

Play Cultures, Social Worlds, and Youth in Familial Settings, 1700-1904

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Between 1902 and 1906, four sisters, Kitty, Nellie, Winnie, and Peggy, daughters of Colonel Edward Kenyon, then living in Middlecot, Hampshire, co-produced a magazine, *The Bee-Hive*, with their extended family of cousins. As the editor explained, “All the little beehives add up to one big beehive.”¹ This youth-led manuscript illustrates a familial play culture which was inclusive of all age groups, enabling the youngest to participate, and to “criticise” older siblings and adults. The youngest Kenyon sister, Peggy, was a frequent author. A few adults contributed, and Aunt Rhoeta, who lived in the Isle of Wight, was on the editorial team. *The Bee-Hive* drew on earlier models of youth-produced magazines, which were replicated later in the twentieth century, and indicates how play can be a fertile ground for studying the transition between childhood and adulthood.

This essay draws on often fragmentary sources about play cultures, social worlds and youth in relation to outdoor play, imaginative play and juvenile periodicals. On the one hand, there might seem to be a clear trajectory from child-focused activities, to more public or adult-facing activities involving youth. These continuities can be characterized as “play cultures” that provide insights into youthful social worlds and the ways these changed within familial contexts. These “social worlds,” however, might also include adults. While this complicates the notion of children’s cultures, it also justifies the concept of youth culture in familial settings, by demonstrating how practices of outdoor play, drama, and writing could be inclusive of all age groups at different levels. Adults (especially fathers), including governesses and tutors, were involved in teaching and supervising games for outdoor play,

¹ *The Bee-Hive, 1902-06*, manuscript magazine, edited by Katharine Kenyon, author’s possession.

not only for youth, but as participants. They thus demonstrated Lev Vygotsky's concept of "scaffolding" and theories of the transition to adulthood.²

The chronological scope of this essay is ambitious, and examples to substantiate different aspects of these life-stages to support the overall arguments have not always survived. Nevertheless, the model illustrated by Kenneth Grahame in *The Golden Age*, of a world of "Olympians" (adults) inhabiting a different world from the young, and of little emotional connection across the generations, because of adults' lack of interest in children's pursuits, bears little resemblance to the complex webs of interactions that will be documented below.³

The phenomenon of youth culture, mainly focused on males, has usually been associated with the Swinging Sixties, Mods and Rockers, rival gangs, the "rise of the teenager," and the development of commercial youth culture over the twentieth century. Many scholars associate the emergence of the concept of adolescence in the early twentieth century with the publication of Stanley Hall's *Adolescence* in 1904 and the development of secondary schooling. Yet, the life-stage of "*adolescencia*" (for fourteen to twenty-one-year-olds) was recognized in the ancient world and was known in the Middle Ages. Early modernists have long acknowledged the rituals of misrule amongst young people, and debated whether there was a distinction between youth and adolescence.⁴

² Michael Wyness, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 179-185, 204-213

³ Kenneth Grahame, *The Golden Age* (London: J. Lane, 1895), 1-2.

⁴ Jon Savage, *Teenage: the creation of youth culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 2021); Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 2012 edn); John Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-present*, revised expanded student edition (New York and London: Academic Press, 1982); Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 6-8; Natalie Zemon-Davis, "The reasons of misrule: Youth Groups and Charivari in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971): 41-75.

Although young people, especially elites, spent much of their time in the family home, few scholars have considered how play cultures might develop into youthful pursuits which spanned the transition to adulthood. A number of historians have acknowledged the significance of sibling relationships, however, and their neglect.⁵ Frequently, play has been treated in an object-related and antiquarian fashion, focusing on the history of toys, rather than considering what it might reveal about family relationships or child development. A related perspective focuses on youth as consumers. The themes selected here reflect Brian Sutton-Smith's emphasis on the significance of social play rather than play with objects, and facilitate analysis of play cultures regardless of social status. This chapter will explore the play cultures created and developed by youth in familial contexts in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland between 1700 to 1900. The *longue duree* includes the period of the "First Industrial Revolution," from 1700 when London was already a major city, to 1900 when one-quarter of the globe was associated with the British Empire.⁶

The eighteenth century has been perceived as a major period of change in attitudes toward the young, due to the ideas of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Other scholars have focused on the nineteenth century, particularly for concepts of "adolescence" and "girlhood," arguing for a recognition of more autonomy for youth in their late teens by the

⁵ For works including siblings, see Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and social relations in Georgian England: Share and share alike* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 18; Ginger Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger, 2008), 27; Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings in British History, 1750-1914* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012); Rosamund Bayne-Powell, *The English Child in the Eighteenth Century* (London, John Murray, 1939), 175-224

⁶ For play, objects and consumerism, see: Kathryn Gleadle, "Playing at Soldiers": British Loyalism and Juvenile Identities during the Napoleonic Wars," *Journal of Eighteenth Century Studies* 38 (2015): 335-345; Dennis Dennisoff, *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008); Brian Sutton-Smith (1986, 26) cited in William A. Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood*, 3rd edition (London, Sage, 1997), 139; Troy Bickham, "Preparing for an Imperial Inheritance: Children, Play and Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 60 (2021): 658-688.

late nineteenth century. Culture can be defined as membership of a group with specific interests and shared meanings. That different families, especially with large numbers of siblings, developed their own systems of shared understandings and practices, relates to the concept of “social worlds.” Particularly apposite concepts are those of “scaffolding,” derived from the psychologist Lev Vygotsky, in which the older person supports the learning of the younger one. This contrasts with theorists’ definitions of play as only activity which is self-generated, with no external engagement by adults.⁷

How far did the process of transition to adulthood change over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Estimates include “youth”, as identified by Lord Chesterfield, as the age of nine until about the mid-twenties, or from seven to the mid-twenties, in relation to the Poor Law. Neither sex could inherit until the age of twenty-one, but they were frequently expected to start work in their teens, even in the upper and middle classes, in a condition of semi-dependence. Fourteen has also been regarded as the age of adulthood. Peter Borsay noted that eighteenth-century young people especially elite girls, were represented as socialising with their parents from about twelve, and that childhood became “compressed.”⁸

The age of schooling impacted on the transition to adulthood. Despite the increasing tendency from about 1760 onwards to send elite boys to boarding school, especially from overseas locations, contact with home and family members continued. Moreover, many boys

⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, 2nd edition (London: Longman, 2005), 55-65; Brikham, “Preparing for an Imperial Inheritance,” 660-661; Hilary Marland, *Health and Girlhood in Britain, 1870-1914* (Basingstoke; Palgrave, 2013), 5-6 and passim; Stuart Hall, “Introduction” in idem, ed, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: The Open University, 2012), 1-2; Wyness, *Childhood and Society*, 179-185, 204-213.

⁸ Harris, *Siblinghood*, 30-31; Anna Davin, “What is a Child?,” in Stephen Hussey and Anthony Fletcher, eds, *Childhood in Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 15-36; Peter Borsay, “Children, Adolescents and Fashionable Society in Eighteenth-Century England,” in Anja Muller, ed, *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 53-65.

from the professional and middle classes attended day secondary schools rather than boarding schools. Day schools for the labouring poor existed in increasing numbers from 1800 particularly, so that by 1858, every child's name was estimated to be on the books of a school. There was no compulsory school age until 1880 (ages five to ten), and this was targeted at working class children. In their Oxfordshire village of Lark Rise, Flora Thompson recalled there were no girls aged over twelve, as they had all gone into service. In industrial or urban areas there was less reason to leave home for work, and three-generation family clusters might develop. Girls from the middling sort and especially elites were more likely to remain at home, and the latter to have more leisure, while middling sort girls might be working in the family business.⁹

The number and spacing of siblings clearly had an impact on the experience of familial youth culture. Average household size in Britain remained relatively constant from the late seventeenth century until the early twentieth, at 4.75. The eighteenth-century household was likely to include servants and apprentices as well as kin. While family size dipped in the aristocracy in the early eighteenth century, from 1750 to 1800 it increased to its largest size over the previous 200 years. In working class families, there were averages of six to eight children, depending on occupation. The average number of children per family shifted from 6.16 in 1860-99 to 4.13 in 1890-99. By the 1870s the "large sprawling families" (or "long families") of early nineteenth century elites had been replaced by about six children. In some cases, due to parental or child death, there was only one child. Some people

⁹ Henry French and Mark Rothery, *Man's Estate: landed gentry masculinities, 1600-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 43-83 ; W.B.Stephens, *Education in Britain, 1750-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998). Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006); Tamara Hareven, "Myths about the Family," in Michael Drake, ed, *Time, Family and Community* (London: Open University Press, 1994); Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 125-146; Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, 79-83, 103-107.

were never regarded as fully adult if they were not householders: indeed, Carol Dyhouse argues that women were never perceived as fully adult by Stanley Hall and others in 1900.¹⁰ Thus, while variable according to gender and class, youth will be considered to extend from seven to the mid-twenties.

Youth, Play, and Memory

Despite the neglect of play by historians, many or most autobiographies or memoirs have sections including childhood and youthful play. Issues about the fallibility of memory have been well rehearsed, and autobiographies were clearly written with reference to the time period in which they were produced. But protagonists' reflections on their younger selves can be significant, as can absences, and the recurrence of specific memories or themes. Some memoirs had no reference to play or youth culture and emphasize solitariness as well as peer culture. Furthermore, play was often disapproved of by adults, or regarded retrospectively as a sign of childishness, or worse (such as Sabbath-breaking), to which studiousness was preferred. Adriana Benzaquen concluded from the letters of the Clarke family from the 1690s, that they do not represent the "authentic self" of the individual, but they do illustrate webs of relationships. These are particularly significant for the purposes of this study in mapping the interactions of siblings and other peers. Letters from adults with observations about children provide the detail of everyday occupations, as do adults' journals and journals by youth, even if edited. Magazines produced by the young (in this case, *The Bee-Hive*) have been cross-referenced with unpublished memoirs. The rich seam of working-class

¹⁰ Alison Mackinnon, "Was there a Victorian Demographic Transition?" in Martin Hewitt, ed, *The Victorian World* (London: Routledge, 2013), 125. Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: aristocratic kinship and family relations in eighteenth-century England* (New York: Academic Press, 1978) , 170. Peter Laslett, "Mean Household Size in England since the sixteenth century," in Richard Wall, ed, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 126, 139; Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56-7.

autobiography, mainly collected in the nineteenth century, was anticipated by religious autobiographies from the eighteenth century, such as the *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers* (1837-8).¹¹ The source material has been taken from a wide range of social classes, and regions, both urban and rural. My subjects include children and youth from the royalty and aristocracy as well as the lesser gentry and the professions, the middling sort and laboring poor. After an exploration of family cultures, the main sections will focus on outdoor play, imaginative play and theatricals, and juvenile writing, especially magazines, with reference to the themes of youth as producers, the transition from childhood play cultures to youthful independence, and the complexity of gender relations.

Family Cultures and Sibling Relationships

Despite claims and demographic evidence that most eighteenth-century youth lived in large families, most histories relate to the mid to late nineteenth century, reflecting the stereotype of the children accommodated in separate wings of the house with nannies and governesses. Not all children had a peer group, whether of siblings or friends. Solitude could be a temporary condition, caused by health issues. Some memoirs emphasize adolescent pursuits such as drinking, gaming, womanising, and “bad company” with the peer group. Others mention mixing with adults from a young age. Some aristocratic young women such as Lady Sarah Cadogan were married at in their early teens (to the nineteen-year-old future Earl of Richmond, in 1718). Yet the Princess Royal was unmarried at twenty-two in 1783. Due particularly to the increase in family size from the 1750s, many children had large numbers of cousins. Discipline in such large families could be sibling-imposed and harsh.

¹¹ Thomas Jackson, ed, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers, chiefly written by themselves* (London, 1837-1838), 17; Adriana Benzaquén, “Pray lett none read this impertinent epistle’: Children’s letters and children in letters at the turn of the eighteenth century,” in Andrew O’Malley, ed, *Literary Cultures and Eighteenth-Century Childhoods* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 200-257.

Indeed, not all sibling relationships were collaborative, nor did all siblings feel affinity with one another. The memoir of Frances Margaret Kenyon indicates that she found her sisters rather distant and controlling. Indeed, some children's main playmates were servants.¹²

Whereas in the seventeenth century, "tomboy" referred to a boy, the term for a boy-like girl in the eighteenth was "hoyden." Thus Lord Orrery wrote in 1733, though affectionately, "Betty is ...a veritable Hoyden."¹³ While Dyhouse argued that natural exuberance in a boy was regarded as "hoydenism" in a girl, Abate considered tomboyishness became an acceptable characteristic for girls from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, a theme that occurs in accounts of future suffragists and missionary wives. The aristocratic Lucy Lyttelton recalled that "At twelve years old I was a heedless tomboy of a child," though she later regretted her "sinfulness."¹⁴

Outdoor Play, Skill and Inventiveness

Familial play cultures frequently encompassed a wide age range of young people, not only including youth, but also older siblings and friends. Many of these groupings may have been initiated by adults, but were then developed autonomously by children and youth. While John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau recommended outdoor activities as essential for a healthy upbringing, few eighteenth century accounts of outdoor family activities exist, with

¹² Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: the Illustrated Companion* (London: Seven Dials, 2000), 29, 44; Flora Fraser, *Princesses: the Six Daughters of George III* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 31-2; Frost, *Victorian Childhoods*, 2; Jackson, ed, *Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*; Bayne-Powell, *English Child*, 21; Frances Margaret Taylor, "Memories, 1894-1979," Vol I, (1969) author's possession; Katharine Chorley, *Manchester Made Them: Some Reminiscences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950), 195.

¹³ Countess of Cork and Orrery, ed, *The Orrery Papers* (London, Duckworth & Co, 1903) 122; Lord Orrery to Tom Southerne, Marston, Nov 7 1733.

¹⁴ Michelle Abate, *Tomboys: A literary and cultural history* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), v, xv; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, 46-47; John Bailey, ed, *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish* (London: John Murray, 1927), 11; Sheila Fletcher, *Victorian Girls: Lord Lyttelton's Daughters* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 64; Margaret Wynne Nevinson, *Life's Fitful Fever: a Volume of Memories* (London: A & C Black, 1926) 5-6, 13.

the image of the “tomboy” and the promotion of health for “healthy bouncing girls” being associated with the late nineteenth. Muscular Christianity is usually associated with schools or voluntary organisations rather than home life. Some authors have challenged arguments about the gendering of childhood. Although working class girls were more restricted than boys, and more likely to have to help with chores or childcare, country labouring girls might play outside when they had time.¹⁵

How much space did children have to play outside? Pamela Horn maintained that, despite poverty, Victorian laboring children living in the country still had a better, healthier environment with space to play than town children. Some accounts emphasize the space available in the countryside, for gentry, middling sort and laboring families. Rebecca Brewin, daughter of a hosier, draper, Methodist preacher and future missionary’s wife, from Mountsorrel, went for rambles looking for wild flowers or blackberries in woods or countryside in the 1850s. Louise Jermy missed the fields and river after moving to London. In cold weather, the affluent might play games indoors. In the 1690s, the Clarke girls requested battledores be bought for them to play with in cold weather, while in winter Mabel Hunt’s family played “Hare and Hounds” indoors as well as outside.¹⁶

While children of the middle classes and elites were likely to be accompanied by servants on walks, male youth especially might have considerable freedom to move across town, like ten-year old John Pocock or fifteen-year-old Dickie Doyle. Location was

¹⁵ Bayne-Powell, *English Child*, 21-22; Marland, *Health and Girlhood*, 6-8; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, 39-40; Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England, 1600-1914* (Yale University Press, 2008), ; Brikham, “Preparing for an Imperial Inheritance”, 667-677; Maeve O’ Riordan “ Childhood in the Country House: Munster, 1850-1914,” in Mary Hatfield, Jutta Kruse and Rhona Nic Congaill, eds, *Historical Perspectives on parenthood and childhood in Ireland* (Dublin: Arlen House, 2018), 45-70; Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Country Child* (Kington: Roundwood Press, 1974), 150-152.

¹⁶ Benzaquén, “Pray do not lett,” 211; Robert Brewin, *Memoirs of Mrs Rebecca Wakefield: Missionary in East Africa*, 3rd edition (London: Andrew Crombie, 1888), 8; Hunt, *Eighty Years*, 6.

significant. Fanny Burney, aged seventeen, walked alone in the countryside from six to seven a.m. on holiday in 1768, but felt unable to do so in town settings.. Gardens large and small were also sources of pleasure, for both sexes, and many youth from mercantile, professional and gentry backgrounds could roam freely in large private grounds, able to develop their own play cultures free from adults. Margaret Nevinson, a Leicester clergyman's daughter, recalled of the 1860s and 1870s that "We had plenty of room for play in our garden and the disused stables; we quarrelled and fought to our hearts' content, disturbing none."¹⁷

Frideswide's Catholic family in the 1880s had to become more decorous soon after early childhood. For some, being outdoors was not considered as desirable. The niece of the future author Charlotte Yonge described her ambivalence: whereas in childhood, she enjoyed scrambling about with her cousin George, in "girlhood" (from age fifteen upwards), she saw being outdoors as "dawdling." In cold weather, walking three times round the gravel path (approximately a mile) was seen as enough exercise. In Lark Rise in the 1880s, children as young as two might be turned outside to play on their own. Indeed, elder girls went to service aged twelve, and were represented as too grown up to play, a reminder that laboring girls might go straight from childhood to adulthood without an adolescence. Images of working class children playing in urban streets have become commonplace. Girls, however, were often described as standing by supervising rather than playing, or else working indoors.¹⁸ The

¹⁷ Nevinson, *Life's Fitful Fever*, 12-13. *Fanny Burney's Diary. A selection from the diary and letters*, edited by John Wain (London : Folio Society, 1961); Edward Hall, ed, *Miss Weeton: Journal of a Governess, 1807-1811* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936, 1937), 20-21 15-16; *Richard Doyle's journal 1840, Introduction and notes by Christopher Wheeler* (Edinburgh: John Bartholomew and Sons, in association with London: British Museum Publications, Ltd, 1980); Tom Pocock, ed, *Travels of a London schoolboy, 1826-1830: John Pocock's diary of life in London and voyages to Cape Town and Australia* (London: Historical Publications, 1996), 16-19.

¹⁸ "Frideswide," O.S.B, i.e. M.W.F..Stapleton, *Reminiscences, Life Story of a Catholic Victorian Family* (East Bergholt: Abbey Press, 1938), 18; Christabel Coleridge, *Charlotte Yonge: her life and letters* (London, New York: Macmillan & Co, 1903), 90, 125; Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, 63-68, 158, 176; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, 119; Thompson, *Lark Rise*, 41-42; Edgar Sheppard, *George, Duke of Cambridge: a memoir of his private life based on*

following activities will now be considered: riding, boating, swimming, skating, and cricket, with reference to the themes of youth as producers, the transition from childhood play cultures to youthful independence, and the complexity of gender relations.

Riding was a skill taught in childhood that could facilitate independence. Learning might start young: seven-year-old Henry Solly, a timber-merchant's son, was given a pony and was given an errand to ride from Essex to Hackney (about three miles) on his own in 1820. Moreover, this was not limited to elites. Matthias Joyce, one of the early Methodist preachers, born in 1754 in Dublin, fell from a horse in full gallop aged about eleven. Riding could be taught to both sexes in elite families. In 1832, Prince George, Duke of Cambridge noted how a girl aged nine to ten rode confidently on a big horse, while he had been rather fearful. In 1862 "Grandpapa" had promised an Exmoor pony to Angie Acland, an Oxford professor's daughter, aged thirteen, who had been able to ride for four years. Youth might go riding without adults, including disabled young people. Thus, in Scotland, in 1860s, Lady Victoria Campbell, who was lame, was made a special saddle so she could ride with her seven siblings. Hunting, very important to country dwellers, was another potentially mixed-age, mixed-gender and cross-class activity, though one led by adults. In 1843, all the house party at Minto, in Scotland, including the youth, went hunting, except for three women, aged seventeen upwards. Mabel Hunt's clerical father insisted his daughters join the Meet in the 1880s.¹⁹

the journals and correspondence of His Royal Highness, vol 1, 1819-71 (New York: Longmans Green & Co, 1906), 21.

¹⁹ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms Acland, d.106, f. 90, Sarah Angelina Acland to Sarah Acland, 1862; Brian Fitzgerald, *Emily, Duchess of Leinster, 1731-1814: A Study of her Life and Times* (London and New York: Staples Press 1949), 62; Henry Solly, "These Eighty Years," or, *the Story of an Unfinished Life* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1893), 25, 43, 30; John Evans, ed, *The Victorian Elliots in Peace and War: Lord and Lady Minto, their family and household between 1816 and 1901* (Stroud, Amberly, 2012), 142; Mabel Hunt, *Eighty Years through Peace and War* (Lowestoft: the Borough Press and Saxmundham: H.G. Crisp, 1959), 6, 181; Nevinson, *Life's Fitful Fever*, 19, 12-13; Mary Clare Martin, "Disabled

Sea bathing became fashionable in the eighteenth century as a perceived cure for many health problems, though not necessarily for enjoyment. In 1755, Dr. Johnson distinguished between bathing for medicinal purposes and swimming for pleasure. While Orme and Allen argue that before 1719, virtually the whole female sex was excluded, young children, both male and female, might swim if taken by adults. Queeney Thrale, whose mother was an enthusiastic swimmer, was taught to swim by her father with a frog in a large basin and she was swimming in the sea aged eleven. Emily, Duchess of Leinster, promoted sea bathing all year round, and in the 1780s, her offspring went bathing at Black Rock in Ireland twice a day. Francis Place, son of a London debt collector, whose father forbade him to swim, was pushed into the river by a man who said that most boys about eleven years of age could swim. But elites as well as the labouring poor might swim for pleasure. The disabled Anna Gurney insisted on being carried down to the beach at Cromer, aged eight, so she could swim with her cousins. In the 1860s, Oundle British school children went bathing in the river Nen during their school lunch-time. The diarist, the Rev Henry Kilvert watched youth swimming in the sea in the 1870s.²⁰

Gender had an impact on elite girls' participation. Whereas Sarah Richardson, a judge's daughter, mentioned only boys bathing in the Thames during family holidays with

Children and Domestic Living Spaces in Britain, 1800-1900," in Margaret Romero, et al., eds., *Children, Spaces and Identity* (Oxford: Oxbow books, 2015), 142-3.

²⁰ Julia Allen, *Swimming with Dr Johnson and Mrs Thrale* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2012), 235, 224. A. Hayward, ed, *Autobiography of Mrs Thrale*, 2nd edition (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), Vol II, 444; Nicholas Orme, *Early British Swimming, 55 BC-1719 AD, with the first swimming treatise published in English, 1595* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1983), 107; Allan Brodie, "Towns of 'Health and Mirth': The First Seaside Resorts, 1730-1769," in Peter Borsay and John Walton, eds, *Resorts and Ports: European Seaside Towns since 1700* (Bristol, Buffalo: Channel View Publications, 2011), 18-19,54; Fitzgerald, *Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, 129; Tillyard, *Aristocrats*, 237; *Autobiography of Francis Place, edited with an introduction and notes by Mary Thale* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 52, 53, 59; John Burnett, *Destiny Obscure: autobiographies of childhood, education and family from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London: Allen Lane, 1982) 86; Ivy Stickland, *The Voices of Children* (1973), 175-7; Martin, "Disabled Children," 142-3.

cousins in the 1830s, Frances Balfour, of the aristocratic Argyll family in Scotland, recalled sea-bathing as recommended, and “pleasurable,” in the mid-nineteenth century. She also remembered, however, that they were hampered by wearing bathing-dresses resembling long night gowns. Nevinson and Acland, the only girls in families of brothers, recorded frustration at the limitations posed by their gender. Twelve-year-old Angie Acland, writing on holiday in 1862, wished she could swim more than once a week, like the other youth.²¹ “One of the sorrows of my childhood,” wrote Margaret Nevinson, “was that boys were allowed to swim in river and canal. I was told that ‘little ladies’ must not bathe in fresh water but only in the sea. I felt this deeply as I was an enthusiastic swimmer and hardly remember the time when I could not float like a cork on the water.”²² Louisa Grey loved her daily swim in the special seawater bathing pool that her family shared with Queen Victoria’s children at Osborne in the Isle of Wight . For elites, there could be a transition to independent self-organized activity by youth. When the Hunts moved to Feering, Essex, their two older cousins (Christopher and Elizabeth) organized bicycling picnics in Essex and to get to the coast at Mersea or Maldon, where they could swim.²³

Boating could also foster independence as well as pleasure, or girls as well as boys. William Hickey, aged fifteen, used to sail on the Thames near his father’s house in Twickenham, in the 1760s. Francis Place spent much of his leisure time rowing in a barge. Sarah Richardson, a judge’s daughter, recalled the enjoyment of brothers and cousins in bathing and boating, and girls in boating in their holidays in the 1830s. Frideswide noted

²¹ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms Acland, d. 106, fol 89, Sarah Angelina Acland to Sarah Acland, Aug 26 1862, Portland; Balfour, *Ne Obliviscaris: Dinna Forget, An autobiography with portraits* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 29-30; “Reminiscences of Sarah Selwyn, 1809-1907” (typescript), 10-11, [ENZB - 1961 - Selwyn, Sarah H. Reminiscences, 1809-1867. - \[TEXT\] p. 1-77 \(auckland.ac.nz\)](http://ENZB-1961-Selwyn.Sarah.H.Reminiscences.1809-1867.-[TEXT].p.1-77.auckland.ac.nz), accessed April 17, 2022.

²² Nevinson, *Life’s Fitful Fever*, 5.

²³ Elizabeth Longford, ed, *Louisa Lady in Waiting: the personal diaries and albums of Louisa, Lady in Waiting to Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), 14. Hunt, *Eighty Years*, 17.

how, when they moved to Kidlington (near Oxford), the boys camped out and the girls picnicked and went boating. In 1844, seventeen-year old Agnes Cotton, daughter of a governor of the Bank of England was acting as “Man Friday” for her younger brother Arthur,” paddling about the last day or two with him alternately in the little boat [their elder brother ...] gave Harry and in the little canoe.”²⁴

Access to skating depended on availability of equipment, the acquisition of which also depended on personal initiative; in this as in other activities, youth might develop the skills necessary to create or acquire play objects. Francis Place wanted to skate when he was twelve years old, so dug for iron and lead in an underwater ruin with his schoolfellows, which he sold to buy skates. Victorian country labouring boys had skates which were usually home-made, but which still allowed them to enjoy the activity. Funds were limited for the clergy families. Margaret Nevinson recalled how, on one occasion when her brother was carrying their shared skates, he dropped the blade of one of them, and they both knew they could not buy another.²⁵ Neither said anything to the adults, providing an example of youthful peer-group solidarity.

Like riding, skating might start young and include both sexes. In 1842, Arthur Cotton was beginning to learn at the age of nine. The aristocratic Lucy Lyttelton went sliding with “the boys” when she was thirteen.²⁶ Although Louisa Grey (born in 1855), who

²⁴ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms Acland, d 184, f. 154, (date unavailable), Sarah Acland to William Charles Cotton (likely to be 1841-48); Peter Quennell, ed, *Memoirs of William Hickey* (London: Century Publishing, 1984), 16-17; Thale, *Place Autobiography*, 52-4; Selwyn “Reminiscences,” 10; Frideswide, *Reminiscences*, 67; Horn, *Victorian Country Child*, 150-2.

²⁵ Ning de Coninck Smith, “Geography and the Environment,” In Colin Heywood, ed, *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Age of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 87); Horn, *Victorian Country Child*, 152; Thale, *Place Autobiography*, 48; Nevinson, *Life’s Fitful Fever*, 27.

²⁶ Bailey, ed, *Diary*, 15, 113; Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms Acland, Agnes Cotton to William Charles Cotton, d. 189, f. 102, Jan 30th 1842.

remembered skating, might be considered to model propriety, being in the Queen's household, it was not universally accepted for young elite women. Gulielma Lister, from an Essex Quaker family, reported of the 1880s how "all the Wildsmith sisters were beautiful skaters... and this at a time when it was thought very advanced for girls to skate."²⁷

Toy boats linked outdoor play and imaginative play with the development of a skill. The favorite sports of Thomas Arnold, the future headmaster, included sailing rival fleets of ships with his few childhood playmates. Ellen Weeton recalled that, when the weather was fine, they played her brother's amusements in the garden; this included sailing ships in the rain tub. Older boys could be producers as well as consumers, across the social spectrum. Francis Place learned the use of tools in a carpenter's shop, in the 1780s, aged about twelve, making many models of sailing boats, which were sold for him by adults, his father and the sculptor, Flaxman, in a shop at the Strand. Henry Solly was taught to make boats in the carpenter's shop on his father's estate and sailed boats (Nelson's fleet) on ponds from a small boy, until he was older (age thirteen) at school in 1830. Thus, sailing toy boats, which seems to have been a particularly gendered activity, perhaps because they depended on equipment, also illustrate a transition from childish play to youthful production. Adults might help youth from a working class backgrounds to learn to fish, but girls could also participate. Rebecca Brewin often spent Saturday afternoons on fishing trips with her brothers, while Katharine Chorley, of Alderley Edge, was shown how to make a fishing rod and to fish by a stable hand.²⁸

²⁷ Longford, ed, *Louisa, Lady in Waiting*, 14; Waltham Forest Archives, L96, Gulielma Lister and Isabella Lister, "Memories of Old Leytonstone," 4.

²⁸ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, 42; Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, 66; Brewin, *Memoirs of Mrs Rebecca Wakefield*, 8; Fletcher, *Victorian Girls*, 14; Horn, *Victorian Country Child*, 151; Chorley, *Manchester Made Them*, 195; Hall, *Ellen Weeton's Journal*, 14-16; Thale, *Place Autobiography*, 54, 47; Solly, *These Eighty Years*, 25, 41, 43; Dean Stanley, *Life of Thomas Arnold*, 6th edition, 2.

The mid-nineteenth century public school is usually associated with the rise of organized sport for the upper and middle class young, yet children played competitive games in the eighteenth century in a family context. Eighteenth-century paintings depicted girls and boys playing cricket. Exercise was considered important for both the male and female children of George III, who played cricket, hockey and other games. Indeed, by the mid-eighteenth century there were all-female cricket matches. By the 1830s, the whole mission community at Paihia in New Zealand—all ages, pakeha and indigenous people alike—played a cricket match. Nineteenth-century elite girls participated in team games. In 1854, Lucy Lyttelton (aged thirteen), played cricket with the boys at Hagley. Mabel Hunt, fifth sister in her family, recalled how her clerical father was always ready to coach them, and taught them to play cricket and not fear the hard ball.²⁹

Country boys could be inventive producers, making cricket bats in the 1860s. In the Buckinghamshire village of Haddenham the young carpentry apprentice Walter Rose added to his pocket money by making cricket bats in his spare time. Urban girls and boys played cricket in the streets in the nineteenth century. Yet family members and servants might send mixed messages. Margaret Nevinson “took part in all [her five brothers’] sports, and became a good cricketer, tree-climber, etc.” But, once when she broke her finger on a hard cricket ball, she was told “It served me right for being a Tom Boy—little ladies should not play cricket.”³⁰ But games organized by adults might be tedious and dull, as in the case of

²⁹ Harris, *Siblinghood*, 32. Jill Shefrin, *Such Constant Affectionate Care* (Cotsen Children’s Library, Los Angeles, 2003), 64; Mary Clare Martin, “Play, Missionaries and the colonial encounter, 1800-1870,” in Hugh Morrison and Mary Clare Martin, eds. *Creating Religious Childhoods in Anglo-World and British Colonial Contexts* (London, Routledge, 2017), 74,(61-85); Bailey, *Diaries of Lady Cavendish*, 22. August 26th 1854. Allen, *Swimming with Dr Johnson and Mrs Thrale*, 107-109. Hunt, *Eighty Years*, 6.

³⁰ Nevinson, *Life’s Fitful Fever*, 5-6, 13.

Frideswide's mother's birthday croquet party. The youth demonstrated "resistance" by falling in the pond and getting soaked.³¹

Thus, outdoor play encompassed activities that extended across the age range. Close analysis of specific aspects of youthful play, such as organized games, shows how their experiences across gender and social class were more varied and also more similar than is frequently suggested. The *longue duree* calls in question the practice of limiting the focus on the late nineteenth century as a key period for girls to have more freedom physically. Young people had roles as producers of equipment, which enabled working class boys to alleviate class divides. Whereas specific skills such as riding and skating might be taught, or activities such as bathing be carefully managed, youth were able to demonstrate autonomy in many activities. Yet, anecdotes highlight the role of adults as well as older siblings in imparting skill.

Drama at Home: Imaginative Play and Theatricals

Whereas psychologists would consider socio-dramatic play as an essential aspect of child development, dramatic activities were woven into the fabric of different households far down the social scale. Family games like "dumb crambo" or charades, which involved answering questions through mime, might be played by all-age family groups. Disapproval of imaginative play and the theatre by different religious groups, notably Methodists, and Evangelicals, was communicated to some young people. Charlotte Yonge's only youthful friends, near her home, the Shipleys, did not approve of imaginary play as it was not "real." Even as late as 1900, the Streatfeilds were not allowed to dress up during Lent.³²

³¹ Martin, "Disabled Children," 142-3; Frideswide, *Reminiscences*, 40-43; Horn, *Victorian Country Child*, 151-2; Frost, *Victorian Childhoods*, 82.

³² Evans, ed, *Victorian Elliots*, 141; Coleridge, *Charlotte Yonge*, 95; Midori Yamaguchi, *Daughters of the Anglican Clergy* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 37.

Although historians might assume a transition from children’s imaginative play to older children performing in public, the reality was far more complex. The very young might attend the theatre and be co-opted into public performances by adults. Gleadle has argued that juveniles “playing at soldiers” in the early 1800s saw this as an apprenticeship for their future military activity. This section will track how cultures of imaginative play developed into more formal presentation of theatricals, and the co-opting or voluntary engagement of the young. Some practices occurred across the age range, some were organized by adults, but some by young people. It will go beyond Abigail Williams’ typology of reading, recitation, and performing to look at the links between imaginative play, reading, recitation and performance, both domestic and public.³³

Religious play was one of the most common themes across the period. Indeed, biographies sometimes interpreted early religious play as indicative of later genius. Many memoirs, across social classes, describe children, male and female, “acting the preacher.” While many did so very seriously, some were mocking. Children also played at funerals, from the early eighteenth to the early twentieth century. In the 1750s, the young Hannah More used to “make a carriage of a chair, and then to call her sisters to ride with her to London, to see bishops and booksellers. She wrote “suppositious letters to depraved characters to reclaim them from their errors, and letters in return expressive of contrition, and resolutions of amendment.”³⁴ Reading plays aloud was a family as well as a solitary activity,

³³ Gleadle, “Playing at Soldiers,” 336, 344; Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 169-182.

³⁴ William Roberts, *The Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More*, (London: Thomas Seeley, 1835), 14; Mary Clare Martin, “Childhood, youth and denominational identity: church, chapel and home in the long eighteenth century,” in Tali Berner and Lucy Underwood, eds., *Childhood, youth and religious minorities in early modern Europe* (Houndmills; Palgrave, 2019), 141; Martin, “Disabled Children,” 138-42; *The great diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire. Vol II, 1712-1719, transcribed and annotated by Frank Tyrer*, edited for the Record Society by J.J. Bagley (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1968), 29.

undertaken not only by the higher classes but also the middling sort and even the poor. One of the Clarkes asked for a copy of “*Don Quixote*” in the 1690s. The Harris family, who lived in the cathedral close in Salisbury, read Shakespeare plays together in the 1760s, while Harriet Martineau loved reading them on her own in the drawing-room, aged about nine. In the 1840s, Joseph Ashby, the farm labourer knew some speeches from Shakespeare, and his brother would teach him in bed at night the set pieces taught at school, making a tent from an old blanket. Newsboys paid 6d for copies of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Alice Foley’s father forced her to act Desdemona.³⁵

The public theatre was very popular in the eighteenth century, and as early as 1712 parents took children as young as four years old. The children of the Duke of Kildare, aged seven upwards, went to the pantomime, which was universally popular, entitled *A Trip to the Dargil*, in Dublin near Christmas in 1762.³⁶ The creativity of the young could result in self-generated performance. Georgiana, the future Duchess of Devonshire, loved to compose poems and stories to perform after dinner, “and entertain her family with playlets featuring dramatic heroines in need of rescue.”³⁷ In 1767 [Lady Bute’s] youngest daughter, a child of ten years of age, ... showed us the beginning of a French novel, wrote by herself, and informed us that she was going to write a play: that the plan was fixt (sic) and was to be taken from a Roman story.³⁸ Lord Pigot’s “natural” daughter, aged about nine or ten , performed

³⁵ Harriet Martineau, *Harriet Martineau’s Autobiography* (London:Smith, Elder & Co, 1877), Vol. I, 70; Benzaquén, “Pray do not lett any read this impertinent epistle”; Williams, *Social Life*, 182-190; Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, eds, *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World: the family papers of James Harris, 1732-1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 122; Mabel Ashby, *Joseph Ashby of Tysoe* (Cambridge, The University Press, 1961), 21.

³⁶. Blundell, *Great Diurnal*, II, 1712, 30; Bayne-Powell, *English Child*, 118, 120; Fitzgerald, *Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, 109-110.

³⁷ Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 9.

³⁸ J.A. Home, ed, *Letters and Journals of Mary, Lady Mary Coke*, (Bath, Kingsmead Bookshops, 1970), Vol I, March 12, 1767, note.

extracts and songs from popular plays for as many as fifty people in 1767. Thomas Arnold, the future headmaster of Rugby, wrote a tragedy in about 1800, when he was only six, about Percy Earl of Northumberland. Charlotte Yonge wrote plays for the Moberlys, children of the headmaster of Winchester, aged sixteen, in the 1830s, customising the parts for the characters.³⁹

As indicated above, children and young people included classical allusions in their play as well as their amateur theatricals. The future colonial administrator, Thomas Macaulay, played imaginary classical games, though these would seem to have been beyond the capacities of his siblings. Thomas Arnold acted the battles of the Greek heroes. The Solly children of Rotherhithe acted a play of “Alexander the Robber” (Alexander the Great) on Twelfth Night, 1831. By the early nineteenth century, the young (especially boys) had toy theatres which provided further opportunities for experimentation, using a range of storylines, and for elder siblings to help younger ones. Girls also performed historical scenarios, Frances Balfour stringing Blondin across her sick-bed and re-enacting a duel with her brother. In the 1880s, the Baptist Tom Moore enacted Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* in the castle grounds at Reigate, and the exclusive (male) Boomerang Club played Red Indians. Victorian country boys played at fox-hunting, would make their own stilts and act the beginnings of several stories.⁴⁰

³⁹ Home, *Letters of Mary, Lady Coke*, Vol I, 199; Stanley, *Life of Thomas Arnold*, 2; Coleridge, *Charlotte Yonge*, 130-131.

⁴⁰ Rachel Bryant-Davies, “Fun with the Classics” puzzling antiquity in *The Boy’s Own Paper*,” in Rachel Bryant-Davies and Barbara Gribbling, eds, *Pasts at Play: Childhood encounters with history in British History, 1750-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 96-122; Catherine Hall, *Macaulay, Father and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 95-6; Stanley, *Life of Thomas Arnold*, 2; Elizabeth Solly to Neal Solly, Waltham Forest Archives, Solly Letters, W96/SOL, 1/15; Balfour, *Ne Obliviscaris*, 141; Sylvia Legge, *Affectionate Cousins: T. Sturge Moore and Maria Appia* (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980), 37; Horn, *Victorian Country Child*, 151; *Richard Doyle’s Journal*, 61, 130.

Formal performances in public were related more to status than to age. In the late seventeenth century, royal and court youth performed in dramas, such as *Calisto*. By 1722, nine year old Lady Caroline Lennox was acting in a play staged in a private theatre at the Royal Mint, watched by royalty: *The Arrival of the Indian Emperor in Mexico. Tableaux vivants*, which might involve royal children from eleven months upwards as well as youth were organized, for example in 1769. By the end of the nineteenth century, children across social classes might be co-opted to patriotic tableaux.⁴¹

Youth were frequently involved in performing with and for adults. Williams described private theatricals by gentry and aristocracy, but also mentioned that cross-dressing was a concern both for the Clarkes (in the 1690s), and the Harrises in the 1760s. In 1768, Fanny Burney participated in theatricals with guests of all ages when staying with her friends such as Mr Crisp at Chesington. Fitzjames Stephen's only appearance on a stage, as Toby Trumplin, occurred at Christmas, 1844 when he was staying with family friends at Warrington. Charades at the Mintos' castle might involve all ages; for example, in December 1856, the game included three adults and one youth, Nina Minto's eleven year old boy.⁴² These examples illustrate the difficulty of disassociating the activities of young people from those of adults.

Young people might also organize theatricals themselves. From 1768 onwards, young women of the musical Harris family in Salisbury organized amateur theatricals with others, led by Gertrude, aged eighteen, and including Louisa, aged thirteen. These were held in grand private homes, such as the chapel in the Harrises' home. The Austen family sometimes held

⁴¹ James Anderson Winn, *Queen Anne, Patron of the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7-10, 34; Tillyard, *Aristocrats: the illustrated companion*, 29-30; Home, ed, *Letters of Lady Mary Coke*, Vol I, 1766, 101. Fraser, *Princesses*, 17-18; Ashby, *Joseph Ashby*, 21.

⁴² Williams, *Social Life*, 194-196; Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Bart K.C.S.I. a Judge of the High Court of Justice* (London: Smith & Elder, 1895), 85; *Letters of Lady Minto*, 136; Wain, *Fanny Burney's Journal*, 10, 37.

private theatricals, as in the novel *Mansfield Park*, but with the barn as the theatre. Plays produced by the elite young could be performed in distinctly public places. In 1831 and 1832, the schoolboy Frederick Young, son of a Limehouse shipowner and MP, “acted female parts in theatricals at the ‘Bow Brewhouse (Mr Drane’s),” to a large audience. His friend and business colleague Joseph Dawson acted Lydia Languish and Frederick her servant Lucy, in dresses especially made by dressmakers. Charles Dickens’ children acted in plays such as *The Frozen Deep*, at home and in a private audience with the Queen in 1857. John Kitto, from a much poorer background, was inspired by the ubiquitous printed playbills to organize a play with other youth. They charged eight to ten pence and bought a feast with the profits, thus foreshadowing the “penny gaffs” held at street corners in working class areas from the 1840s.⁴³

Performance might develop directly from youthful imaginative play. Clergy daughters from the mid-nineteenth century produced entertainments for the parish and for public consumption. In 1860, at Pradoc in Shropshire, the Kenyon family home, a performance of “Blue Beard” was held, acted by adults and mainly children, with the programme appearing in children’s handwriting. Clergy daughter Margaret Nevinson produced little plays and *tableaux vivants* with two girl friends at their country house, “B-Hall,” in Leicestershire. In one, they acted a scene in which a young girl joined a convent, the path later taken by one of the girls. Frideswide, however, described the tedious aspects of home theatricals organized by their mother in the 1870s. On one occasion they rebelled and went to the village in historical

⁴³ Burrows and Dunhill, eds, *Music and Theatre in Handel’s World*, 531; December 31, 1768, Cambridge University Library, Royal Commonwealth Society Library, Letters and Papers of Frederick Young, 54/1, 1831, 1832, ff. 15-16; Valerie Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 58; David Cecil, A portrait of *Jane Austen* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, London: Book Club Associates 1980, c 1978), 35; John E Ryland, *Memoir of John Kitto, compiled chiefly from his letters and journals* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1956), 13-14; John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: penny gaffs to gangsta-rap* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

costume and started making speeches to the village children .⁴⁴ Such resistance was the exception rather than the norm, however.

Thus, aspects of youthful imaginative play suffused life in country houses and homes further down the social scale, and included dramatic performances by adults. Self-generated imaginative play might result in productions, both dramatic and written, to adults in their households or even wider communities. Inevitably, these processes were refracted by class and gender, although there were similarities across social strata.

Juvenile Writing and Periodicals: Play as Apprenticeship

Youthful cultures of reading and writing could develop, regardless of adult attitudes. Fanny Burney, who published *Evelina* when she was eighteen, was encouraged by her father's friend, Mr. Crisp ("Daddy Crisp") and literary friends. John Kitto was asked to write a story for a friend, and illustrated it as well, for a small fee. Writing for publication was possible. The young men in the Gurneys' circle in Norwich contributed articles to *The Cabinet*, a local Jacobin magazine. Harriet Martineau and Charlotte Yonge, published in juvenile magazines as teenagers. Catherine Marsh submitted an article to *The Youth's Companion* when she was seventeen, but it was rejected.⁴⁵

Christine Alexander has described the culture of family magazines in the nineteenth century as "Play and apprenticeship." She analysed the literary productions of later well-

⁴⁴ Yamaguchi, *Daughters*, 87-9; Bailey, ed, *Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, 46; Nevinson, *Life's Fitful Fever*, 33; Handwritten flyer for "Blue Beard," 1861, Kenyon papers box, possession of the Rt Rev G.H. Thompson; *Letters of Nina, Lady Minto*, 169; Frideswide, *Reminiscences*, 37, 68.

⁴⁵ Wain, *Fanny Burney's Journal*, 10, 37; Ryland, *Memoir*, 13; Kathryn Gleadle, "The Juvenile Enlightenment: British Children and Youth during the French Revolution," *Past and Present*, Vol 233, (2016), 143-184; Coleridge, *Charlotte Yonge*, 149; L.E. O'Rourke, *The Life and Friendships of Catherine Marsh* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1917), 10; Martineau, *Autobiography*, 71, 117-23.

known authors in the context of youthful play and as preparation for their future roles as authors, using concepts such as “serious play,” “family play,” and “communal play.” The culture of producing home made magazines has been characterized as a form of female empowerment, but boys were often involved, even initiators. Indeed, they were also produced by boys’ schools, for the working class as well as the middle classes, into the twentieth century.⁴⁶ The earliest known examples of family magazines were the stories written by the Burney family in the 1750s. *The Loiterer*, to which other siblings contributed, was started by Jane Austen’s brother at Oxford. The Bronte family’s *Glasstown* was based round toy soldiers brought home by their father in the late eighteenth century. Other famous child authors and productions included Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson), and the Woolf family’s *Hyde Park Gate News*, which Virginia Woolf edited in the early 1890s between the ages of nine and thirteen. Alexander emphasized the power wielded by females as editors, while noting the role of, say the young Lewis Carroll in organising his siblings. Sibling hierarchy was evident in the Stephen family: the younger brother Adrian was squashed when he tried to start a new paper, the *Talland Gazette*. This “communal play” with siblings has frequently been identified not only as part of their youth culture, but also as the source of these authors’ later creativity. Many other families besides the future famous produced their own magazines, however. The “Boomerang Club,” composed of the Moore boys’ siblings and friends, produced a monthly magazine of prose and verse in the 1880s.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Christine Alexander, “Play and Apprenticeship: the culture of family magazines,” in Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, eds, *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 42; Kathryn Gleadle, “Magazine Culture, Girlhood Communities, and Educational Reform in Britain,” *English Historical Review* 134 (2019): 1169-1195; Magazine of Woolwich Polytechnic, 1910. University of Greenwich archives.

⁴⁷ Patricia Crown, “Stories for Cecilia Burney Written by her Sisters and Illustrated by Edward F. Burney and Other Hands: A Manuscript for, by and about Children,” *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29 (2006): 399-411; Alexander, “Play as

The Bee-Hive provides more detailed insights into how such magazines might function across the age range and with extended family. Produced and edited by a family of four sisters (the Kenyons, born 1886-1894, whose father was career military officer), and their extended family of cousins and some adults from 1902-1906, it provides insights into family dynamics and shows how the skills of the youngest could be developed in collaboration with older siblings. The first editor was Kitty (Katharine), who was sixteen. The four sisters all contributed, though Peggy (aged eight) comes across as the most enthusiastic. The magazine also included contributions by members of other households from their extended family: the Fairfax Taylors, who attended Oxford High School, the De Butts family, and Aunt Rhoeta, (De Butts), who lived in the Isle of Wight. The magazine had all the expected features, such as letters pages, editorials, and puzzles. Contributors were encouraged to write “critisisms” (sic) of other articles. The first edition was hand-written (in the same handwriting) but later versions were typewritten. They also had themed issues, such as “Cats,” which allowed contributors to write at their own levels. The news pages allowed the youngest to add their interests (about new baby Freddy’s baptism in the Isle of Wight in 1902), juxtaposed with accounts of school, and their adult elder brother Herbert’s report back from India. The magazines also illustrate how writing competence was not dependent on “age.” Peggy, the youngest, was a more frequent contributor than her elder sister Winifred. The content also provided insights into the lives of older cousins. ⁴⁸

Conclusion

Apprenticeship”, 42; Legge, *Affectionate Cousins* 37; Diana White, *Jane Austen: the Life and Times of the Woman Behind the Books* (Monkton Farleigh: Folly Books, 2017), 74.

⁴⁸ Gleadle, “Magazine Cultures,”; *The Bee-Hive*, 1903, author’s possession.

This essay has identified specific forms of youth culture that were generated in familial environments, across different social classes and genders. Outdoor games, whether free flow or with rules might be introduced or facilitated by adults or older siblings, but practised by young people independently. Youth (mainly boys, and often from poorer backgrounds) made their own resources such as skates, and toy boats. While elite girls recorded the constraints of their gender in relation, to, say, swimming, many girls, from different social classes, did engage in outdoor play and learned the skills of independence associated with riding and boating.

Imaginative play could develop into family produced or publicly performed theatricals produced by the young. That these flourished within an environment of adult play-reading and charades does not negate their identity as the creations of youth. Juvenile magazines might include the whole age range of a family and be sufficiently inclusive of the youngest to make this a collective endeavour. Indeed, in *The Bee-Hive*, younger members were invited to “criticise” older ones, thus developing their own writing capacity, and giving the young a voice within hierarchical family structures. This therefore extends the understanding of youth culture as a collaboration across age groups, and a means for the youngest to develop, rather than an exclusive, narrowly age-related category.

Clearly, a short essay cannot capture the complexities of change over time, and class and gender differences. Childhood would seem to have ended more abruptly in the eighteenth century, even for the middle and upper classes than in the nineteenth, as a result of early marriage, socialising with adults, or leaving home for apprenticeships. Nevertheless, given that much sociability for the elites occurred at home, the distinctions between “childhood,” “youth” and “adulthood” were rarely consistent. This essay also demonstrates the complexity of sibling dynamics. Girls with many brothers might participate in boys’ games. Conversely,

families with solid cohorts of girls might be encouraged to play boys' games on their own. Whereas a focus on the acquisition of toys may emphasize a deficit model of class difference or disadvantage, to consider children and young people as producers opens up a much wider range of play experiences for investigation. This essay thus develops and contributes to definitions and interpretations of play cultures, social worlds and youth for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Despite limited examples of youthful protests, the continual, perhaps surprising existence of "scaffolding" by adults rejects the idea that youth culture is, by definition, opposed to that of the adult world (assuming there is one such). Moreover, it also nuances the frequent assertion of the gendering of childhood and youth.

Suggested Readings:

Christine Alexander and Juliet McMaster, eds, *The Child Writer from Austen to Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Rosamund Bayne-Powell, *The English Child in the Eighteenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1939).

Adriana Benzaquen, "'Pray lett none see this impertinent epistle': Children's letters and children in letters." In Andrew O' Malley, *Literary Cultures and Eighteenth-Century Childhoods* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 200-257.

Troy Bickham, "Preparing for an Imperial Inheritance: Children, Play and Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain": *Journal of British Studies*, 60, 2021, 658-688,

Ginger Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (Westport, Connecticut, and London: Praeger, 2008).

Kathryn Gleadle, "Magazine Culture, Girlhood Communities, and Educational Reform in Britain", *English Historical Review*, (2019), Vol 134, Issue 579, 1169-1195.

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Amy Harris, *Siblinghood and social relations in Georgian England;: share and share alike* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012),

Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Country Child* (Kington: The Roundwood Press, 1974).

Mary Clare Martin, “Play, Missionaries and the colonial encounter, 1800-1870” . In Hugh Morrison and M.C.Martin, *Creating Religious Childhoods in Anglo-World and British Colonial Contexts* (Routledge, London, 2017), 64-85.

Mary Clare Martin, “Disabled Children and domestic living spaces in Britain, 1800-1900.” In Margaret Romero, Eva Alarcón García and Gonzalo Aranda Jiménez et al ed, *Children, Spaces and Identity* (Oxford: Oxbow books, 2015), 136-154.

Valerie Sanders, *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Basingstoke; Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (London: Yale University Press, 2017).

ABSTRACT

Debates on youth culture have frequently focused on rituals of misrule, gangs, the music industry, and other activities and institutions external to the home and family. Yet from 1700 to 1900, many young people developed play cultures within domestic and familial settings. This chapter focuses on outdoor play, imaginative play, and young people's writing and dramatic performances from 1700-1900. While the activities of girls and young women have received far less attention than those of males, recent research reflects a rich social world of activities generated by young people on the threshold of adulthood in all social classes, which was shared with siblings and friends, male as well as female.

As mainly self-generated and distinct from adult worlds, these activities are as worthy of the definition "youth culture" as twentieth-century developments which were strongly

influenced by adult celebrities, the mass media and commercial interests. Although this essay argues that, for all the idealistic visions of play as a youth-generated activity, the intervention of adults was necessary for such play cultures to develop, it casts new light on the definition of "youth culture," and on the transition to adulthood.

Keywords: youth, play, siblings, outdoors, theatricals, juvenile magazines
