

The Infantilisation of Indigeneity in Colonial Australia

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This chapter quotes from nineteenth-century texts which use offensive and derogatory language. It also contains reference to Indigenous Australian people who have died. I use the terms 'Indigenous Australians' / 'Indigenous Australian peoples' to refer collectively to the diverse societies and peoples living on mainland Australia and Tasmania prior to British invasion. I intend this terminology respectfully. However, I recognise that it is not universally accepted; as I hope the conclusion to this chapter suggests, I also recognise some of the reasons why this is the case.

Introduction

Jeannie Gunn's *The Little Black Princess* (1905) has been described by its publishers as an 'Australian classic', 'beloved' by 'generations of Australians'.¹ This might come as a surprise to the many Australians who have never heard of it. *The Little Black Princess* is currently in print only in the same volume as Gunn's considerably more famous work, *We of the Never-Never* (1908). The two works were first published separately, then reissued, combined and abridged, in 1982. The 1905 edition of *The Little Black Princess* was made available online in 2016. This partial availability reflects how dubious its canonical status is. As John Guillory argues, canonicity is a judgement made by an imaginary 'group of readers, defined by a common social identity and common values'.² Its publishers imply that *The Little Black Princess* has a place in the Australian literary canon by, first, imagining a group of readers united by their supposed Australianness, and then, circularly, suggesting that this 'Australian' classic is the very text in which these imaginary Australians can find their common – national – identity epitomised.

Recognised, accessible, and beloved: a nation's literary canon is (at least ostensibly) all that its archives, conventionally conceived, are not. As Achille Mbembe suggests, the archive – defined both as a building and as the documents it houses – grants 'privileged status' to its own documents.³ Through this status, archived documents are imbued with the power to define, in Ann Laura Stoler's words, 'what knowledge should be valued and what their readers should know'.⁴ By thus categorising other knowledge as 'disqualified', archives erase 'the facts of subjugation' in colonial contexts.⁵ According to this model, canonical literature is the beloved expression of an uncomplicated national identity, and is (or should be) read by all Australians; archived documents, by contrast, are 'rhetorical sleights-of-hand', and require a reader capable of reading 'against their grain'.⁶

Of course, literary fiction is essentially an extended exercise in rhetorical sleights-of-hand. *The Little Black Princess* is its author's account of her relationship with the eponymous child, Bett-Bett. As such, it individuates a specific and ubiquitous model of the relationship between settler and Indigenous Australian in nineteenth-century Australia: that of parent and child.⁷ In this chapter, I will apply what Aleida Assmann has called 'the strategy of the archive' to the literary text, placing it 'back in its historical context...side by side with other texts of the epoch' to analyse the rhetorical devices through which *The Little Black Princess* idealises that model.⁸

Following Stoler's suggestion, furthermore, that when reading archives 'we explore the grain with care and read along it first', I suggest that many archived texts – those which are kept behind physical or, increasingly, digital, walls – articulate quite explicitly both the ideology underlying the parent-child model of settler-Indigenous relations, and its colonial functions.⁹ This reading of archived texts demonstrates that infantilization is a common trope in late nineteenth-century settler depictions of, and interactions with, Indigenous Australians, and that it presents Indigeneity as a transient state, so that its counterpart, paternalism, complements colonial efforts to eradicate Indigenous peoples.

Assmann differentiates the canon—‘the actively circulated memory that keeps the past present’—from the archive—‘the passively stored memory that preserves the past past’.¹⁰ To elevate *The Little Black Princess* to the status of a literary classic is to naturalise, in the present day, the prevailing, infantilising mode of depicting Indigenous Australians evident in the archives of the colonial era. When this text is eulogised as an Australian classic, Australian national identity is re-constituted for today’s readers, as it was constituted in the colonial period, as white.

Archived documents by settlers thus articulate the ideology underpinning the literary canon. Archived Indigenous writing complicates the hegemony of settler Australia itself. As Evelyn Araluen Corr has argued, for many Indigenous peoples, “‘the archive’ is a material and symbolic space of imperial violence’.¹¹ Produced under colonial, coercive conditions, articles written by Indigenous Australians for the *Flinders Island Chronicle* (1836–1837) deny their authors ‘the right to experience and articulate their contemporary and ancestral heterogeneities without resistance’.¹² Notwithstanding the coercive ‘resistance’ to Indigenous articulation evident throughout them, however, I suggest that these articles represent a (partial, fragmentary) challenge to the white Australia constructed by the settler infantilisation of Indigeneity.

Several scholars have demonstrated the systematic neglect of Indigenous sources from the historiography of colonialism.¹³ This situation is both reflected and compounded by the relative availability of canonical literature, archives of settler writing, and archives of Indigenous writing. Canonical literature is, almost by definition, easily accessed. The limited accessibility of physical archives, meanwhile, has been overcome by the digitisation of much archival material by settlers in colonial Australia (and elsewhere). However, this digital – and thus relatively accessible – nineteenth-century imperial archive is, as Adeline Koh suggests, ‘largely *white*’.¹⁴

This hierarchy of availability has two major effects. First, it substantiates and perpetuates Leonie Stevens’s claim that Indigenous voices are also at the bottom of a hierarchy of credibility.¹⁵ Second, it dictates an analytical framework within which scholars simply cannot

‘adequately represent or interrogate the important historical interconnections of nineteenth-century colonialism and the existence of people of colour’.¹⁶ In an effort to represent more fully the fact of Indigenous presence in a colonial discourse predicated on the ‘disappearance’ or ‘extinction’ of the first owners of Australian lands,¹⁷ I evaluate the dialogue between canonical literature, archived writing by settlers, and archived writing by Indigenous Australians. I read (purportedly) canonical literature in search of what is hidden under its rhetoric. With Stoler, I then read archived writing by settlers along its grain: not for its omissions of Indigenous experience, but as a partial record of how Indigenous peoples and settlers were imagined in the colonial period. A comparative analysis of these readings demonstrates that one ubiquitous trope in settler depictions of Indigeneity – infantilisation – is consonant with the ideological construction of a white Australia, and therefore with historical acts of genocide associated with this ideology. I then turn to writings by Indigenous Australians. Keeping the violence which frames the production of Indigenous writing in nineteenth-century Australia in view, I argue that the fragments of Indigenous voices we can access through their archived writing imbue the trope of infantilisation with an ambivalent significance. These fragments complicate, though they never quite contradict, the white Australia implied by infantilisation in white literary canons and archives.

Infantilisation in the Literary Classic

The Little Black Princess has been classified in academic discourse as ‘children’s literature’.¹⁸

Children’s literature is typically defined as literature *for* children. However, as Jacqueline Rose has famously argued, ‘the question of what we mean by that “for” – the question ‘of what the adult desires ... in the very act of construing the child as the object of its speech’ – is of vital significance.’¹⁹ This chapter will not attempt to debate whether *The Little Black Princess* actually *is*

for children. Rather, it will analyse the significance of ‘the phantom child – implied, addressed, represented, assumed ... lurking’ behind the *idea* that it is.²⁰

Many analyses of children’s literature since Rose argue that these texts speak both to an implied child reader, and – over that child’s head – to an implied adult reader.²¹ As Marah Gubar has outlined, ‘the power imbalance’ inherent to the ‘adult author-child reader relationship’ and exacerbated by this double address has led to a school of thought in which children’s literature is actually seen as a form of colonialism.²²

Notwithstanding this theoretical analogy between children’s literature and colonialism, and a wealth of research into explicitly or implicitly colonial themes in children’s literature, little has been written on the *literal* colonial significance of the act of writing for children. Thus, although Clare Bradford, for example, explicitly categorises *The Little Black Princess* as a work for children, and outlines several ways in which the text is imbued with more than merely ‘superficial features of racism’, she only briefly notes, in the final sentence of her discussion of the text, that its ‘positioning of white children as amused and superior observers’ is perhaps its most powerfully racist feature.²³

In other words, Bradford identifies but does not fully evaluate the interaction between genre and ideology in *The Little Black Princess*. What does it mean, not just for our understanding of a particular text but also for our understanding of colonialism, to describe that text as *for* children? Or, to modify Rose’s question, what is the colonial significance of construing ‘the child’ as the object of a particular text’s speech? Elsewhere, Bradford has demonstrated that *The Little Black Princess* depicts two (racialized) communities: an Indigenous community, ‘them’, raced, as the book’s title suggests, ‘black’, and the settler community, ‘us’, implicitly raced ‘white’.²⁴ I suggest that the features which mark *The Little Black Princess* as *for* children facilitate an emphatically colonial depiction of the relationship between these imagined communities. Through what I will demonstrate is a racialised representation of relative age, *The Little Black*

Princess not only depicts and justifies a paternalistic interaction between settler and Indigenous people in Australia, but actually contributes to a genocidal project of colonisation. The metaphorical colonisation which many critics claim is enacted by children's literature in general becomes literal in the white adult's address to the child in *The Little Black Princess*.

Since children's literature is notable for the dual or at least ambivalent age of it is implied audience, Gunn's implied readers might be *either* – or both – child and/or adult. This uncertainty about the age of the implied reader, combined with the certainty about her race which Bradford identifies, together epitomize the literally colonizing significance of *The Little Black Princess*. It is not the racially defined groups 'us' and 'them' alone but the relative age of these imagined groups which marks Gunn's depiction of the colonial encounter as consonant with the genocidal ideology underpinning that encounter in the nineteenth century.

The following passage illustrates Gunn's depiction of age as a function of race. Gunn has made Bett-Bett a red dress:

But oh dear, the fuss she made ... In funny pidgin English, and with much waving of her arms, she said that, if you had on a red dress when there was a thunderstorm, the debbil-debbil who made the thunder would "come on" and kill you "deadfellow". When I heard this, of course I made a pink dress, as I didn't want the Thunder-Debbil-debbil to run off with her.²⁵

Neither Gunn nor the *adult* readers partially addressed in this passage believe in Bett-Bett's devil. In this respect – insofar as she addresses an adult reader – Gunn uses a child's voice to provoke adult laughter at children, in keeping with the charge laid at children's authors in general by Rose and others.

However, white children would neither share the specifically Indigenous fear experienced here by Bett-Bett, nor use the ‘funny pidgin English’ in which that fear is articulated. This means that the passage is equally accessible, on the same level, to a white *child* as to a white adult reader: white children replicate the position white adult readers assume in relation to Bett-Bett in this passage. Gunn does not adopt Bett-Bett’s point of view to provoke adult laughter at children’s fears. She ventriloquises the Indigenous child to provoke white laughter at ‘black’ fears, and she does so by narrating Indigenous beliefs in the voice of a child, and positioning white readers of any age as the (indulgent, amused) adult listener.

Bradford claims that an earlier work of Australian children’s literature, Charlotte Barton’s *A Mother’s Offering to her Children* (1841), is ‘unambiguously a children’s book’, in part because ‘the children outside the book can align themselves with the children within, who listen to stories told by the authoritative, knowledgeable female narrator’.²⁶ In the case of *The Little Black Princess*, the children ‘outside the book’ are invited to align themselves not with the child within, but with the authoritative, knowledgeable, adult narrator, and this alignment is predicated on the racial profile, not the age, of Gunn’s implied child readers. The readers of *The Little Black Princess* are addressed as adults, because they are white, and are aligned against the child within, because she is not.

In keeping with a long tradition in children’s literature criticism, Bradford points to the way this strategy ‘flatters’ the text’s white child readers.²⁷ As in her claim that *A Mother’s Offering* ‘seeks to colonise the nineteenth-century child readers of the book into viewing themselves as engaged, along with their parents, in the imperial enterprise’, Bradford focuses exclusively on how children’s literature ‘colonises’ the white child reader.²⁸ Of course, colonial writing for children also speaks to the colonisation of Indigenous peoples, though in a different – and less metaphorical – way.

This is most apparent when Gunn turns from Bett-Bett to other, older Indigenous people. As the use of the definite article in the title – *The Little Black Princess* – suggests, Bett-Bett

stands in for Indigenous Australian peoples as a whole, who are thus collectively infantilised.

There is, therefore, no change in tone when Gunn changes subject from Bett-Bett to her (adult) uncle:

The white people had nicknamed him “Goggle-eye”; and he was very proud of his “whitefellow name”, as he called it. You see, he didn’t know what it meant ... The first time I met Google Eye, he was weeding my garden, and I didn’t know he was king ... It takes a good deal of practice, to tell a king at a glance – when he’s naked and pulling up weeds. (12–13)

Once again, Gunn depicts the Indigenous character as childish, and implies a community of readers united by their amusement at this childishness and, thus, by their relative maturity. The actual age of any character or reader is less important than the metaphorical age they acquire by virtue of their race.

The Little Black Princess thereby constructs two mutually reinforcing equivalences: between Indigeneity and childhood, and concomitantly between whiteness and adulthood. Claudia Castañeda suggests that the idea of ‘the child’ as ‘an adult in the making’ is ‘so apparently self-evident that it seems almost impossible to imagine an alternative’.²⁹ A cursory glance at nineteenth-century literature and history complicates this, since both are populated with dead children. The child is ‘a potentiality rather than an actuality’, as Castañeda argues, but that potentiality has one, and only one, alternative: death.³⁰ The child is defined, above all, not by its potentiality (the adult), but by its provisionality: whether in adulthood or in death, childhood by definition comes to an end.

Through infantilisation, then, Indigeneity is likewise defined as a provisional, transient state. Concomitantly, as well as validating settler authority over Indigenous peoples, the analogy between whiteness and adulthood asserts that to be an adult is to be white. In short, if children

either grow up or die, Indigenous people either grow *white* or die. This is the central underlying message which *The Little Black Princess* communicates, and it does so through the interaction of its genre and its ideology; by positioning itself as *for* children, and depicting age as a function of race rather than chronology. This message is made visible by reading canonical fiction against its grain, by reading it as another archived document, which gives privileged status to certain, colonial ways of thinking.

Infantilisation in the Settler Archive

The status of *The Little Black Princess* as canonical literature invites the study of its literary qualities: its fictionality; its position in literary history; its genre. This is the ‘timeless framework’ described by Assmann, and it obscures both the text’s value as a (fictionalised) record of actual historical events, and its continuity with colonial Australian history.³¹ I will now situate *The Little Black Princess* in dialogue with more literally archived, more explicitly historical records of the infantilising practices implemented during Australia’s colonial period. Through this, I will argue that *The Little Black Princess* can be understood not only as a romanticised depiction of paternalism, but as a participant in the genocidal violence of Australia’s colonial era.

The Aborigines Protection Society (APS) was formed in 1836. Its journal, *The Aborigines’ Friend, or Colonial Intelligencer*, ran from 1847–1909. The connection between the infantilisation of Indigenous Australians and their attempted annihilation is exemplified in the establishment of so-called ‘Training Schools’ – institutions for ‘The Religious Instruction and Moral Training of Aboriginal Natives’ – which the Archdeacon of Adelaide, Mathew Hale, advocates for in a contribution to the *Aborigines’ Friend*:

Our natives ... will be ... removed from the influence which the elders of their own tribes at present influence over them ... We shall give to the married couples their own hut, their own plot of ground, their regular, though light and easy, daily employment ... And above all, we shall strive

to make them feel the value of a settled mode of life, as affording them the means of religious instruction, and of enabling them to attend to those things which concern their everlasting welfare.³²

Both Hale's objective – to impose a 'settled' (that is, settler) mode of life – and his paternalistic tone signpost his motivating idea: British civilisation is the cultural adulthood towards which Indigenous peoples ought to be enabled to grow.³³

Training Schools were presented as a moral imperative because they were seen as the best way to slow, halt, or reverse the rapid decline in Indigenous populations across Australia, in accounts which ignore the exact coincidence of this decline with the period of colonialism. Training Schools do not only constitute protective, moral action in the settler imagination. They also present such action as necessitated not by colonialism but by Indigeneity.

Of course, the effect of Hale's infantilisation is not merely to justify cultural imperialism or whitewash settler culpability for the decline in Indigenous populations across Australia. Because it equates whiteness with adulthood, and designates Indigeneity as a transient state which will end either in this adult-whiteness or in death, infantilisation simultaneously obscures and celebrates an emphatically racial form of ethnic cleansing. The endeavour to 'civilise' Indigenous Australians is an effort to cultivate white Australians, in intent as well as in effect.³⁴

An analysis of the scientific theory propounded by one of the APS's staunchest supporters demonstrates this. James Cowles Prichard was a passionate opponent of slavery, and a beacon, even today, of all that was at least well-intentioned about British colonial practices.³⁵ His principle scientific work, *Researches into the Natural History of Mankind* (1813), is a sustained defence of monogenism, predicated on the theory that culture produces race. This theory is clear in Prichard's analysis of the supposed differences between slaves and domestic servants with African heritage in the United States:

The field slaves live on the plantations, and retain pretty nearly the rude manners of their African progenitors. The third generation in consequence preserve much of their original structure, though their features are not so strongly marked as those of imported slaves. But the domestic servants of the same race are treated with lenity, and their condition is little different from the lower class of white people. The effect is that in the third generation they have the nose raised, the mouth and lips of moderate size, the eyes lively and sparkling, and often the whole composition of features extremely agreeable. (p. 227)

It is clear which ‘manners’ Prichard sees as more civilised, and which physical ‘structure’ he sees as superior. Furthermore, the perceived correlation between cultural practices and racial characteristics is described as causation: ‘the *effect*’ of the difference in culture between ‘African progenitors’ and ‘domestic servants’ is a difference in their ‘composition of features’, which remain ‘original’ or become ‘agreeable’ respectively.³⁶

Prichard’s clear preference for the physical characteristics of those who have been in servitude rather than in slavery casts a less flattering light on his opposition to slavery than many critics suggest. He may have opposed slavery because he recognised the humanity of the enslaved people, but he argues against it on the grounds that its abolition will eradicate the racial features which characterise them and their ‘savage’ counterparts.³⁷ In his work, if not actually in his thought, Prichard does not take issue with slavery in itself, but rather with slavery as one manifestation of that absence of civilisation which keeps certain groups of the human race in a ‘primitive state’: in the racial condition he calls ‘Negro’ (p. 233).

This means that the introduction of British culture complements the annihilation of Indigenous Australians as a racial group, despite the APS’s purported objective of preventing this.³⁸ When Prichard, Hale, and others advocate for the (enforced) introduction of British

civilisation as the way to ensure the survival of Indigenous Australian peoples, they are covertly advocating for the development of Indigenous into white Australians. Hale is not particularly covert about this. His article on Training Schools includes an almost Edenic depiction of an Australia purged of its Indigenous peoples. He claims that ‘The Anglo-Saxon race are deriving countless wealth from the sunny hills and dales of South Australia: we have acquired here a noble country, destined, perhaps, to sustain its millions of population in prosperity and power’.³⁹ The paternalistic ideology underpinning Training Schools expunges the genocidal means through which this white Australia was to be achieved, by implying that Australia’s Indigenous populations were not annihilated by its settlers; they were ‘trained’ to grow up into settlers themselves.

According to the representational strategy of infantilisation, white Australia is the natural consequence of Indigenous racial and cultural inferiority, not because Indigenous Australians have been exterminated by settlers, but because they have either died, as was their inevitable fate anyway, or been enabled, by settler benevolence, to grow from ‘black’ to ‘white’. This idea is theorised at the start of the nineteenth century in scientific work like Prichard’s; advocated for throughout the century by philanthropists through the APS, and, finally, romanticised in canonical literature like *The Little Black Princess*.

Infantilisation in the Indigenous Archive

One of the most infamous ‘Training Schools’ was the settlement on Flinders Island, an island off the coast of Van Diemen’s Land. This settlement, known as Wybalenna, was devised in 1834 as a sanctuary, and / or prison, for those Indigenous peoples who had eluded systematic massacre on Van Diemen’s Land in the preceding decades.⁴⁰ The goal of Wybalenna was to civilise Indigenous peoples, by replacing their culture with nineteenth-century British peasant culture including, most importantly for its commandant George Robinson, Christianity.⁴¹

Intermittently between September 1836 and December 1837, two Indigenous teenagers, Thomas Brune and Walter George Arthur, wrote and edited a newspaper at Wybalenna, the *Flinders Island Chronicle*. Given the conditions of its production, the *Chronicle* requires what Benjamin Miller describes as a ‘two-part reading strategy’.⁴² First, ‘to avoid overwriting colonial violence, [it] needs to be carefully contextualised’.⁴³ Much of this context is visible within the *Chronicle* itself. Indeed, as Stevens argues, ‘there is little doubt’ that its prospectus was ‘dictated to Brune by the Commandant’.⁴⁴ This prospectus, and some of the earlier issues of the *Chronicle*, consequently both exude and extol the infantilisation and paternalism implicit in this dynamic. The claim that ‘The object of this journal is to promote christianity civilisation and Learning among the Aboriginal Inhabitants at Flinders Island ... which it is hoped may induce Emmulation in writing excite a desire for useful knowledge and promote Learning generally’ [sic], for example, is written in Brune’s hand, but more plausibly represents Robinson’s voice.⁴⁵ As such, it is an unusually clear statement of ‘the incomplete nature of a supposedly complete record’; ‘the archive’ of the *Flinders Island Chronicle* is a very limited repository of Indigenous knowledges and histories.⁴⁶

However, the second part in the reading strategy Miller proposes ‘to avoid obliterating Aboriginal presence’, is that ‘the potential effort of Aboriginal authors might be imagined even as that effort is consumed by the archive’.⁴⁷ Subsequent issues of the *Chronicle* suggest that Robinson became either more permissive or less diligent in his censorship, and these issues facilitate this second, more imaginative interpretative work. This is, crucially, not an attempt to ‘provide a (fictionalised) account of [Brune’s] motives and intentions from this fragment— to pretend to know [Brune] based on limited information’.⁴⁸ It is, rather, an interpretation of an archival fragment, into which Indigenous resistance might be imagined in part through the ‘violence of [its] partial archival representation’.⁴⁹ I read this ‘Indigenous archive’ not as an articulation of Brune’s or Arthur’s views—much less of ‘Indigenous’ views—but as a trace of

Indigenous presence within, and reduced to, two spaces of coercion, incarceration, and colonial violence: Flinders Island, and the colonial archive.

On 17 November 1837, Brune appears to praise Robinson, claiming that he is ‘so kind to you he gives you everything that you want ... he brought you out of the bush because ... he knowed the white men was shooting you and now he has brought you to Flinders Island where you get everything and when you are ill tell the Doctor immediately and you get relief’ [sic].⁵⁰ This passage is as much about the brutality of white men in general as it is a testimony to the safety of Flinders Island and the protection offered by Robinson. It obliquely points out that Flinders Island represents less a safe haven than a last resort.

Brune’s tone becomes more ambivalent, even ominous, in following paragraphs:

... Yes my friends you should thank the Commandant yes you should thank the Commandant. There is many of us dying my friends we must all die and we ought to pray to God before we get to heaven yes my friends if we dont we must have eternal punishment ... Let us hope ... that something may be done for us poor people they are dying away the Bible says some of all shall be saved but I am much afraid none of us will be live by and by as then as nothing but sickness among us. Why don’t the black fellows pray to the king to get us away from this place.⁵¹

This passage invites us to imagine Brune’s despair and anger at the hypocrisy of the ideology behind Wybalenna in two ways. First, it once again gives us a description of the colonial context and some of its devastating effects: sickness and death. Such passages justify Robert Hughes’ claim that Wybalenna foreshadowed the concentration camps which the British would systematise during the South African War (also known as the Second Boer War) at the end of the century.⁵²

Second, the passage is a clear instance of what Amanda Nettlebeck calls ‘Indigenous participation in “protection talk”’.⁵³ I have demonstrated that the paternalistic idea of protection contributed to the ideological and practical subjection of Indigenous Australians, since it was predicated on Indigeneity as a transient state which would end either in death or in maturation into whiteness. As Nettlebeck argues, however, the participation of Indigenous people themselves in such discourse reflects ‘some of the more nuanced positions that Indigenous groups took up inside settler colonial states, and across changing political climates, than can be encapsulated by the familiar binary of colonial race relations defined by either resistance or accommodation’.⁵⁴

When he appeals to his readers to ‘pray to the king’, Brune invokes protection as both ‘a moral imperative’ dictated by Christianity and ‘a legal imperative’ dictated by ‘the Crown itself’.⁵⁵ On one level, then, Brune invokes the infantilisation-paternalism dynamic to claim the Indigenous rights and settler responsibilities it implies, and in doing so he acts, as Penny van Toorn has argued, as a ‘mediator of the coloniser’s doctrine’.⁵⁶ However, in telling his readers to pray to the king, Brune depicts God and the king as two (inseparable) manifestations of the same thing: namely, paternalism.

Of course, paternalism already had a physical, embodied presence at Wybalenna, in its Commandant; as Van Toorn has argued, Robinson had already discursively placed himself ‘into the same position as God’ in early editions of the *Chronicle*.⁵⁷ This, combined with the slippage from Brune’s instruction that his readers ‘thank the Commandant’ to an injunction that we ‘pray to God’, and with the subsequent elision of God and the king, all operate to align Robinson with the king, and both with God. Since Robinson’s power to protect the Indigenous peoples at Wybalenna had, by this stage of the project, already been revealed as dubious, to align him with God and the king casts doubt on the power of these other iterations of paternalistic power.

Furthermore, Christianity was only selectively adopted by some Indigenous people at Wybalenna, and not adopted at all by others. It is therefore doubtful that many of Brune's readers would have simply accepted the idea that prayer or, by extension, God, had any power to protect them. Brune's suggestion that 'the black fellows pray to the king' conflates the protection afforded by the Crown with that afforded by a God who has limited, if any, power for his Indigenous audience. Thus, on one level Brune can be seen to capitalise on the fact that their infantilisation affords certain rights to the Indigenous peoples at Wybalenna. On another level, however, his writing points to the ideological continuity between Robinson, the King, and God. The *Chronicle* thereby corroborates a colonial idea of infantilised Indigeneity, even as it also depicts paternalism as ineffectual; whether in the embodied form of Robinson or in the sublime form of God, it has failed to protect the Indigenous people at Wybalenna from sickness and death. Concomitantly, since paternalism might equally be manifested in Robinson, or the King, or God, it becomes, in Brune's writing, a repository for any individuals and any ends.

Ultimately, this suggests that this protean, empty father-figure can be a repository for Indigeneity too. By appropriating the imaginative and linguistic strategies used to represent Indigeneity as a transient phase on the route to whiteness, Brune asserts his rights as a child and Robinson's failures as a father. In short, Brune depicts himself as a 'black-child' in order to chastise his 'white-father', and he does so through the very language, medium, and representational strategy which epitomise the father's authority. Brune thereby becomes not (or not only) 'a willing accomplice' to Robinson, as Stevens suggests, but instead (or also) his double.⁵⁸ Brune's writing contributes to the construction of the imaginary racial binary of (white) settler-father and Indigenous-child. However, both by the very act of writing, and in what he writes, Brune becomes a father-figure too. His writing thereby also invokes the possibility that the racial profile of each figure in that binary might easily be reversed. Paradoxically, the very act of participating in his own infantilisation constitutes, at the same time, an act of resistance to it.

Conclusion

Edward Said argues that, after the period of ‘primary resistance’ to colonialism—the effort to retain or recover ‘geographical territory’—comes a period of ‘secondary, that is ideological resistance’, the effort to ‘reconstitute’ the community after colonialism.⁵⁹ The ‘partial tragedy of this resistance’ is ‘that it must to a certain degree work to recover forms already established or at least influenced or infiltrated by the culture of empire’.⁶⁰ For Said, “To achieve recognition is to rechart and then occupy the place in imperial cultural forms reserved for subordination’.⁶¹

Brune’s writing does just this; by occupying a recharted form of the infantilised Indigenous figure, Brune invites his readers both to equate and to reimagine infantilisation and Indigeneity. Following Miller’s suggestion that we approach such archival fragments as an ‘opportunity to fill silence with the potential of a reimagined life while acknowledging the damage of colonial ideologies that frame’ it, I have argued that the archive of Indigenous writing represented by *The Flinders Island Chronicle* both mediates, and invites its reader to imagine resistance to, colonial ideology.⁶²

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, however, the *Flinders Island Chronicle* is considerably more difficult to access than Gunn’s dubious ‘classic’, or settler representations of Indigeneity like Hale’s in the *Aborigines’ Friend*, neither of which holds prime position in the hierarchy of availability in Australian literary culture either. That position is reserved for established literary classics, of which Ethel Turner’s *Seven Little Australians* (1894) is among the most loved.⁶³ ‘In Australia’, Turner begins, ‘the land and the people are young-hearted together, and the children’s spirits are not crushed and saddened by the shadow of long years’ sorrowful history. There is a lurking sparkle of joyousness and rebellion and mischief in nature here, and therefore in children’.⁶⁴ In Turner’s work, Indigenous Australians are expunged from Australian history, and this obscures Britain’s genocidal efforts to remove them from Australia itself.

As Assmann has argued, 'The canon stands for the active working memory of a society that defines and supports the cultural identity of a group': a nation's identity is imaginatively constructed, in part, through its literary classics.⁶⁵ *Seven Little Australians* might be a regrettable component of Australian national identity, but it is not clear that it is aberrant. Successive Australian governments throughout the twentieth century upheld a policy, now notorious as the Stolen Generations, whereby Indigenous Australian children were forcibly removed from their families and communities and placed with white families. The Stolen Generations epitomises the catastrophic consequences of infantilisation for Indigenous Australian peoples.⁶⁶ This practice is consonant with the pernicious ideas that Indigeneity itself is the cause of any difficulties faced by Indigenous Australians, that they must be protected by white Australians, and ultimately that they must grow up, into white Australians themselves.

This chapter has discussed texts published from 1813–1905. It has suggested that infantilisation endured as a representational strategy throughout the nineteenth century. The lasting popularity of *Seven Little Australians* and the attempted canonisation of *The Little Black Princess* suggest that the infantilisation of Indigenous Australians and their cultures endures to an extent in Australia today; these novels are the canonical surface of the archive of infantilized Indigeneity from which Australia itself emerges. *Seven Little Australians* depicts the racist fantasy underneath the Stolen Generations and the imaginary scene in which *The Little Black Princess* is canonically 'Australian': the fantasy that Australia is white, or at least will be when it grows up.

By reading literary texts as archives of the enduring trope of infantilisation, we can see that 'sparkle of joyousness' in Turner's Australia for what it is: not the absence of 'long years' sorrowful history', but the erasure of genocide. An analysis of literary classics in dialogue with settler and Indigenous archives decodes the discursive practices through which paternalistic representational strategies like Gunn's or Hale's complement colonial efforts to eradicate not just Indigenous Australian cultures, but Indigenous Australian peoples. It also reveals Indigenous

peoples' appropriation of the same representational strategies in their efforts to respond to, and resist, the existential threat represented by colonialism.

As Aileen Moreton-Robinson has argued, 'Resistance by the oppressed is the influence they have on their relationship with the oppressors'; within the literary archive examined here, Indigeneity exists only through Brune, who himself exists only in relation—opposition or submission—to colonial power.⁶⁷ Brune's knowledge and experience—beyond the possibility of his opposition to colonial incarceration—is uncertain, but as Miller has suggested, 'Careful close readings of the frames that influence subaltern records can produce silence through failed representation'.⁶⁸ Silence and failure, in other words, are 'valuable outcomes' of research like this, since they acknowledge Indigenous presence and subjectivity prior to and outside colonial knowledge systems.⁶⁹

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is developing an archive of intangible Indigenous heritage, but as Tran and Barcham argue this must be 'embedded in the practice of a lived culture'.⁷⁰ This 'living archive' makes impossible what Thomas Richards calls 'the basic animating project of the imperial archive, namely, the organization of all knowledges into a coherent imperial whole'.⁷¹ The infantilization of Indigeneity in colonial Australia is a failed representation of Indigeneity, but as such points to the partiality of the conventional colonial archive, and its public-facing counterpart, the literary canon. The fragmentary nature of the 'Indigenous archive' examined in this chapter bears witness to the violence underpinning colonial ways of knowing, and to the partial and limited knowledge of Indigenous peoples and histories produced through the tangible, the textual, the literary archive. It also leaves a gaping, visible space: the failures of what Richards calls the imperial archive, or, rather, the knowledges, histories, and cultures of the living Indigenous archive which persists outside the frame.

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² John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 28.

³ Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and its Limits', in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 2002), pp. 19–26, at p. 19.

⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 44, referring to Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 47. See also Sas Mays, 'Introduction', in Sas Mays (ed), *Libraries, Literatures, and Archives* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–19 on the difference between archives and libraries: namely, the 'collection of imaginative literary texts' which characterises the latter (Mays, p. 3).

⁷ See Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), for a detailed account of the paternalistic settler practice of forced child removal in Australia and America.

⁸ Aleida Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara Young (eds), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 97-107, at p. 102.

⁹ Stoler, *Archival Grain*, p. 46.

¹⁰ Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', p. 98.

¹¹ Evelyn Araluen Corr, 'Silence and Resistance: Aboriginal Women Working Within and Against the Archive', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 32/4 (2018), 487-502, at p. 487.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 487.

¹³ See Leonie Stevens, *Me Write Myself: The Free Aboriginal Inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land at Wybalenna, 1832-47* (Melbourne: Monash University Press, 2017), esp. pp. xxiv–xlii. This neglect encompasses written sources, of course, but also extends to the wealth of non-textual sources of Indigenous history.

¹⁴ Adeline Koh, 'Inspecting the Nineteenth-Century Literary Digital Archive: Omissions of Empire', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 19.3 (2014): pp. 385–395, at p. 394, emphasis in original. See also Rachel Bryant Davies's observations in this volume on the illusory 'wholeness' of digital archives.

¹⁵ Stevens, *Me Write Myself*, p. xxvi.

¹⁶ Koh, 'Digital Archive', p. 394.

¹⁷ See Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ *The Little Black Princess* features in Clare Bradford's *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 88–91, and 'Australian Children's Literature', in Peter Pierce (ed), *The Cambridge History of Australian Children's Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 282–302.

¹⁹ Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or: The Impossibility of Children's Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), p. 2.

²⁰ Julia Mickenberg and Lynne Vallone, 'Introduction', in Julia Mickenberg and Lynne Vallone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 4–23, at p. 5.

²¹ See, for example, Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).

²² Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconstructing the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 71. Rose's is the seminal analysis of children's literature as a form of colonialism (Rose, esp. pp. 42–65). Gubar offers a persuasive counterargument.

²³ Bradford, *Reading Race*, pp. 89; 91. See also, for example, Don Randall, *Kipling's Imperial Boy: Adolescence and Cultural Hybridity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

²⁴ Bradford, 'Australian Children's Literature', in Peter Pierce (ed), *The Cambridge History of Australian Children's Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 297. Of course, this dialectic entirely erases the many peoples in turn of the century Australia who were racialised neither as 'white' nor as 'black'. I use the term 'black' in inverted commas, rather than the capitalized 'Black' used elsewhere in this collection, because I am describing the nineteenth-century racialization of Indigenous Australians as 'black', not describing or identifying Indigenous Australians as Black.

²⁵ Jeannie Gunn, *The Little Black Princess* (London: De la More Press, 1905), p. 6.

²⁶ Bradford, 'Australian Children's Literature', p. 282.

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- ²⁷ Bradford, *Reading Race*, p. 91.
- ²⁸ Clare Bradford, 'The Wise Colonial Child: Imperial Discourse in *A Mother's Offering to Her Children*', *New Literatures Review* 33 (1997): 39–50, at p. 33.
- ²⁹ Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 1.
- ³⁰ Castañeda, *Figurations*, p. 1.
- ³¹ Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', p. 101.
- ³² Mathew Hale, 'Prospectus of an Institution About to be Formed at Port Lincoln for the Religious Instruction and Moral Training of Aboriginal Natives', in *The Colonial Intelligencer or Aboriginal's Friend* 3 (1850–1851): pp. 214–217, at pp. 213; 216.
- ³³ Hale here repeats an idea, which persists today, that Indigenous Australians were not already 'settled' prior to colonialism. See Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture* (Broome: Magabala Books, 2014), on the evidence for pre-colonial Indigenous Australian agriculture.
- ³⁴ See Jacobs, p.63–73. See also Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
- ³⁵ See, for example, H. F. Augstein, *James Cowles Prichard's Anthropology: Remaking the Science of Man in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999). See also Efram Sera Shriar, *The Making of British Anthropology, 1813–1871* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), esp. p. 52 on empire and ethnography.
- ³⁶ See Lara Atkin 'Review: The Architects of the Study of Man', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19/1 (2014), 123–126, on the symbiotic relationship between the missionary and the ethnographer, which are seamlessly amalgamation in Prichard himself. See Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races; Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. p. 121–167, on race and religion in the nineteenth century. Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981) is the essential work on what is now called 'scientific racism', a genre to which Prichard was an early, if unwitting, contributor.
- ³⁷ This casts doubt on Kidd's claim that the 'mainstream version of race science in the British world during the first half of the nineteenth century'—in which Prichard was pre-eminent—'was anti-racist in its motivations' (Kidd, 135).
- ³⁸ See Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999) on the 'logic that was common to the ostensibly separate projects of ethnography and ethnocide' in the context the emergence of the assimilation policy in late nineteenth-century Australia (Wolfe, p. 11).
- ³⁹ Hale, 'Prospectus', p. 216.
- ⁴⁰ See N. J. B. Plomley, *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement, with the Flinders Island Journal of George Augustus Robinson, 1835–1839* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1987), p. 4.
- ⁴¹ See 'Robinson, George Augustus (1791–1866)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), <<http://adb.anu.edu.au>>, accessed 11 December 2020; and Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 52. See also Erin Johnson-Williams in this collection on the interaction of Christianity and incarceration in colonial contexts.
- ⁴² Benjamin Miller, 'Fragments of the Archive: The Subaltern Protests of Charles Never', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 47/4 (2021), , 491–506, at p. 500.
- ⁴³ Miller, 'Fragments of the Archive', p. 500. David Lowther similarly demonstrates the value of meticulous contextualization when researching colonial archives in his contribution to this collection.
- ⁴⁴ Stevens, *Me Write Myself*, p. 64.
- ⁴⁵ Thomas Brune and Walter Juba Martin, 'The Aboriginal or Flinders Island Chronicle Under Sanction of the Commandant', in Michael Rose (ed), *For the Record: 160 Years of Aboriginal Print Journalism* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996), pp. 3–19, at p. 3.
- ⁴⁶ Miller, 'Fragments of the Archive', p. 493. Tran Tran and Clare Barcham, '(Re)defining Indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage', *ALATSIS Research Discussion Paper*, 37 (2018), examine the forms and complexities of Indigenous knowledges, revealing just how inadequate a conventional archive—a collection of documents in a building—is for developing, preserving, and providing access to Indigenous heritages. See also Philipi Burnett's discussion in this volume of Christian Cole's 'scattered and invisible' archival presence.
- ⁴⁷ Miller, 'Fragments of the Archive', p. 500.
- ⁴⁸ Miller, 'Fragments of the Archive', p. 503. Judith Phillips's contribution to this collection asks whether it is *permissible* to expose private lives to public gaze; Miller asks whether it is *possible* to 'expose' an Indigenous person's motives or intentions from the traces that remain in the archive, without obfuscating and thus repeating the violence of these archival representations.
- ⁴⁹ Miller, 'Fragments of the Archive', p. 493.
- ⁵⁰ Brune, 'Flinders Island Chronicle', p. 17.
- ⁵¹ Brune, 'Flinders Island Chronicle', p. 17. See Stevens, *Me Write Myself*, pp. 134–135, on this passage.
- ⁵² Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787–1868* (London: Pan Books, 1987), p. 423. See pp. 414–424 for an overview of the context in which Wybalenna, the 'benign concentration camp', was created.

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- ⁵³ Amanda Nettelbeck, “‘We Are Sure of Your Sympathy’: Indigenous Uses of the Politics of Protection in Nineteenth-Century Australia and Canada”, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 17. 1, (2016), n.p., <[doi:10.1353/cch.2016.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2016.0009)>
- ⁵⁴ Nettlebeck, ‘We are Sure of Your Sympathy’, n.p.
- ⁵⁵ Nettlebeck, ‘We are Sure of Your Sympathy’, n.p.
- ⁵⁶ Stevens, *Me Write Myself*, p. xxxvii.
- ⁵⁷ Penny Van Toorn, *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), p. 107.
- ⁵⁸ Stevens, *Me Write Myself*, p.66.
- ⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. 134
- ⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 135, quoted in Corr, p. 493.
- ⁶¹ Ibid, p. 135.
- ⁶² Miller, ‘Fragments of the Archive’, p. 494.
- ⁶³ Bradford notes that *Seven Little Australians* is ‘the only nineteenth-century text still read by children’ in Australia Bradford, ‘Australian Children’s Literature’, p. 287.
- ⁶⁴ Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Australians* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 1–2.
- ⁶⁵ Assmann, ‘Canon and Archive’, p. 106.
- ⁶⁶ See ‘The Stolen Generation’, *Australians Together*, <<https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/australian-history/stolen-generations>>, accessed 17 November 2020; ‘The Stolen Generations’, *AIATSIS*, <<https://aiatsis.gov.au/stolen-generations>>, accessed 19 November 2020; ‘Who are the Stolen Generations?’, *The Healing Foundation*, <<https://healingfoundation.org.au/resources/who-are-the-stolen-generations>>, accessed 19 November 2020; and ‘The Stolen Generations’, *Common Ground*, <<https://commonground.org.au/learn/the-stolen-generations>>, accessed 19 November 2020, for overviews and accounts of the Stolen Generations and its devastating effects.
- ⁶⁷ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, ‘Introduction: Resistance, Recovery and Revitalization’, in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michèle Grossmann (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 127–131, at p. 128–129, quoted in Corr, p. 439.
- ⁶⁸ Miller, ‘Fragments of the Archive’, p. 506.
- ⁶⁹ Miller, ‘Fragments of the Archive’, p. 506. See Stevens, *Me Write Myself*, p. 90, on silences and absences in the archived school reports from Flinders Island.
- ⁷⁰ Tran and Barcham, ‘(Re)defining Indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage’, p. 19. See Jemima Short in this volume, however, on the challenges and ethical issues of researching communal histories as an ‘outsider’.
- ⁷¹ Ibid, p. 18–20; Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 7.