



University of HUDDERSFIELD

University of Huddersfield Repository

Webster, Wendy

Transnational Journeys and Domestic Histories

Original Citation

Webster, Wendy (2006) Transnational Journeys and Domestic Histories. *Journal of Social History*, 39 (3). pp. 651-666. ISSN 0022-4529

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/13011/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

Transnational Journeys and Domestic Histories

Wendy Webster

In *Mike and Stefani*, an Australian documentary film released in 1952, a family group -- Mike, Stefani, their young daughter and Mike's adolescent nephew -- are shown on board ship, bound for Australia.¹ The displaced persons (DP) camp in Germany that they are leaving is only one of a number of liminal places on which the film focuses. These include the labour camps in Germany to which Mike and Stefani are deported as enforced workers during the Second World War, and the immigration office where they undergo a rigorous interview about their application to enter Australia. Ron Maslyn Williams, the film's producer and writer, reversed Mike and Stefani's journey, travelling from Australia to Europe to research the film, and visiting every DP camp in Germany. To save money, he travelled in an International Refugee Organisation ship.²

This essay considers the potential of histories of transnational movements of people, comparative histories of particular movements, and the erosion of boundaries between British domestic and imperial history, to expand and revise social histories of place. It does so through looking at a particular case-study: that of nineteenth- and twentieth-century British domestic life and work. I begin by tracing the historiography of the most common site of domestic work -- the home -- looking at two main impulses that gave rise to increasing interest in the home in historical work on Britain, the first foregrounding questions of class, and the second questions of gender and class. Historians of Britain were slow to take up questions of race and ethnicity. A

main focus of the essay is on how such questions are raised through a consideration of transnational migrations of people which, in a British context, often involves making connections between domestic and imperial history. But I also consider enforced migrations through the movement of refugees -- a neglected area in historical work, including work on Britain.

Work on such movements demonstrates how far the history of home involves transnational themes, including the recruitment of migrants and refugees who crossed national borders to do domestic work, and their development of what has been called the 'transnational family' -- one that maintained contact and relationship across national borders. The essay is concerned to situate Mike and Stefani's journey by ship to Australia within a history of policies, shaped by ideas of gender, race and class in an imperial context that produced convoluted movements of peoples. It compares their journey not only to that made by refugees recruited to the British labour market from DP camps in Germany and Austria, but also to that made by British migrants to Australia in the immediate post-war period. In doing so, it traces some of the intersecting transnational dimensions of diverse domestic histories.



A democratisation of place was a strong feature of British social history from the mid-1960s. Attention turned away from elite places and their inhabitants and activities towards what were sometimes called (especially in works of oral history) 'ordinary people' and the working classes. Through its focus on class, British social history from the mid-1960s generated interest in a wide range of places in which the working classes congregated: places of leisure, workplaces, meeting places,

communities. There was also attention to working-class housing which, in a British context, included work on model villages, Chartist villages, artisan dwellings, the rural labourer's cottage. In cultural studies, Richard Hoggart's account of working-class community in Hunslet in Leeds made considerable reference to domesticity and domestic interiors, particularly through his strong focus on the figure of 'our Mam'. His portrait of working-class community and culture in a Northern English city, and their erosion by commercialisation and Americanisation, was influential for many social historians of Britain.³

This democratisation of place extended to primary material as social historians mined a wide range of sources found in many places beyond the boundaries of official archives. As part of the increasing use of personal narratives to explore the perspective of the working classes and write 'history from below', the home also became significant for the sources it contained or generated. Personal narratives in particular were often located in people's homes. John Burnett, searching for working-class autobiography, and Malcolm Brown in quest of stories of the private soldier in the First World War, for example, both advertised for people to come forward with diaries, letters or autobiographies of relatives and forebears, most of which came from private archives in people's homes.⁴ In the development of oral history, interviews were often conducted in people's homes, generating new sources.

While social history foregrounded issues of class in relation to housing, the development of women's history from the late 1960s very considerably extended attention to the home in historical work and developed much rich literature. This history took its readers into domestic interiors and analysed the power relations

involved in domesticity. It produced a history of private life which, alongside attention to domestic work, also looked at sexuality, marriage, menstruation, birth control, childbirth, breast-feeding, wet-nursing, the labour of love involved in child-care, domestic violence. In feminist work, the distinction between public and private - named as 'separate spheres' -- was fundamental to the way in which power relations between men and women and the subordination of women was conceptualised. Feminist historians of the nineteenth century in particular uncovered the ways in which this distinction informed institutional practices, laws and customs with important implications for gender and citizenship and women's access to education and the labour market. Feminist history was also concerned to trace the challenges to separate spheres by the women's movement from the 1860s, while historians of women in the twentieth century traced the increasing erosion of separate spheres and fluidity of male and female roles.⁵ In its turn, the interest that women's history generated in questions of gender and masculinity meant that, by the new millennium, John Tosh's book on the middle-class home in Victorian England was entitled *A Man's Place*.⁶

A commitment to the politics of class as well as gender and the development of a distinctively socialist feminist perspective was a particular characteristic of feminist historical work in Britain and class and capitalism were central to much British feminist history, generating debates about the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Such a perspective produced literatures on working-class women's domestic and family work as well as paid employment. How they combined these drew attention to the home as a place of paid employment for women. There were accounts of women's contribution to family income through taking in washing,

sewing or lodgers, and of the continuing importance of outwork done by women -- including chain-making and nail-making in the Black Country -- into the mid-nineteenth century and beyond.⁷ A commitment to the politics of class also produced accounts of class relationships between women within the home through domestic service -- an occupation that obviously blurred distinctions between home and work, private and public.⁸ Such accounts explored power relations between women within the home organised around class.

It is symptomatic of the separation of questions of class and gender from ethnicity in British history that Eleanor Rathbone -- a very important figure in the history of British feminism as an advocate of family endowment -- does not feature there as an advocate of action to save the Jews before and during the Second World War. It is necessary to turn to literatures on British Jewry and refugee movements to Britain to learn about her campaigns to get Jews out of Nazi Germany and bring them to Britain. It is these literatures that also look at Jewish women refugees who escaped from Nazi Germany before the war through a British Ministry of Labour scheme, but only on condition that they worked as domestic servants.⁹ The history of those who escaped from Germany through this scheme complicates the story of class relations in domestic service, for many had been middle-class employers of servants in Germany and Austria before the rise of Hitler but, on arrival in Britain, had to don a cap and apron. In Bronka Schneider's autobiographical account of her first months in Britain, working as domestic servant in a remote castle in Scotland, class relationships are further complicated by the fact that she was in service to a man and wife who had recently returned from India.¹⁰ Schneider subsequently migrated from Britain to the USA.

One symptom of the neglect of questions of race and ethnicity in British history until recently was the separation of the domestic from an imperial context. The idea that racial difference was also about differences of place -- a racial separation between empire and metropolis, where non-white people belonged in an empire under British colonial rule -- was current in Britain up to the mid-twentieth century and beyond. It was replicated in much of the literature on British history which maintained a separation between the imperial and the domestic. Imperial history enjoyed considerable cultural prestige, and was often written by men who were actively involved in imperial politics or administration, and held distinguished university chairs funded by imperialists. Their work focused on the 'official mind' -- the activities of policy-making elites in politics, administration and economics.¹¹ The rise of social history from the mid-1960s did little to develop a social history of empire or to undermine a separation between the imperial and the domestic, and there was practically no work that considered whether, or how far, empire shaped British society.

It was the advent of new imperial histories in the 1990s, often drawing on post-colonial theory and taking a cultural approach that began to look at connections between empire and metropolis. A range of work explored the role of empire in shaping ideas about what it meant to be English or British. Other work looked at the impact of empire on developments in ideas of racial and gender difference.¹² Such histories open up a large field for potential development in British history. Amongst these is their capacity to develop, revise and complicate work on class, gender, race and ethnicity. Like British domestic and imperial history, these are questions that have

often -- though by no means always -- been treated separately. But as Billie Melman has argued: 'The integration of race into studies of gender, and of gender into studies of race has a great potential for the expansion and indeed revision of two fields that had developed separately'.¹³



A. James Hammerton has recently argued that the histories of single female migration and domestic service are inseparable'.¹⁴ Setting the history of Britain in the wider geographical framework of empire draws attention to the very wide range of transnational movements involved in the history of domestic service in the nineteenth century, and especially the migration of British and Irish women to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Irish women also migrated to Britain to work as servants -- a history that has been taken up in literatures on gender and migration but rarely features in histories of domestic work in Britain. Louise Ryan suggests that the relative invisibility of Irish female migrants in Britain, where a dominant popular stereotype was the Paddy or Mick, may have been due to their containment inside British domestic spaces.¹⁵

In this traffic in people bound for domestic service, ships often served as domestic spaces in motion. Hammerton, summarising work on shipboard practices, argues that they 'replicated and magnified the control of women and their incarceration at home under conditions of separate spheres'.¹⁶ On journeys to Australia, where single women were segregated and supervised in steerage, and locked in at night, punishments for seeking greater freedom until the 1840s included head-shaving and being placed in irons. In the traffic between India and Britain,

Rozina Visram's work shows that ships could serve as another form of domestic space: one where Indian Ayahs were regarded as indispensable figures to care for the children of British families making the passage home.¹⁷

The notion of domestic spaces in motion is also useful in thinking about the impact of transnational journeys on the meanings assigned to domestic work -- especially by race and gender -- within different locations in the same geo-political system: the British empire. There were prominent differences between metropolis and empire, involving different forms of racial, sexual and social segregation. As Ayahs, Indian women were widely employed by the Raj in an Indian context to care for British children, and often feature prominently in autobiographical accounts by British men and women who were raised in India. But, while Indian Ayahs were also employed by families on ships returning to Britain from India, on disembarkation in Britain, far from being seen as indispensable, they were dismissed. Their role in British domestic work, continuing through to British ports, ended once they landed, and they were left stranded, with no guarantee of a passage home -- a history which Visram explores through the activities of a home in the East End of London where Ayahs stayed, waiting for placements with British families returning to India. Visram records that Mrs. Antony Pereira made the journey between India and Britain fifty four times.¹⁸

There were also differences in the racial, social and sexual segregation involved in domestic work between different parts of empire. While white British and Irish women sailed for Australia and New Zealand to work as domestic servants, in India and in African colonies, indigenous men were often employed. In British

colonies in Africa they were commonly named as 'boys'. Elspeth Huxley, whose parents migrated to Kenya between the wars to run a coffee plantation, reflected on her mother's employment of black male servants: 'How this name for grown men (houseboys) originated I do not know, but everyone used it'.¹⁹ She also noted her mother's authority over black men who by no means fitted the description of 'boys': 'It was always a surprise to see how an angry man like Kigorro, truly an elder, strung up to a high pitch of tension and fury, would defer to Tilly, who was after all a woman, even if a white one, and meekly accept a rebuke'.²⁰ Julia Bush's work looking at female emigrants from Britain to South Africa, suggests the importance attached to spatial, social and sexual segregation when black men were employed alongside white women. She records early twentieth century advice from a mistress of servants to new maids coming out from Britain on their attitudes towards native men as fellow-servants. This included warnings against sitting 'in a room where there are boys', and against doing 'anything whereby an insolent native may take liberties'.²¹

The mobile meanings of domestic spaces by gender and race meant that women's domestic roles often shifted once they disembarked from empire ships. While the Indian Ayah became unemployed on arrival in Britain from India, Elizabeth Buettner's work shows that, by the interwar period, the impact on middle-class British women returning from India was very different. Having commanded numerous servants in India, they often faced a reversal of their domestic role on arrival in Britain: one where they had to do many domestic chores themselves. Those who retired to Britain after many years in India faced loss of the status belonging to privileged memsahib. At best, many employed one maid-of-all-work, and at worst, they might do all the housework themselves.²²

A. James Hammerton and Louise Ryan, looking at Irish women who migrated to empire and Britain to work as domestic servants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both note a further impact of transnational journeys on the meanings assigned to domestic life. Alongside their formal employment, migrants often took on other types of domestic and familial work upon disembarkation, fostering complex transnational family ties. Ryan's work, drawing on oral history, demonstrates that, in the case of twentieth-century Irish female migrants to Britain, this family role included bringing over brothers and sisters, providing accommodation and meals for relatives arriving from Ireland, and sending money home.²³ Caribbean women recruited to do domestic work in Britain after 1945 -- under a government scheme to do domestic work in hospitals, and by the British Hotels and Restaurants Association to work as chambermaids and in kitchens -- took on a similar role. Exploring life stories from the Caribbean, Mary Chamberlain argues that 'the idea of family and the meanings attached to it have emerged as key elements in the narratives of belonging and identity', and that such narratives 'link families across the oceans and the generations'.²⁴

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Caribbean women recruited for domestic work -- under a government scheme to work in hospitals, and by the British Hotels and Restaurants Association to work as chambermaids and in kitchens -- were far outnumbered by refugee women recruited from DP camps in Germany and Austria. In Britain, the first employment and resettlement scheme for refugees was called 'Balt Cygnet'. The first arrivals under this scheme were women from the Baltic States who had ended the war in DP camps and were recruited for domestic work in British

hospitals. They disembarked in Britain in October 1946. Under extensions of recruitment schemes labour was brought in for agriculture, mining and textiles as well as domestic work. The UK admitted a total of 76,987 refugees between July 1947 and December 1951 of a range of nationalities -- chiefly Polish, Ukrainian, Yugoslavian, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian -- later extended to Sudeten Germans and Austrians. Some had ended the war in DP camps as a result of a flight westwards to escape the advance of Russian forces, and others as a result of German occupation of their countries and subsequent deportation to Germany as enforced workers.

This returns us to Mike and Stefani in the Australian documentary film, shown on board ship bound for Australia. Theirs was a transnational journey shared by many other refugees at the end of the Second World War. Rival recruiting teams were in operation at DP camps at different times from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Britain as well as France, Holland, Belgium and the USA. The US and Australian schemes took the largest numbers -- the US admitting 329,301 between July 1947 and December 1951 and Australia admitting 182,159. Stanley Hawes who as Producer-in-Chief at the Films Division of the Australian Department of Immigration was involved in the production of *Mike and Stefani* saw this as 'one of the great mass movements of history'.²⁵



Mike and Stefani observes many of the conventions of documentary realism, and uses real people, not professional actors. It traces the process through which Mike and Stefani arrive on board a ship bound for Australia -- showing their wartime

experiences of deportation as enforced workers and their subsequent reunion in a DP camp. After what the director regarded as the emotional climax of the film -- the long and rigorous interview that Mike and Stefani undergo with an Australian immigration official -- the film cuts to the sequence on the ship. As they see Australia for the first time, the last words of the film conjure the stability and democracy of Australia against the threat of Communism. They are Stefani's: 'Oh God, let our children be free'.²⁶ Mike and Stefani's arrival in Australia is not shown.

Situating Mike and Stefani's passage to Australia in the context of British imperial history and of the British scheme to recruit people from DP camps points up the importance of questions of race and ethnicity to histories of British domestic life and work. Kathleen Paul's work has noted the paradox of British governments encouraging and funding British migration to Australia at a time of acute labour shortage in Britain and national bankruptcy.²⁷ Under the Free and Assisted Passages scheme funded jointly by the Australian and British governments, 140,000 British people emigrated to Australia between 1946 and 1951. Arthur Calwell, Australia's Minister of Immigration, appeared on British newsreels in 1947 urging Britons to emigrate and telling them: 'Australia believes that the world's finest export always has been and always will be men and women of British stock. We want men and women with courage and enterprise'.²⁸ A similar Free and Assisted Passages scheme encouraging British migration to New Zealand was entirely funded by the New Zealand government. As Paul notes, the simultaneous recruitment of refugees to the British labour market, filling part of the gap left by British emigrants, added a further element of paradox.²⁹ Such an apparently convoluted policy was not the result of some careless oversight, but part of a resolve to maintain the Britishness of Australia

and New Zealand -- shared by Australian and New Zealand governments, as well as British.

This resolve meant that widely publicised celebrations of the millionth post-war migrant to Australia in 1955 featured a British migrant. Moreover this migrant was female -- Mrs Barbara Porritt. Sara Wills's work looks at the stories that were developed in the Australian press about Barbara Porritt's journey from Britain to Australia aboard the *Oronsay*. The ship's captain planted a kiss on her cheek, and Harold Holt, who had succeeded Calwell as Australian Minister for Immigration, shook the captain's hand, congratulating him on 'doing what everyone else had wanted to do to her as soon as they saw her'.³⁰ Once she arrived, this 'Mrs. Million' or 'girl in a million' was continually associated with the idea of home. Many Australian women making the reverse journey from Australia to Britain thought in terms of arrival at a place thousands of miles away that they had never seen before as 'going home'.³¹ The idea that British migrants also felt 'at home' in Australia was a recurrent theme of Barbara Porritt's story. This made much of her former British home in Yorkshire and the county's links with Captain James Cook to emphasise the close ties between Australia and Britain, while later stories showed her at her Australian home in a model town in the Latrobe Valley.³²

'You typify the kind of migrant we hope will follow you in even greater numbers', Harold Holt had cabled the Porritts on their wedding day in Yorkshire before their departure for Australia.³³ Two years later, in an attempt to fulfil this hope the 'Bring out a Briton' campaign was launched.³⁴ With such a strong preference for British migrants, Mike and Stefani were more ambiguous figures, and part of the

initial purpose of the documentary film was to 'assist our local assimilation campaign'.³⁵ In the immigration interview Stefani is asked to confirm that she understands that, upon arrival in Australia, she and her daughter may be separated from Mike until he can provide a home for them. The idea that Barbara Porritt, on honeymoon after her recent Yorkshire wedding, should be asked to make such an undertaking of separation from her husband would have been unthinkable. Even so, Mike and Stefani conform to the requirements of the White Australia policy -- a policy about which the Australian government was open and explicit and which assigned no place to its Aboriginal population. The name given to those like Mike and Stefani who arrived from DP camps in Europe -- 'new Australians' -- suggested that they belonged in Australia. But, since it served as a euphemism for non-British migrants, it also signified a hierarchy of belonging.

Mike and Stefani is mainly concerned with their loss of home through deportation and subsequent life in DP camps -- a story that takes a very different trajectory from the insistent identification of Barbara Porritt's arrival with ideas of home and publicity about her new home in the Latrobe Valley. But many British migrants were housed initially in hostels, often nissen huts left over from the war which were used for temporary accommodation.³⁶ Mike and Stefani's arrival -- not shown in the film -- was also likely to involve life in yet another camp. The largest former army camp used to house refugees was in Bonegilla, North Victoria, and accommodated them in fibro and corrugated iron huts. In Chullora Railway Camp, those with as many as four children lived in huts built to house single men.

Was Stefani expected to do domestic work in hospitals, like many other women who arrived as refugees? All female refugees arriving in Australia from DP camps were handed a Certificate of Registration that described their occupation as 'domestic', while male refugees were handed a Certificate that described their occupation as 'labourer'.³⁷ Even so, Barbara Porritt and Stefani were probably in similar employment by the mid-1950s. Porritt worked as a stenographer after her arrival -- an aspect of her new life in Australia that was downplayed in publicity which cast her in a domestic role.³⁸ Four years after her own arrival and two years before Porritt's, Stefani wrote to Stanley Hawes asking for help in getting work. Shortly afterwards she informed Hawes that she had found a secretarial position.³⁹

Despite the different trajectories of the stories of Barbara Porritt's journey and of Mike and Stefani's, both incorporate elements of heterosexual romance. Porritt is newly-wed, and her story made a good deal of the idea of Australia as her honeymoon destination with her husband Dennis by her side. *Mike and Stefani* shows their reunion in a DP camp when the war is over, and its focus is on a family group who travel together to Australia. Moreover, this group includes two children. As they are shown relaxing on board ship, Mike and Stefani encounter other families with children, including babies. The final words of the film -- Stefani's 'Oh God, let our children be free' -- could be understood as encompassing these other family groups as well as her own. They draw attention to a difference between the Australian and British schemes that recruited people from DP camps, for such family groups had no counterparts on board ships bound for Britain. Although some married refugee couples were admitted initially by the British scheme, from July 1947 recruitment was confined to single persons -- young, able-bodied and in good health.⁴⁰ The British

scheme did not admit children, and women were not wanted as mothers. The British search for workers was encapsulated in the renaming of refugees on arrival in Britain. Arguing that the term 'displaced persons' was pejorative, the government called all of them -- female as well as male -- 'European Volunteer Workers' (EVWs).

When a British Ministry of Labour official made an exploratory visit to the British zone of Germany, he reported that amongst the women from the Baltic States in DP camps 'an exceedingly good type of woman is available for hospital domestic work', referring to their good appearance, scrupulous personal cleanliness, natural dignity in bearing, exceptionally fit and healthy bodies, and good standard of education and spoken English.⁴¹ His comment suggests some of the complex ideas surrounding ethnicity and class in the history of domestic work, for the attributes he identified were scarcely those that were used to recommend an English woman for the low status of hospital domestic. It also suggests how far an ethnic hierarchy of refugees was constructed during the recruitment process. It was exactly this thinking that informed the composition of the first arrivals from DP camps who boarded ships to take up hospital domestic work in Britain -- all women from the Baltic States.

It is interesting that the catalogue of qualities listed by the British official as those of 'an exceedingly good type of woman' correspond closely to those that Stefani exemplifies in *Mike and Stefani*. Although the film is vague about her country of origin, Stanley Hawes, commenting on Ron Williams's script outline for the film, envisaged the commentary talking about Stefani's 'happy past as a schoolteacher in an Estonian village'.⁴² Australian selection teams fully shared Britain's preference for refugees from the Baltic States, and the first Australian shipment of refugees

embarking from Bremenhaven and arriving in Fremantle aboard the *General Heintzelman* in November 1947, like the first shipment arriving in Britain comprised people from the Baltic States, although in the Australian case this included men. Arthur Calwell informed the Australian Prime Minister in 1947 that: 'Other countries are keen competitors for best migrant types and unless we act quickly we may lose our opportunity of securing migrants on selection basis'.⁴³ Anxious to preserve the Baltic image of refugees, Calwell continued to refer to them as 'Balts' long after the scheme had been extended to other nationalities. Egon Kunz notes that this meant that: 'for years all non-British, non-Mediterranean immigrants were by unsuspecting Australians referred to as 'Balts' -- a misuse of the term to which many of the immigrants, including some from the Baltic area, vehemently objected'.⁴⁴ At the same time, both the Australian and British schemes limited the number of Jewish Holocaust survivors who were admitted. The Australian scheme limited the proportion of Jews on any one shipment to 15%, justifying this on the grounds that: 'the selection of too great a preponderance of people of the one group would arouse criticism of the scheme, both in Australia and overseas'.⁴⁵ In Britain, a Foreign Office memorandum instructed that 'the situation in Palestine, and anti semitics (*sic*), clearly prevent the recruitment of Jews'.⁴⁶ As Tony Kushner's work has shown: 'In the late 1940s, the British state placed Jewish survivors in the displaced persons camps at the bottom of its desirability lists at a time when it was recruiting labour from this source on a massive scale'.⁴⁷

On arrival in Britain, refugees found themselves in similar accommodation to the provision in Australia -- hostels that were often former wartime barracks. Domestic work for some female EVWs in Britain began in transit camps where they

worked in the kitchens. But the domestic work of EVWs did not extend to childcare. Very occasionally a pregnant woman came to Britain -- as in the case of a Latvian woman who came under the 'Balt Cygnet' scheme and gained entry only because she lied at the medical inspection about her pregnancy.⁴⁸ The EVW recruitment scheme required that women were single or willing to leave dependants behind, and not pregnant. Initially the Australian scheme selecting 'New Australians' from DP camps also excluded children, But by 1949 -- the peak year for recruitment -- those under fourteen years were more than 20% of the total arriving. Publicity about 'New Australians' from DP camps often showed children, as in the sequence of Mike and Stefani on board ship for Australia. In 1949 an edition of *Australian Diary* -- a film magazine programme produced by the Australian National Film Board -- ended an item on 'Tomorrow's Australians' with a shot of a man and woman holding a small baby. Another *Australian Diary* item entitled 'Migrants Learn to be Australian Citizens' ended with the narrative voice informing the audience that: 'their children will grow up as Australian as you and I'.

In a late 1940s context where both Australia and Britain were anxious to increase their populations, why are Stefani and Mike sailing to Australia with children while EVWs bound for Britain cannot bring children in? Addressing such a question draws attention to the significance of questions of race and ethnicity in tracing the history of women's national role as mothers.

The late 1940s was a period which saw a final flowering of pronatalism in Britain fuelled by fears that numbers were declining below replacement level, threatening 'race suicide'. In Australia, the policy of 'populate or perish', developed

between the wars, was sharpened by wartime experience of threatened Japanese invasion. The Australian government gave a great deal of publicity to its migration schemes, advertising the idea that safety could only be secured by numbers.

'Tomorrow's Australians' in 1949 began by informing its audience that: 'Australia's most important job for the next 25 years is to increase its population to a point that will guarantee security from attack and full national development'.

Australia identified immigration as a main strategy for increasing population, Britain's preferred strategy was to increase births, and the Royal Commission on Population reported in 1949 that 'continuous large scale immigration would ... certainly be undesirable, and the possibility ... that circumstances might compel us to consider ... it is among the undesirable consequences of the maintenance of family size below replacement level'.⁴⁹ Pronatalism was not only about increasing domestic population, but also ensuring sufficient numbers for emigration. As Anna Davin's work has shown, the history of pronatalism in Britain was embedded in imperial concerns, and the fear that, if the British population did not increase fast enough to fill the empty spaces of empire, then others would.⁵⁰ The need to maintain British power and influence in the world and populate the Dominions had long been a concern of those who identified women's national role as motherhood, and saw the 'supreme purpose' of white British women as 'the procreation and preservation of the race'.⁵¹ Wartime and immediate post-war pronatalism expressed similar concerns. In 1943, Winston Churchill said that for Britain 'to maintain its leadership of the world and survive as a great power that can hold its own against external pressure, our people must be encouraged by every means to have larger families'.⁵² In 1947, Eva Hubback worried that if Britons became too few in number, the nation would not be able to

maintain its position at the centre of a great Commonwealth. She argued that: 'It is largely because our own 47 and a half millions can combine with the Dominions that we are still a great Power ourselves'.⁵³

British pronatalism was thus in part to do with the need to produce more Barbara Porritts who would continue to emigrate to the Dominions, including Australia. But Australian identification of a need for immigration recognised that there were not enough Barbara Porritts. Immigration policy continued to favour British migrants, and when Arthur Calwell broadcast to the nation in 1949 advertising the success of his migration plan, and telling his audience that the target of 110,000 migrants in that year had already been exceeded by August, he noted with satisfaction that 70,000 would be British. 'The Commonwealth government', he said, 'is determined that its migration plan shall succeed. If we are to survive as a nation, it must succeed'.

The Australian drive for increased population within the framework of a White Australia policy meant that, although Australian preference was for British migrants and their children, 'New Australian' women as mothers and potential mothers, as well as their children, were encompassed in the idea of 'our people'. The British government assigned refugee women the role of worker, including domestic worker, and not mother. Britain maintained an 'open door' policy for immigrants from empire and Commonwealth but in the 1950s committees were set up by both Labour and Conservative governments to consider means of restricting black and South Asian migration to Britain and met in secret.⁵⁴ Active recruitment of refugees and migrants to solve the labour shortage solicited whites. The women who were assigned a

national role as mothers and the task of maintaining its leadership of the world and its position at the centre of a great Commonwealth, did not include migrants or refugees.

In Australia, by contrast, while refugee women and migrants were wanted as mothers as well as workers, many indigenous women were excluded from a national role as mothers. Aboriginal women did domestic work for white settler families. But the history of white settlement in Australia also involved forcible separation of Aboriginal mothers from their children -- and especially from daughters -- who were sent to foster families or institutions if it was deemed that they would thereby received 'better' care. Among the tasks in which Aboriginal girls who were separated from their mothers were trained was domestic work, and many of those brought up in institutions were subsequently employed as domestic servants by white families. The history of such forcible separations demonstrates the importance of ideas of racial difference to the processes by which motherhood and different forms of domestic work were allocated, as well as their significance in producing different forms of domestic violence. While migrants to Australia, including 'new Australians' were assigned a national role as mothers, producing children for the Australian nation, Aboriginal women were excluded.



I began by looking at a historiography of home that foregrounded first questions of class and then of gender and class. This essay has argued that a consideration of transnational movements of people has the potential to complicate, expand and revise this history, showing that many of those recruited for domestic work in middle-class British homes in metropolis and empire, and later in domestic

work in public institutions, crossed national boundaries. Such a history brings questions of race and ethnicity and their intersections with gender and class into prominent view as important factors in any account of which people boarded ships, and the diversity of their experiences after disembarkation. At the same time, it demonstrates different allocations of different types of domestic work by class, gender and race in metropolis, empire and within different parts of empire, and the importance of questions of which women should be encouraged or deterred from bearing children within this allocation. The history of domestic life and work including motherhood cannot be fully understood outside the history of the control and orchestration of national borders -- which people were allowed inside for settlement, which people were refused entry, which people were positively encouraged to enter.

The history of transnational movements of peoples, the erosion of boundaries between British domestic and imperial histories, and the development of comparative histories clearly has considerable potential to expand and revise the social and cultural history of diverse places. But does it undermine the democratisation of place that was such a prominent feature of the development of social history from the mid-1960s? Writing history on transnational themes can be an expensive business involving historians in their own journeys across national borders. If transnational and comparative approaches are privileged, is there a danger of creating a hierarchy of historians, where those with the best resources and access to funding (in itself a matter of place) are likely to produce the most prestigious work?

In their monumental study, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide* -- the first comprehensive and detailed history of refugee movements to Britain in the twentieth century -- Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox challenge such a hierarchy of place.⁵⁵ They show the transformative impact on intersecting local, national and global histories of work on refugees, but emphasise the importance of local history and local sources to such work. Focusing on the history of Hampshire, their study demonstrates the impact of refugees on local communities, including their cultural and economic contributions, and their more general impact on local society where even those passing through briefly were registered by those experiencing or witnessing their passage. It also charts local responses to refugee movements, and the history of a neglected tradition -- one in which thousands of local committees and local people in Hampshire were involved across the century in supporting refugees. While the neglect of enforced displacement as a major theme of twentieth-century history demonstrates a reluctance to think beyond conventional histories and ideas of home and nation, Kushner and Knox demonstrate the important contribution that local and regional studies have to make to the development of a history of refugee movements.

¹ *Mike and Stefani* (Ron Maslyn Williams, Australia, 1952).

² Letter from Ron Maslyn Williams to Kevin Murphy, 13 September 1939, in Ina Bertrand, *The Production and Distribution of Mike and Stefani: Putting the Letters into Context* (Canberra, 2002), 17.

³ Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London, 1957).

⁴ John Burnett, *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London, 1976); Malcolm Brown, *Tommy Goes to War* (London, 1978).

⁵ For a discussion of 1970s feminist historiography in Britain and challenges from black feminists, see Billie Melman, "Changing the Subject: Women's History and Historiography 1900-2000", in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ed., *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 2001), 19-26.

⁶ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, Conn., 1999).

⁷ Jenny Morris, "The Characteristics of Sweating: The Late Nineteenth-Century London and Leeds Tailoring Trade," in Angela John, ed., *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918* (Oxford, 1986), 92-121; Nancy Osterud, "Gender Divisions and the Organisation of Work in the Leicester Hosiery Industry," in *ibid.*, 44-68; Edward Higgs, "Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth-century Censuses," *History Workshop Journal* vol. 23 (1987), 59-80; Leonore Davidoff, "The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in 19th and 20th Century England", in Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between : Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁸ Teresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (London, 1976); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London, 1994); Leonore Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England' in Davidoff, *Worlds Between*; Judy Giles, *Women, Identity and Private Life in Britain, 1900-1950* (Basingstoke, 1995); Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink and Katherine Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (Harlow, 1999), Chapter 6.

⁹ Tony Kushner, "Politics and Race, Gender and Class: Refugees, Fascists and Domestic Service in Britain," in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, eds., *The Politics of Marginality: Race, the Radical Right and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1990).

¹⁰ Bronka Schneider, *Exile: A Memoir of 1939* (Bronka Schenider, ed., Erika Bourguignon and Barbara Hill Rigney (Columbus, 1998).

¹¹ In the *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Wm Roger Louis traces this historiography, from the work of Thomas Macaulay, through J. R. Seeley, Hugh Egerton and Frederick Lugard, to Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher. See Wm Roger Louis, "Introduction", in Robin Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. V, *Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), 1-42.

¹² Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992), 309-329; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992); Catherine Hall, *White Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992); Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London, 1992); Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (London, 1994); Laura Tabili, 'We Ask for British Justice': *Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithica NY, 1994); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London, 1995); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995); Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York, 1996); Bill Schwarz (ed.), *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History* (London, 1996); Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, 1998); Clare Midgley (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester, 1998); Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton NJ, 1999); Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford, 2001); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600-1850* (London, 2002); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2002); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford, 2005).

¹³ Melman, "Changing the Subject", 26.

¹⁴ A. James Hammerton, "Gender and Migration", in Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004), 159.

¹⁵ Louise Ryan, "Family Matters: (E)migration, Familial Networks and Irish Women in Britain," *Sociological Review*, 52 (2004):353.

¹⁶ Hammerton, "Gender and Migration", 163.

-
- ¹⁷ Rosina Vizram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700-1947* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 29-30.
- ¹⁸ Rosina Vizram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 51-4.
- ¹⁹ Elspeth Huxley, *The Flame Trees of Thika* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), 34.
- ²⁰ Elspeth Huxley, *The Mottled Lizard* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), 268.
- ²¹ Julia Bush, " 'The Right Sort of Woman': Female Emigrators and Emigration to the British Empire, 1890-1910", *Women's History Review*, 3 (1994), 398.
- ²² Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2004), 203-7.
- ²³ Hammerton, "Gender and Migration", 160; Ryan, "Family Matters".
- ²⁴ Mary Chamberlain, "Reading Narratives and Cultural Identity: Life Stories from the Caribbean", Paper presented to the European Social Science History Conference, The Hague, 2002, 17.
- ²⁵ Letter from Stanley Hawes to Ron Maslyn Williams, 3 November 1949 in Bertrand, *The Production*, 36.
- ²⁶ *Mike and Stefani* was not widely distributed in Australia. One explanation offered for this is the view that it was seen to be anti-German and by the time it was finished Australia was trying to attract German migrants. See Bertrand, *The Production*, 15. Stefani's last words suggest a move that was also characteristic of American cinema -- from concern with the 'German question' to a Cold War, anti-Communist message.
- ²⁷ Kathleen Paul, " 'British Subjects' and 'British Stock': Labour's Postwar Imperialism", *Journal of British Studies*, 34 (1995): 255.
- ²⁸ 'Wot, no Babies!', *British Paramount News*, 10 July 1947.
- ²⁹ Paul, 'British Subjects': 233-276.
- ³⁰ Sara Wills, "When Good Neighbours Become Good Friends: The Australian Embrace of its Millionth Migrant", *Australian Historical Studies*, 36 (2004): 332.
- ³¹ Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune*, 143.
- ³² Wills, "When Good Neighbours," 345-7.
- ³³ Quoted in Wills, "When Good Neighbours," 336.
- ³⁴ James Jupp, *The English in Australia* (Cambridge, 2004), 136-9.
- ³⁵ Bertrand, *The Production*, 5.

-
- ³⁶ Jupp, *The English*, 139.
- ³⁷ Egon Kunz, *Displaced Persons: Calwell's New Australians* (Sydney, 1988), 165.
- ³⁸ Wills, "When Good Neighbours," 347-8.
- ³⁹ Bertrand, *The Production*, 7.
- ⁴⁰ J. A. Tannahill, *European Volunteer Workers in Britain* (Manchester, 1958), 46.
- ⁴¹ Diana Kay and Robert Miles, *Refugees or Migrant Workers? European Volunteer Workers in Britain* (London, 1992), 50.
- ⁴² Letter from Stanley Hawes to Ron Maslyn Williams, 3 November 1949, in Bertrand, *The Production*, 37.
- ⁴³ Quoted in Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, 35.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.
- ⁴⁵ Suzanne Rutland, "Subtle Exclusions: Postwar Emigration to Australia and the Impact of the IRO Scheme", *Journal of Holocaust Education*, 10 (2001), 54.
- ⁴⁶ Tony Kushner, 'Remembering to Forget: Racism and Anti-racism in Postwar Britain', in Bryan Cheyette and Laura Marcus (eds) *Modernity, Culture and 'the Jew'*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 233.
- ⁴⁷ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination : A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); 235; Tony Kushner, 'Immigration and 'Race Relations' in Postwar British Society', in Paul Johnson, ed., *Twentieth Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural change* (Harlow, 1994), 420-1.
- ⁴⁸ Linda McDowell, "Workers, Migrants, Aliens or Citizens? State Constructions and Discourses of Identity Among Post-war European Labour Migrants in Britain", *Political Geography*, 22 (2003): 873.
- ⁴⁹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Population*, Cmd. 7695 (London, 1949), 125.
- ⁵⁰ Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", in Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, vol. 1 (London, 1989).
- ⁵¹ This was the message of J. H. Gemmell in his Presidential Address to the North of England Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society in 1903, quoted in Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London, 1992), 35.
- ⁵² Quoted in Barbara Brookes, *Abortion in England 1900-1967* (London, 1988), 134.
- ⁵³ Eva Hubback, *The Population of Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1947), 114-5.

⁵⁴ Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke, 1996), 20-22.

⁵⁵ Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century* (London, 1999).