

The Activist Novel: Pastoral Political Mediations in England and Aotearoa New Zealand (Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*)

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Abstract: This essay examines forms of social and political “activism” in England and Aotearoa New Zealand as they are mediated through disruptions of pastoral in Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856). Three counterposed strains of political action are connected by the narrative workings of the family-Bildungsroman: a spontaneous protest by grammar schoolboys defending ancient “English” liberties; organised social endeavours by English girls, bringing basic education to the poor; and—on the other side of the globe—anti-imperial acts of resistance by Māori warriors amid a longer context of inter-tribal disputes. Rethinking an Empsonian critical model associating pastoral with artistic political simplification, the essay offers a “peep” at the complex “machinery” of high-Victorian didactic and imperial pastoral constrained to realism by the dialogic operation of the novel. In doing so, it shows how the term political “activism” may be opened up to historical and critical complication by the workings of novelistic form.¹

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Imagine the end of a school day during the early 1850s, in a southern English town bearing some resemblance to the prosperous cathedral city of Winchester. A boy, Norman May, 16 years old, leaves the schoolhouse. It hasn't been the best of days. He is dux of the grammar school (its academic head-boy), having triumphed in the competition for that role earlier in the year. Academic leadership brings a responsibility for moral leadership. Last night a group of boys took spontaneous action against the local brewer for closing off the ally that gives access to a field-path behind the brewery yard—a shortcut used by generations of schoolboys. Norman himself delivered a stirring speech, defending ancient British liberties and protesting against the insult to aged almshouse residents in need of an easy route to

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the town centre. Carried away by his own rhetoric, he joined in as the boys tore up the barricades—but stopped them spoiling the beer. An apology has had to be made to the headmaster, “extremely displeased that the *Dux* should have been no check on such proceedings” (Yonge 1856, 219). Higher brewery fences have already been erected, and Norman has worked all day to tamp down his schoolfellows’ enthusiasm for further action.

Having reasserted his authority Norman goes for a walk along the river, indulging a new-found interest in botany, and drinking in the natural beauty of the late summer rural scene:

the fresh dewy coolness sunk on all around, and the noises of the town were mellowed by distance, and the sun’s last beams slanted on the green meadows, and the May-flies danced, and dragon-flies darted, and fish rose or leapt high in the air, or showed their spotted sides, and opened and shut their gills, as they rested in the clear water, and the evening breeze rustled in the tall reeds, and brought fragrance from the fresh-mown hay.

It was complete enjoyment to Norman after his day’s study, and the rule and watch over the unruly crowd of boys, and he walked and wandered, and collected plants for Margaret till the sun was down, and the grasshoppers chirped clamorously, while the fern-owl purred, and the beetle hummed, and the skimming swallows had given place to the soft-winged bat, and the large white owl floating over the fields as it moused in the long grass. (220)

Astute readers of Charlotte Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain; or, Aspirations* (1856)—practised readers of pastoral more generally—will intuit that these late evening pleasures are not going to last. Something is amiss, destabilising the complacency with which Norman rewards himself for the day’s hard work and for reasserting “rule and watch over the unruly”. An undertow of warning gathers force: that sinking coolness in the air, the *carpe diem* brevity of May-flies, dragon-flies and grasshoppers “clamour[ing]” among the cut hay, the thought of his invalid sister Margaret at home gradually relinquishing her hold on life, the predatory hovering of bat and owl taking over the sky from summer’s swallows. A quiet echo of Norman and Margaret’s surname, May, in “May-flies” might clinch a suspicion that the

elegiac tinge to the scene will prove personal. Sure enough, turning back through the “sobering” twilight, Norman is in time to hear a “loud shout” and catch a glimpse of “black specks dancing in the forbidden field, and something like the waving of a flag” (220-21). His younger brother Tom is not at home, where he should be. In Randall’s Alley a fence has been levelled, a bonfire is flaming, “black figures ... flitting round it, pushing brands into red places” (221), and a policeman is already on site. Less than 24 hours on, Norman, wrongly identified as a ringleader, will have forfeited his duxship—“all [he has] been striving for [...] utterly undone” (224).

This essay examines the relationship between Bildung, political activism, and the novelistic undoing of those artful “simplifications” of the social and political sphere identified by William Empson as the characteristic achievement of pastoral. One of the most popular works of the mid-19th century, *The Daisy Chain* owed its success to a compelling imaginative bridging of the distance between child and adult, individual and social group, as it multiplied the traditional focus of Bildung across generations and social classes (McAleavey). Contemplating the social challenge of gearing up toward universal education fifteen years prior to the 1870 Education Act, the novel trains its readers’ attention on well-educated young people in whom democratic and libertarian impulses contend with an assumption that education confers an obligation to lead the less well-educated. The undoing of Norman’s restorative pleasures by “unruly” contemporaries is part of a repeating formal pattern reworking the operation of pastoral to admit the critical dialogism of the novel and ultimately connecting three versions of activism *avant la lettre*: the spontaneous political protests of English boys defending time-honoured liberties; the collaborative social endeavours of English girls looking to bring basic education to the poorest children in their

locality; and—on the other side of the globe—the anti-imperial political activism of indigenous tribal leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The English elements of activism reflect Yonge's lifelong immersion in initiatives to support the expansion of primary and secondary education. Historians have drawn attention to her contributions across a range of literary formats as a prolific novelist, editor of and regular contributor for over 40 years to *The Monthly Packet* girls' magazine, popular anthologizer of historical and literary materials classical to modern, and the writer of numerous textbooks aimed at securing continuing Church-of-England influence across the school system as the state enlarged its role.² Her classroom experience was considerable: she began Sunday school teaching at the age of seven, and from her early twenties led village school classes for both sexes in Scripture, also instructing girls in History, Grammar, and needlework [Battiscombe, 40, 66, 79, 107]. The town/gown conflict at the boys' grammar school has roots, as I show, in the unevenly democratising educational culture that engrossed so much of Yonge's own activist energies and that inspires his sister Ethel's campaigning effort to bring primary schooling to the hamlet of Cocks Moor—with important differences in the gendered psychology of the young activist and the didactic articulation of *Bildung*.

The antipodean component to Yonge's interest in channels of activism involves a much longer leap of the geopolitical imagination, informed by her correspondence with settlers and missionary educators in the Pacific. Her cousin, John Coleridge Patteson, was recruited as a missionary to the South Seas not long after she began work on *The Daisy Chain*, arriving in Auckland to begin his ministry in May 1855. Having already donated part of the profits of *The Heir of Redcliffe* (1853) toward a schooner for mission work in the

² The most extensive work to date on the textbooks was presented by Susan Walton at the Victorian Transformations Conference (see Acknowledgements).

islands, Yonge gave all the profits of *The Daisy Chain* to the Melanesian mission, yielding an annual income secured by a bequest in her will (Jordan and Schinske, 145). Patteson would in due course receive £163.10 toward building of St Andrew's College in Kohimarama, Auckland.³ So taxing an extension of the conceptual field of political figuration and literal economic profits of authorship admits "a peep" at the "machinery" (Empson, 190) of a distinctive extrapolation of pastoral, exceptionally ambitious of effecting social change. This is high-Victorian didactic and imperial-domestic pastoral constrained to realism, I argue, by the dialogic operation of the novel and the polyvocality of serialized magazine publication—peculiarly drawn, moreover, to narrativizing all that impedes positive political intervention in the world.

If Yonge's Tractarian affiliation can seem to license certain assumptions about her politics, presupposed to be socially hierarchical and committed to a British right of religious interference in indigenous lives on the other side of the globe, the repeated counterpointing of domestic and imperial-domestic pastoral with political "reality" indicates a far more sceptical relation to educational and missionary authority.⁴ The breadth of *The Daisy Chain's* political sympathies shows in the consideration given to questions of political maturation as a point of contention. Political activism flows, at home and overseas, from an instinctive anti-authoritarianism and quick sympathy with oppression that Yonge identifies with youth and with the Māori pursuit of political self-determination. If *The Daisy Chain* appears then to dally with a casually racist analogy between the imperial subject and the child (characteristic

³ A further £20 was donated by Yonge in 1857 toward the installation of bells in St Matthew's Church, Auckland. The recipient church is given in her bank records only as "Auckland church", but the date, and her friendship circle, point to the Anglican church of St Matthew (now "St Matthews-in-the-City"). Bishop Sewlyn's wife led the funding appeal, aided by Lady Lucy Hebert who made the contact with Yonge. See Yonge, L to an unknown woman, 23 November 1865; and "Bishop Selwyn's Bells".

⁴ This reading builds on recent scholarship recognising the complexity of Yonge's Tractarianism and political conservatism. See Schaffer, "Mysterious Magnum Bonum" (esp. 245 on the tension between Yonge's avowed politics and her realism); Shaub; Walton, *Imagining Soldiers* (esp. Ch. 4); Mitchell; Wagner; and Gore, Schultze and Courtney (esp. Mitchell on Conservative community, and Barringer on "the World beyond Europe").

of some of the mission reports published alongside the serialized chapters in *The Monthly Packet*⁵), on closer scrutiny the novel draws its lines of connection more cautiously, training the reader's eye on an "English" political pastoralism legible with hindsight as a sign of emotional and political immaturity. In the domestic case, immaturity is naturalised as an inevitable aspect of growing up and a structural feature of educational democratisation running in advance of institutional supports for universal education; in the imperial case, the progressive-developmental analogy has no such warrant.

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Schoolboy activism

Pastoral is far less innocent than its surface charms may suggest. William Empson's celebrated account of the mode, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), sharpened criticism's ability to register an artful poetic reduction in the complexity of the world. Formally, pastoral makes complex ideas "simple"; politically, it imposes a provisional artistic unity on the difficulty of the social field. A strong factor in its appeal to Empson (himself the product of a Winchester schooling) was that it offered fresh perspectives, Seamus Perry observes, on the "literature of clash and contradiction" (Empson, xx). Class conflict and the rise of aggressive nationalisms came to the fore in Empson's contemporary literature, but his versatile readings looked beyond those immediate theatres of conflict to take a capacious view of pastoral "machinery", the role of the critic being to restore some of the complexity art has concealed.

The situational complexities of the school-boy protest against closure of the brewer's alleyway are built up by Yonge from the novel's first reference to a grammar school at Market Stoneborough. This is an institution with a history of turning "merchants" into

⁵ See, e.g., [anon.], "New Zealand: A War Dance".

educated gentlemen (8). Set in the grounds of a Minster dating back to the 13th century, the school “survived the Reformation, and trained up many good scholars; among them, one of England’s princely merchants, Nicholas Randall”—that same Randall whose effigy kneels in a wall of the Minster chancel, and who gave his name to the alleyway under dispute (8). In the modern day of the novel, the Stoneborough school educates the sons of professional men including Dr May, the town’s trusted medical practitioner, alongside the sons of local tradesmen. Educational advancement is the ideal, but the gateway is narrow. Randall “endowed two scholarships at Oxford” (8), contested on an eighteen-month basis—staggered so that no year group need miss out. Realistically, an Oxford education is not every student’s goal (George Larkins prefers pranking and fishing), but it is Norman’s dearest aspiration and he has competition from Harvey Anderson, a year older, from a less advantaged background, with a dead father and budding resentment that the younger boy was made “Dux”.

A schoolboy protest against the local brewer’s encroachment on an old right of way goes then to the heart of local class relations, exposing a competition for social advantage that makes the place of education a lightning rod for conflicts of interest. Norman (in the first flush of activist enthusiasm) would have his school fellows see the reopening of the alley as a libertarian cause on which ordinary townsfolk and freedom-loving schoolboys are at one:

the way was the right of the town, the walk had been trodden by their forefathers for generations past—it had been made by the good old generous-hearted man who loved his town and townspeople, and would have heard with shame and anger of a stranger, a new inhabitant, a grasping radical, caring, as radicals always did, for no rights, but for their own chance of unjust gains, coming here to Stoneborough to cut them off from their own path. He talk of liberalism and the rights of the poor! He who cut off Randall's poor old creatures in the almshouses from their short way! and then came some stories of his oppression as a poor-law guardian, which greatly

aggravated the wrath of the speaker and audience, though otherwise they did not exactly bear on the subject. (218)

It is hardline anti-outsiderist stuff, smearing Mr Tomkins the brewer with vague imputations: grasping “radical”, self-styled “liberal”, “oppressor” of the old (the narrative voice patronizes Norman for irrelevance when he starts on the abuses of the Poor Law, but the boy’s logic seems clear enough). “Britons never shall be slaves!” (218), shouts Larkins, going the full (grandly gestural) “Rule Britannia” in response. This is a town with naval links into wider imperial, mercantile, anti-slavery and missionary endeavours, Winchester lying just 40 miles from Portsmouth where young Harry May will attend naval college and begin his cadetship on a sailing to the Pacific rather than continue at school.

Norman’s loose political terminology leaves Mr Tomkins anywhere on the Reformist/Whig/Liberal scale of affiliations, the only clarity being that he is an incomer to Stoneborough and not an old-school conservative, literally or figuratively, of the Dr May type. In lieu of having a care for the “poor old” amid ongoing anger at the deracinating consequences of the New Poor Law,⁶ Mr Tomkins obstructs the boys’ way for no obvious purpose beyond establishing hard boundaries on his commercial operation. It is a distinctive feature of Yonge’s realism that the drawing of her minor characters tends, as here, to be non-omniscient, conjectural on the part of others, saying more about the shared social biases from which characterology emanates than about the individual. Of Christopher Tomkins’s “radicalism” we learn nothing more clarifying than that he correctly identifies Norman at the end of the riot, wrongly thinking him a leader; he refrains from blocking Dr May’s preferred candidate for appointment as the new vicar of Stoneborough; and he chooses not to field a parliamentary candidate against Flora May’s husband in the

⁶ See Besley, Coate, and Guinnane, esp. 265.

Stoneborough by-election. His “radicalism” gets little traction in a narrative where his primary function is to signal ideological opposition to a prevailing paternalist conservatism.

There are contemporary points of reference for *The Daisy Chain*'s schoolboy protest against commercial encroachments. Some few first readers might have recognised a Hampshire model for Tomkins in the self-styled “independent liberal” William Whitear Bulpett who risked unpopularity when he stood for the general election of 1852 on a platform of abolishing church rates and prioritising investment in business—“townsmen for towns” his election rallying cry (Preston, 8).⁷ But when Norman explains things to his father in the aftermath of the riot he identifies mean schoolboy self-interest, not mature politics, as the chief motive. “It is all [Harvey] Anderson's doing”, Norman tells his father bitterly: “he talked [the other boys] up to the mischief when my back was turned, and then sneaked quietly home” and “held his tongue to get me down, that he might have the Randall!” (223, 222). This is what it comes down to: ruthless competition for personal advantage in a system where at most one boy in any year group can win an Oxford scholarship. Only consideration for Harvey's family circumstances leads Norman to prevent Dr May intervening: “don't you remember, when [Harvey's] father died, how [...] it was said that if he gained a scholarship, it would be such a relief to poor Mrs. Anderson?” (228). A much longer narrative route will be taken before George Larkins exposes Harvey's duplicity and clears Norman's way to the Randall.

The cynical reading of Anderson's motives may be justified, but it is not an explanation of why a whole group of boys joins the fray. They all answer the call to defend

⁷ Population growth made new infrastructure a local priority but generated conflict between volunteer reformers, organised under the auspices of the Cathedral, and “town” representatives hostile to Church interference in town business. Yonge had Bulpett (manager and major mortgagee of the Itchen Navigation Canal) (Aldous, 177; and Humby) in her sights when she wrote to a friend in 1861, explaining that a “general town drainage” to relieve pressure on the river was needed, but because her “Cathedral people” had taken the lead “the Radicals refuse, and actually make the opposition to it a cry” (L to Anne Sturges Bourne, 19 February 1861).

liberty, but they let Norman and Anderson do their political thinking for them, and the impression given is that they are mere opportunists, attracted to “mischief” (224). It is salient that Norman is never a natural political leader. Keenly competitive, given to extreme overwork, vulnerable to depression, he is (in his father’s diagnosis) an exceptionally gifted boy at risk of social isolation, “a *lusus natureæ* ... [who] wants companions” (311). As dux, he has taken “higher ground than was usual even with the well-disposed [...] fe[eling] it his duty to check abuses and malpractices that his predecessors had allowed” (184). The disciplining of his short-lived radicalism is only the start of an education in registering the limits of his own foresight and his capacity for judgement in a complex social and political field.

If Yonge’s psychological subtlety shows in her willingness to make one of her central protagonists a “prig” (233), and unhappy in his own skin as a result, her didacticism shows in her depiction of his chief antagonist. A charismatic speechifier “in the village Hampden style” (217), Harvey Anderson invites his fellow students to see themselves as “townsmen” not schoolboys: “citizens not bound to submit to injustice”. With the “village Hampden” we are avowedly in the ambit of pastoral and in a better critical position to recognise the political implications of Norman’s brief riverside enjoyment of that mode. The allusion is to lines from Thomas Gray’s ubiquitously anthologized “Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard” (1751), imagining among the unremembered rural dead another John Hampden, leading architect of the English Civil War, here doomed to obscurity by poverty and want of education:

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast

The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;

Some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest,

Some Cromwell guiltless of his country’s blood. (Gray, ll. 57-60 [p. 39])

Empson was scathing about the “Elegy”, castigating the “complacency” (7) with which it naturalizes the huge waste of talent in a society distributing social opportunity so unjustly. John Guillory’s rereading of the “Elegy” in *Cultural Capital* (1993) took a different political measure of Gray’s “investment” in pastoral. Concentrating on how the class politics of expanding literacy drove canon-formation, Guillory isolated the “perfect” address to the historical moment by a poet not yet aligned with the emerging “bourgeois” public sphere (the scare quotes around “bourgeois” are Empson’s). On the eve of democratising developments in the English education system, the “Elegy” sustained a distinctly aristocratic ethos, Guillory argued, “in the sense governed by the pastoral topos of the aristocrat-as-peasant”. It connotes the “hypothetical achievements of the peasantry” as “tragically repressed”, yet names “no achievements” that it does not “deplor[e] as instances of Ambition, Luxury, and Pride”. Its enormous popular appeal rested, in short, on inducting readers into a vernacular idiom that brilliantly ambiguated class allegiance (112).

A related but distinct mechanism is at work when pastoral functions within a novel written, almost exactly a century on from the “Elegy”, amid a national endeavour to build a school system that could offer all children access to the cultural credentialing Gray’s poem trades in. Positioning the principal challenger to her main student protagonist as a fatherless “small, quick-witted boy, half a year older [than Norman], who had entered school at the same time, and had always been one step below him” (100), Yonge imagines a scenario in which the inadequate capacity of a grammar school to reward academic merit (too few scholarships) generates the circumstances in which a clever boy can feel that honesty asks too high a price of ambition. Like Gray, Yonge fashions a prose thick with allusion—every chapter introduced by an epigraph, her narrative voice freighted with references to Latin, Greek and English literature, her chief characters seaming their conversation with

quotation. Pastoral is one mode among many, and in the grammar school grounds, where the gap between aspiration and possibility breeds resentment, its residual aristocratic ethos is tissue thin. The phrase “village Hampden” reverberates unsteadily, an ironic sobriquet in which admiration for the young man’s potential leadership is less audible than the authorial quashing of misdirected political energy.

In the moral plotting of *The Daisy Chain*, ambition is tempered and redirected, but not disqualified. Two scholarships are awarded. Harvey is last heard of “prospering” at his Oxford College, “the pride of his family” (352). His gift for “inflammatory discourse” has been channelled into provocative scepticism at college (Norman his chief target) and drawing-room “talk” back in Stoneborough. All that cleverness is, we are led to understand, of the schoolboy sort that deals in “abstract questions” of principle insufficiently tested by “realities” (464). If this puncturing of Harvey’s radicalism delivers a conservative judgement on the young advocate for liberty and social justice who has “mischievous[ly]” disregarded the laws of property and incited “aggressi[on]” (219), it is salient that the chief male activist remains for the most part in the background. Restricting his scope, the novel accords with Franco Moretti’s observation that the nineteenth-century English Bildungsroman tended to steer clear of villainy or handled it clumsily, “reluctan[t]” to follow the French and Russian novelists in having its protagonists identify with “*mobility*, [...] to the point of transgression or crime” (Moretti, 201). (*The Daisy Chain*’s more sensational sequel, *The Trial* (1864), breaks that mould, at a cost to realism.)

Norman is a more psychologically complex figure, tainted for a time by association, and lastingly destabilised in his sense of the value to be placed on his own talents. In turning to pastoral to register his brief respite from the complications of town-gown politics, the novel establishes a pattern that repeats through his portion of the narrative whereby the

well-educated boy's immature insertion of himself into the social field produces a craving for the simpler existence associated with pastoral. It is salient then that his post-activist yearning for pastoral replenishment of the self differs from the version of pastoral Empson identified in the writing of Yonge's friend and occasional magazine contributor, Charles Dodgson. Though the walk along the meadows has what Empson, with nice gesturalism, called "the feeling of pastoral", the feeling is internalized: it has no sharers, and does not sustain the characteristics *Some Versions* attributed to *Alice in Wonderland*—the simplification of people, the conversable pretence of politeness, the "tricks of thought" "tak[ing] refuge" at this historical point in "child-cult" (13). Walking solitary through the fields, Norman is, at 16, already too complicated in himself, too ambivalent about his own desire for worldly success, too far along the road to being grown up to leave the world behind him. He craves pastoral's simplicity but cannot sustain it, sensing it for what it is—a short-changing of the complex, politically conflictual, at times fundamentally unfair social scene he has left behind and must shortly re-enter.

Girls' Activism

Narratively intertwined with Norman's struggle to set aside intellectual ambition and channel his talents toward the wider social good is the story of his 15-year-old sister Etheldred (Ethel) May. Where Norman's and his school fellows' brief involvement in local activism is spontaneous, vitiated by self-interest, and fails to achieve its aims (the alley remains blocked-up, the brewer victorious), the activism of Ethel and her supporters gradually acquires seriousness, strategy, and funds. Moral Bildung here becomes literal bricks and mortar Bildung. The result is a distinctive recalibration of the late eighteenth- and

early nineteenth-century Bildungsroman, whereby the traditional male story is counterposed with not one but several female stories: those of his sisters (Ethel foremost; Flora, older and more conventional) and the girl, Meta Rivers, whom he will eventually marry. The classical Bildungsroman presented its readers, Moretti argues, with a

specifically “bourgeois” dilemma: the clash between individual autonomy and social integration. ... When the logic of social integration has been interiorized, turning into a desire that the individual perceives as his “own”, as his *greatest* desire in fact, to which all others can be subordinated and sacrificed—then socialization is no longer felt as a mere necessity, but as a value choice it has become *legitimate*. (67)

Yonge’s influential contribution to the genre lies in the pressure she places not against individualism (her boys and girls are keenly animated by a sense of their “own” desires) but toward a stronger “logic of social integration”, primarily driven by young women, and becoming legible in her fictions as something more than a corrective to individual self-realization. Social integration becomes itself an object of individual and collective desire, driving endeavours—parochial, national, international—that interlock and can accrue, at all levels, the zeal of mission.

Two major objects are achieved under Ethel’s leadership: elementary schooling for the poor families of Cocksmoor and the building of a church for the same hamlet. Only the setting up of the school features in the serialised chapters that ran in the *Monthly Packet* between July 1853 and December 1855. The main changes and additions Yonge made for the book version involved scaling up the social mission to Cocksmoor and setting Norman on a course toward ordination and a missionary life in New Zealand. The word “mission” does double-duty throughout, “mission in New Zealand” (518) giving a larger political and ethnographic frame to internal “English mission” (531).⁸ Norman’s overseas mission lies in

⁸ On the “imbrication” of English and global mission, see Schaffer, “Taming”, 205; Dennis, in Walker Gore et al., esp. 184; and Skinner.

the future of the novel, but Ethel's local mission is charted over its course, making *The Daisy Chain* a striking example of how Victorian realism could work its way into the minds and sympathies of readers by matching the duration of plot time to reading time.⁹

With the enlargement of the story came a sharper articulation of gendered distinction in the psychology of activism. The terms of the schoolboy protest were more strongly contrasted, ironized, implicitly corrected by those of Ethel's story. It is to the point that her initial engagement with the labouring poor on the outskirts of Stoneborough is plotted in parallel with the accidental death of the May family mother—an entirely idealised figure. The organising principle of the serialised text was tracking how the children's characters are "formed" (vii) in the year after her loss; in the book version, larger thematic implications flow from a temperamental difference between Ethel and Norman, described in Mrs May's unfinished letter to her sister in New Zealand (a cast-list and aide-memoire for any reader who might struggle to retain the names and characteristics of eleven siblings). In the mother's assessment, Norman "like all school-boys" lives "a life of emulation" (49); he must learn to be guided by his inward sense of what is right, sacrificing personal distinction for the good of others. Ethel, by contrast, already possesses a laudable "independence of praise" (49). She wants experience to discipline the "heedlessness of all but one absorbing object" (48) that is her main weakness and primary attraction as a character, rescuing *The Daisy Chain* from the more patent didacticism that limited the longevity of other contributions to *The Monthly Packet* and establishing a model that inspired later chroniclers of family, including Louisa May Alcott and Edith Nesbitt.

⁹ First mooted in Chapter VI, the school project only reached fruition in Chapter XVI (XVII in the book text) after more than a year in serialization (September 1853 to December 1854). The Foundation stone of the church is laid in Ch. XX of the book. On realism and the temporality of the serial, see Hughes and Lund; also Beer. On Yonge's development of realism through attention to the multi-generational family over time, McAleavey.

The initiating event of the Cocks Moor mission is a charitable visit, at Ethel's urging, to a poor family in distress. In the hospital, under Dr May's care, lies a labourer badly injured in a quarry accident, thought to be dying, and "in great distress, for his wife has just got twins, and there were lots of children before". "They want everything—food and clothes—and we want to walk and take it", Ethel tells her governess (2). What shocks the May siblings more than the poverty is the encounter with children close to their own ages who have escaped the Stoneborough school system:

"I suppose none of the children can go to school. I don't know their faces there," said Flora, looking at a nice tall, smooth-haired girl, of thirteen or fourteen.

"No, Miss" [replies the mother:] —'tis so far. I am sorry they should not, for they always was used to it where we lived before, and my oldest girl, she can work very nicely. [...] It is not like what I was used to, ma'am; I was always used to keep to my school and to my Church—but it is a bad place to live in here." (24)

This brief dialogue between the doctor's daughters and the would-be-pious labourer's wife keys the sentimental scene in to mid-century Britain's complex educational environment, where National Schools (run by the Anglican Church) and Non-Conformist schools co-existed with a wide array of private provision, including Sunday Schools, free ragged schools for the poorest children, and dame schools (day-care, run for a fee out of the homes of poor women) (see Gardner). Educational opportunities for the poor varied greatly by region; even at the time of the 1861 census around half had no access to primary schooling (Harkness, 299). The Taylors have moved from an area where they were decently provided for to one that offers nothing—not even opportunities for the needle—"work" the eldest daughter is skilled in (a necessary acquirement for any girl wanting to go into service and escape the hard life of the agricultural labourer).

The subsequent concentration on education, over and above relief of hunger and distress (Ethel tackles both), reflects Yonge's conviction that the route out of poverty lies

through schooling. Three years after *The Daisy Chain*'s publication she gave evidence to the Duke of Newcastle's Royal Commission on the State of Popular Education in England, testifying on the basis of "18 years [...] intimate knowledge of and share in the management of a school for girls and infants, from fifty to sixty in number, and [...] being generally aware of what passed in the boys' school" (*Report of the Commissioners*, extracted in Yonge, *Letters*). Her response to the Commission's questions is striking for its granular explanation of the economic and personal factors impeding efforts to educate poor girls and boys. Yonge stressed the value of a hinterland provision of Sunday schools, evening schools, and lending libraries to guard against children slipping out of education before they had acquired sufficient literacy and the intellectual and moral qualities associated with education: "habits of regularity and discipline", enhanced usefulness, awakened curiosity, above all the foundations of religious instruction.

Early in her activist career, Ethel walks in on her father giving just such basic instruction to her younger siblings in the form of their Sunday story for the week, "David and Goliath":

"So Tom and Blanche [...] can you tell me how we may be like the shepherd-boy, David?"

"There arn't giants now," said Tom.

"Wrong is a giant," said his little sister.

"Right, my white May-flower, and what then?"

"We are to fight," said Tom.

"Yes, and mind, the giant with all his armour may be some great thing we have to do: but what did David begin with when he was younger?"

"The lion and the bear."

"Aye, and minding his sheep. Perhaps little things, now you are little children, may be like the lion and the bear—so kill them off—get rid of them—cure yourself of whining or dawdling, or whatever it be, and mind your sheep well,' said he, smiling sweetly in answer to the children's earnest looks as they caught his meaning, and if you do, you will not find it near so hard to deal with your great giant struggle when it comes." (95)

It is a young persons' lesson in Old Testament pastoral as a guide to living, the cute patness of Blanche's readiness with abstraction ("Wrong is a giant") implying regular drilling. Ethel takes the instruction to heart: "it suits me as well as the children. I have a great giant on Cocks Moor [the recalcitrance of the poor], and here I am, not allowed to attack him, because, perhaps, I am not minding my sheep, and letting my lion and my bear run loose about the house" (95). Characteristically, she lets allegory run past sober limits (lion and bear creating imaginary havoc in the home), and the moral she takes to herself is not the one Dr May was pressing on Tom and Blanche: yes, she should have an eye to ordinary duties (the "perhaps" demurs), but a "great giant" is abroad, hers to take on ...

The nursery distinction between Right and Wrong, sheep and predator is promptly thrown off kilter as Ethel, Richard, Flora and Mary return to Cocks Moor and encounter a Goliath in their way:

a sharp-faced woman stood in their path, with a little girl in her hand, and arrested them with a low curtsey, and not a very pleasant voice, addressing herself to Flora, who was quite as tall as Richard, and appeared the person of most consequence. "If you please, miss, I wanted to speak to you. I have got a little girl here, and I want to send her to school, only I have no shoes for her. [...] I want her to get some learning; as I am always saying, I'd never keep her away, if I had but got the clothes to send her in. I never lets her be running on the common, like them Halls, as it's a shame to see them in nice frocks, as Mrs. Hall got by going hypercriting about." (99)

The simple Biblical-pastoral concept of shepherding one's flock proves unsustainable in the face of rapacious self-interest and sly willingness to abuse other members of the flock. The "[h]orrid woman" (99) is stopped in her flow by the older May siblings, Flora and Richard, who tell Mrs Watts that clothes will follow on the children's attendance, not the other way around. The sharper implicit rebuke is from working-class self-assertion to middle-class patronage, shameless opportunism needling "bourgeois complacence" (as Empson would have it). Ethel's heart sinks "at the aspect of what she ha[s] undertaken", the lack of

grandeur in her first “enemy” a blow to her sense of what she is about: “She knew there would be evil, but she had expected it in a more striking and less disagreeable form” (99). Her sense of bathos, “evil” shrinking in stature, softens the moral correction by admitting a readiness to see what is childish, still, in her own moral heroics.

Of more narrative importance than the setback is the contrapuntal movement between piety and satire on the part of the implied author and Ethel herself—a movement characteristic of the Cocks Moor story. Building a Christian commitment to pastoral care into Ethel’s social activism while granting her the capacity to mock herself (in *The Trial*, she has developed a habit of mimicking the gargoyles on the church roof), the novel reconfigures what the mode is equipped to do within the dialogic form of the novel. Where, for Norman, pastoral’s simplicity makes it unreal, a space of ideal, essentially private accord between self and world in which one might be unproblematically happy and good (an illusion swiftly corrected by reality), for Ethel “the pastoral idea” (in Empson’s locution) retains serviceability, braced by satire and comedy. She, and others with her, learn from the gap between the simplification and the reality, adjusting youthful idealism around the discovery that motives are mixed and priorities will differ (poor women must clothe their children). Much of the Cocks Moor narrative, accordingly, is focused on the social obstacles to Ethel’s mission—rival do-gooders, for example, in the form of snobby women on the Ladies’ Committee whose principal educational involvement thus far has been fundraising for the National School and who see the new social-outreach venture as lowering the tone.

Read with an eye to Freudian theory, Ethel’s strenuous efforts to turn “wild”, “lawless”, “uncivilized” Cocks Moor (2, 3, 54) into a functioning parish are an obvious case of sublimation. Debarred by gender and familial circumstance from taking Norman’s route to university, pursuing her interests in classical studies or “earn[ing] money by writing [...]

romances” (25), she finds a socially-acceptable outlet for her intellectual, moral, and (in the Freudian view) sexual energies.¹⁰ Whenever she contemplates romance here, and in *The Trial*, she does so only to step back, putting commitment to her causes before personal happiness. The blocking of personal ambition resembles her brother’s case, but plays out differently: for her, this is the conscious price of effective social action—action that is desperately needed, personally energising, and teaches her the value of “social integration”; for him, it opens the door to a global stage of action, where professional advancement and domestic happiness can be imagined aligning, but where something seems missing in the way of personal investment¹¹ and where “social integration” will be greatly complicated by the politics of race and empire.

Schoolgirl Christian activism differs from schoolboy political activism, then, in its productively collective character and its unambiguous social benefits. Ethel’s siblings and various townspeople help, but her most ardent supporter is the girl who does most to refurbish “the pastoral idea”. Rich, pretty, good Meta Rivers is, from her first introduction, associated with the charm of English gardens and the restorative power of English rural scenes. With Meta, Yonge taps into a vein of feminised pastoral everywhere on display in *The Barnacle*: the home-produced magazine over which she presided as “Mother Goose” from its inception in 1862, welcoming contributions from young ladies who gave themselves pennames such as Albatross, Bog-Oak, Mockingbird, Ladybird, Gurgoyle and Frog, and decorated their submissions of poetry, prose fiction, and music with pastoral motifs.

¹⁰ For a Sedgwickian reading of *The Daisy Chain*, attentive to troubling undercurrents in the representation of Meta’s brother, see Cleere.

¹¹ For an excellent reading of Norman’s ill-suitedness for mission, see Walton, “Charlotte Yonge” (esp. 247).



Illustration accompanying "The Verdict of the Jury", *Monthly Packet* [unbound copy loose unnumbered pages, c. 1863/1864] Reproduced by kind permission of the Principal and Fellows of Lady Margaret Hall

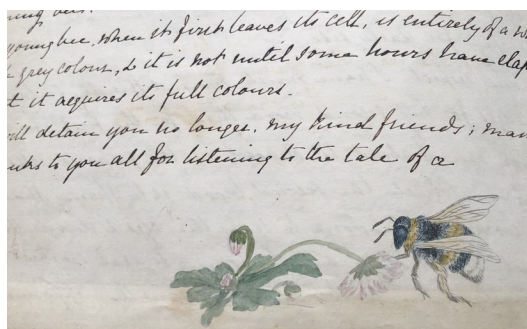


Illustration in lieu of signature for "Humble hearts have humble desires", *Barnacle Magazine*, Xmas 1863, Vol. II [unpaginated] Reproduced by kind permission of the Principal and Fellows of Lady Margaret Hall

First seen by Norman in the conservatory of her father's house, Meta is a sentimental heroine, a "beautiful little damsel" (143) in keeping with many of the *Barnacle* submissions and potentially as marginal. On learning that he has a sick sister, she cuts "sprays of beautiful geranium, delicious heliotrope, fragrant calycanthus, deep blue tree violet, and exquisite hothouse ferns; perfect wonders to Norman" (144).¹² Recounting the visit to

¹² On the pervasive floral imagery of the novel, the preoccupation with craftwork preservation of specimens, and wider thematic contextualisation in terms of taming the "wild", see Schaffer, "Taming the Tropics", esp. 207-8. On Yonge's familiarity with the work of Victorian female botanists, see Courtney, Walker Gore et al., esp. 47-8).

Margaret, he describes the conservatory in terms straight out of Spenser, Shakespeare, or Keats:

a real bower for a maiden of romance, with its rich green fragrance in the midst of winter. It is like a picture in a dream. One could imagine it a fairy land, where no care, or grief, or weariness could come, all choice beauty and sweetness waiting on the creature within. I can hardly believe that it is a real place, and that I have seen it. (150-51)

So curated a scene is, of course, a triumph of culture over nature—prettily allusive prose replicating the function of the conservatory in gathering, preserving, and displaying cultivated beauty.

Meta, however, is keen to put herself to the test of reality. “It cannot be right or safe to live so entirely at ease, and without contradictions” (264), she tells Ethel. Watching the Cocks Moor project develop, she presses to be involved. It is of a piece with Yonge’s dislike of unleavened homily¹³ that Meta has to withstand keen mockery from both ends of the social scale: from the Cocks Moor children, mimicry and disobedience; from Dr May, affectionate jibes at her eagerness to reject home comforts and her naiveté about what poor children will be like (“Miss Meta is obliged to take to envying the black-hole of Cocks Moor, instead of being content with the eglantine bowers of [her home] Abbotstoke!”; “you had an Arcadia of good little girls in straw hats [in mind], such as I see in Blanche’s little books” [239]). On Meta’s birthday, the May family, minus only Margaret, sets out with her to find an old Roman camp deep in the fields. Meta is ecstatic,

a brilliant little fairy [...] fluttering like a butterfly, and with the same apparent felicity in basking in joy, all gaiety, glee, and lightheartedness in making others happy. On they went, through honey-suckled lanes, catching glimpses of sunny

¹³ See Yonge, L to Anna Butler, contributor to *The Monthly Packet*, 15 June 1857: “I really believe that the Packet must steer clear of Puseyite name and discussion, and do what it does silently.” Jordan gives a judicious account of the Tractarian preference for “reserve” in public discussion of faith, while observing Yonge’s readiness to adapt the level of didacticism to different audiences.

fields of corn falling before the reaper, and happy knots of harvest folks dining beneath the shelter of their sheaves (273).

There is much more in this vein—painterly pastoral moralism, strongly reminiscent of the *Fairy Bower* (1841), by John Henry Newman's sister Harriet Mozley, then at the height of its popularity with young girls. But it is pastoralism quickly brought under critical pressure by the proliferating generic modality of the novel. Attempting to trace out the ruins of the old fort, the young people contemplate the “delightful possibility” that the place was “raised in the war with Caractacus, whence, argued Ethel, since Caractacus was certainly Arviragus, it must have been the very spot where Imogen met Posthumus again” (273). This is pastoral as a vehicle of chthonic literary nationalism—and death is even in Arcadia—with the critical rider that Yonge's version, like the model she invokes, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, is rife with dramatic and stylistic disturbance. It is not long before the archaeological artefacts are shown to be fake and then the whole scene blows open with the discovery of a surly dog (who steals half the picnic chicken) and a very hungry boy in need of help.

The Daisy Chain does not require Meta to abandon Arcadia. Rather, it makes her an exemplary figure of temperamental resilience, keeping pastoral's gifts of moral and spiritual simplification alive, re-energised by natural buoyancy and an easy way with comedy. She finds her true mission not among the Cocks Moor poor but in rescuing Norman from religious doubt. Horrified to discover when visiting Oxford that conversations with Harvey Anderson have led Norman into the “fog” of modern rationalism, Meta walks with him in Christ Church meadows encouraging him to turn his mind back to the fields: “it is all a fog up from books, books, books—I should like to drive it off with a good fresh gust of wind! Oh! I wish those yellow lilies would grow in our river!” (427). When they marry, her ardent hope helps sustain his: that mission work in New Zealand will enable them to make pastoral

simplification a source of strength, so that she too may be of use in the world—a “coffee-pot” and not “a China shepherdess” (597). A grounding regard for practicality has always anchored Meta’s “hummingbird” lightness (284), so it is apt that Yonge chooses, as the epigraph for the marriage chapter, Catherine Fanshawe’s parody of Gray’s “Elegy”:

Ye cumbrous fashions, crowd not on my head,
 Mine be the chip of purest white,
 Swan-like; and, as her feathers light,
 When on the still wave spread;
 And let it wear the graceful dress
 Of unadorned simpleness. (395)

The poem, much anthologised in the period, is a witty satire on the impossibility of simplicity in the modern marketplace—the speaker’s aspiration to purchase a simple white hat thwarted by the sophistications of the millinery trade: “The simplest bonnet in Pall Mall | Is sold for £1. 8s.” (Fanshawe, 37).¹⁴

As it happens, millinery is politically significant in the context to which Norman and Meta will be emigrating.

Māori activism:

Look again at the dancing black shapes in the field, and that “something like the waving of a flag” at the edge of Norman’s vision. It is an odd formulation: a flag it proves, and what else could it conceivably be?, the “something” more indicative of rising panic on the boy’s part than any real doubt about what he can be seeing. In the immediate dramatic scenario of the Randall’s Alley protest, dancing and flag waving are symbols of manifest freedom-loving Englishness, the boys claiming their ancient rights of wayfare in the face of new restrictions by a commercial property-owner. Although it is summer, there is a fifth-of-November atmosphere to the events, bonfire night being a flashpoint for town-gown conflicts, with

¹⁴ Yonge’s pre-1856 source is not known.

and without the provocation of anti-Catholicism, in the 1850s (Sharpe, 161, 165-66). But in the wider political outlook of this remarkably geo-politically aware novel, the protest conjures another political scene, inescapably vivid to those who bought and consumed Yonge's fiction 12,000 miles away in the Antipodes. In that context a British flag was not a symbol of triumph but a disputed symbol of sovereignty over indigenous Māori and a provocation to war.

A few chapters on from the account of bonfire night, Ethel describes another destruction of property by fire, another protest against encroachment on ancient liberties, just ten years earlier in northern New Zealand. Ethel is explaining to Meta that the May family has an antipodean branch:

“Uncle Arnott [...] was an officer at Edinburgh, and fell in love with Aunt Flora, but my grandfather Mackenzie thought him too poor to marry her, and it was all broken off, and they tried to think no more of it. But grandpapa died, and [...] somehow Mr. Arnott turned up again, quartered at Whitford, and papa talked over my Uncle Mackenzie, and helped them—and Mr. Arnott thought the best way would be to go out to the colonies. They went when New Zealand was very new, and a very funny life they had! Once they had their house burned in Heki's rebellion —and Aunt Flora saw a Maori walking about in her best Sunday bonnet; but, in general, everything has gone on very well, and he has a great farm, besides an office under government.” (277)

It is a spectacularly flippant piece of narration. The poor officer and the woman he loves escaped the class constraints on their union in this country by emigrating to the colonies. Such a “funny life”! Their house burned, with no more serious consequences than the boys' incineration of the brewer's fence, and they themselves treated to the sight of “A Maori walking about” in Flora's “best Sunday bonnet”. So comically narrated, the incident recalls young Harry May's misdemeanour, just a few pages earlier, when he presented himself to his sisters in disguise as “Miss Walkingham”, the young relative of a local dignitary, behaving bizzarely and earning a furious paternal chastisement for agitating his invalid sister (260-63).

In both instances, we are dealing with a quasi-theatrical narrative escapade geared toward young readers. In the Māori instance the comedy is palpably unstable.

The political reality behind Ethel's caricature of indigenous uprising was the first war between the northern Māori tribes and the British Colonial Office in New Zealand a decade before the writing and setting of *The Daisy Chain*. Fifteen years on from the Treaty of Waitangi, Colonial Office actions through the early 1840s had made clear to Māori chiefs a radical disparity between what they had thought they were doing in signing or putting their mark to the treaty (securing their freedom to pursue economic prosperity with the protection of the crown) and what that document signified in British law: the crown's preemptive power to force the sale of land, impose new laws and taxes, place restrictions on the felling of Kauri timber, and draw political power further south, starting with the removal of the capital from Kororāreka in Ipipiri/the Bay of Islands to Auckland. The launch point of the first Northern War was the cutting down of the Union Jack flagpole at Kororareka on 11 March 1845, by Hōne Heke (c. 1807/8-1850), leader of the Ngāpuhi tribe¹⁵—an act famously illustrated decades later (in the absence of contemporary images) by Arthur David McCormick for Reginald Horsley's *New Zealand: Romance of Empire*,¹⁶ part of John Lang's Romance of Empire Series for young readers.

¹⁵ See O'Malley, "'A Living Thing'" and *The Meeting Place*; and Moon.

¹⁶ Horsley was an Australian-born, London-based writer of young adult adventure stories; his illustrator specialised in naval and imperial subjects.



Heke fells the flagstaff at Kororareka
(Page 169)

McCormick, Arthur David, 1860-1943: 'Heke fells the flagstaff at Kororareka'. Illustration from *New Zealand: Romance of Empire* by Reginald Horsley ... with twelve reproductions in colour from drawings by A.D. McCormick, R.I. (London, T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1908). Reproduced by kind permission of Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Ref: A-004-037.

Heke's name quickly became "customar[y ...] shorthand" (the historian James Belich notes [29]) for what was in reality a complex political leadership involving three main Māori "divisions"¹⁷ whose degree of co-operation has long been argued over by historians. "Heke's rebellion", or "the Maori rebellion" as Yonge refers to it more accurately in a letter,¹⁸ was distinguished, Belich shows, by remarkable control and co-ordination on the rebel side until late in the day when the British defenders retreated by sea to Auckland and the remaining Māori plundered the town. This was the fourth and the most consequential time Heke had felled the British flag: a humiliating episode, which saw British forces in retreat, and a wedge driven not only between Māori and the British Colonial Office but between the Colonial Office and sections of the British public increasingly cognisant that New Zealand was home to indigenous tribes with their own fiercely defended "aspirations" (Yonge's subtitle).

A hinterland of textual evidence indicates that while *The Daisy Chain's* representation of activism in the felling of wooden posts and a flag recalls Hōne Heke—and Ethel's account of her aunt's history names him—the burning of the house and parading of the bonnet are demonstrably based on an earlier flaring up of anti-missionary sentiment during the intertribal war between Tauranga, Waikato, and Rotorua Māori which started in 1836.¹⁹ Yonge's source (directly or through intermediary report) was almost certainly the letters home of Lady Mary Ann Martin, the young wife of William Martin, first Chief Justice of New Zealand, and, at the time of Yonge's writing, becoming a friend of John Coleridge Patteson. In the 1870s, Lady Martin would be among the chief connections Yonge drew

¹⁷ See also Adams; and, for an important feminist corrective to the singular focus on Hōne Heke, Middleton's account of Heke's warrior wife.

¹⁸ L to Sir John Taylor Coleridge, 22 April 1872.

¹⁹ On the "Rotorua War", see Adams, 14; and Ballard, 499.

upon to compile her official *Life of Patteson* after his murder on Nukapu in the Solomon Islands (mistaken for a “blackbirder”²⁰) (Yonge, 1874: II, 126).

The young Lady Martin made serious efforts to hold her own intellectually alongside her husband and the missionary men who travelled out to New Zealand with her in 1841, including George Selwyn, newly appointed first Anglican bishop to New Zealand. These were men trained in the classics—in Selwyn’s and Martin’s cases exceptionally gifted in the acquisition of languages, and keen to understand Melanesian and Polynesian philosophy. Resources on board ship were limited, she recalled in *Our Maoris* (1884), based on her journals from the time: “no printed Maori grammar, only a manuscript grammar and vocabulary, and copies of St. Matthew’s Gospel, just printed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge” (2), but the group had a young Māori boy travelling home with them. “A walking dictionary” (2), he gave the young Mary Martin an early lesson in scepticism toward the inflated claims missionaries often made for their civilising accomplishments when writing back to mission headquarters in London.²¹ “He was not a favourable specimen”, she comments, having “been brought to England by a gentleman, [...] sent to school for two years”, but consigned to the care of the servants’ hall during the holidays. Once back in New Zealand “He left off English habits, with his English clothes, [...] and never sought for instruction or Christian teaching. However, he was very useful on board, and undertook to teach correct pronunciation, especially of the nasal “nga,” so hard to English tongues” (2-3).

Martin and her husband lived in close proximity with Māori, depending daily on Māori labourers for everything from the building of shelter to provision of food, counting

²⁰ “Blackbirder” was the name given to kidnappers looking to sell islanders on the international slave market.

²¹ See McKenzie (esp. 88). Recent scholarship has been alert to the variety and complexity of Pacific missionary discourse, and its exposure to both internal and external contemporary critique. See, for example, Smith, ch. 2, and Johnston, *passim*.

many Māori (men and women) among their friends, and receiving Māori dignitaries at home. By 1846, when sickness laid her low on a trip into the Tauranga and Rotorua (“Lake District”) bush and she had to be taken to Archdeacon Alfred Brown’s Tauranga Mission House,²² Martin was fluent enough to converse with Margaret, the Māori nurse and Christian convert appointed to look after her, who recalled being “sent to be the little slave-girl of a damsel of her own age entrusted to Mrs. Brown’s care” (100). From Mrs. Brown herself, Martin learned of the previous missionaries’ experiences in 1836:

“The Tauranga people came down with a war-party to take “utu” [revenge]. They not only attacked the Roto-rua natives, but they sacked the Mission station and burnt down the house. ... And then the Roto-ruas sacked the Tauranga Mission station.” Mrs. Chapman [Anna, wife of Thomas, founder of the first Rotorua mission] was staying with the Browns for rest and change, for her heart was sad through the terrible sights and scenes around her, when she heard the wild shouts of a war-party, headed by the renowned Maori chief, Waharoa (Long Mouth), as they returned in triumph home. She saw the men rushing by, loaded with spoils. One huge fellow had her neat, black silk bonnet (his only article of clothing) stuck on his head. (101-2)

The tone shifts markedly from the adoptive orientalism associated with the Māori convert/nurse to the eventful narration of the 1836 conflict as mediated initially by Anna Chapman, then at second hand by Charlotte Brown the Archdeacon’s wife, then again by Martin. Clearly the ur-source of Aunt Flora’s experiences, Chapman’s tale supplies the key incidents (the sacking and burning; the triumphant wearing of a lady’s bonnet by a Māori warrior). Fear—or the occasion for fear—is evident: two mission stations attacked; a wife taking refuge with her nearest English neighbours, two days’ journey away,²³ only to find that she is under threat again from the opposing tribe, and witnessing her bonnet—implicitly, it might have been herself—abducted as a trophy and now looking incongruously “neat” on a “huge”, naked warrior chief. The physical threat has, however, dissipated as

²² For biographical information about the Browns, see Jinty Rorke, “Brown, Alfred”, in Oliver.

²³ Philip Andrews, “Chapman, Anne Maria and Chapman, Thomas”, in Oliver.

history has crystallised into anecdote, and if the scene is not yet comedy it has the makings of comedy. A curiosity of settler experience, it is itself a kind of trophy, a specimen of romance that will circulate back at home where such stories are made safe.

Ethel's account of Aunt Flora's experience isn't entirely off key, in the sense that its humour retains something of the tonal uncertainty and the demand for reassurance in the underlying story. But the changes Yonge makes are significant. Almost all the Māori content (place names, personages, original language) drops away, so that what we are left with is that "customary shorthand" for the political complexity of cultural encounter in Aotearoa New Zealand, Hōne Heke's name, which now stands in for an event years earlier, as much inter-tribal as anti-British in character. The "renoun" of Te Waharoa leaves no mark, his wearing of the missionary wife's bonnet blurring with other instances of native hat-appropriation (a recurrent trope of settler children's-literature, H. A. Forde's *Across Two Seas* [1894] being a later New Zealand example). Hats have special symbolic resonance in Polynesian cultures (the contemporary critic Charlotte Muru-Lanning comments) where the head and anything related to it are *tapu* (sacred): for a Māori person to take a pākehā (white person – or, literally, parasite)'s hat is to take "a Pākehā wa[y] of doing things [...] modifying [...] to liberate and empower tangata whenua [the original people]". Ethel neutralizes that symbolism, offering a child's-eye view of empire in which the politics of land expropriation and racial conflict are not invisible—on the contrary, cartoonishly clear—but merit the bare minimum of political rumination. In lieu of tribal warfare, she conjures an image of a single Māori no longer "rushing by" on the war path, only "walking about" campily delighted by the English lady's bonnet.

At 15, Ethel is not, in our modern locution, quite a child, though the word had greater elasticity in Victorian usage than it does now. The effect of childish irresponsibility in

narration, coming from a clever, thoughtful, politically attuned young person is ironic—but the target of the irony is moot: her relatives? (whose prosperity as settlers in New Zealand is made to seem more a matter of luck than merit); *herself*? (for telling so naive a story of adventure in the South Seas). We can at least say that the object does not seem to be the Māori activist, more the naive simplicity of an idea of the colonies that led a young couple to consider New Zealand a “new” and open field for honest endeavour. If nothing else, the reworking of recent lived experience of conflict rests on knowledge of a complexity to the political field that underpinned and qualified Yonge’s ambition for her fiction to serve educational mission on a global scale. The most salient question this long-range simplification of Māori rebellion might leave us with is how far the novel expects its readers to be more geo-politically aware, more grown up, than Ethel or the girl she is speaking to, Meta.

It makes a difference to how we answer that question if we read *The Daisy Chain* in its first publishing context, *The Monthly Packet*, where Ethel’s reaching for the simplifications of imperial-pastoral was complicated by the internal dialogism of the novel *and* by the polyphonic form of the magazine. Pastoral was, to a striking extent, the default mode of submissions from New Zealand sent in to the *Monthly Packet* by missionary and settler correspondents and selected by Yonge for publication alongside the novel’s instalments. As critics have long appreciated, the basics of the English pastoral tradition—its concern with fields, pastures, care of the flock—took on new valence in the alien landscapes of the global south. In “New Zealand: A Drive in the Harikiwi Forest” (*MP* May 1854), an unnamed female settler in Wellington reports on a trip up the West coast by cart, heading out through thick native bush. Some of the scenery meets with approval in English horticultural terms (“ever-green leaves, all shining like varnish [...] a neat trim look, like a

gentleman's shrubbery") but the sheer size of the tree-ferns (not named, presumptively *mamaku* or *ponga*) throws the scale, imparting an *Alice in Wonderland* instability to things: "stems thirty feet high, [...] and the leaves at the top projecting like a monstrous umbrella" (395). More startling than the sense of English landscape criteria under strain is the explicitness of imperial-allegorical pastoral read-off: "the English grass clothes every vacant space" around the settler houses", Yonge's contributor observes, "its power of quickly destroying the strong native weeds quite symbolical of our English race in time overpowering the natives by mere force of progression" (396). Nothing about the experience that follows—finding lodging with Pākehā-Māori (white men adopting "native" wives and "native ways" [397]), near-death experiences fording the Otaki River—justifies the assertion. In retrospect, the conventionalising pastoral orientation of her opening looks absurd.

One New Zealand submission in particular speaks to the missionary orientation of *The Daisy Chain* as it negotiates the political field via pastoral. Not at first glance novelistic, the unsigned verses printed in February 1854 to celebrate "The Ordination of Rota", the first Māori admission to the Anglican clergy, put the conventions of ordination ritual and Anglican hymnology under strain, touching in elements of a political context absent from a subsequent prose report on the same event.²⁴ The poem opens with a startling twist on a standard rhetorical rejection of all empires but God's:

Oh, kneeling at a Christian shrine,
 Within thine own unconquered land;
 May God, the Pakeha's God, and thine
 Anoint thee with His grace divine,
 And touch thee with His wounded hand (ll. 1-5).

²⁴ For these and following details of Rota's life and its political context, see G. J. Dempsey, "Waitoa, Rota", in Oliver.

“Unconquered” gives full acknowledgement to an indigenous people who had, for the past 12 years, resisted the encouragements of the Colonial Office, and were increasingly showing signs of moving away from Christianity. (It would be Rota’s mission to try to bring them back within the church fold.) The bleeding brow and wounded hand of Christ constitute remarkable sympathetic gestures toward a history of ongoing political conflict, anti-imperial but also inter-tribal, that had shaped much of Rota’s life and would go on doing so, flaring into war in the mid 1860s and briefly forcing the abandonment of his work. Christ, who stood bleeding before Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judea, knew the brutality of empire (the poem reminds its reader), and now claims the Māori deacon as his own, stooping from “a victor’s golden throne” to wipe away the tears of “the dark-browed man”. The end is pastoral—Psalm 23—but not a retreat from the world, rather a source of restoration and re-empowerment:

God lead thee by the rivers fair,
And, should thy spirit faint with care,
Refresh thee—for alone He can. (ll. 23-5)

No first reader of *The Daisy Chain*, consuming the novel alongside these anonymous settler contributions from New Zealand writings, could be quite ignorant of the pressure of the antipodean context on the English pastoral imagination.

*

“Activism” is an anachronism. Only gradually in the 1920s, then with rapidity from the 1960s, did the word acquire a specific association with “the use of vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change” (*OED Online*; last revised 2010). To read a novel of the 1850s, explicitly representing a process by which young English boys and girls begin to acquire a mature understanding of political injustice as a local and a global phenomenon

and find routes into ameliorative action, is to open a critical window on the cultural history of the concept and its long permeation with student activism. In joining a local class-inflected schoolboy protest against encroaching mercantilism, to schoolgirl advocacy on behalf of democratic primary education, and linking both to twenty years of anti-imperial and inter-tribal war on the other side of the globe, this essay endeavours to sharpen the lineaments of the story this novel tells about grow up into a political engaged life.

In all three of the contexts where pastoral works in *The Daisy Chain* to frame and mediate political activity—the grammar school playground; the as-yet untamed fields around Cocks Moor; the settler landscapes of Aotearoa New Zealand—the significance of its literary offer to simplify the political field lies principally in the subsequent move to dismiss that simplification and restore conflict. The critical claim here is not that pastoral must *per se* be immature (Meta's ability to fortify her activism through deliberate recourse to pastoral shows otherwise; so does Ethel's gradual tuning of Biblical pastoral didacticism to engage across class differences). Rather, the offsetting of real-world complexity and pastoral simplification offers a series of site-specific discursive calibrations of the competence of political agents within their fields of political action. Read sceptically, as pastoral must be in a context where other voices and modes are always in play, the move to make things simpler is most clearly legible in this novel as a narrowly entitled "English" impulse (which may be radical or conservative)—indicative, to Yonge's way of thinking, of psychological and political immaturity. In the domestic case, the immaturity is to be expected: a normative facet of growing up, somewhat differentiated along gender lines. The grammar-school boy will, if he lives his life well, outgrow the impulse toward destructive protest; his sisters are well placed to help him mobilize pastoral on behalf of stronger social integration through universal education. In the imperial case, English pastoral is under less manageable strain.

Its long-range simplifications are palpably inadequate to the actual encounter with an indigenous society whose internal political complexity and just cause of rebellion leave imperial-domestic pastoral looking *at best* childish: the incompetent gesture toward politics in a novel willing to own incompetence.

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