigenous peoples would become extinct even if individuals of indigenous descent survived.

The Juvenile Missionary Magazine made a less radical version of this argument about Native Americans. It published a speech that an Ojibwe chief supposedly gave during a visit to England. The chief contrasted the clothing he wore “when I was a pagan Indian” with his new Christian garments: “When I became a Christian, feathers and paint *done away*; my silver ornaments I gave to the Mission cause: blanket *done away*; scalping knife *done away*; tomahawk *done away*.”¹⁶ The chief did not become an Indian Christian. He *was* an Indian but then became a Christian, giving up not only his old religion but also many of the features of his old culture. His transformation was not as radical as that of Pierrot, as one could still distinguish him from the white population, but

¹⁵ “Dialogues of the Living,” *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, June 21st, 1866: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 8th, 2014.

¹⁶ “The Great Change,” *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, September 1st, 1849: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 28th, 2014.

he made it clear that he had given up most of the features of Indian life. It was not enough just to change religions; he had to abandon his former identity entirely.

The notion that other races could assimilate into Western society, and eventually become indistinguishable from white Europeans, necessarily reflects a cultural view of racial difference. One could not expect “savage” races to blend in perfectly with white Europeans if they were inherently less intelligent or less civil. Assimilation was necessarily premised on the notion that other races could change their characteristics and become civilized. One could believe that a race would die out due to either racial inferiority or cultural inferiority, but one could not believe that a race would assimilate itself out of existence unless he or she believed that that race was uncivilized for primarily cultural reasons.

Not all contemporary writers were certain of what awaited aborigines, Native Americans, and other “savage” races. An article in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, for example, foretold Native Americans' collective future equivocally. It pointed out that all previous efforts to “civilize” them had failed, but held out hope that US and Canadian authorities would manage to teach them civilization. “Their only hope of survival lies in their renunciation of the forest and plain life; and the kindest course towards them is to break them in gently to our customs, hoping thus in some measure to preserve the good qualities of their race among the nations of the world.”¹⁷ This author did not go as far with the assimilationist argument as others had, admitting that Native Americans had some “good qualities” that were worth preserving. Nonetheless, he or she made it clear that Native American civilization as a whole was doomed, leaving open the question as to

¹⁷ “The Indians of North America,” *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 21st, 2014.

what would happen to individual Native Americans. Perhaps they would adopt “the white man’s arts” and survive, or perhaps they would die out—it was too soon to tell.

In almost all of these writings, culture played a key role in the debate over whether certain groups would be able to survive the conquest of Western civilization. If some groups of people were destined to die out, it was primarily because they would not give up “savage” practices and learn to live as whites did. Inherent inferiority could provide an explanation for why certain groups would not adopt Western culture and become civilized, but so could the belief that “inferior” cultural practices were so pervasive that their practitioners would never abandon them, even if they could in theory. If any of these groups managed to survive, it would be because they had adopted Western practices and shed their old identities; contemporary writers broadly agreed that they would not survive in their “savage” state. Bad culture, then, could do just as much damage to a group of people as bad racial characteristics, making it difficult to distinguish between the implications of racial and cultural superiority.

Slavery, Inferiority, and the Fault of the West

There were few issues in the nineteenth century more loaded with commentary on superiority than slavery. Europeans’ long history of buying, owning, and trading in enslaved Africans became by the nineteenth century a source of shame among most British children’s writers. At the same time, the assumptions that Europeans had used to justify slavery persisted. Children’s writers portrayed black people as servile, unintelligent, and prone to crime even as they condemned their enslavement as an assault on human dignity. Outrage over slavery focused more on the bad name that the slave

trade had given to Western culture than on the suffering and death of the human beings who had been enslaved. This outrage highlights the complicated interaction between racial and cultural ideas of superiority. If whites could do any good for blacks, it would be by teaching their religion and values. Even among writers who believed that black Africans were inherently inferior to whites, many believed it was necessary to give blacks and whites access to the same opportunities and education. Equal opportunity would give the former a chance to improve their lot and even mitigate their inherent inferiority.

The idea that Western culture was superior to other cultures did not entail that all interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans benefitted the non-Europeans. In particular, contemporary children's writers frequently criticized European participation in the slave trade. Although many writers believed that slavery was a preferable fate to remaining in "heathen" Africa,¹⁸ they still condemned it as an immoral institution. Civilizing "savages" may have been more important than abolishing slavery, but the two goals were not mutually exclusive. Europeans should have spread Christianity and civilization in another, more moral manner.

Critiques of European participation in the slave trade centered on the fact that slavery made it difficult for missionaries and imperialists to spread the benefits of Western culture. In an 1885 article on the Congo, for example, *The Children's Friend* called for "the nations of Europe [to] bring [the Congolese] relief from their superstitions" but argued that this uplift would not be possible until the Congolese managed to "forget and forgive the cruelties of a forever past system of slavery."¹⁹

¹⁸ "A Negro Boy's Prayer," *The Juvenile Instructor and Companion*, 1850: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

¹⁹ "Travels to Other Countries—Congo," *The Children's Friend*, circa 1885: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 22nd, 2014.

Slavery had thus given Western civilization and Christianity a bad name, making it difficult for missionaries to spread the gospel. The slave trade was a horrendous stain on the legacy of Western culture, and Africans could not be expected to forget about it lightly. Similarly, *Chatterbox* criticized the Portuguese for having “misused their advantage, as, indeed, other nations long did, by slave-dealing.” Pointing out that the chief Portuguese settlement in Congo was named “Saint Paul de Loando,” the author found it “strange to call a city by the name of St. Paul and yet to have a wicked slave-market in it. What would St. Paul have said to such a market? What would he have called those who bought little black boys and girls who had been torn from their homes, and sent them away to be hopeless slaves, to be bullied, whipped, branded, and worked to death?”²⁰ The Portuguese had no right to call themselves a Christian power or incorporate Christian names into their colonies after trading in slaves for so long. In doing so, the author claimed, they made a mockery of their faith and associated the saints with horrors they never would have supported.

Most of these authors condemned the slave trade in retrospect. The aforementioned articles were written in the 1880s. Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807,²¹ successfully pressured most of her European and American neighbors to do the same by the 1830s, and suppressed illegal slave traders by the 1860s.²² That many writers continued to be concerned over the impact of the slave trade decades after its suppression meant they saw the slaving as a serious stain on Europe’s legacy. Europeans could not

²⁰ “A Tour Round the World—Congo,” *Chatterbox*, July 16th, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

²¹ C.f.- Louis Taylor Merrill, “The English Campaign for Abolition of the Slave Trade,” *The Journal of Negro History*, 30.4 (Oct. 1945), p. 382-399.

²² Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, p. 294; Jo Loosemore, *Sailing Against Slavery*, BBC Devon, 8 July 2008.

claim to be superior to Africans without qualification. They had to acknowledge and continually apologize for their history of slaving or Africans would never take their “civilizing mission” seriously. This position accepted that European imperialism had a brutal history, but it also indicated that such brutality was wrong primarily because it made the “civilizing mission” difficult. The authors’ main goal was to present Western values and methods in a way that would make Africans want to accept them. Africans’ inherent rights to life and liberty were secondary concerns at most.

The tendency to condemn slavery for interrupting the “civilizing mission” rather than for being violent and oppressive makes sense given that contemporary writers assigned such importance to culture. As previously noted, many believed that cultural inferiority could cause a race to lose all its good qualities and go extinct, even independently of that race’s inherent characteristics. If black Africans failed to adopt Western practices and values, many whites believed they would have the right and the ability to wipe them out, just as they had done to Australian aborigines and Native Americans. Moreover, given that Christianity was a central part of the culture that Europeans were spreading, giving Western culture a bad name also meant condemning millions of Africans to eternal damnation. This portrayal of the slave trade stemmed from the belief that only Western culture could save Africans, both in this world and the next.

The British Empire abolished slavery in 1833, and most other Western powers had followed suit by the later part of the century.²³ Most British children’s writers took pride in this development, lauding their government for ending such a cruel institution. An article about Jamaica in *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, for example, noted that it

²³ Brazil was the last country in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery, doing so in 1888. C.f.- Leslie Bethell, “The Decline and Fall of Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Brazil,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1 (1991), p. 71-88.

had been “nearly 12 years [since] the English people said they would have no more slaves. God had heard the prayers and blessed the efforts of many who pitied their ill-used fellow-men, and He inclined the hearts of the English Government to let these oppressed ones go free.” Once Britain had freed the slaves, missionaries began preaching to them in earnest, and “God's holy Spirit has blessed the words spoken by his servants, and some of these Negroes have been set free from a far worse slavery.”²⁴ This author repeated the idea that freeing the slaves was necessary to bring them to the gospel but added that slavery meant God was working through the British government. Even in condemning Britons for having “ill-used” millions of people through slavery, this author reinforced the notion that there was something particularly “holy” about Britain, and thus that Britons were religiously and culturally superior to other peoples.

Many children's writers believed the British Empire could further God's work by suppressing the slave trade elsewhere in the world. British control over Canada provided a haven for runaway slaves from the United States. A poem in *My Little Friend Annual*, for instance, describes a runaway slave's attempt to get to Canada, “where freedom's banner waves.” The man eventually succeeds, prompting the author to comment that

His feet are now on British soil,
He's under friendly care;
No wrathful slaver with his dogs
Can ever touch him there.²⁵

Many authors also emphasized that the British Royal Navy was hard at work putting a stop to evil Middle Eastern slave traders, as well as to Europeans who defied their countries' bans on slave trading. An 1880 article in *Young Folks*, for example, recounted

²⁴ “The Old Negro and His Wife,” *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, April 1st, 1846: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 25th, 2014.

²⁵ “The Negro and the Blood,” *My Little Friend Annual*, 1877: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

the efforts of a British whaling vessel named the *Galen* to rescue a group of enslaved Mozambicans from Portuguese traders. It described the Mozambicans' "wild joy" thanks to the *Galen*'s efforts.²⁶ The same year, *Every Boy's Annual* described British efforts to "free a section of [the negro's] suffering countrymen, and at the same time inflict a heavy punishment on the traffickers in human flesh."²⁷ Depictions of Arab Muslim slave traders often emphasized the perceived barbarity of Arab Muslim culture. An 1866 article in *Beeton's Annual*, for example, described a group of Arab slave traders and noted "the small regard that the Arabs on this coast have for the sanctity of human life."²⁸ The British Empire was thus the champion of slaves all over the world, making Britain superior not only to the "bloodthirsty" Arabs but even to other Western powers. No other country could match the "Scepter'd Isle" as a symbol of liberty.

Acknowledging the evils of slavery thus reinforced the idea that Britons were superior to other peoples. One of the chief evils of slavery was that it hindered efforts to spread Christianity and other Western values. Now that slavery was abolished, Africans and their descendants could forgive their former oppressors and begin to learn this superior culture. Moreover, Britain had overcome her propensity to promote human suffering and had since become a bastion of the anti-slavery cause, proving that the British government was an instrument of divine will. Former slaves were indebted to the British, and should thank them for having helped put an end to their suffering. According to these authors, as horrible as slavery was it only made Britain look better in the long run.

²⁶ "The African King," *Young Folks*, September 4th, 1880: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

²⁷ "A Tale of the Slave Trade," *Every Boy's Annual*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 28th, 2014.

²⁸ "An Incident of the Slave Trade," *Beeton's Annual*, 1866: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

Not all contemporary publications accepted that it was Britain's duty, or even a good idea, to oppose slavery. Some emphasized the idea that black people were naturally servile and would be happier as slaves. *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, for example, published a narrative by Frances Butler Leigh, the daughter of the wealthy American planter Pierce Butler. In it, Leigh informed a group of former slaves that they no longer had to obey her orders, to which the freedmen replied, "No, missus, we belong to you; we be yours as long as we lib."²⁹ Other writers emphasized slavery as a necessary means for keeping black people, a supposedly violent population, in check. An article from *Boys of the Empire*, for example, describes a group of Maryland slaves at the end of the Civil War. Upon realizing that they had become free, the former slaves became "half crazy with drink" and began threatening the local white population.³⁰ Thus although most authors opposed slavery, there were exceptions. The pervasive belief that black Africans were inherently less intelligent and more violent than white Europeans convinced some that the black race was not suited for, and did not necessarily want, freedom. These views may have stemmed from the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, a revolt in Jamaica that many Britons interpreted as evidence that black people were inherently violent.³¹ The aforementioned writers, all of whom published their writings after the rebellion, may have interpreted the rebellion in this way.

Black characters in most of these stories speak in a dialect closely resembling those used in minstrel shows in the United States. According to historian Eric Lott, this style of speech consisted of "exaggerations and distortions" of Afro-American vernacular

²⁹ "Negro Fidelity," *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, August 1st, 1883: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 8th, 2014.

³⁰ "Ross Billings' Banjo," *Boys of the Empire*, May 14th, 1888: *New York Public Library*, Print.

³¹ Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the boys' story paper in Britain*, Houdmills, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2003, p.139-141.

speech.³² Its frequent appearance in British periodicals, along with periodicals' frequent focus on racial politics in the US, implies a profound American influence on British views of race.

Although few publications went as far as *Kind Words for Boys and Girls* in claiming that black people wanted to be slaves, the basic assumption that blacks should serve whites was widespread. Late-nineteenth-century authors frequently portrayed black people as fiercely, selflessly loyal to whites. In an 1883 story about "the Mexican War,"³³ for example, *The Boy's Comic Journal* described the relationship between Allan Rothsay, an English officer who was stationed in Mexico, and his slave Dominic, who unexpectedly appeared by his side. Rothsay asked Dominic what he was doing in Mexico, to which Dominic replied,

Doing, massa? Yah! Ah! Ain't I a-lookin' after you? ... When you're a-runnin' yer 'ead right into the wild cat's mouf, for sakes of Massa Pablo? Where's you'se a-gwine, I'm a-gwine-- so there! ... ou ain't gwine this journey 'lone, so there! Take that out o'my mouf straight. Dominic ain't gwine to see the son of his po' ole massa, what saved his life twice, heading' straight for 'striation widout tryin't o keep his eye on 'im.³⁴

Similarly, *Chums* told the story of a former slave in Virginia who continued to serve his former master after the war. The former slave, who was not given a name, explained that "Marse Henry couldn't git 'long 'thought me. ... He ain't nebber learn do t'ings like common w'ite fo'ks. He hab niggers for dat." When asked why he chose to work for his old master, the former slave answered, "What nigger good for but wuk, I like know?"³⁵

³² Eric Lott, "'The Seeming Counterfeit': Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy," *American Quarterly*, 43.2 (January 1991): p. 223-254.

³³ The author did not specify which of Mexico's wars this story described, but given that Rothsay owned a slave and was depicted as a law-abiding Englishman, it probably took place before 1833.

³⁴ "Faithful 'til Death—A Story of the Mexican War," *The Boy's Comic Journal*, July 28th, 1883: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

³⁵ "By the 7:40 Express—When the Old Slave Returned Home," *Chums*, September 21st, 1898: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 12th, 2014.

More broadly, children's writers often depicted black people as naturally suited to servile labor. Opposition to slavery did not entail the assumption that black people could do business on equal terms with whites. Rather, children's authors often implied that the obvious occupations for former slaves were servile. A piece in *Little Folks*, for instance, told the story of Agola and Tebu, two siblings who escape being sold in a Yoruba slave market with the help of a Christian missionary. Upon escaping, "Agola became the servant of the missionary's wife, and she and Tebu were never separated again."³⁶ Similarly, in a story in *Little Wide-Awake*, a woman told her grandchildren "all about the West Indies, and the Blackies there." She recounted her experience employing a black woman named Phillis, whom she described as "a perfect treasure of a servant."³⁷ *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget* said that "the negro in the English West India regiments" was famous for "his obedience to orders."³⁸ Writers often assumed that black people performed servile tasks throughout the world. In a story from *Chums* about a kidnapping in Turkey, for example, a group of Turkish bandits employ a "negro" to rough up their prisoners for them.³⁹ These stories indicated that if it was wrong to enslave black people, it was because of the abuses and injustices of the system of slavery specifically, not because black people had much potential outside of service. There were exceptions to this portrayal of black people—*Chums* published a story about an American slave who gained his freedom and became a "coloured lawyer"⁴⁰—but in general, contemporary children's authors seemed disinclined to portray black people as competent, independent adults.

³⁶ "The Runaway Slaves," *Little Folks*, circa 1885: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

³⁷ "Grandmama's Negro Servants," *Little Wide-Awake*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 18th, 2014.

³⁸ "Faithful," *Young Folks Paper*, July 13th, 1889: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 23rd, 2014.

³⁹ "The Negro of Galata," *Chums*, June 21st, 1893: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014.

⁴⁰ "Julian Dare's Slave Hunt," *Chums*, July 17th, 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 12th, 2014.

One reason that writers portrayed black people as servile may have been that they agreed with a central pro-slavery argument: black people were too feeble-minded and too criminal to be left to their own devices. The incompetent black criminal was a frequent source of humor in contemporary children's literature. An article in *Boys of England*, for example, described an interaction between a black man and a judge. "A Negro appeared before an American magistrate, charged with some trivial offence. The latter said to the man—'You can go now, Sambo, but let me warn you never to appear here again.' Sambo replied, with a broad grin—'I wouldn't been here this time, only the constable fetch me.'"⁴¹ Similarly, in an article from *The Boy's Comic Journal*, a black woman is accused of stealing five dollars and responds, "it was only four dollars and a quarter I stole. I counted it over twist myself."⁴² In another article from the same paper, a black child asks a white farmer for a boot that is sitting on the farmer's land. When the farmer asks the child why he wants the boot, the child responds, "My farder wuz 'roun' h'yar las' night an' jus' 'ud time ter git de one sho' w'en de dorg got luse; so he sen' me ober ter git de oder, es it's ob no use ter yo' widout its mate."⁴³ These articles implied that if black people had a redeeming feature, it was that they were not smart enough to seriously threaten society. A criminal race was only a threat if it could deceive the people it was robbing. Black people, however, did not have the self-control or cunning to carry out such deception, and were liable to incriminate themselves or their comrades when attempting to rob whites. Such an image would seem to confirm the idea that black servility to whites was in the best interest of both blacks and whites.

⁴¹ "Sambo and the Magistrate," *Boys of England*, April 18th, 1879: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 13th, 2014.

⁴² "A Southern Outrage," *The Boy's Comic Journal*, May 12th, 1883: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

⁴³ "He Put His Foot In It," *The Boy's Comic Journal*, May 1st, 1886: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

One could easily dismiss this tendency to argue against slavery while reinforcing its premises as hypocrisy. Contemporary writers claimed to support freedom and dignity for all people but still wanted to think of themselves as superior. It could, however, just as easily have represented a sincere attempt to reconcile the perception that certain races were inferior with the belief that all human beings deserved equal treatment. In this view, human equality meant not that all humans were capable of doing the same things, but rather that all humans had a right to liberty. Some humans, and some groups of humans, may have been “less intelligent” than others, but intelligence was not a prerequisite for dignity. All humans were entitled to freedom, and just because most black people would end up in servile positions did not mean that white people had the right to impose those positions on them.

These authors, who wrote mostly in the 1880s and 1890s, may have been influenced by the work of John Stuart Mill, who had challenged the racial arguments of Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle several decades earlier. In 1850, Mill responded to Carlyle’s contention that whites had the right to subjugate blacks because they were “born wiser.”⁴⁴ Although he did not accept the premise that white people were inherently “wiser” than blacks, he argued that even if they were, “it would not be the less monstrous to assert that they had therefore a right to subdue them by force.”⁴⁵ Mill demonstrated that racism failed even on the basis of its own premises. Oppression was wrong regardless of the intelligence of those who suffered from it. However the human species may have been ranked, everyone had the right to life and liberty.

⁴⁴ Thomas Carlyle, “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question,” *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* December 1849.

⁴⁵ John Stuart Mill, “The Negro Question,” *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* 1850.

Moreover, even if black people were generally condemned to a servile position in society, there were many black individuals who were capable of accomplishing much more. Just because black people were inferior to whites on average did not mean that there were not many black individuals who were equal or superior to most whites, and these individuals should be given the same opportunities. *Chums* seemed to confirm this position in its article about the former slave who became a “coloured lawyer.”⁴⁶ Perhaps most black people were not fit to be lawyers, but this did not mean that the ones who were capable of practicing law should not have done so. The problem with slavery was that it made no distinction between the individual and the race, holding down all black people regardless of their individual differences. By condemning slavery, contemporary writers indicated that they supported equality of opportunity and that they believed differences between individuals mattered at least as much as differences between races.

An 1866 article from *Beeton's Annual* gives us another clue as to why contemporary writers would oppose slavery yet believe that black people were servile.

A state of slavery carried on for a length of time will produce peculiar qualities in the race so held in subjection. Under it some intellectual faculties will lie dormant; the reflective powers will have no scope; those which border on the lower animal nature—the perceptive faculties, the instincts of acquisitiveness, self-preservation, furtiveness, will be disproportionately developed. It is in this way only that I can account for the sad instances of inveracity so often met with in the black man.⁴⁷

The way whites treated blacks thus affected blacks' inherent abilities. If growing up in a servile position made black people servile, then by extension, being raised as equal to whites could make black people equal. If this was the author's position, culture had the power to change black people's nature for the better, but only if the whites who

⁴⁶ “Julian Dare's Slave Hunt,” *Chums*, July 17th, 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 12th, 2014.

⁴⁷ “Sketches of Jamaica,” *Beeton's Annual*, 1866: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

controlled Western culture chose to use their power in this way. If, on the other hand, whites continued to treat blacks as inferior and servile, black people would increasingly become inferior and servile. It was not just that intelligent black individuals deserved the same opportunities as whites, but also that if black people were not given the same opportunities as whites, fewer and fewer of them would be intelligent. Human equality, then, was a possibility, but only if Europeans promoted it.

“Orientals:” The Once (and Future?) Great Races

Above all other foreign races, contemporary British children’s writers respected the “Orientals.” Whereas most children’s writers downplayed the achievements of African and Native American civilizations, they were happy to acknowledge the scientific, artistic, and technological accomplishments of the Chinese, Japanese, Persians, Arabs, and Indians. These achievements, coupled with the perception that “Orientals” were diligent and intelligent workers, led many writers to believe that the “Eastern” peoples were on a par with, or even in some ways superior to, white Europeans in nature. At the same time, most writers portrayed “Oriental” cultures as dysfunctionally superstitious and barbaric, having declined to levels below that of Western civilization. Asians may have had the potential to equal or exceed Europeans, but until they adopted Western culture, most writers believed they would remain in a state of barbarism.

Children’s writers often emphasized the historic accomplishments of “Eastern” civilizations like the Persian Empire, the medieval Arabs, the Mughals, and China’s early dynasties. *Chatterbox* called the Arabs “fond of art and science. They built colleges and collected books. They were clever physicians, lawyers, philosophers, and astronomers,

and we have to thank them for the invention of the decimal system of numbers and for the discovery of algebra.”⁴⁸ *Young Folks* echoed this sentiment, praising Arabs for founding “mighty empires” and for being the “pioneers who penetrated the dense jungle and traversed the trackless desert.”⁴⁹ The same paper called the ancient Persian Empire “one of the foremost countries of the world. ... [T]he Persians were a civilized and cultivated people, and Europeans were neither cultivated nor civilized.”⁵⁰ *Chatterbox* called the Mughal Empire a “great empire,”⁵¹ and praised the Taj Mahal as “the most wonderful Moslem building in the world, and with its white marble dome and minarets, seems cut out of snow. ... One competent judge says, ‘St. Peter’s at Rome is not to be named in the same breath with the Taj Mahal.’”⁵² China also deserved praise; according to *The Boy’s Own Paper*, “the inventions which have done most to revolutionize society... were known and used in China while our forefathers were bowing down to wood and stone.”⁵³ The “Oriental” races were not just capable of being civilized; they had done it. For thousands of years Asia had equaled or exceeded Europe in its accomplishments, and Europeans were indebted to Chinese, Indian, and Middle Easterner discoveries. Whatever the state of “Eastern” civilization at the moment, it was clear that “Orientals” had the potential to do great things.

“Eastern” civilization may once have been great, but by the nineteenth century, this was no longer the case in the eyes of most British children’s writers. According to an 1866 article in *Young Folks*, from their former status as a wealthy and advanced people

⁴⁸ “A Tour Round the World—Arabia,” March 26th, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

⁴⁹ “The Arab,” *Young Folks*, April 10th, 1866: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁵⁰ “Falcon Flying in Persia,” *Young Folks*, January 12th, 1889: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁵¹ “A Tour Round the World—India,” *Chatterbox*, April 2nd, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

⁵² “The Palace of Agra,” *Chatterbox*, August 17th, 1868: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

⁵³ “John Chinaman, and What John Bull owes Him,” *The Boys’ Own Paper*, December 16th, 1899: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 12th, 2014.

the Arabs had declined into “crafty, deceitful, thieving, and lazy subjects under all circumstances, and in all conditions.”⁵⁴ The same paper presented Indians as dysfunctionally superstitious, claiming that the British Empire was able to control its Indian subjects by claiming to wield the power of “Brahma.”⁵⁵ Similarly, whereas Persians were once more civilized than Europeans, “today it is the Europeans and Americans who are civilized, and the Persians but partially so.”⁵⁶ *Every Boy’s Annual* called China “a half-civilized country, where under one form or another, flourish all the abuses which disgraced our society years ago.”⁵⁷ *Chatterbox* said of Egyptian Arabs, “much of the fine character of that proud people has been lost.”⁵⁸

According to contemporary writers, “Orientals” had not lost their potential for greatness but failed to take advantage of it. The “Eastern” races were still intelligent and innovative, but their immoral, criminal cultures taught them the worst uses for these skills. An article in *Chums*, for example, claimed that Indians were intelligent but employed this intelligence chiefly as “swindlers.” The author described Indian thieves’ “ingenious device to drill a hole in the thickness of a rupee, and then scrape out the silver from the inside.” All these efforts were for naught, however, because “the operation may occupy him the greater portion of a week, during which time he might have earned two rupees by honest work.” Similarly, the author claimed that Chinese people possessed “a profundity of cunning and a dexterity in fraud that the Western races cannot rival.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴ “The Arab,” *Young Folks*, April 10th, 1866: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁵⁵ “Catching a Thief in India,” *Young Folks*, 9 August 1879: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁵⁶ “Falcon Flying in Persia,” *Young Folks*, January 12th, 1889: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁵⁷ “School-Boys All Over the World,” *Every Boy’s Annual*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 27th, 2014.

⁵⁸ “A Tour Round the World—Egypt,” *Chatterbox*, May 21st, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 27th, 2014.

⁵⁹ “Wasted Cleverness,” *Chums*, September 4th, 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014.

This purported lack of morality made it difficult for Asians to cooperate, as no two Asians could trust each other. *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, for example, told the story of a group of Indian thieves who attempted to break into a white official's house. The group cut a hole in the wall and inserted one of its members into it feet-first. The official woke up, grabbed the thief's feet, and began pulling. Fearing that they would be discovered, the thieves cut off their comrade's head and ran away.⁶⁰ Morality was thus just as important as intellect and ingenuity in the creation of a successful civilization. Asians clearly had to be intelligent to carry out so many schemes. Such schemes were not only wrong, however, but were also less lucrative than honest work, and they made cooperation dangerous. Before they could be civilized, Asians would have to learn to be good people. This helps explain why so many writers emphasized missionary activity as an essential component of the British Empire's "civilizing mission." Christianity provided the moral education that the "heathen" religions apparently didn't have.

Contemporary writers consistently identified one country as an exception to the idea that "Oriental" nations were immoral and backward: Japan. By the late nineteenth century, Japan had undergone the Meiji Restoration, becoming a wealthy, industrialized empire that could rival its European competitors. Children's writers held up Japan as an example of what Asians could accomplish if only they adopted Western methods. *Sunday Readings for the Young*, for example, claimed that the Japanese were "getting on very fast indeed, so fast that the last twenty years has completely changed the state of affairs in that country. They have now railroads, telegraphs, telephones, steamers, and armour-

⁶⁰ H.A.F., "A Terrible Alternative," *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, January 27th, 1870: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 8th, 2014.

plated vessels of war.”⁶¹ *The Children’s Friend* called the country “the most advanced and most enterprising of all Asiatic nations.”⁶²

Most authors left little doubt that Western influence was the source of Japan’s rapid success. *The Children’s Treasury* stated that Japan had formerly been “closed to Europeans, but now any one can go, and they are glad to learn all they can of useful trades and of modern customs. Some of them in the large towns dress now so like English people that you could hardly tell the difference.”⁶³ *The Children’s Friend* praised the Meiji Restoration for establishing a government in Japan “formed on European models,”⁶⁴ while *Chatterbox* called the newly industrialized Japan “a market to our enterprising mechanics of Sheffield, Birmingham, and Manchester.”⁶⁵ Japan was evidence that “Asiatic” nations had not lost the potential that had once made them world leaders. They could again become wealthy, technologically advanced civilizations—all they needed was to adopt European methods. Japan had already done this, and its reward was to become the most advanced nation in the “East.”

There was one problem with Japan’s rise to prominence: although the Japanese adopted many Western habits, they had not become Christians. This fact puzzled many writers, who assumed that Christianity and civilization were mutually inclusive. *Sunday Reading for the Young* expressed incredulity at Japan’s non-Christian modernization, calling it “wonderful that a nation so enlightened about the things of this world should be

⁶¹ “A Few Words About the Japanese,” *Sunday Readings for the Young*, 1891: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁶² “Travels to Other Countries—Japan,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1890: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

⁶³ “Japanese at Dinner,” *The Children’s Treasury*, August 13th, 1878: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁶⁴ “Travels to Other Countries—Japan,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1890: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

⁶⁵ “A Tour Round the World—Japan,” *Chatterbox*, April 9th, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 26th, 2014.

able to believe that a mere doll has the power of saving them, and answering their prayers; but so it is, and a little English child, who knows Jesus to be his Saviour, has a better knowledge than all the wisdom of the Japanese, which can only serve them for a few fleeting years.”⁶⁶ The English, then, could still feel superior to the Japanese, even if the two nations were equal economically and technologically. Religion was a more important feature of civilization than wealth or industry. The fact that a people could be intelligent enough to adopt Western methods yet did not simultaneously conclude that Christianity was true disturbed these authors. This was also a problem for writers who recognized that non-Christian civilizations like China had once been world leaders. In an article in *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, for example, a character asks how “if the Chinese invented the compass, porcelain, gunpowder, printing, and paper, why do we have to send missionaries to them?”⁶⁷ If the Christian God had given humanity evidence of his existence, how could a rational people fail to see it? This paradox does not appear to have inspired any contemporary children’s writers to conclude that there was no God or that different conceptions of God were equally valid, at least not publicly. However wise the Chinese and Japanese may have been, they were wrong about religion.

Most writers solved this dilemma by assuming that Japan’s growing knowledge would eventually lead it to Christianity. *Young Folks* claimed that just as Japan was known as “‘the land of the rising sun,’ and, considering its rise and progress, and learning, moreover, that the bright beams of Christianity and civilization are spreading over it, the

⁶⁶ “A Few Word About Japan,” *Sunday Reading for the Young*, 1891: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁶⁷ “Round-the-World Joe—China,” *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, November 13th, 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 8th, 2014.

title seems to be both apt and prophetic.”⁶⁸ *The Children’s Friend* hoped that Japan’s “industrious, orderly, skillful people [would] quickly embrace the true faith of Christ, which has already spread widely among them.”⁶⁹ *The Children’s Treasury* reported that Christian missionaries “have gone east to teach them of Jesus, and when the Japanese have really given their hearts to Him, they are very earnest in trying to get their fellow countrymen to believe in Him, too.”⁷⁰ These predictions illuminate a partial answer to the “problem” of Japanese religion: Japan had only recently become a “modern” nation. Christianity may have been a feature of modernity in the minds of contemporary Britons, but a nation need not adopt every aspect of modernity at once. Japan would adopt Christianity just as it had adopted capitalism and European government; it was only a matter of time. Japan, of course, did not become a predominantly Christian nation, and even if it had, that would not have explained how non-Christian nations like China had once been dominant. Nonetheless, this explanation helps us to understand how Britons rationalized the fact that a modern, educated nation had as yet failed to convert to Christianity.

Besides Japan, contemporary writers sometimes pointed to Britain’s colonies as examples of the good that Western culture could do when taught to Eastern nations. *The Children’s Friend*, for example, noted that under British leadership, “cotton mills are springing up in the suburbs of Bombay; so the nations learn from and teach each other.”⁷¹

It said of Burma, “where Western knowledge has penetrated, the children are bright,

⁶⁸ “A Bird’s Eye View of Japan,” *Young Folks*, April 4th, 1885: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁶⁹ “Travels to Other Countries—Japan,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1890: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

⁷⁰ “Japanese at Dinner,” *The Children’s Treasury*, August 13th, 1878: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁷¹ “Travels to Other Countries—Bombay,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013.

clever, and attractive.”⁷² Like the Japanese, then, these cultures had the potential to become civilized, wealthy, and Christian. Japan was not an anomaly within a sea of barbarism but rather the harbinger of a civilized East. Some “Eastern” nations, such as the Japanese, had taken the initiative to imitate European practices, while others, such as India, had to have those practices imposed upon them by empire, but all of Asia would learn to be like Europe one way or another.

The idea that “Oriental” cultures could become civilized through the adoption of Western culture did not necessarily entail the belief that human difference was primarily cultural. Many writers believed that some races were inherently more intelligent and more capable of civilization than others, but placed Asians in the same category as whites. *The Children’s Treasury*, for example, claimed that the Japanese were a “very intelligent and thoughtful” people, implying that other peoples were not intelligent or thoughtful.⁷³ Some publications even went so far as to say that “Orientals” were more intelligent than white Europeans. *Chums* claimed that the Chinese “will learn in a few weeks a trade or calling to acquire which a European would take years. For all his stolid, unemotional look, John is as sharp as a needle.”⁷⁴ The same publication claimed that Indians possessed mental faculties “that the Western races cannot rival,” at least when it came to fraud.⁷⁵ *Sunday Reading for the Young* speculated that the Japanese may have been “the most intelligent people in the world.”⁷⁶ These views likely stemmed from the work of eugenicists like Francis Galton, who argued that the “yellow races of China”

⁷² “Travels to Other Countries—Burmah and Siam,” *The Children’s Friend*, circa 1880: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 14th, 2013.

⁷³ “Japanese at Dinner,” *The Children’s Treasury*, August 13th, 1878: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁷⁴ “Chinamen Imitate Quickly,” *Chums*, September 5th, 1900: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014.

⁷⁵ “Wasted Cleverness,” *Chums*, September 4th, 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014.

⁷⁶ “A Few Word About Japan,” *Sunday Reading for the Young*, 1891: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

were destined to become “one of the most effective of the colonizing nations” as soon as they eliminated “certain of their peculiar religious fancies.”⁷⁷ These authors believed not only that there were inherent intellectual distinctions between the races, but that Europeans were sometimes on the losing side of these distinctions. Theories of racial difference were not merely attempts to defend white European dominion over the rest of the world. Many white writers promoted these theories even when they entailed that whites were not the most intelligent, indicating that they sincerely believed in such theories and accepted whatever conclusions they produced. Europeans were at most temporarily superior, capable of ruling the rest of the world only until they had taught Asians to be civilized, at which point Asians would become their equals or superiors.

The idea that Europeans could be inherently less intelligent than Asians but superior in practice due to culture demonstrates the complex interaction between cultural and racial ideas of superiority. Superior races, it seems, did not always make better decisions than inferior ones. Culture apparently played just as important a role in a civilization's success as inborn intelligence, and a culturally superior people could overcome an intellectually superior one, at least until the latter group adopted the former group's practices. Notably, most children's writers who took this position did not oppose spreading Western culture among the "Orientals," even though in doing so Europeans would be giving them the power to challenge their hegemony. Not everyone in the British Empire shared this willingness to spread Western civilization to potential challengers. Many white Australians, for example, worried that “industrious, persistent, and strong” Chinese immigrants would take over Australia and subdue the whites just as the whites had subdued the aborigines. They used this fear to argue for restrictions on immigration

⁷⁷ Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, Macmillan, 1883.

from China.⁷⁸ For children's writers in Britain, however, humanity had to reach its full potential, regardless of which group would be on top when this happened.

In addition to having a general interest in encouraging humanity to reach its full potential, contemporary writers may have felt a more dire need to spread Western culture among Asians. As previously noted, many writers did not believe that "savage" races like Australian aborigines, Native Americans, and black Africans were inherently inferior to white Europeans, at least not originally. Rather, they often believed that these groups had started out with the same potential as whites, but through the adoption of "barbaric" cultural practices, they had degraded themselves and lost many of their good qualities. In the long run, this degradation had turned intelligent, noble people into dumb, violent savages. If such degradation could happen to these groups, it could presumably have happened to Asians as well. Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, and Indians may have possessed "superior" racial qualities at this point, but given enough time living in inferior cultures, they too would lose their good qualities and become barbarians, or even go extinct. Spreading Western culture was thus the only way that Europeans could save Asians from permanent barbarism. These writers did not just want Asians to reach their full potential; they were trying to help them avoid losing that potential entirely.

Conclusion: Understanding the Importance of Culture

Tidy racial or cultural explanations of human difference often gave way to complicated predictions of the future of humanity's various racial and ethnic groups. Authors who believed in cultural difference could still conclude that certain groups would

⁷⁸ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 79.

never achieve as much as others. Likewise, authors who believed in inherent racial difference often promoted equal treatment of people regardless of race and advocated spreading Western culture to non-white peoples. Two advocates of cultural theories of human difference could come to different conclusions about the fate of specific groups of people, while advocates of racial difference and advocates of cultural difference could sometimes come to the same conclusions. As different as racial and cultural notions of superiority were in theory, the distinction was not always clear in practice, and a writer's belief on the subject said very little about what he or she thought about British relations with other peoples.

In order to understand how such different theories could lead to the same conclusion, it is necessary to note that contemporary writers conceived of culture as comparable to nature in determining a society's potential. Culture did not merely influence how a group of people could use their natural talents; it defined what those talents were and whether that group of people would survive long enough to use them. Over time, cultural patterns could even change a certain group's nature, transforming intelligent races into "savages." From this perspective, cultural differences could cause disparities between groups of people every bit as large and insurmountable as inherent racial disparities. By the same token, if a people did manage to change its culture for the better, this gave it great advantages even over groups that were naturally superior—hence the belief that Europeans were superior to Asians even though Asians were inherently more intelligent. Thus even believers in inherent racial difference often advocated spreading their culture among "inferior" peoples in the hopes of mitigating the effects of their natural inferiority.

The belief that culture had such a powerful effect on individual races' potential helps explain why so few writers questioned the fact that Britain was spreading its culture through violent conquest. The loss of millions of lives in its rise to power was acceptable because Christianity and British practices could prevent whole races from dying out. To the extent that contemporary authors did reject violence associated with Western civilization—the violence of slavery, for instance—it was because they believed that using such violence was counterproductive to attempts to spread their culture. They rarely objected to the use of violence to spread civilization as such, so long as it got results.

Chapter III:

The Kernel Within:

Attempts to Counter Racial Prejudice

Andrew Soboeiro



Caption: It has recently been stated that during electrical treatment for a nervous disorder, a negro's skin was changed from black to white. This fact will not be lost sight of, and before long, we suppose, the natives of Central Africa will be "shocked."¹

Racial stereotypes were central to the British worldview at the end of the nineteenth century. Western, predominantly white countries had virtually unchecked military and economic power over the rest of the world, leading many Britons to conclude that the white man was destined to subjugate all other races, at least until those races could learn to imitate "the white man's arts." Self-interest reinforced this idea; many Britons, particularly those in the working class, aspired to live and grow wealthy in Britain's colonies or in the United States, a goal that was only possible if white settlers continued to dispossess or kill indigenous peoples. Events like

¹ "A Study in Black and White," *Chums*, August 30th, 1899: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014; see also "Blanc et Noir: Une Tragedie d'Afrique," *Jack and Jill*, May 2nd, 1886: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

the Sepoy Rebellion and the Morant Bay Rebellion also convinced many Britons that non-whites were dangerous when not kept under whites' strict control. All of this contributed to the hardening of widespread racial stereotypes, which portrayed black Africans as either violent or servile, Native Americans as a weak, doomed race, and Arabs as primitive nomads. Most children's writers likely accepted these stereotypes, but even those who did not still had to appeal to audiences who did. Racial and ethnic stereotypes were thus heavily ingrained in the British worldview. Even the most ardently egalitarian writers rarely challenged them directly.

In this context, British children's authors who objected to the subjugation of non-whites usually did so by accommodating racial stereotypes into more positive narratives. Many accepted the beliefs that black people were servile, for example, but glorified black characters within that servile context, portraying them as fearless servants willing to sacrifice their lives for their masters. Similarly, many writers depicted Native Americans as a dying race, but insisted that they were a noble people who deserved the respect and honor of the whites who would replace them. These writers' reliance on more positive interpretations of racial stereotypes demonstrates just how powerful those stereotypes were. However sincerely they tried to challenge racism, they could not escape the dominant racial assumptions of their era.

The Importance of Inner Whiteness

Children's writers sometimes made a distinction between "outer" and "inner" whiteness and blackness. Whiteness was better than blackness, but all races could achieve inner whiteness, making them essentially equal. *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, for example, published a letter that a West African boy had supposedly written in which the boy claimed, "if our faces are coloured, the blood of Jesus can make our hearts as white as yours, who dwell in the midst of

light.”² Some authors would use this line of thought to criticize white feelings of racial superiority. White people, they argued, might think that their outer whiteness made them better, but many whites were “blacker” on the inside than most black people. A poem in *The Boy’s Illustrated News*, for example, told the story of the arrogant white master Lorenzo and his witty black servant Mungo. Pointing to a basket of apples and chestnuts, Lorenzo bragged to Mungo that “this apple’s a white man: this chestnut is you.” Mungo responded by pointing out that

Negro, like chestnut, though dark in his skin,
Is *white*, firm, and sound at the *kernel* within,
While, though beauteous like apples, in Buckra so smart
He has oft *many little black grains at his heart*.³

Black people could aspire to attain inner whiteness, while white people had to watch themselves lest they become black at heart.

This emphasis on “inner whiteness” demonstrates just how deeply ingrained notions of white superiority were at this time. One could argue that black people were equal to white people, but the idea that blackness was equal to whiteness was out of the question. Contemporary authors could, however, argue that whiteness was available to a wider range of the global population than most people thought. Europeans and their descendants may have monopolized white skin color, but no one could monopolize white behavior. This did nothing to challenge the idea that whites were aesthetically more attractive than non-whites, but it at least counseled readers not to make moral judgments on the basis of skin color. These writers were able to accommodate the association between whiteness and goodness in a manner that was somewhat fairer to non-whites.

² Dieterle, David, “Letter from a Negro Boy of West Africa,” *The Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, February 1st, 1854: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 25th, 2014.

³ “The Negro’s Retort,” *The Boy’s Illustrated News*, January 25th, 1881: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

The Black Martyr Theme

Like stories about “inner whiteness,” the “black martyr” was a common trope among writers who advocated greater respect and rights for black people. Children’s authors often portrayed black slaves and servants sacrificing their lives for the sake of their white masters and employers. *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, for example, published a story about a sinking ship. The ship’s captain evacuated most of his passengers into a longboat, but left behind his two sons in the care of a black servant. The longboat had enough room for the sons or the servant, but not for both. Upon learning this, the servant exclaimed, “Very well! Give my duty to my master, and tell him I beg pardon for all my faults,” put the captain’s children in the longboat, and drowned himself.⁴ An almost identical story appeared in *Wee Willie Winkie*, this time focusing on a slave rather than a servant.⁵ *Chums* published the tale of Tommy Hardwick, an English immigrant to South Africa. When the local Boers tried to kill Hardwick, his friend Zebub, “one of the Zaandam Kaffirs,” intervened to save his life, but was mortally wounded in the process. Zebub’s last words to the grieving Hardwick were “no matter for me, Baas—me happy!”⁶ These stories all presented black people as moral role models, deserving not hatred or fear but rather admiration from their white counterparts.

These “black martyr” stories turned the stereotype that black people were violent and dangerous on its head. If black people used violence, these stories implied, they did so to protect white people, not to harm them. White people often owed their lives or the lives of their families to black heroes, and certainly had no reason to hate or ostracize them. Far from threatening whites, black people actually made them safer. There was thus no reason for whites not to live and interact with black people.

⁴ “The Devoted Negro,” *Kind Words for Boys and Girls*, August 11th, 1870: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 8th, 2014.

⁵ “A Faithful Negro,” *Wee Willie-Winkie*, 1895: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

⁶ “Zebub the Kaffir,” *Chums*, January 3rd, 1900: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 9th, 2014.

At the same time, these stories implied that black people were disposable and servile. The heroes in these stories were so ready to sacrifice their lives for their white friends and masters that they seemed to place no value on their own lives. The greatest thing black people could do, these stories implied, was to die for white people. According to this logic, black people may have been morally equivalent to or better than their white friends and employers, but in practical terms, whites should always be chosen over blacks. Contemporary writers wanted to portray black people as equals, but could not conceive of them except in terms of their value to whites.

A common variation on this theme involved black slaves' risking their lives for their white masters, surviving, and receiving their freedom as compensation. *Bright Eyes*, for example, described the exploits of an enslaved South American man who "hearing the cries of his master, and guessing the cause, ran instantly into the river, armed with a long knife." He succeeded in disabling the crocodile, but was too late to save his master. Nevertheless, "the children of this unfortunate man felt so grateful to the negro for what he had done to save their father that they gave him his freedom."⁷ Similarly, *Chums* published the story of slave master Julian Dare, who nearly drowned while hunting his escaped slave Michael. Michael rescued Dare at the last moment, prompting Dare to grant "Michael's freedom, signed and sealed by his master's own hand, in part repaid the heroic aid he had rendered."⁸ Freedom was the reward for demonstrating undying loyalty to one's master; if a slaveholder owed a life debt to his or her slaves, the least he or she could do was to free them.

As with the "black martyr" trope, stories about black slaves earning their freedom represented a clear attempt to portray black people in a positive light, yet reinforced other prejudices in the process. They presented black people as brave, selfless, and moral, willing to

⁷ "Adventures with Crocodiles," *Bright Eyes*, circa 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 22nd, 2014.

⁸ Ernest Carr, "Julian Dare's Slave Hunt," *Chums*, July 17th, 1895: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 12th, 2014.

put aside personal resentment and rescue their white masters regardless of how abusive those masters had been. These stories also made it clear that free black people deserved their freedom. Liberty was something that they had *earned*; it was not a gift from benevolent whites, and could not be lightly taken away. At the same time, by emphasizing that black people had earned their freedom, these stories implied that they did not have a natural right to be free. They imply that slavery was not wrong to begin with, but became wrong once black people had demonstrated their valor. Had black people not done this, there would have been no reason to abolish slavery. These narratives also gave white people the ability to contest whether individual black people deserved freedom. Not all black people, after all, were equally valiant or selfless; did this mean that not all black people deserved to be free? In this view, slavery was not a crime against human dignity but at worst an obsolete social status given to society's less deserving members. There was no inalienable right to liberty, only a chance to earn it.

The belief that black people had to earn their freedom may have been connected to the apprenticeship provision of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act. When the British Empire abolished slavery in most of its territories, it required former slaves to serve their former masters as apprentices until either 1838 or 1840, depending on their occupations.⁹ Requiring slaves to serve their masters for a certain period before gaining freedom seems to imply that the slaves owed labor or sacrifice before they deserved to be free. If freedom was a right inherent to humans, why should the enslaved not have been freed immediately? Writers for magazines like *Chums* or *Bright Eyes*, published several decades after the Slavery Abolition Act, may have based their view of slavery on its principles.

⁹ "An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies," Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, August 28th, 1833, 3 & 4 Will. IV c. 73.

A final, distant variation on this theme appears in an early issue of *The Children's Friend*. The story, entitled "Honour in a Negro," concerned an English merchant named William Murray, who fell sick while in West Africa and stayed in the house of "a black named Cudjoe." While Murray was recuperating, a Dutch ship arrived, invited some of the locals on board, and carried them off as slaves. The friends and family of the captured men formed a mob and marched to Cudjoe's house, proclaiming, "the white men have carried away our brothers and sons, and we will kill all white men." Cudjoe responded, "the white men that carried away your relations are bad men; kill them when you can take *them*: but this white man is a good man, and you must not kill him." When the mob insisted that he hand over his guest, Cudjoe stood firm, saying, "This man is my friend; my house is my fort; I am his soldier, and will fight for him; you must kill me before you can kill him." The mob heard him and backed down, and later apologized to Murray for unfairly threatening him. The author cited this as "a remarkable instance of honour in a poor unenlightened African negro."¹⁰

Like the other accounts, this story associates the morality of black people with their ability to serve whites. Cudjoe was not portrayed risking his life for his children, his spouse, or his compatriots. It was his willingness to save a white merchant that demonstrated his true value. Nonetheless, this story departs from other "black martyr" tales by making putting a black man in a position of power relative to the white man he saved. Cudjoe was not Murray's servant or slave, but his host. He saved Murray not because of a sense of loyalty or obligation, but rather out of a desire to uphold justice and take good care of his ward. He may have served the white man, but he was not servile. Nor was he portrayed as unique among black men. The mob he confronted had good reason to be angry and deserved vengeance; they were simply misguided about whom to blame for the injustice. This passage thus did nothing to reinforce the idea that

¹⁰ "Honour in a Negro," *The Children's Friend*, 1 August 1832: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 22nd, 2014.

black people belonged in servile positions. They were not perfect, but they were capable of being good homesteaders and hosts, and understood justice.

This more empowered portrayal of Africans was undoubtedly connected to the political and military realities of the early nineteenth century. Whereas by the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans defeated Africans in most engagements between the two, they had no such success prior to that point. During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, battles between Europeans and Africans usually ended in either stalemate or victory for the African. Even when Europeans won, they usually did so only with the help of African allies and they rarely maintained control over the African territories they captured.¹¹ This particular story was published in 1832, a year after the end of the First Anglo-Asante War (1823-1831) in which the West African Asante state repelled a British invasion and fought the British army to a standstill on the coast.¹² At least within Africa, Africans were powerful and African protection of Europeans was an act of benevolence, not servility.

By the late nineteenth century, however, the global military balance had shifted in Europe's favour. Between 1870 and 1895, Europeans enjoyed unprecedented success in battle against non-Western powers. Before Ethiopia's victory over Italy in 1896 and Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, there seemed little chance that any non-Western power could exist independently of some European power's hegemony and thus little reason for British authors to portray non-whites as independent agents. Similarly, the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 in India and the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 in Jamaica convinced many British observers that non-whites

¹¹ C.f.- John K. Thornton and Andrea, "A Re-interpretation of the Kongo-Portuguese War of 1622 According to New Documentary Evidence," *Journal of African History* 51 (2010), p. 235-248; Richard Gray, "Portuguese Musketeers on the Zambezi," *Journal of African History* 12 (1971), p. 531-533; John K. Thornton, "The Art of War in Angola," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30 (1988), p. 360-378; John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, Second Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹² Jim Jones, "The British in West Africa," West Chester University, 2004, Web.

were violent and dangerous, and would threaten whites if not kept in a servile state. According to historian Kelly Boyd, as a result of these rebellions, “harsh racism was once more acceptable.”¹³ In this context, many Britons believed that whites were not only capable of subjugating non-whites, but had the moral right to do so. Even the most anti-racist British authors thus portrayed non-whites as servile, but emphasized that they were moral and noble in their servility. The goal, it appears, was to convince readers not that non-whites were their equals, but rather that they deserved kindness and friendship. Other races would remain subordinate, but whites would honour them for their work—and perhaps do away with the worst abuses of imperialism. Contemporary writers wanted not to end racial hierarchy so much as to make it more humane.

Noble and Ignoble “Savages” in *Jack and Jill*

If positive portrayals of black people focused on their honor in servility, positive portrayals of Native Americans tendency to insist that they would be better off free from white influence. “Indians,” these authors claimed, were a noble, respectable people, but the growth of white civilization had ruined them. A story published in *Jack and Jill* entitled “Tangoras the Redskin” told the story of a Native American leader, Tangoras, who resisted white settlement in North America. Tangoras regarded “the progress of civilization with the same feelings that the shipwrecked mariner watches the approach of the wave that is to wash him from the rock on which he has attained a foothold.” He condemned Western capitalism and Christianity for promoting greed and destruction, and refused to obey the laws of the white civilization that had conquered his people. When another Native American man murdered Tangoras’s son, instead of going to the white authorities, Tangoras hunted down and executed this man on his own. The

¹³ Kelly Boyd, *Manliness and the boys’ story paper in Britain*, Houdmills, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2003, p. 139-141.

white settlers sentenced him to death for this vigilantism. The morning of his execution, Tangoras swallowed poison, which killed him during his walk to the gallows. In his last words, he expressed gratitude that he was not dying by the settlers' hands, because "nature impelled him to die as a man, while the Christians would have taught him to die as a dog."¹⁴

This author attempted to portray Native Americans as honourable. Tangoras was the protagonist, and the author presented his actions as moral and rational. Far from being inferior to his Western conquerors and desperate to imitate them, he was happy before they arrived. White settlers, the author implied, were wrong to impose civilization on the Native Americans. In doing so, they forced people like Tangoras to either abandon their best qualities or die. Native American cultures were fine without whites' getting involved.

Even as it condemned white settlers' for conquering the Native Americans, however, this story indicated that such conquests were inevitable. Whites may have been wrong to take over Native American lands, but there was no suggestion that Native Americans could do anything about this. That Tangoras had to die to liberate himself from Western tyranny seems to confirm the aforementioned belief that Native Americans, however noble they may have been, could not survive in a civilized world. Tangoras may have deserved the respect of white society, but whites could only give him that respect in retrospect. Native American cultures, the story indicated, would die out. At best, future generations would remember them fondly.

The goal of this story seems not to have been improving the lives of Native Americans, but rather honoring the memory of what the author perceived to be a dying race. Like the European conquest of Africa and Asia, white settlers' ethnic cleansing of Native Americans may have looked inevitable at this point in history. The remaining natives would either die or decline to the "lowly" status of Tangoras's tribe. The author did not want to challenge this view and

¹⁴ "Tangoras the Redskin," *Jack and Jill*, June 6th, 1885: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

probably did not think challenging it would have any effect, but he or she reminded readers that this was nothing to be proud of. There was no way to stop white settlers from their violent expansion, but this author could at least make them feel guilty about it, keep alive the memory of noble Native Americans, and perhaps discourage whites from doing this to other races.

The desire to prevent further white destruction of non-Western societies looms large in “Pecks and Pick-Me-Ups,” an article published two months after “Tangoras” in the same paper. This article took the unique position of advocating for indigenous Africans’ right to self-determination while simultaneously reinforcing the most blatant negative stereotypes about indigenous African “savagery.” The author claimed that if Europeans would treat the African with “a little polite indifference, I think he would love us all the more.” If “a fleet of niggers” were to sail up the Thames and tell the English to “take off your clothes, as it's the right thing to do, according to our ideas of civilization. Keep cats in all the churches. Bang your mothers-in-law on the head with a club,” the English would resent it. By the same token, the English should “let our black brother go in peace. Let him roast his prisoner with sage and onions. Let him wear six pounds of butter in lieu of a dress-coat. Let him beat tom-toms, only, for goodness sake, leave him alone.”¹⁵ According to this author, African societies were indeed violent, primitive, and cannibalistic, but it was their right to be this way. However “savage” their southern neighbors may have been, Europeans had no right to interfere with them. “Barbaric” practices seemed legitimate to “barbaric” people, and “civilized” nations had to respect that.

These two articles shared the premise that white Europeans were wrong to conquer “savage” races, but differed in their attitude toward the specific races they portrayed. Whereas “Tangoras the Redskin” portrayed Native Americans as noble and pure, “Pecks and Pick-Me-

¹⁵ “Pecks and Pick-Me-Ups,” *Jack and Jill*, August 22nd, 1885: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

Ups” accused indigenous Africans of cannibalism, endless violence, and all of the worst acts of “barbarism.” These differing attitudes were common throughout the nineteenth century in many white settler societies. From the United States to Brazil, white settlers often emphasized their countries’ “Indian heritage,” portraying Native Americans as pure and noble while either condemning or ignoring black people.¹⁶ In this view, black Africans and Native Americans were both “savages,” but Native American savagery was somehow more attractive and admirable than African savagery. The authors in *Jack and Jill* appear to have accepted this narrative.

Besides the difference in attitude, these two stories also differ in how they predicted the futures of the “savage” societies they described. While “Tangoras the Redskin” saw the destruction of Native American societies as inevitable, “Pecks and Pick-Me-Ups” foresaw no such fate for indigenous Africans, and advocated against European interference in Africa. This difference may stem from an attempt to appeal to working-class readers. According to historian Christopher Banham, working-class Britons, although patriotic, were generally critical of “both nation and empire, complaining that overseas expansion diverted attention away from much-needed domestic reform, or that they were excluded from the rewards which empire supposedly brought.” At the same time, working-class children often saw the United States as a “spacial utopia,” and hoped to move there in order to escape Britain’s “overcrowded and unsanitary towns and cities.” Publications intended for working-class audiences tended to reflect and reinforce these ideas.¹⁷ Given that each issue of *Jack and Jill* cost only 1 penny,¹⁸ the paper would have appealed to working-class readers and its publishers may well have taken working-class attitudes into account when deciding which stories to print. These two stories would have appealed to

¹⁶ C.f.- Elaine Pereira Rocha, “Antes índio que negro [Better to be Indian than Black],” *Dimensões* 18 (2006), p. 203-220; *Racism: A History*. Dir. Paul Tickell. BBC, 2007. Documentary.

¹⁷ Christopher Banham, “‘England and America Against the World:’ Empire and the USA in Edwin J. Brett’s ‘Boys of England,’ 1866-99,” *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40.2 (Summer 2007), p.151-171.

¹⁸ The Waterloo Directory of English Newspaper and Periodicals, 1800-1900.

readers who disapproved of imperial expansion but who nonetheless aspired to settle in the “spacial” USA. Western powers, it implied, should stay out of Africa and other regions they had not yet settled, but some regions, notably the United States, were already lost to white settlement. Working-class Britons could thus support and move to the United States in good conscience.

Of Arabs, Horses, and Islam

Although most children's authors had little good to say about Arab education, gender roles, or art, they regularly praised the Arabs as horse breeders and equestrians. Arab horses, these authors claimed, were the finest breeds in the world, and their masters showed great care and intelligence in the way they mastered those horses. *The Juvenile Companion and Sunday-School Hive*, for example, described a horse in Morocco as “the handsomest barb I ever saw” and recounted its great speed under the direction of its skilled Arab rider. The rider “shook the bridle [and] off he went at full speed. The mottled grey turned his tail in the air, and vanished to a speck in no time. ... The next moment the Arab was at my side.”¹⁹ *Little Folks* explained that “the Arab loves his horse above the merchant’s gold” and that “no steed like this can range the desert over.”²⁰ The Arabs also understood horse biology in detail, and had many creative ways of taking advantage of their horses. An article in *Boys of England* told of a French traveler named De Brullon who crossed the desert with the Arab chief Molah Khan. After a storm eliminated their water supply, Khan and De Brullon needed to reach an oasis six hours away but were too thirsty to make such a trip. Khan remedied this situation with a clever use of his steed: “He took a sharp knife and made an incision in his horse's leg, holding underneath a tin drinking utensil. In a couple of minutes it was full, and then he pressed his thumb upon the wound until it had ceased

¹⁹ “An Arab and His Horse,” *The Juvenile Companion and Sunday-School Hive*, circa 1860: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 24th, 2014.

²⁰ C.L.M., “Our Wild Folks- The Arab Steed,” *Little Folks* circa 1890: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 20th, 2014.

bleeding.” The two drank the fluid, continued their journey, and reached the oasis safely.²¹

These stories presented the Arabs as intelligent and ingenious, but only within a “primitive” context. To portray the Arabs as skilled horse-masters was to imply that they were a primarily nomadic people, ignoring the fact that most Arabs had always lived in settled communities and had constructed grand cities such as Cairo, Baghdad, and Kufa. It also implied that the Arabs depended on horses for transportation, omitting their long history of advanced shipbuilding.²² These stories honored the Arabs for their equestrian achievements but reinforced the stereotype that they were a backward, stagnant people, unable to reach their full potential except under Western tutelage.

Besides praising the Arabs for their equestrian skill, children's publications occasionally expressed a qualified respect for the strong faith of Arab Muslims. An 1873 article in *Young Folks*, for example, described the interaction between a French “infidel” and his Arab Muslim guide who helped him cross the Sahara Desert. The Frenchman sneered at his guide for performing *salat*, asking him how he knew there was a god. The guide responded with an analogy: “‘How do I know that a man and not a camel passed my hut last night in the darkness? Was it not by the print of his feet? Even so,’ said he, pointing to the sun, whose last rays were flashing over the lonely desert, ‘that footprint is not of man.’”²³ Islam, the author implied, was better than atheism, and in this sense Arab Muslims were more moral and rational than many Europeans. Children's writers would also emphasize the similarities between Islam and Christianity. In an article about education in Egypt, for example, *Bo-Peep* described the Koran as

²¹ “Anecdotes of the Horse and his Rider,” *Boys of England*, 24 October 1879: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 24th, 2014.

²² C.f.- Peter N. Stearns, *Globalization in World History*, Oxford: Routledge, 2010, p. 39-40.

²³ “A Beautiful Answer,” *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget*, November 1st, 1873: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, May 23rd, 2014.

“a book which they are taught to look upon as sacred, as we are the Bible.”²⁴ Whatever differences there were between Christians and Muslims, they had in common their faith in one god and their respect for his written word.

By emphasizing the commonalities between Christianity and Islam, these authors were not implying that Islam and Christianity were equivalent. *Young Folks*, for example, elsewhere indicated that Christianity was by far the superior religion and condemned the Arabs for resisting “the more enduring promises of Christianity.”²⁵ Rather, these authors still wanted to convert the Arabs to Christianity but believed that this would be easier to accomplish by demonstrating what Islam and Christianity had in common. Muslims were right to believe in one god; they had simply picked the wrong one.²⁶ Similarly, they were right to revere a holy book, but had chosen the Koran instead of the true word of god, the Bible. Christians still had to “save” Muslims, but they could do this more effectively by emphasizing their religions’ commonalities.

Conclusion: The Limits of Challenging Racism

For many of these stories, the authors seemed more interesting in demonstrating the bravery and respectability of other races and cultures than in challenging any of the dominant narratives about those races. “Tangoras the Redskin” was not written to disprove predictions of impending Native American extinction but rather emphasized the bravery, intelligence, and legitimacy of that race during its purported final years. Stories like “Zebub the Kaffir” or “A Faithful Negro” did not question whether black Africans ought to remain in servile positions but

²⁴ “A Strange School,” *Bo-peep*, 1885: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

²⁵ “The Arab,” *Our Young Folks Weekly Budget*, 10 April 1866: *Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Literature*, Print.

²⁶ Or they had picked the right one but worshiped him incorrectly. The question of whether Christians and Muslims worship the same god remains unresolved today. For a Christian perspective on this question, see <http://www.catholic.com/blog/tim-staples/do-muslims-worship-the-same-god-catholics-do>. For a Muslim perspective, see <http://www.islam101.com/religions/christianity/christmasTreat.htm>.

instead demonstrated that within those positions, they had shown great honour and bravery.

Stereotypes about Africans, Arabs, and Native Americans, these writers implied, were roughly accurate, but this did not mean that readers should disregard them. Even in a state of subordination or decline, non-whites had noble qualities and deserved respect.

This tendency to accommodate racial stereotypes suggests how difficult it was for contemporary authors to conceive of non-whites except through those stereotypes. Many writers wanted to portray other races in a positive light but everything they knew about those races was tied up with stereotypes. They could conceive of black Africans only as servile or violent, Arabs only as primitive nomads, and Native Americans only as a dying race. They could portray these stereotypes in a positive light, using them to counter whites' hatred of and violence toward non-whites, but they had trouble challenging the stereotypes themselves.

Besides the authors' beliefs, readers' opinions would also have influenced how these publications addressed racial stereotypes. As the work of Christopher Banham demonstrates, for-profit periodicals could not ignore the beliefs of their readers. Even if a writer privately believed that racial stereotypes were untrue, he or she would not necessarily have challenged those stereotypes in print for fear of alienating readers. Such writers had a better chance of appealing to readers if they accommodated those stereotypes into a more positive narrative. Had Tangoras led a successful revolt against the white settlers, readers might have sided with the whites, and failed to sympathize with him. Portraying him as the noble victim of white aggression helped ensure that readers would side with him, and see Native Americans as a respectable, if doomed, race. If Michael had risen up against Julian Dare and taken his freedom by force, readers might have ended up fearing black Africans and may even have supported slavery as a safeguard against "black barbarism." By having him win his freedom by rescuing Dare, the author ensured

that readers would approve of Michael's freedom. Pandering to stereotypes, then, may have been the only way to reach readers. Even writers who disagreed with these stereotypes still had to contend with their cultural power.

Whether as a result of their own prejudices or those of their readers, children's writers almost invariably resurrected images of the servile African, the noble but doomed Native American, and other racial stereotypes. The political and cultural context of the late nineteenth century—which included the West's unchallenged military and economic dominance, white settlers' dependence on stolen land, and the memory of the Morant Bay and Sepoy rebellions—limited children's authors' ability to challenge the dominant racial narrative. They presented non-whites as moral and sympathetic, but only within the context of simplistic stereotypes. They apologized for white settlers' abuses, and advocated for whites to take better care of their non-white subjects, but they almost never challenged the paternalistic relationship between whites and non-whites. Even the most well-meaning authors could not escape the pervasive tendency to simplify and look down upon non-white, non-Western peoples.

Conclusion:

Nineteenth-Century Stories and Twentieth-Century Politics

Andrew Soboeiro

Given the popularity of children's periodicals during the nineteenth century, millions of adult Britons during the early twentieth century had grown up reading magazines like *Boys of England*, *The Girl's Own Paper*, or *The Children's Friend*. It is thus hardly surprising that many of Britain's policies during the early twentieth century invoked principles similar to the ones taught in nineteenth-century periodicals. The idea that non-Western nations could become "civilized" by adopting Western methods or that European powers had a responsibility to use imperialism for humanitarian ends explains Britain's support for Japan during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), its involvement with the League of Nations mandate system, and its hesitancy to support Abyssinia in the Second Italo-Abyssinian War (1935-1936), among other issues. Children's periodicals did not create these ideas, but they did help to popularize them and make them seem natural. The popularity of children's periodicals among late nineteenth-century child audiences helps to explain why British officials and politicians pursued these policies, as well as why the British public supported them.

Children's authors claimed that non-Western countries could modernize by adopting Western practices and that Japan was the poster child for such modernization. This teaching may well have influenced British public opinion toward Japan during the Russo-Japanese War. From 1904 to 1905, Japan decisively defeated the Russian Empire on land and sea, destroying Russia's Baltic and Pacific fleets and gaining control of

strategic Port Arthur. This war, the first conflict since the Industrial Revolution in which an Asian country defeated a European rival in battle, solidified Japan's status as the dominant power in East Asia.

Despite the fact that Japan was neither white nor Christian and Russia was, Britain supported Japan, and the British people held a positive view of the Land of the Rising Sun during and after the war.¹ The British government had a variety of strategic and diplomatic reasons for supporting Japan over Russia, but ordinary Britons' support for the former likely stemmed from the popular view that the Japanese were an “advanced” and “enterprising” people, a view that children's periodicals had helped to spread.² Britons were also less likely to support Russia after growing up reading that Russians were a “superstitious” people and their version of Christianity a matter of “mechanical rites with little real piety.”³ Children's periodicals had long argued that to be “civilized,” a country had to adopt Western values, practices, and economic models, and by that definition Japan had clearly progressed. Britain thus had every reason to support Japan's imperial ambitions, at least when those ambitions only challenged a “lesser” Western power.

Besides influencing popular perceptions of the Russo-Japanese War, children's periodicals also may have made Britons more likely to support certain humanitarian efforts. In the early twentieth century, Western observers increasingly realized the murderous nature of the Congo Free State. A Belgian royal colony in Central Africa

¹ Gregory Miller, *The Shadow of the Past: Reputation and Military Alliances Before the First World War*, Ithaca: Cornell University, 2012, p. 82-84.

² C.f.- “Travels to Other Countries—Japan,” *The Children's Friend*, circa 1890: *Gale News Vault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013; “A Bird's Eye View of Japan,” *Young Folks*, April 4th, 1885: *Osborne Collection of Early Children's Literature*, Print.

³ C.f.- “Travels to Other Countries—Russia,” *The Children's Friend*, circa 1875: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, October 14th, 2013.

ostensibly founded to end slavery and promote free trade, the Congo Free State instituted a brutal forced labor system to harvest the region's rubber resources. From 1885 to 1908, this forced labor system killed between 5 and 10 million Congolese people through overwork, starvation, disease, and violence.⁴ As knowledge of the Congo Free State's atrocities grew, Western intellectuals spoke out against Belgian rule, including prominent Britons like Joseph Conrad, Arthur Conan Doyle, and E. D. Morel.

In *The Crime of the Congo* (1909), Arthur Conan Doyle detailed the Belgians many atrocities and advocated dislodging Belgium from the Congo. His arguments employed the distinction between benevolent and harmful imperialism that children's periodicals often made. He argued that the Congolese “under their old savage *régime* as Stanley found them were infinitely happier, richer, and more advanced” than under Belgian rule. Belgium's crimes against the Congolese did not disprove the superiority of Western civilization. On the contrary, according to Doyle, the Belgians' chief sin was that “by their injustice and violence [they] have dragged Christianity and civilization in the dirt.”⁵ The Congolese, he implied, needed to adopt Western values and methods but were unlikely to do so as long as they associated them with Belgian tyranny. Doyle advocated forcibly removing the Belgians and partitioning the colony among the British, French, and German empires. He made little attempt to explain why he thought the Germans, who had committed genocide against their Herero and Namaqua subjects in South West Africa just two years earlier, or the British, who had invested heavily in the Congo Free State,

⁴ For estimates of the Congo Free State's death toll, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998; Peter Forbath, *The River Congo: The Discovery, Exploration, and Exploitation of the World's Most Dramatic Rivers*, Harper & Row: 1977; Robert B. Edgerton, *Like Lions They Fought: The Zulu War and the Last Black Empire in South Africa*, Macmillan Inc.: 1988, p. 212.

⁵ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1909.

would make better imperialists than the Belgians.⁶

In condemning Belgian tyranny while upholding the supposed superiority of Western civilization, Doyle echoed children's publications like *Chatterbox* or *The Children's Friend*, which had criticized nineteenth-century European slavers for giving Western civilization a bad name.⁷ Like Doyle, those writers had taken the superiority of Western civilization for granted but argued that great civilizations had great responsibilities. European empires had a responsibility to treat their subjects well and thus connect Western values and practices with benevolence and prosperity. Doyle continued their tradition of associating humanitarian concern for non-white, non-Western peoples with the belief that those peoples were inferior. He may not have gotten this idea from children's periodicals, but ordinary Britons who had grown up reading them were primed to agree with his arguments.

The idea that Britain and its allies should use imperialism for humanitarian ends was formally enshrined with the creation of the League of Nations mandate system after the First World War. The League divided former German and Ottoman territories among the British, French, Belgian, and Japanese empires with the understanding that those empires would “develop” their new territories and then release them as independent states.⁸ International law thus recognized the principle that imperialism was a means of creating a “civilized,” Westernized world. Although the League only used the mandate system to distribute former German and Ottoman territories, League members often

⁶ C.f.- Robert B. Edgerton, *Like Lions They Fought: The Zulu War and the Last Black Empire in South Africa*, Macmillan Inc.: 1988, p. 195-213.

⁷ C.f.- “Travels to Other Countries—Congo,” *The Children's Friend*, circa 1885: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 2nd, 2013; “A Tour Round the World—Congo,” *Chatterbox*, July 16th, 1881: *Gale NewsVault*, Web, November 4th, 2014.

⁸ Martyn Housden, *The League of Nations and the Organization of Peace*, Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2012, p. 86-87.

debated using it to colonize independent states as well. In particular, League members often discussed allowing European powers or the United States to take control of Liberia and Abyssinia, the only two independent African countries at that time, in order to abolish slavery in both territories.⁹ When Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 on the pretense of abolishing slavery, many Britons urged their government to take Italy's side in the conflict.¹⁰ The idea that Western powers should expand their empires for humanitarian ends, an idea that children's periodicals had helped to popularize, led to unquestioned support for imperialism.

Understanding British public opinion during the early twentieth century is particularly important given that Britain achieved universal suffrage in this era. The Representation of the People Act of 1918 extended the franchise to all men over 21 and many women over 30 who owned property, while the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928 gave the vote to all Britons over the age of 21. The primary beneficiaries of these voting reforms, especially among men, were working-class. Given that periodicals appealed primarily to working class children, this means that a disproportionate percentage of the new voters grew up reading periodicals like *Boys of England* or *The Girl's Own Paper*. By studying the relationship between children's periodicals in the late nineteenth century and British public opinion in the early twentieth, we can better understand how newly enfranchised Britons conceived of themselves and their country's role.

⁹ Susan Pedersen, "The Meaning of the Mandates System," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32.4 (2006): p. 560-582.

¹⁰ Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem*, Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003, p. 247-249.

Notes

For some of the periodicals that I found on the online archive Gale NewsVault, publication dates for specific articles were not available. In these cases, I have extrapolated rough dates based on contextual information in the articles. An article on Abyssinia from *The Children's Friend*, for example, states that the Emperor of Ethiopia is Yohannes II. Since Yohannes ruled from 1871 to 1889, I have dated the article "circa 1880."

When citing periodicals in the footnotes, I provided the specific date of publication for each article, poem, picture, or story I used. In the bibliography, however, I provided broader publication data for each periodical as a whole. I used the following formats:

Footnotes:

"Article Title," *Periodical Title*, Date of Publication: *Database/Collection*, Web or Print, Date of Retrieval (for Web articles).

Bibliography:

Periodical Title. Place(s) of Publication: (Date range in which it was published). Collection/Database. Web or Print.

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