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DIPLOMAMUNKA

Elveszett Gyermekkor:
A Gyermek Migránsok Traumatikus Élményei Ausztráliában és Identitás Keresésük
Lost Childhood:
The Traumatic Experiences of Child Migrants in Australia and Their Search for Identity

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the relation of trauma and identity in the context of the British child migration schemes to Australia. It has investigated what kind of traumatic experiences the child migrants had to endure and how these experiences formed or deformed their identity. In addition, the paper examines the former child migrants' desperate search for their identity in their adult life, observing the underlying motivations and the expected result of this search. The thesis mainly uses the statements and testimonies of former child migrants included in Margaret Humphreys's *Empty Cradles* (1994) and *Lost Children of The Empire* (1989) written by Philip Bean and Joy Melville. In order to provide the reader with a clearer understanding, child migrant characters from works of fiction are introduced as examples at certain points off the paper. The thesis concludes that British child migrants suffered a series of traumas, such as dehumanisation, double rejection, maltreatment, neglect and abuse, and that these left a lasting impact on the migrants' identity. The paper also concludes that since the traumatic experiences were layered, the cure for the child migrants' traumas must be similarly complex.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

1. Historical Background 5

1.1 The Concise History of Child Migration 5

1.2 A Brief History and Definition of Trauma 8

2. The Not-Yet-Human: Dehumanisation and The Ideology Behind Child Migration 11

3. The Abandoned: Double Rejection and The Loss of Trust 20

4. The Survivor: Conditions, Maltreatment, Child Labour and Abuse in The Australian Institutions 29

5. The Somebody: Search for Identity and Acceptance of Loss 40

Conclusion 49

Works Cited 51

Introduction

Child migration is still an obscure episode in Australian history. This is surprising since child migration did not happen sometime in the early years of Australia's white history, but had been a practice present for a considerable time, since the beginning of this white history until the 1970s. During this interval, tens of thousands of British children were forcibly deported from English and Irish orphanages by different agencies such as the Fairbridge Society, Barnardo's, the Salvation Army, the Church of England or the Catholic Church, with the knowledge of Her Majesty's Government, and were placed in institutions established at various points of Australia (Jay et al 55). Child migration received public attention when in the late 1980s Margaret Humphreys started uncovering the truth about post-war child migration. Articles, books (such as Humphreys's 1994 *Empty Cradles*), a documentary and a mini series were published in the following years and both the British and the Australian government launched official investigations. Public attention turned once more toward child migrants when in 2009 Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised officially on behalf of the nation to former child migrants. His apology was followed by Prime Minister Gordon Brown's apology in 2010 on behalf of the British government. In the same year, director Jim Loach released his debut feature film *Oranges and Sunshine* which portrays the first years of Margaret Humphreys's work with former child migrants. Despite the loads of official reports, literary works, film and media, child migration is still not a widely known topic either in Australia or Britain, or worldwide.

Although some research has been conducted on the topic of child migration, the themes discussed in detail in this paper only appear on the level of mention in these studies and not as a cohesive whole. This paper concentrates on the relation between trauma and identity in the context of child migration and wishes to answer two interrelated questions: What kind of traumatic experiences did child migrants have to endure and how did these shape their identity? Can the recovery of one's identity be the ultimate cure for these traumas?

The two main sources which serve as the basis of the paper are *Lost Children of the Empire* (1989) written by Philip Bean and Joy Melville, and *Empty Cradles* (1994) by Margaret Humphreys. The first one gives the comprehensive historical background of child migration, discusses the various motivations behind the schemes and introduces several testimonies by former child migrants. The latter one is Humphreys's account of roughly the first seven years of her investigation into child migration. Humphreys tells how she became engaged with child migration and how she founded and ran the Child Migrants Trust. She included many of the interviews she had had with former child migrants, in addition, the stories of some child migrants, such as Pamela Smedley, Harold Haig or Desmond, are described in detail.

Fictional works construct the second group of sources. One of these works is *The Leaving of Liverpool* (1992) a two-part mini series written by John Alsop and Sue Smith and directed by Michael Jenkins. The series tells the story of two children, Lily and Bert, who are forcibly deported from a Liverpool orphanage to Australia where they are placed in different institutions. Bert's background is unclear, but Lily is obviously not an orphan for it is her mother who takes her to the English orphanage and intends to

leave her daughter there for only six months. Although neither Bert nor Lily embody a specific child migrant, their characters are not purely fictional. In fact, the writers of the drama wanted to consult with Humphreys, but as she was too busy at the time, they turned to the former child migrants for help (Humphreys 302-303). This way the character of Bert and Lily stand for a generalised but realistic experience of child migrants. The second work of fiction is Lesley Pearse's novel *Trust Me* (2001) in which Pearse tells the story of two sisters, Dulcie and May, who are first placed in institutional care in England then transported to Australia without the knowledge or consent of their father. Bruce Blyth, founder of VOICES (Victims of Institutionalised Cruelty, Exploitation and Supporters), wrote an afterword for the novel which he closes with the following words: "*Trust Me* may be fiction, but every word is engraved with the truth" (Pearse 1355). Last but not least, the third fictional work analysed is *Oranges and Sunshine* (2010) directed by Jim Loach. The film is basically an adaptation of Humphreys's *Empty Cradles*, though there are minor changes, for instance, the names of former child migrants are altered (but they are easily recognisable). Agutter claims that the historical accuracy of the film is also reinforced by the fact that the characters describe their experiences as if they read from the *Lost Innocents Report* (Agutter 156).

The inclusion of these fictional works aims at providing the reader with a clearer, more complex insight into the experiences of child migrants. Though the statements of real-life child migrants are crucial, due to their fragmentary nature, it would be difficult to draw a comprehensible picture of the complexities of this topic using only these sources.

The third group of sources can be called secondary. Works in this group vary from studies written specifically on child migrants, for example, the research of Fernandez or McPhillips, to studies published about institutional care in general, like Barry Coldrey's works, to the writings dealing with more general issues such as Maria Kronfeldner's work on the concept of humanity and dehumanisation or Judith Butler's thoughts on mourning. The works of Barry Coldrey, who was a Christian Brother once himself, are included and used in order to balance the paper's standpoint.

The paper comprises five chapters. The first chapter serves as a basis, it gives a short introduction of the history of child migration and attempts to summarise the history of trauma studies. The second chapter describes the ideology behind child migration and the approach of authorities, agencies and staff members, in one word, of adults toward children. It is claimed that children had not been considered to be human and that this concept did not only enable adults to treat child migrants as less than human, but also made child migrants regard themselves as such. Subsequently, the third chapter discusses the theme of double rejection. This is a theme which appears often in works dealing with the child migration (e.g. Humphreys), but is never discussed in great depth. Many a child migrant felt that they had not only been abandoned by their families but their country had rejected them as well. This feeling of double rejection was mostly the result of the indifference and the practices of the agencies involved and it shaped the child migrants' image of themselves greatly. The fourth chapter deals with a widely investigated topic, the abuse, maltreatment and neglect of the child migrants in the institutions. In addition, the chapter looks at various ways of reacting to these different types of coping mechanisms. It is important to note that these traumatic

experiences also influenced the migrants' identity. Finally, the last chapter addresses the topic of identity directly. The question of identity is examined in the context of Dominick LaCapra's theory about absence and loss, and the possible ways of working through trauma. Lastly, the paper examines Margaret Humphreys's work, its process and how and to what degree it was able to help former child migrants overcome their traumatic experiences.

1. Historical Background

1.1 The Concise History of Child Migration

Child migration from Britain to its colonies began as early as the 17th century. The first group of unwanted children crossed the Atlantic ocean from Liverpool to Virginia in 1618 as a response to the colony's request for labourers (Bean and Melville 59). The transportation of unwanted children to the colonies remained sporadic for the following two hundred or two hundred and fifty years. The reason behind transportation this time was partly political and partly economic. The unwanted children who were a burden in the mother country were considered to be useful to populate the colonies.

In the 19th century child transportation gained new momentum thanks to the 'child savers'. These individuals advocated, moreover, organised the migration of children in need, believing that the new environment provides new opportunities and is beneficial for the mind and body of the deprived minors. Among these benefactors the most influential were Annie Macpherson, Maria Rye and dr Thomas John Barnardo. The latter was not scared even of taking children from their parents and called this

devoted work of his “philanthropic abduction” (Bean and Melville 86). Children in this philanthropic period were mainly transported to Canada, because Australia was not regarded as a morally safe place for children due to the 1851 gold rush (Bean and Melville 74).

In the beginning of the 20th century Kingsley Fairbridge added a new dimension to child migration. His vision was to train deprived British children to become farmers and farmers’ wives in the countries of the empire (Bean and Melville 137). Fairbridge farm schools were established in Canada, Southern Rhodesia and Australia as well (for example Molong and Pinjara). In the inter-war years the Christian Brothers order also joined the agencies involved in the child migration schemes and established four institutions in Western Australia: Bindoon, Clontarf, Castledare and Tardun (Bean and Melville 155). However, when Canada announced it would not accept any more child migrants because of the start of the Depression in the 1920s, agencies had to transfer their migration schemes to other parts of the Empire. The most favourable destination became Australia, but children were still sent to New Zealand and Rhodesia, though in much smaller numbers. Until 1970 approximately 150,000 unaccompanied children, placed originally in British orphanages and homes, had been transported to orphanages and children’s homes abroad without the consent or knowledge of their parents. Although the exact number of children sent to different parts of the British Empire and later to the Commonwealth is still not known, it is certain that the majority of the children were not orphans and that the transportation of British children reached its climax in the 1940s and 1950s as an aftermath of the Second World War.

Decades later, in 1986, Nottingham social worker Margaret Humphreys received a letter in which a woman claimed she had been sent to Australia by the British government at the age of four (Humphreys 1). Humphreys began searching for the woman's birth certificate but soon realised that the woman's case was not unique, in fact, thousands of people were in the same situation. In 1987 the Child Migrants Trust was founded by Humphreys to uncover the truth about the child migration schemes and to find birth certificates and, if possible, remaining family members of the former child migrants. In order to raise public awareness of the issue, the Trust published its first book *Lost Children of the Empire* written by Philip Bean and Joy Melville in 1989. The book was soon followed by the acclaimed mini series *The Leaving of Liverpool* (1992) which was broadcast both in Australia and Britain.

The injustices done to child migrants were officially acknowledged by the Australian and the British government in the 2000s. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered Australia's apology on 16 November 2009, while British Prime Minister Gordon Brown issued a formal apology on 24 February 2010. Nevertheless, the child migrants' story is still not a closed chapter of history. The Child Migrants Trust with Margaret Humphreys as its Director is continuously working to help former child migrants, though family reunifications are currently hindered by the covid-19 pandemic (*Child Migrants Trust*).

1.2 A Brief History and Definition of Trauma

The word 'trauma' has its origins in Ancient Greek, in which it meant 'wound' in the word's literal sense (Eyerman 42). In the 1990s, Cathy Caruth, one of the most prominent figures in Trauma Studies defined trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (181). Clearly, a lot of time had to elapse and a lot of changes had to take place in the world in order to transform trauma's original meaning from a physical wound into its present day meaning of a psychological one.

The first significant contributor to trauma studies is considered to be John Erichsen who examined the psychological effects of railway accidents on people in the 1860s. Erichsen was soon followed by such well-known names as Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet who promoted the better understanding of trauma by their explorations on hysteria and the probable underlying causes. The interest in trauma was wavering in the 20th century. Three major historical events, the First World War, the Second World War (mainly the Holocaust) and the Vietnam War have drawn and renewed the attention of psychology professionals onto this subject again and again. PTSD (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) was first included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980, launching a tsunami of works on trauma. By the 1990s trauma had become a widely discussed and debated topic influenced by feminism and other political movements (Schönfelder 42-43). Despite the

repeated interest, the focus of consequent research remained on men for a significant time, while women and children were heavily marginalised. For instance, it was not until the middle of the 1970s that the 'abused child syndrome' was identified (Schönfelder, 44).

Trauma is a highly complex phenomenon. According to Caruth, it is not exactly the overwhelming experience which the victim senses as traumatic, but there is an "inherent latency" within it which, afterward, makes the occurrence experienced as a trauma (187). Moreover, it is not the traumatic experience alone that induces symptoms, but the even more harmful repression of memories about the event (Eyerman, 42). Therefore, however dreadful, incomprehensible and overwhelming an experience might be, in reality it depends on the period afterwards whether the experience either turns into a bad memory or a trauma. Similarly to a physical wound which festers if untended, a mental wound undetected and untreated can have ruinous effects on the victim leading to the "dissolution of the self" and the "disruption between the self and others" (Balaev, 150). What is more, evidence shows that trauma, especially childhood trauma, and psychotic disorders are linked (Lasalvia and Tansella 282).

Judith Herman makes a difference between children and adults regarding trauma's effects on their personality: "repeated trauma in adult life erodes the structure of personality already formed, but repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality" (96). Children with their personality still in formation are more vulnerable to trauma than adults who have a mature personality. It is of significance to point out Herman's use of 'repeated trauma', as one traumatic experience might not lead to the deformation of one's personality, but a series of such experiences can cause great

damage. Child migrants had to endure a sequence of distinct traumas, beginning with the rejection of their parents and country, through the harsh conditions and inhuman treatment at the children's homes.

Regarding recovery, Australia's National Centre of Excellence in Posttraumatic Mental Health writes the following on their website 'Phoenix Australia': "Traumatic events are common and most people will experience at least one during their lives. Most people recover with the help of family and friends, but there are effective treatments for those needing extra support" ("Recovering from Trauma"). Compared to an average person, child migrants were in an enormously disadvantageous situation as they had to cope with not only one, but multiple traumatic experiences, in most cases alone, without the support of family or friends. As 'Phoenix Australia' suggests in the quote above, there are situations in which even the support of family and friends are not enough and professional help is needed. This is well observable in case, for instance, of those fictional child migrant characters who happen to have a close friend or a family member beside them. Though Lily, of *The Leaving of Liverpool*, does everything in her power to support Bert, the boy cannot work through his trauma. Likewise May and Ross, two of the child migrant characters in Pearse's novel *Trust Me*, cannot let go of the past despite Dulcie's efforts. These three characters stuck in the past exemplify well the situation of many real-life child migrants who were in desperate need of professional help.

2. The Not-Yet-Human: Dehumanisationn and The Ideology Behind Child Migration

"At Fairbridge you were just a number" (Humphreys 87). "We all stepped down that gangplank like sheep. And we were actually sorted out like sheep" (Bean and Melville 183). There are hundreds of testimonies in which former child migrants formulate something similar in one way or another to these two quotes. Child migrants were dehumanised, they were not treated as human beings, but as lifeless objects or animals.

Although regarding and treating children as something less than human seems unreasonable by the 21st century standards of the western world, the long lasting indifference toward children in trauma studies mentioned in the previous chapter proves just the opposite. The truth is that children have been excluded from the notion of humanity at times throughout history (Davies 131). Even highly influential philosophers like Immanuel Kant or Jean-Francois Lyotard questioned the humanness of children.

Kant was an old bachelor and as such was annoyed both by women and children. Nevertheless, beside his personal reasons, he justified this dislike in philosophical terms. In Kant's eyes only an autonomous person counts as "properly human", while the child (and the woman) is a liminal figure between the world of animals and that of humans. The child is still immature and dependent, he/she resembles an animal and, therefore, "is not yet, but will become" a properly human, autonomous individual (Cavarero 26-29).

Though it is a fact that the ideas of Kant had affected Lyotard's thinking, still it is amazing that their views on children do not differ significantly despite the two hundred years of distance between them. Lyotard in his book *The Inhuman* also writes about the not-yet-human status of children, elaborating on the reasons behind this liminal state:

> Shorn of speech, incapable of standing upright, hesitating over its objects of interest, not able to calculate its advantages, not sensitive to common reason, the child is eminently the human because its distress heralds and promises things possible. Its initial delay in humanity, which makes it the hostage of the adult community, is also what manifests to this community the lack of humanity it is suffering from, and which calls on it to become more human (qtd. in Davies 135).

The characteristics or rather the inabilities listed by Lyotard are true for children, nevertheless to equal these with the label 'not human' and to exclude children from humanity based on this list is problematic. Setting, for example, the ability of speech, of standing upright or of being sensitive to common reason, as a criteria for being human would result in qualifying a mute person, a disabled person in a wheelchair or a mentally impaired person somewhat less than human as well. To determine the general criteria for being human is nearly impossible and is not the aim of this paper.

Defining the characteristics of humanness is almost impossible because, as Maria Kronfeldner argues, humanity is a purely functional concept and as such its content changes according to the changing context. Its function is to include and

exclude, in other words, to determine who we humans are and who those others, less than humans are (2). In case of Kant and Lyotard who were autonomous, erudite grown men, the content of the concept of humanity certainly included the characteristics: independent, knowledgeable, educated, experienced, mature and preferably male. Consequently, the 'other' had to be the dependent, ignorant and immature creature. To the two philosophers' credit, they both saw the potential in children becoming 'human', thus it is very probable that they did not want to dehumanise anyone deliberately. In any case Kant and Lyotard did just that to children by "drawing a line between individuals or groups […] According to an assumed concept of what it means to be human" (Kronfeldner, 3).

This underlying but general approach toward children had been present throughout the centuries of child migration as well. In fact, the ideology behind the child migration schemes can be drawn up using the three dimensions of dehumanisation defined by Kronfeldner: "seemingly factual belief", "emotive evaluation" and "behavioural consequence" (3). Interestingly enough, while explaining the first dimension, Kronfeldner gives the example of women who may be excluded from humanity because they are seen as *childlike*, meaning they are *not entirely human.*

This first dimension basically means overgeneralisation. Generally speaking, the above mentioned view of the two philosophers can be seen as overgeneralisation, since neither Kant nor Lyotard made a difference between, for instance, a two-year-old and a twelve-year-old child, who, following the philosophers' logic, should certainly be in different stages of "becoming human". However, children who were singled out for migration had become the subject of further generalisations. All these children had been

living in some kind of an institution for shorter or longer time before their migration, but this did not mean that they were all orphans. In fact, there were various reasons behind their institutionalisation. Such an underlying reason for placement is portrayed by Charlotte and Vera's story in *Oranges and Sunshine* (2010). Vera became an unwed mother in the 1940s which at that time was considered to be a huge shame. At least Vera's mother thought so and did not let her daughter keep baby Charlotte. Pearse's child migrant characters, Dulcie and May also have a living father, though imprisoned, and Lily of *The Leaving of Liverpool* is only left in the children's home for six months by her mother, for the time she is working.

Humphreys makes a shocking statement about the number of child migrants who were actually orphans, saying "after researching thousands of cases in the past seven years, I can safely say that I have found only one child migrant whoo could properly have been called an orphan" (492). Authorities and organisations involved in the migration schemes disregarded the differences between the family circumstances of children completely and labelled all of them as 'orphan' making them seen more unfortunate and dependent, consequently less human.

The second dimension is the 'dehumanisers'' emotional reaction to the previously overgeneralised group. From an outsider's point of view, the obvious emotional response toward 'orphan' children would be pity. However, as Coldrey highlights when writing about institutional care, orphanages and other child-related institutions were established not for the sake of the children, but to protect "respectable society" from these children in the first place ("Extreme" 96). The 'orphan' children, whose numbers had grown considerably due to the Second World War, were seen as a

threat to society, because they were thought to be all poor, lower class and born outside marriage (yet another example of overgeneralisation). Hence, the emotional response to children living in orphanages were, beside pity, fear, contempt and superiority.

Lastly, the third dimension of dehumanisation is the actual action following from the other two dimensions, taken for, but most likely against, the other group or individual. The objective of children's homes, pre 1950s, was generally "to change, to reform, to remould the children" (Coldrey, "Extreme" 97). Though a larger scale project, the child migration schemes had a similar aim, to take children useless in Britain (and an economic burden for the country) and transform them into something useful in other parts of the empire and later the commonwealth. A former child migrant, who at the age of twelve had been asked whether he would like to go to Australia, New Zealand or Canada, realising he did not have a real choice said: "children in that day and age were not considered to be quite human, but rather some sort of creature to be whipped into shape as they matured" (Bean and Melville 226). The initiators behind the schemes realised the potential in children: if placed to the 'right' spot and reared in the 'right' way, the children can become the 'right' type of human once they grow up.

Australia was badly in need of people after the Second World War. During the war the country had to realise that its small population was not enough to protect such a vast land against the 'yellow peril'. Arthur Calwell, then Minister for Immigration, announced the new migration schemes in 1947, and the slogan for Australia became 'Populate or perish!'. In the spirit of the still living white Australia policy (1901) the preferable immigrants were white and if possible British. The most attractive refugees were selected for migration from Europe's displaced persons' camps by Calwell's men.

British people received either assisted passage or, if the applicant was an ex-serviceman, even a free voyage to Australia (Clarke 269). This was the biopolitical context into which the British 'orphan' children fitted perfectly.

The Archbishop of Perth welcomed migrant boys from Britain in 1938 with the following words:

> At a time when empty cradles are contributing woefully to empty spaces, it is necessary to look for external sources of *supply*. And if we do not *supply from our own stock* we are leaving ourselves all the more exposed to the menace of the teeming millions of our neighbouring Asiatic races (Humphreys 13, emphasis mine).

The quote above is interesting from multiple point of views. It is explicitly racist, it expresses Australia's fear of an Asian invasion and that it was partially this fear that set migration schemes into motion. Last but not least it shows the way migrant children were regarded. The roles were reversed, vulnerable children in need of support became the support Australia needed, they became the "good British stock", the "bricks for empire building" (Bean and Melville 134-135, 188).

In the mini series *The Leaving of Liverpool* there is a remarkable scene which symbolises the whole idea of building an empire of children's bodies. Lily has already been placed in the Star of the Sea Orphanage by her mother and there is a celebration of Empire Day going on. Girls are dressed up in the colours of the Union Jack and are instructed to assume humiliating postures thus forming, literally with their bodies, the words EMPIRE DAY 1951. All along they have to sing and stay still and if one tries to raise her head it is pushed down by the cane of a staff member. His motions are

unconcerned, as if he was not a carer dealing with girls, but a mason adjusting some oblique bricks in a wall or a shepherd handling some unruly lambs.

This duality of regarding the child migrants either as inanimate objects or animals, already demonstrated in the two quotes at the very beginning of this chapter, was prevalent both in the underlying ideology of the schemes and the treatment of the children before, during and after migration. The two views correspond with the two forms of dehumanisation defined by Nick Haslam who used the two senses of humanness as a basis of his analysis. He identifies animalistic dehumanisation as the denial of uniquely human (UH) characteristics. These UH characteristics are those distinguishing humans from animals and thus are associated with culture, civility, refinement, morality and socialisation, qualities developed and not born with (256-257). The dehumanisation of child migrants fall mainly into this form, since children, exemplified by the thoughts of Kant and Lyotard, have been excluded from the concept of humanness based on the lack of the exact characteristics enumerated by Haslam. Children selected for migration were degraded to the level of live stock. Pamela Smedley, a former child migrant, expressed her indignation saying it was still unbelievable to her “that someone could walk into a classroom in England, pluck you out, take you to Australia […] You do that to animals - you sell them off and cart them away - but not children. You don’t do that to children” (Humphreys 171).

The other form of dehumanisation identified by Haslam is the mechanistic one and is the result of the denial of human nature (HN) characteristics. These are not unique to humans, but are essential and inherent, such as warmth, openness, individual agency and emotionality (256-258). However improbable it seems to deny such

characteristics as openness or emotionality from children, child migrants were actually the subject of mechanistic dehumanisation. Likening children to inanimate objects as bricks has already been mentioned. There was also a child migration organiser who went even a step further and suggested that child migration should belong to the Department of Natural Resources rather than the Director of Child Welfare (Bean and Melville 103). Though the suggestion was never accepted, the fact that the idea of putting children in the same category as minerals or forests could emerge at all is an unquestionable evidence for mechanistic dehumanisation.

The dehumanisation of children did not cease on the level of ideology and scheming but continued in practice. Partially it was dehumanisation responsible for the violence and abuse against children in the care institutions and later on the farms the youth were sent to work. Although Barry Coldrey did not have dehumanisation in particular in his mind when writing about the institutional care of children, still the two different models he outlines are connected to animalistic and in a way to mechanistic dehumanisation. The first, 'rescue model' corresponds with Haslam's animalistic form of dehumanisation: the children were regarded as wild, savage creatures who had to be civilised, Coldrey uses the metaphor of animal taming to clarify his point ("Devoted" 10). The cruel beatings, the practice of locking children into small pen-like places, and the just enough food all reflect the animal taming aspect.

The other model in traditional child care, according to Coldrey, was the 'medical treatment' one in which the child had to be separated from the bad influences of his/her parents or the city and had to be placed in a sterile, protected place, preferably somewhere in a rural environment, like Australia, where he or she could strengthen

("Devoted" 10). In a sense this model is connected to Haslam's mechanistic form of dehumanisation, as, for instance, doctors often dehumanise their patients this way, in order to detach themselves from the patients, to be indifferent (253). The mass tonsillectomy operation scene in *The Leaving of Liverpool* can be seen both literally and metaphorically as the manifestation of this medical-mechanistic dehumanisation. Children go for the operation one after another as if they were commodities on a conveyor belt and the medical staff does their work indifferently. Metaphorically, the removal of the tonsils can stand for the protection against the bad influences since infected tonsils can cause illnesses.

However, I would suggest another, third form of dehumanisation related to the medical treatment model, in which the dehumaniser denies the human body and bodily needs of the other and only acknowledges the spiritual part of them. This 'ethereal' form of dehumanisation was typical mainly for 19th century 'child savers,' Annie Macpherson and Maria Rye, nevertheless it was also present in 20th century institutions run by religious orders, where prayers dominated children's lives. These were more important than sleep or food, and making a mistake in a prayer entailed cruel punishment (Bean and Melville 89, 232-233, Humphreys 548). As humans are composed of both a spiritual part (psyche) and a physical part (body), disregarding one of these is dehumanising. Since Haslam defined mechanistic dehumanisation as the denial of inherent human characteristics, the ethereal form of dehumanisation, the denial of physical human characteristics, can be seen as the other extreme on the scale.

Dehumanisation was a traumatic experience in itself for child migrants, but in addition to that for many child migrants it lead to further traumatic experiences such as

neglect, verbal, physical and/or sexual abuse. In many cases dehumanisation extended beyond the years at the child care institutions exactly because of the institutionalisation. The stigma of being an 'orphan' reared in a children's home accompanied the child migrants throughout their lives, serving as a base for dehumanisation. The way Dulcie from *Trust Me* is treated at her first workplace, arranged by the mother superior of the Australian institution she had been sent, exemplifies this ongoing dehumanisation. Dulcie finds sleeping in a shed and eating leftover food grievous, because "it stated that Pat [wife of the farmer] regarded her as on a level with the dogs outside" (Pearse 412). A stigmatised person is always perceived by others as "not quite human" (McPhillips 80).

The irony of the child migration schemes was that dehumanisation happened wrapped into slogans like 'the best interest of the children' and promises for a happier, healthier and more humane life on the other side of the world. It is as Tony Davies put it in *Humanism*: "It is almost impossible to think of a crime that has not been committed in the name of humanity" (131).

3. The Abandoned: Double Rejection and The Loss of Trust

"'What did we do wrong?' she asked, 'Can you find out why they sent me? What did I do wrong?'" (Humphreys 15). Like many other child migrants, Pamela Smedley had sought the answers to these questions for many years convinced that some way she brought transportation upon herself as a punishment for some unknown, horrible deed. On the organisers' part the migration schemes were not meant to be

punishment at all, on the contrary, they saw the schemes as a solution beneficial for everyone involved. This discrepancy between the children's perception and the organisers' intention was yet again the result of dehumanisation discussed in the previous chapter. In fact, if somebody is sent away as a punishment for committing a crime, this somebody is necessarily recognised as an individual responsible for his or her actions, however, as it has been stated, children selected for migration were not seen as individuals but as an overgeneralised mass of 'orphans'. The child migrants nevertheless thought the fault must be in them, since otherwise the double rejection they had to endure would have been utterly incomprehensible.

Orphan in the word's literal meaning, or not, the children sent to Australia after the Second World War had been left in British institutional care for some reason or another by their parents. Len in O*ranges and Sunshine* (a character based on real life child migrant Desmond appearing in Humphreys's book), pronounces the truth, or rather what he has believed to be true, when saying the children did not end up in Australian children's homes by some accident: "Well, the truth is, our mums shot through, didn't they? We didn't just fall out of our prams and fly off with Peter Pan, did we? Our mums didn't want us. That's why we're here. Isn't that the truth? (*Oranges and Sunshine* 00:53). Seemingly Len is a self-confident and quite unpleasant man, nevertheless in reality he only tries to shield the "hurt little boy" inside him with his bold manners (*Oranges and Sunshine* 00:51). This appears not only in his behaviour but in the way he speaks, for instance, in his quoted sentences above. Len wants to be seen as a cool, indifferent person who is not afraid of facing the truth. However, the statements that start so confidently all turn into questions by the end: 'didn't they?', 'did

we?' or 'Isn't that the truth?:'. Though these can be interpreted simply as rhetorical devices, but considering Len's past these questions reveal the confusion and uncertainty inside him residing there since his childhood. Most probably Len has tried to figure out why he was left by his mother in institutional care, and the answers he has come up with were most likely along the lines of being unwanted, unworthy of love or not good enough for his mother.

Naturally, in most of the cases the situation was much more complicated than that. A 2019 research on British child migrants in Australian care, lead by Professor Elizabeth Fernandez recovered that abandonment was only in 20 percent of the cases the reason behind the placement in care. It was overtaken by such reasons as the parents' inability to cope, effects of the war, the parents' marital problems, the parents' death and housing or financial difficulties (529). With hindsight and from an outsider's point of view these reasons all seem plausible, but for a child, at the time of his or her placement in an institution these were hardly reasonable or logical, only the feeling of abandonment and worthlessness made sense.

Near the end of the novel *Trust Me,* Dulcie makes a bitter remark about the credibility of the child migrants, saying that many people "assume all orphans are human rejects and not to be believed" (1338). This comment connects dehumanisation and the sense of rejection. The children were not only perceived as less than human by the initiators of the migration schemes and staff of the institutions, but believed themselves to be less than human due to their supposed abandonment. Former child migrant Desmond's thoughts as a child in Clontarf support this argument: "I suddenly realized that I was no longer a human being. I became a nonentity. […] The core of me

had died and I had this shell; the shell of God's brave little soldier. A mechanical toy" (Humphreys 331).

The incomprehensibility of the parents' rejection, the long years spent in ignorance of the reasons behind the rejection turned this experience into a traumatic one for many child migrants. The lies told by the staff of the various organisations about the parents' indifference aggravated the situation even more and caused more harm to the children. Even those children were deceived and thus hurt by these lies who had known the reason for their placement. Lily, one of the main characters in *The Leaving of Liverpool*, for instance, is told by her mother that she only has to stay in the orphanage for six months. Lily holds on to this promise for a very long time, she denies to take part in the 'game' in which the children have to choose where they would like to go (Australia, Canada or Rhodesia), she tries to run away to avoid transportation, she fights at the Australian depot not to be separated from Bert with whom she planned their return to England while on the ship. However, the words of a staff member, trying to regulate her, and the form supposedly signed by her mother make her insecure and break her resistance in a second:

> Woman: Because your wonderful mum signed this form, saying we
> can send you wherever we like.
>
> Lily: Crap!
>
> Woman: She never wants to see you again in her life.
>
> (*The Leaving* 00:44)

After this conversation Lily does not resist any more but takes the bus broken-heartedly and obediently. A similarly terrible lie, though perhaps less harmful to the children's self-esteem, was the death of the parents. For example, a child migrant was told her father had died in the war and she should be thankful that the orphanage had accepted her (Bean and Melville 184, 266). It is also worth mentioning that parents were lied to about the whereabouts of their children. The most common practice was to tell the parents that their child had been adopted, like in case of Mrs O'Mara who returns for Lily to the orphanage after six months. Beside the psychological harm caused both to the children and the parents, these lies greatly decreased the chance of family reunions.

Very often siblings were separated from each other as well. This could happen either back at the mother country, like in case of Marie, who was adopted in England, and Harold, who was sent to Australia (the siblings are called Nicky and Jack in *Oranges and Sunshine*), or could take place immediately after the arrival in Australia where girls and boys had to go to separate institutions according to their sex. There was neither time nor place to explain one by one to each child this separation, or to let brothers and sisters say farewell. They were simply made to stand in separate queues in the midst of cacophony and chaos. The depot-scene in *The Leaving of Liverpool*, already mentioned in connection with Lily's broken resistance, captures precisely this chaos and the cries of children dragged away from each other. In many of their testimonies, former child migrants call the Australian child care institutions 'concentration camps', and the prelude to the institutional care, the afore described

scene of separation, only strengthens the sense of similarity between children's homes and concentration camps.

In 1955 Ross investigated 26 of the 39 Australian institutions where British child migrants had been sent and his findings were included in the 1956 report of the Overseas Migration Board. Ross's report, beside criticising the insufficient conditions at the homes, dismissed the general belief that transportation, that is giving a fresh start in life in another country, was beneficial for children coming from institutional care, as these children had been "already rejected and insecure" (Jay et al 37, Humphreys 484). Hence, child migrants experienced transportation to Australia as a second level of rejection coming from their country. In a way this rejection hurt the child migrants even more than the abandonment of their families. The gravity of this trauma is observable in the following words, and the belief behind these, of a former child migrant called Bill. Bill was seventy-five years old and had spent more than sixty years in Australia when he called Margaret Humphreys during one of her visits to Perth in 1988: "The British government sent us here years ago. They didn't want us. Just left us here to rot" (Humphreys 133-134).

Bill's words not only reveal the feeling of rejection by his mother country, but the belief that Britain sent its children away to a place where they would 'rot' as a means of punishment. Naturally, this was not the case, nevertheless the idea of Australia as a place of punishment was not an unfounded one since the country started its white history as the penal colony of England. At the end of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century Australia was used as a dumping ground for convicts with whom the English prisons were overflown. After the Second World War it became

the ideal place for 'orphan' children with whom children's homes were overflown. Children aware of Australia's past may have drawn the parallel between themselves and the convicts and felt their transportation to be the same as the convicts' exile.

The irony of the child migrants' situation was that while they felt they had been rejected by Britain, they were stigmatised in Australia exactly because of their Britishness. Staff members and migration officers called these children "those dreadful English girls" or "British scum" and in institutions where British and Australian children lived together the Australian kids were afraid of the British, kept distance as if the child migrants had been freaks (Bean and Melville 188, 231). This phenomenon is not only interesting from a psychological or sociological, but from a postcolonial point of view as well. The British, who had once claimed Australia for themselves and set up their colonies on the antipodean continent, were now regarded as newcomers. Despite the grandiose idea about building the empire stronger with these children, in reality the British child migrants were second-rate citizens in Australia. It is evident looking at the jobs they were trained to (domestic servant and farm worker) that "they were there to be servants for others" (Bean and Melville 70). There were Australian children's homes where expressing Britishness was banned and the infringement resulted in punishment. Humphreys mentions Goodwood, an institution for girls in Adelaide, where girls "were punished if they sang 'God Bless England' instead of 'God Bless Australia' (163-164).

Neither the rejection of Britain, nor the anti-British sentiments could turn most of the child migrants against their homeland. When Margaret Humphreys visited the homes of the women who had lived in Goodwood, their pride of being English was evident since they had furnished their houses in a distinctly English style (164). One of

the former Goodwood residents Pamela Smedley, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, told Humphreys that she had bought a miniature English house, made in England, on her first wages (168). Another former child migrant, referred to as Michael, told off Humphreys when she dared to ask him whether he considered himself to be British or Australian, and said he was obviously British (311-312). Even the seventy-five-year-old Bill with his strong resentment against the British government identified himself as British (Humphreys 134). On the other hand, there were some child migrants who saw the opportunity in migration and were happy to become Australian citizens instead of abandoned British children (Bean and Melville 265).

The Leaving of Liverpool mini series offers some interesting insights into the relationship of the child migrants and the mother country. The two protagonists, Lily and Bert represent two extremely different reactions to their rejection. Lily loves Britain, especially Liverpool, despite the transportation and her stay at the Australian children's home. She still remembers the distinct smells of Liverpool and dreams about returning to England and having a home in a certain district. She is absolutely fascinated by the Queen and her accent when she hears her on the radio in Harry's car. Later, when Lily and Bert get romantically involved they go to a cinema, where Lily is delighted to see the Queen's visit to Tonga on the screen and leans happily against Bert.

The cinema scene is followed immediately by a Union meeting attended by Bert. The speaker talks about the Queen as the representative of oppression and closes his speech with lines from Henry Lawson's 1891 "Freedom on the Wallaby" poem. These two scenes can summarise in themselves the two directions the two protagonists take. However, it is worth considering how Bert ends up at a meeting like this. At the

very beginning of the first part of the mini series, children are running with a Union Jack and Bert shouts 'God Save The King!' while the flag is waving in the background. Bert adores Britain and believes firmly in the Empire. With his friends of the orphanage, he founds the 'Empire Club' whose prime minister is Bert himself. On their meetings he does not even need to read in order to be able to speak about the great achievements of British men and women. Evidently, Bert is a loyalist royalist at the beginning. Then, due to the various traumatic experiences, endured in the Australian institution like the death of his friend or the terrible realisation that the abuser of this friend was a brother he has trusted all along, his faith in the Empire and his trust in people is broken. In order to be employed, Bert joins the Union and thus finds himself under the influence of republicans. At this point the one and only stable thing in Bert's life is Lily and her love, however, when he finds Lily's letter to her mother, he sees it as yet another betrayal of his trust. It is the 3rd of February in 1954 and the Queen arrives in Sydney. Bert appears in the midst of the cheering crowd and starts shouting: "Down with the monarchy! We're a republic!" (*The Leaving* 03:07). Bert's transformation from British to Australian may seem extreme, still his motivation is clear: to become an Australian citizen, a somebody, instead of an abandoned British nobody. Although his research does not focus specifically on trauma, De Neve suggests that "childhood trauma may distance [those who are affected] from conservative principles" (63).

Bert's anti-British and anti-imperialist views may seem unique, but his low self-esteem and loss of trust due to the series of rejections are problems relatable for most of the child migrants. The feeling of worthlessness and distrust led to further, serious identity-related issues, such as the inability to work through the traumas and

thus being stuck in melancholia, which is according to LaCapra, “often pronounced in those who have experienced some injury to trust” (719). However, distrust can have much simpler effects in one’s life. McPhillips points out that former child migrants are well over seventy years now and due to their age and health conditions they are likely to be in need of some kind of institutional care, but the problem is that “many survivors developed a fear and distrust of any institution and authority” (79). In any case, the injury of trust is a key factor in the traumatic experiences of child migrants, therefore its recuperation is essential in the recovery process.

4. The Survivor: Conditions, Maltreatment, Child Labour and Abuse in The Australian Institutions

“When I first came out here [Goodwood, Australia] it was like coming to the Charles Dickens era. Those nuns were like Gestapo, it was like being in a prison” said former child migrant Nita Brassy (Bean and Melville 203). Perhaps the most widely discussed and the most frequently highlighted part of the child migrants’ story is the one about the inhuman conditions, maltreatment and the various types of abuse they suffered at the Australian institutions. It is important to note that not every single child migrant was abused either physically or sexually; however, it is equally important to note that abuse did not concern only isolated cases but was systematic at the institutions receiving British child migrants. The *Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report, for example,* includes some telling data on the sexual abuse of child migrants. The report found evidence of the sexual abuse of child migrants in sixteen of the Australian institutions out of the seventeen featured in the report (Jay et al 11). Sexual

abuse nevertheless was only the tip of the iceberg, numerous other problems lay underneath which in themselves might have been experienced as mere inconveniences but added up they became almost an unbearable load on already traumatised children.

One of these smaller issues was the strange weather. British children used to mild temperatures and the ever drizzling rain of the British Isles were not prepared for the heat and drought of Australia. Furthermore, children whose majority had lived in an urban environment back in Britain, now found themselves isolated in the outback. Considering what a shock this sharp contrast caused to convicts and settlers who were mostly grown men in the 18th and 19th century, it is imaginable what a shock it must have been to the thousands of confused children.

The location of the Australian institutions was thought to be advantageous for the children's physical and mental health. The child migration agencies saw vast open spaces in the outback as ideal for raising good and healthy farm workers and domestic servants out of the deprived British minors. However, what was considered to be an advantage soon turned out to be a huge disadvantage not only for the children in care, but for the staff of the homes as well. Due to the isolation of the homes the residents did not have much opportunity to meet people from outside the institution or to see the world. Many former child migrants said that they were not prepared for life outside the institution at all. For instance, they sometimes had no idea how to behave in a social situation completely ordinary for other people after they had left the homes (Bean and Melville 212-213).

The institutions were not funded generously therefore they were able to provide the children with only the bare minimum. Food and clothing were both very

basic and had to be appreciated as torn dresses or wasted food were common reasons for punishment. In *The Leaving of Liverpool*, while Lily is living at Ashwood, she makes fun of cooking and throws chops first to the floor then at an outraged female staff member. As a result, she is caned by a completely unemotional male member of the staff.

Although disgusting food and severe punishment for a tear were bad enough, the conditions at Catholic institutions were even worse. These institutions were much poorer than institutions funded by the Protestant Church or the state, for instance, the Fairbridge schools and as a result the living standards were dramatically low (Coldrey "Submission'). Hunger was a well-known feeling for the inmates as the food they got was hardly sufficient. Many times the children tried to complement their rations with whatever they were able to find in bins, or, as another solution, they stole food (Humphreys 152, 466). Similarly, clothing was a problematic area in institutions run by the Catholic orders. Having shoes, for example, was a luxury for the boys living in Bindoon Boys Town.

Bindoon, run by the Christian Brothers in Western Australia, is probably the most infamous institution of all with its equally infamous leader Brother Keaney. Bindoon and the figure of Keaney inspired both Pearse, Loach and Jenkins. They all included the Western Australian institution and its cruel leader in some form in their works. For instance, although Bert is said to be in an institution somewhere near Sydney, the character of Father O'Neill, played by Bill Hunter, and his ambitious building plans unmistakably refer to Keaney and thus the institution he runs is basically a fictional version of Bindoon. When Bert, his friend Wilson and the other British boys

arrive there hungry and tired of the day-long journey from the ship, Dave tells them where they have to sleep and says the boys will only get food the next morning. Dave's character is a very interesting one as he is a resident in the institution, just like the other boys, still he gives orders and has the privilege of owning a pair of boots. He stands between O'Neill and the boys, similarly to a 'kapo' who was a prisoner yet stood above the other prisoners in the concentration camps of the Germans.

Like Brother Keaney, Father O'Neill visualises monumental buildings and the Stations of the Cross made of stone built in the middle of the outback. Short of money, Keaney - and in the mini series O'Neill – realised his grandiose plans using the children put into his care as slave labour. The truly beautiful buildings of Bindoon Boys Town and the Stations of the Cross were all built by underfed, barefooted boys sweating and burning under the scorching sun. A former resident of Bindoon Boys Town, Graham remembered: "Bindoon. We built Bindoon. We mixed so much cement the dust burned our feet and the sores on our knees and hands. We were slave labourers" (Humphreys 142).

The use of child labour for building Bindoon was an extreme case, however, child labour in general was a common practice in the other Australian institutions. In fact, many orphanages and children's homes would not have been able to operate at all without the labour of the children (Hil et al 14). Hil adds that it was not rare either that children were used as "unpaid labour for commercial purposes," meaning they were made to work on farms or in laundries in order to earn money for their institutions (15). The overwhelming majority of participants of Fernandez's research claimed that they were made to do some kind of work under the age of thirteen and only 4 percent of

these said they were paid. This number increased to 14 percent in case of work done at the age of thirteen or above (532). Work at this young age was not only harmful because its difficulty, but because the long hours spent with cooking or polishing floors took time away from education, which was generally very basic.

In the beginning, Margaret Humphreys was often accused of not placing "child migration into its historic context" (Humphreys 484). It seemed organisations involved in the migration schemes were trying to protect themselves by claiming the time and situation were different after the world war and that childcare was a different concept back then. The Ross report, issued in the mid 1950s was already mentioned in the previous chapter. However, there was another, highly influential report on child care a decade earlier the content of which contradicts the claim about child welfare being considered a different notion in the first half of the twentieth century.

After the Second World War, the Care of Children Committee, also known as the Curtis Committee, was established and it issued a report in 1946. The Curtis Report, just like the Ross report a decade later, dismissed the idea that migration would be beneficial for all deprived children and stated that only those children should be offered the opportunity of migration who were both physically and mentally sound. The report also made propositions about the arrangements for the welfare of the deprived children. These propositions included: children should be placed in smaller homes, but more preferably in adopting or foster families; "should generally have the same social experiences as if they were living with their natural parents"; children should attend the local school; should be encouraged to participate in various activities such as swimming or scouting and should have access to books, toys, a radio etc. It is essential to highlight

that the Curtis report stated that the migrant children should be provided the same level of welfare in the receiving country as the children who remained in the UK. Moreover, the 1948 Children Act was based on the propositions of the report of the Care of Children Committee (Jay et al 28-29).

This was the historic context of child migration. Child welfare was not simply guided to a new direction by propositions and recommendations, but was reformed and had been regulated legally since 1948. Hil points out that by using children as unpaid labour in the Australian institutions, the 1926 Slavery Convention was violated as well. Moreover, this happened in a country which rejected slavery from the very beginning of its white history (12-13). Arthur Phillip wrote: "there is one [law] that I wish to take place from the moment his Majesty's forces take possession of the country: That there can be no slavery in a free country, and consequently no slaves" (Hughes 68).

Beside the insufficient provisions and the long hours of hard work, the poor funding led to another serious problem, the employment of unsuitable and untrained staff. Barry M. Coldrey, once a Christian Brother himself, started his research on child migration at the end of the 1980s. He wrote several articles and books on the topic of sexual abuse of children in residential care. In 2003 he sent a submission to the *Senate Inquiry into Institutionalised Children in Care* in which he mainly focused on the underlying reasons of maltreatment and physical and sexual abuse of children in residential care. He emphasised the unsuitability of the staff which was mainly due to the unfavourable nature of the job. Being a carer in an isolated children's home meant low wages, everlasting work hours, stress and very little or no opportunity for recreation. This way, institutions basically employed anyone applying to be a carer,

regardless of his or her personality, qualifications and training. Under the workload and the continuous stress staff members became frustrated and impatient with the children and often gave way to this pressure in aggressive outbursts. Even small mischiefs attracted sudden, cruel and exaggerated punishment. There is a scene of such an outburst of aggression within the very first minutes of each part of *The Leaving of Liverpool*. In the first part, the celebration of Empire Day ends in chaos and emotions break loose. A frustrated and angry carer hits Wilson so hard on the head with his cane that the boy collapses and is unconscious for a while. When he eventually comes to his senses, he realises he does not hear the noise made by the others around him. Wilson is deafened by the blow of the cane, but nobody is ever made responsible for it. The second part of the mini series starts with Lily's chop-throwing scene. The girls' fun is disturbed by a female member of the staff. The woman becomes furious seeing what is going on in the kitchen and grabs a younger girl by her hair and starts to hit her mercilessly on the spot, in front of the other girls. Lily interrupts and the woman turns her anger toward her in the form of insults concerning her Britishness and her mother.

Another reason behind the abuse at the homes was the fact that many members of the staff had been abused in their childhood either at home or in residential care. Coldrey refers to this phenomenon as the "cycle of violence" meaning that a person used to be punished by means of violence as a child, is likely to accept it as normal, furthermore, uses violence for the same purpose later in his or her adult life (Submission). The cycle of violence is a recurring theme in Pearse's novel as well. On the farm she has been sent to work after the orphanage, Dulcie is treated like a dog by Pat, the farmers wife. Eventually, it turns out that Pat grew up in an orphanage herself

and was abused, even raped as a young girl. Dulcie's husband, Ross, formerly a child migrant himself, is prone to aggression when things do not turn out to be as he wants them, most probably because of the violence and rape he suffered at Bindoon. Dave's character from *The Leaving of Liverpool* has already been described as a special, liminal position. Dave can be seen as the embodiment of the cycle of violence. He is beaten up cruelly by Father O'Neill (only once on the screen but probably many times off screen) and it is very likely that at a younger age he was sexually abused by Brother Jerome. Dave seems to be old enough to be sent away for farm work, still he remains in the boys' home and terrorises the younger boys. Unfortunately, Bert also starts to slide into the cycle, even though he is not abused but witnesses violence. When his friend Wilson gets into such a bad condition that he has to stay in bed, Bert immediately assumes it was Dave who hurt him. Bert's revenge is extremely cruel and it balances on the border of physical and sexual assault.

In the case of Catholic institutions, some carers might have chosen to join a religious order as a way of refuge and not because they were so devoted or prepared for being a nun or a brother. Coldrey gives Morris West as an example, who joined the Christian Brothers only because he did not have another choice, but after twelve years he left the order and eventually became a successful author (Submission). Brother Matthew's character in Jenkins's mini series represents this type of life course. Although Matthew genuinely cares for the children he is in charge of, he does not really able to cope with the situation at (fictional) Bindoon. He realises the cruelty and the exploitation of the children, and he even speaks up for the boys, but against Father O'Neill and his ideas about childcare Matthew has no chance. Soon after this failure he

leaves the home as well as the Christian Brothers order. When the desperate Bert asks him why he has packed away his clerical collar he answers: “It was my ticket once out of a family I didn’t much like… it isn’t taking me anywhere” (*The Leaving* 01:25).

In his *Submission*, Coldrey also suggests that pedophiles took advantage of the scarcity of suitable applicants thus they were able to get in the children’s homes. He admits that both physical and sexual abuse happened more frequently in Catholic institutions. These, run by either the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy or the Nazareth Sisters had a huge disadvantage to institutions run by Barnardo’s or Fairbridge, namely the imbalance of the sexes in the staff. Brothers trying to care for young boys and sisters trying to discipline teenagers heightened the risk of physical and sexual abuse. Though its theme is not child migrant related, Fred Schepisi’s 1976 film *The Devil’s Playground* presents this sex imbalance in a Catholic seminary and the difficulties it causes both for the brothers and the boys. The film’s view on the repression of sexuality is also relevant in case of the British child migrants. As they were never taught or even talked to openly about sexuality in residential care, they had serious problems later in life in their intimate relationships. In addition, the absence of female influence, or rather the absence of characteristics associated with femininity, such as compassion, caused a lot of harm. Children like former child migrant Desmond who grew up in a loveless environment became adults who do not know what love means (Humphreys 336).

Even though Barry Coldrey’s points about the staff problems are valid, it is important to remember that the children were just as much isolated, frustrated and had no way of recreation as the staff. They did not choose to go to these institutions out of

their own free will and had already been traumatised by the rejection of their mothers and country. When in *Oranges and Sunshine* Margaret Humphreys, played by Emily Watson, finally faces the Christian Brothers to whom she has caused so much trouble with her work, the brothers do not dare to look at her as if they were afraid of her. Margaret is anxious as well, but when Len leaves her alone with the brothers she realises she must speak up for the 'children' and gathering strength she asks: "Have I disturbed you, brothers? Have I frightened you? What have you got to be frightened of? Grown men like you" (*Oranges and Sunshine* 01:29). With this she refers to the fact that the institutionalised children had certainly more reason to be frightened and endured more suffering than the brothers.

Since the children had nobody to turn with their sorrows and wounds, they each developed some kind of a coping mechanism in order to be able to live on. Probably the most harmful of these is the repression of feelings and memories, already mentioned in the subchapter dealing with trauma. Former child migrant Michael told Humphreys that "he had decided many years ago to suppress his feelings of hurt in order to survive" (Humphreys 311). In *Trust Me*, Ross's character and life course also represent suppression and denial as a way of coping. In fact, Dulcie's friend, Rudie identifies the coping mechanism of each of the three child migrant characters (Pearse 1036-1039). He claims May's way of coping is cunning, meaning that she deceives everyone with her lies about herself and about her sister. On the other hand, Dulcie falls into the trap of self-sacrifice and blames herself for everything. In a way, all three characters rely on repressing the truth about their past: Ross by claiming it did not

happen at all, May by introducing herself as a different person and Dulcie by focusing on others all the time rather than herself.

In this sense, Lily in *The Leaving of Liverpool* is more fortunate. She seems to be able to handle her feelings and experiences and even to care for Bert. She could easily fall into the mistake of Dulcie, but she is also able to take a step back and not to save Bert at all costs. The boy takes the path of suppressing the past, in fact, he is the only one who could save himself by opening up and accepting the truth. However, it is Wilson who makes the most drastic step to end his pains. Deafened, transported and abused, he chooses drowning in the 'swimming pool' rather than asking for help and enduring the punishment his night trip would certainly entail.

The maltreatment, verbal, physical or even sexual abuse added yet another layer of feeling of guilt, shame, sense of worthlessness and being nobody to the top of already low or non-existent self-esteem and confusion of the child migrants due to the combination of dehumanisation and rejection. These false feelings led, almost in case of every child migrant, to some kind of problem in their adult life, at the workplace, in intimate relationships, in parentage, but most important of all problems within themselves. The traumatic experiences they wanted to suppress and deny kept coming to the surface in milder cases in the form of insecurity, distrust or anxieties but in more severe cases they became so overwhelming that they ended up causing PTSD or psychosis. A shared "problem within" of the child migrants is the uncertainty of identity which is going to be discussed in the following chapter.

5. The Somebody: Search for Identity and Acceptance of Loss

> I clearly remember being made to sign a wage book. Upon seeing my name, I asked, 'Whose name is that? I don't know that name.' 'Don't you know your own name?' I was asked. 'I've never heard that one.' 'Goodness, fancy not knowing who you are!' […] I'm forty-five years old, with two children of my own, and still I have no identity. (Humphreys 156)

Maureen Briggs, former child migrant and resident of Nazareth House, Geraldton, told Margaret Humphreys this incident in her life while Humphreys was in Perth. Identity is a central question in case of the British child migrants. Australian Democrat Senator for Western Australia, Andrew Murray, who had been sent to Southern Rhodesia at the age of four through the child migration schemes himself, wrote: "the greatest scar of all for former child migrants as a whole has been the loss of identity" (27-28). Every topic discussed hitherto in this paper seems to converge at the theme of identity. Dehumanisation, rejection and maltreatment or abuse all have affected the child migrants' sense of identity, often to the point that the migrants felt they did not have any identity at all.

The destruction of individuality was a means of dehumanisation. Each child was incorporated into the mass of deprived orphans despite the individual differences. This echos Arendt's idea about the relation between domination (which is an interesting question in connection with children and institutions) and identity, for according to her the final step toward total domination is the destruction of a person's individuality

(453). It was a common practice in many institutions to not allow the children "keep any personal possessions" (Bean and Melville 200). Although this may seem a minor issue compared to the ones discussed so far, still owning something personal, be it a toy or other article, means a certain degree of individuality. Moreover, these personal articles bear special meaning to their owners, can preserve and evoke memories (like Pamela Smedley's miniature English house). This function of personal possessions would have been especially important for the child migrants since in many cases they had been too young at the time of their transportation to remember their lives before institutionalisation. Memories play an essential role in the constitution and formation of one's identity. The connection of memories and identity is observable in Pearse's novel: "She [Dulcie] told Ross how in all the time at St Vincent's this collection of memories had given her a clear identity. She wasn't just one of those Pom child migrants, but English Dulcie Taylor, with a father called Reg" (633). Dulcie is old enough at the time of her institutionalisation and transportation to remember even small details about her parents and the place they lived, thus throughout the grievous years spent in the children's homes she has this strong base, the sense of identity, she can always return to.

The children placed in institutional care in Britain, then transported to Australia, felt they had been rejected both by their families and nation. The ever present feeling of not being good enough in their childhood has prevailed in their adult life. Without family links and sometimes without a clear sense of nationality the children felt uprooted, belonging to nobody and nowhere. Furthermore, the maltreatment, neglect, verbal, physical and/or sexual abuse both at the British and Australian children's homes made the child migrants feel even more worthless and empty.

Other than these practices forming and deforming the child migrants' identity indirectly, there were cases when the identities of transported children were manipulated in a direct way. Maureen Briggs' experience of not recognising her own name is just one of the many cases in which the name, or the spelling of it, and/ or even birth date of the child migrants had been changed either deliberately (to prevent parents finding their children) or due to carelessness (Humphreys 310). In addition, the deception of both the children and the parents, telling the former that their parents had died or had abandoned them, and the latter that their children had been adopted, can also be seen as a way the identity of child migrants was manipulated.

The wish to regain the absent or lost identity manifested in two interrelated forms. One of these was the need to belong to somebody or somewhere. To belong does not only mean that a person has a companion, but it provides a base, compared to which one is able to define himself or herself. The most spectacular example for this incredibly strong need to belong is Bert's story in *The Leaving of Liverpool*. In fact, the whole mini series can be seen as a sequence of attempts made by Bert to belong and thus to be somebody.

While living in the Star of the Sea Orphanage in Liverpool, Bert founds the Empire Club and apparently becomes its prime minister. He takes the role of the leader not in order to position himself above the other kids and command them, but because he is a boy gifted with infinite imagination, creativity and ideals, a natural leader accepted by all the children. During the sea voyage to Australia, Bert assumes the role of Lily's brother, hence the role of a protector. Though Bert and Lily became separated, the boy remains the older brother figure for Wilson at the fictional Bindoon institution. Wilson's

abuse and death mean Bert’s failure as the protector, he has to find a new role for himself. He decides to become a Christian Brother as the only way out, however, this plan fails too when Bert finds out that Father O’Neill did not give him Lily’s letters. While rummaging in O’Neill’s office, Bert also finds his birth certificate, in which his father is named as ‘Gideon’. When later in Sydney he learns that Gideon is a Jewish name, he becomes enthusiastic about the Jews. He evidently easily identifies with being Jewish since he sees his plight similar to the Jewish people’s sufferings. Things seem to fall into place, Bert joins the Union with a little help from the other workers, also, he and Lily become romantically involved. However, Bert’s newly constructed identity collapses when a letter arrives from the Star of the Sea Orphanage claiming they have no information about Bert’s father and that his mother abandoned him. Even though Lily tries to comfort the hopeless Bert saying: “You belong to me now. I’m your family,” Bert is confused and lost to the extremes (The Leaving 03:01-03:02). By the end of the mini series, Bert transforms from an imaginative boy into a confused teenager who is holding on blindly to the ‘working class,’ the only community and ideology that makes him a somebody belonging to somewhere.

Apparently, Bert’s example is an extreme one, as his character does not stand for a specific child migrant, but is created from the experiences of several real life child migrants. Nevertheless, the wish to belong has been a very real one for all the child migrants, Pamela Smedley among them, who said to Margaret Humphreys: “I must be related to someone, even if it’s an aunt or an uncle. I feel I’m a nobody, a nothing, without any roots at all” (Humphreys 171). Pamela’s thoughts connect the two interrelated forms of dealing with the identity crisis mentioned above.

Apart from the need to belong, the need to find one's roots has been an equally strong desire of the child migrants. This practically means the recovery of birth certificates and eventually, if possible, the reunion of the former child migrants and their remaining family members. This quest of finding certificates and family members is the main theme of Director Jim Loach and Screenwriter Rona Munro's *Oranges and Sunshine*. As they say in the audio commentary attached to the film's DVD version, the core of the entire film is in the following words of Jack, a former child migrant character: "…there's an emptiness in me. There always has been, and I think… I thought… I think that the only thing that could fill it is her, you know? Is… is my mother" (Oranges and Sunshine 00:24). The story of Jack, and the real life person, Harold Haig, his character is based on, is especially interesting from the point of view of the need to belong and the need to have roots. In the film Jack and his sister, separated as children, have already reunited by the time Margaret starts her work with the child migrants. This means that when Jack utters the words quoted afore, he already has Nicky, his sister within his reach, furthermore, Jack had a wife and children, still, he feels he needs to find his mother. This wish is completely comprehensible, however, the effect Jack expects from this reunion, that his mother would fill the void inside him, is highly problematic.

The mother is generally a key figure in the child migrants' search for their identity as, presumably, she was the one who abandoned them, thus made them feel rejected and not good enough, and therefore the mother seems to be the only person able to restore their identity. If one assumed that this reasoning is valid – and many of the former child migrants did so –, it would mean that finding one's birth certificate and

even his or her mother is the ultimate cure for all the person's traumas. Though there have been reunifications with a happy ending, for instance, in *Oranges and Sunshine* such a successful reunification is shown, Charlotte and her newly found mother Vera seem happy and whole together, but broader experience shows that the recuperation of the birth certificate and finding living family members is only a step in a much longer process of recovery. This is the sad truth Margaret tells Len in *Oranges and Sunshine* at the end of their visit to Bindoon:

> I've been loved and looked after my entire life. It's your turn now. But you'll never get it. Everybody thinks there's going to be this big cathartic moment when all the wrongs are righted and all the wounds are healed, but it's not going to happen. I can't give you back what you've lost. (Oranges and Sunshine 01:31-01:32)

The research of Fernandez shows that family reunifications have been rarely successful and she identifies trans-generational trauma as one of the undermining factors (539, 541). Even though finding birth certificates and family reunifications might not have worked like magic, identities have not been restored in a minute, but the very decision of the former child migrants to face their past and, of course, the support of Margaret Humphreys and the entire Child Migrants Trust have helped in working through the traumas.

Dominick LaCapra's name has been already mentioned in connection with the injury of trust and melancholia in a previous chapter. His distinction of absence and loss is also an essential point concerning the relation of the traumatic experiences and the search for identity of the child migrants. According to LaCapra, absence cannot really

be worked through, the only thing one can do is to learn to live with it, in other words, rather than work-through one can only act-out absence. LaCapra identifies melancholia "as a form of acting-out", thus connecting absence and melancholia. On the other hand, loss can be worked through, and this working-through might manifest in mourning. Working-through is an essential process since it enables one "to distinguish between past and present and to recognize *something* as having *happened to one* back then that is related to, *but not identical* with, here and now" (LaCapra 712-713 emphasis mine).

However paradoxical it might seem, by recovering the past and showing former child migrants what they have lost, Margaret Humphreys and the Child Migrants Trust helped to launch a working-through process in the people who asked for help. In Ann Cvetkovich's words, Humphreys created an archive of memories "from which one can later work through" (qtd. in Di-Capua 7). Uncertainties and anxieties around the migrants' childhood and family have been replaced by facts, birth certificates and other documents. Naturally, the most fortunate end result of the search has been a successful family reunification, nevertheless, less fortunate results, for instance, parents found out to be already dead, can also contribute to the working-through of traumas, since, however sad these discoveries might be, they bring certainty into the former child migrants' lives. This is basically the phenomenon Webster and Kruglanski call the 'need for closure' which they define as a wish to find an answer to a concrete question, because any kind of answer, be it advantageous or disadvantageous, is more bearable than uncertainty and confusion (1049).

The acceptance of loss is crucial for the child migrants because it can lead to the understanding that terrible things only happened to them and that they are not

identical with those terrible experiences. In their childhood they were made to believe they had to be punished for something and that they deserved what they got because they were wicked (see chapter The Abandoned). This motive appears in *The Leaving of Liverpool* when Lily is sent away from the farm she has been working on as a domestic servant. The son of the farmer starts to harass Lily sexually but the girl fights back, as a revenge, the son tells his parents that Lily spent the night with the shearers. The farmer, believing Lily is a whore, sends her away saying: "It's not what you did. It's what you are" (*The Leaving* 02:05). Fortunately, Lily is a resilient character and does not take this too seriously, however, in real life many child migrants identified themselves with their traumatic experiences. One of them said after a private session: "For the last 28 years I've always felt it was my fault, that I deserved it. Now, 3 months after my meeting I am at last accepting that I'm not responsible. I'm just a survivor" (McPhillips 77).

Furthermore, the realisation of loss is essential regarding mourning as a form of working through, more precisely, the effect of mourning on identity. In her book *Precarious life* Judith Butler dismisses Freud's idea about "successful mourning" and suggests her own definition. For Freud the mourning (or working through of a loss) was considered to be successful if the mourning person eventually projects his or her attachment to another person or object. Butler does not believe that people should strive for this "full substitutability", she rather suggests that mourning means the acceptance of change. "Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation […] the full result of which one cannot know in advance" (Butler 20-21). However painful it has been for the former child migrants to face the truth that their childhood is lost forever and that a piece of paper or a newly found family member would never give

their lost identities back, this acceptance lets these people to move on. They have become able to undergo the transformation, instead of remaining stuck in melancholia, holding on to the life and identity they have lost.

Margaret Humphreys's work has not helped former child migrants in the way one would think at a first glance. Presenting a child migrant with his or her lost birth certificate or introducing them to their living family members to whom they can belong did not turn them suddenly into a different person, a 'somebody'. Humphreys's work has brought healing to the survivors slowly, step after step, tending wound after wound. She has been able to win the trust of people who had been deceived and lied to for long years since their childhood. Having a person whom the child migrants could trust entirely was essential, without this basis the whole mission of the Child Migrants Trust would have failed. Humphreys has always taken those who asked for help seriously and treated them as equal human beings and never as inferiors or guilty. She has listened if that was necessary and explained the complexities of the child migration schemes if that was needed, but she has never failed to emphasise that child migrants should not feel shame, because what had happened to them was not something they deserved. In fact, Humphreys flew several times to Australia at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s and spent months living in hotels (and later in the house of the CMT) despite her two small children and her husband in England. This incredible devotion of hers has made the former child migrants feel accepted at last. The establishment of the Child Migrants Trust did not mean simply the birth of an organisation, but the birth of a cohesive community, a kind of a huge family to which every child migrant can belong. Finally, the apology delivered by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2009 on

behalf of the nation and the British government apology to child migrants in 2010 signified the official recognition of the injustices the migrants had to endure in their childhood. These smaller components mentioned above created, not necessarily an ultimate, but definitely a soothing cure for the traumas endured by British child migrants.

Conclusion

The numerous testimonies of former child migrants and the examples taken from fictional works all justify that child migrants had to endure a series of traumatic experiences, both before, during and even after the years spent at the Australian institutions, and that these had a deep impact on their identity. The main cause behind these experiences was the way authorities and agencies regarded children generally as less than human. However, the dehumanisation of children did not only lead to inhumane treatment, but was a traumatic experience in itself, for it was able to make the child migrants believe they were not entirely human. This belief founded the basis for low self-esteem and the feeling of being a nobody.

The feel of rejection by their mothers and their country also contributed, in a negative way, to the child migrants' forming identities. A number of child migrants experienced the abandonment and the transportation to Australia as a form of punishment. Double rejection thus made the child migrants feel even more worthless and insignificant. The bad conditions, the neglect and in many cases the abuse of children at the homes added yet another layer of traumatic experiences.

Due to these experiences, former child migrants have felt the agencies involved in the migration schemes had stolen their identities. In many cases this was literally true, since agencies often manipulated the documents of the migrant children. In general, former child migrants saw the recuperation of their real birth certificates as the only way to regain their lost identities. However, as the destruction of self-image of child migrants had been layered (dehumanisation, double rejection, maltreatment), the cure had to be similarly complex. This soothing cure has been provided by Margaret Humphreys and the Child Migrants Trust since 1987. Humphreys's work has not been confined to the recovery of birth certificates, but she was able to gain the trust of the former child migrants and to establish a safe place where these people can turn for help with faith. To conclude, the cure, if not really ultimate, has been Humphreys's attitude and method, the way she has made former child migrants realise and accept the losses of the past, in other words, the way she has launched the working-through process within them, enabling former child migrants thus to move on.

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