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## The Academic Evangelists

Between 1874 and 1886 Macmillan Brown, Leeper and Masson headed to Christchurch and Melbourne, where they settled immediately into professional positions that they had secured before leaving home. In this way, their act of migration involved less risk and uncertainty than that of the Wilding and Higgins families. Their incomes had been negotiated, and their professional positions brought, if not automatic authority, then at least a degree of recognition within the wider community. Only Macmillan Brown regarded his appointment as a colonial sojourn. Each was to bring an almost missionary zeal to the self-imposed task of ensuring that the colonial universities they entered established themselves firmly within the international community of scholarship. It was on these terms of activist academic engagement that they set out on their colonial careers. They were terms that were to have a significant, if not determining, influence upon the family environments they were simultaneously helping to establish. The case studies that follow attempt to gauge more precisely the extent to which their academic evangelism became the axis around which family was constructed. In doing so, they also explore such negotiated terrain as remained within households, where the separation of work and domestic life was blurred.

## John Macmillan Brown: 'I am Canterbury College'<sup>1</sup>

Twenty-eight-year-old John Macmillan Brown set sail from England, resigned to a temporary exile at Canterbury College, which he hoped might be relieved by the beauty of New Zealand's scenery and a constant supply of books sent from Britain. It was an exile viewed as an opportunity to build up capital and he did not see marriage as a prospect. He was to remain in New Zealand for the rest of his life, and throughout his 23-year tenure as professor, established himself as the dominant academic influence of the college's foundational years. W. J. Gardner depicts him as an 'Encyclopaedic God-Professor', a generalist rather than a specialist, who exerted a far-reaching personal influence over the college and its students.<sup>2</sup> The extent of this influence, and the speed with which it was achieved, appealed to Macmillan Brown's self-assured and egocentric personality, and produced a fondness for declaring: 'I am Canterbury College'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the story of John Macmillan Brown's establishment is also the story of Canterbury College's establishment. It is bound up with the issue of defining the purpose and role of a colonial university, and rests upon a considerable body of personal academic achievement and a reputation as a champion of women's higher education. It is also a story whose denouement is a marriage constructed around two separate professional careers. The 'other' of this tale is Helen Connon, Macmillan Brown's first student at Canterbury College, the first woman within the British Empire to gain an MA honours degree, the pioneering principal of a leading academic girls' school in Christchurch, and later, in 1886, his wife.

In 1874 Macmillan Brown encountered the bustling South Island town of Christchurch and the wider province of Canterbury enjoying a short-lived period of economic growth built on the back of high wool

1 A former student of John Macmillan Brown, Lillian Harriet Williams (Mrs J. W. Blyth) claimed that this was a much repeated phrase of his. D. J. O. Caffin, 'Interviews with former staff and students', 18 April 1986, (typescript), p. 2, W. J. Gardner Papers, MB 107, 5b, MBL; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 59.

2 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 43–67; W. J. Gardner, 'The Formative Years, 1873–1918', in W. J. Gardner, E. T. Beardsley and T. E. Carter, *A History of the University of Canterbury 1873–1973*, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, p. 104.

3 Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, p. 108; Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 89–90; Charles Brasch, *Indirections: A Memoir 1909–1947*, Oxford University Press, Wellington, 1980, p. 119.

prices, Vogel's public works programs, borrowing, and immigration. In education and in politics, the trend was towards centralisation. The University of New Zealand, established in 1870 as an examining body only, had invited affiliations from institutions providing higher education and offered operational grants. A national system of elementary education was established in 1877 by which primary schooling became free, compulsory and secular. The provinces that formed the basis of a federal system of government were abolished in 1876. Christchurch civic leaders envisaged their city as playing a pre-eminent role in the nation's educational development and saw Canterbury College and the city's museum, established in 1870, as forming the hub of an educational and cultural precinct that would embrace a city library, and be framed by botanical gardens.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of a university college in Christchurch had been a utopian part of the Wakefieldian Canterbury settlement of 1848. The idea was kept alive by a small, educated elite. In 1872, in alliance with a cluster of progressive politicians and run-holders, they hastily established an institution of higher learning (the Canterbury Collegiate Union) as the first step in the creation of a university. Their haste reflected a desire to thwart the ambition of the newly created University of Otago (1869) to become the colony's sole teaching university.<sup>5</sup> Whatever interprovincial rivalry was involved, their actions also indicated a preference for regional universities, and their professed objectives were progressive: the 'encouragement of talent without barriers of distance, wealth or class'.<sup>6</sup> This dictum embraced the admission of women, although no formal policy was enunciated. Women attended from the start on equal terms with the men. Teachers, mostly Oxford and Cambridge graduates, were recruited from within Christchurch, and a liberal course of studies offered that included classics, mathematics, physical science, modern languages and, from 1873, jurisprudence, English languages and literature, physiology, and geology. Classes were held in late afternoon or evening, to allow

4 'The Origin of University Education in Canterbury by Dr J. Hight, Prof. of History, Canterbury College', *Lyttelton Times*, 12 May 1923, p. 14; Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 29–46; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 33; Burnard, 'Artisanal Town', pp. 115–37; Macintyre, 'Outwards and Upwards', pp. 85–89, 95–98; Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, p. 25.

5 Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 22–32.

6 Gardner, 'The Formative Years', p. 32. Here Gardner is summarising the inaugural address of John Tancred, Chancellor of the University of New Zealand, at the opening of the Canterbury Collegiate Union on 22 July 1872.

part-time study. The Union began with 83 students, of whom only a small proportion had matriculated. When the Union was dissolved in 1874, the university that replaced it, Canterbury College, formalised the essence of the original curriculum.<sup>7</sup> Its original board of governors prescribed a Bachelor of Arts degree that followed the more generalist Scottish model; both arts and science subjects were included, and Latin and mathematics were compulsory. They planned to establish chairs in chemistry, classics, history and English literature, mathematics and natural philosophy, and five lectureships in biology, modern languages, mental science, jurisprudence and political economy.<sup>8</sup>

Its founders were well aware of the various strands in the heated British public debate, which reached a crescendo in the 1870s, about the purpose of a university and its relation to the wider society. James Hight, historian and former early Canterbury College student, argued that many of the university's founders had been Cambridge University students in the 1850s and 1860s, when the ancient university was 'more receptive to change' than Oxford, and that this experience helped to shape the foundational ethos of Canterbury College.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, Gardner argues that the Canterbury College founders wished to achieve British standards of scholarship within a colonial-style university, by which they meant democratic—'open to rich and poor alike'.<sup>10</sup> They looked to Scotland and the newer, dissenting British universities of London and Durham, the secular nature and combination of vocational and general education of which seemed to match colonial needs. The prospects of reconciling scholarship and democracy were better at Canterbury College than in the Sydney or Melbourne universities, in Gardner's view, because it was founded later. Unlike the University of Sydney, for example, Canterbury College did not aspire to become 'the same under ... different skies'.<sup>11</sup> Colborne Veel, editor of the *Christchurch Press* and later to become a close friend of Macmillan Brown, captured the pragmatic attitude that prevailed in the creation of the city's university:

7 The Canterbury College Ordinance was passed by the Canterbury Provincial Council on 16 June 1873. The Canterbury College Union was officially dissolved on 19 May 1874, with the university's first term technically beginning in June 1874.

8 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 30–34; Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 17–88.

9 Hight, *Lyttelton Times*, 12 May 1923.

10 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 39.

11 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 17, 22.

a system must be moulded to suit the state of society in the colony. We must strike out a line of our own. We must adapt the scheme of University education to the peculiar requirements of our own case. We cannot reproduce Oxford, Cambridge or Edinburgh in New Zealand. The state of society in the colony will not admit of such an idea.<sup>12</sup>

Within this context the establishment of Canterbury College was a haphazard, piecemeal and unsystematic affair that left room for individual professors to play a defining role. This allowed innovation and experimentation within a framework shaped by customary understandings of what a university should be. It was a formula that suited the peculiar mix of pragmatism and idealism that historians have detected in the academic career of John Macmillan Brown.<sup>13</sup> He held degrees in classics and philosophy and had also studied in the newer field of English literary studies. From Oxford University he imbibed the spirit of Arnoldian idealism.<sup>14</sup> His Scottish background and university experience encouraged a democratic approach and allowed Macmillan Brown to argue that education might be both utilitarian and moral in its purposes. These two ‘seemingly paradoxical ideologies’, as Erica Schouten calls them, were to inform Macmillan Brown’s university career.<sup>15</sup>

At the centre of the paradox stood modern literature or, more precisely, *English* literature. There was much resistance from the older universities to the introduction of modern languages and literature as a formal academic discipline. English literary studies, often referred to as ‘mere chatter about Shelley’, were seen to have an inferior intellectual status to classics. Latin and Greek were the traditional languages of scholarship in Britain and Europe. They required, or so it was believed, greater intellectual effort than the study of literature in one’s own language and possessed a repository of ‘spiritual and aesthetic inspiration’ not apparent in modern literature.<sup>16</sup> Knowledge of English, French and German literature, though regarded as a necessity for the

12 *Press*, 13 August 1873; Gardner, ‘The Formative Years’, pp. 34–35.

13 Erica Schouten, ‘The “Encyclopaedic God-Professor”: John Macmillan Brown and the Discipline of English in Colonial New Zealand’, *Journal of English Literature*, vol. 23, part 1, 2005, pp. 109–23; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 59–60, 63, 65–67; Gardner, ‘The Formative Years’, pp. 87–89.

14 Matthew Arnold emphasised the moral value of literary studies.

15 Schouten, ‘The “Encyclopaedic God-Professor”’, p. 109.

16 Dale, *The English Men*, p. 12.

cultured gentleman, was seen as a matter for private study rather than systematic academic analysis. Courses in English literature were seen, as Leigh Dale writes, ‘as the obvious refuge for women, working-class boys and “third class” men’.<sup>17</sup> To this, perhaps, could be added ‘colonials’. Jo McMurtry has established how the newly established colonial universities of America, unencumbered by tradition and open to experimentation, were relatively quick to embrace the new discipline, and that nostalgia for the British homeland was a factor in the acceptance of English literature as a university subject.<sup>18</sup> These factors may have played a part in the emergence of Macmillan Brown as the founding father of such studies in Australasia.<sup>19</sup>

Macmillan Brown’s commitment to literature as an instrument of moral development and a vehicle of public discourse blossomed relatively quickly in the colonial environment. He was later to present in his *Memoirs*, as an indicator of his views about the place of classical studies in a colonial society, an exchange in 1874 with Lord Lyttelton, the chairman of the London selection committee that recommended his appointment to Canterbury College. To Lyttelton’s observation—‘You cannot write Greek verse’—John Macmillan Brown responded: ‘God help me, what would be the good of Greek verse for pioneers in a new colony?’<sup>20</sup> The exchange has been largely accepted at face value. Schouten suggests, for example, that Lyttelton was highlighting Macmillan Brown’s ‘failure to possess the cultural capital that was still most important in the English university system ... a solid mastery of classics’, and Macmillan Brown’s retort could be seen as rebutting a piece of old-world snobbery.<sup>21</sup> The pattern of Macmillan Brown’s future teaching role, and in particular the speed with which literature assumes a larger role in it, suggests that such an interpretation may

17 Dale, *The English Men*, p. 12.

18 McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature*, pp. 1–5, 16–17, 21–23, 65, 78–82.

19 Dale, *The English Men*, pp. 25–37. Though English literature was taught at the ancient universities of Cambridge and Oxford, it was as part of the School of Medieval Languages; Cambridge did not have a full chair in literature until 1911. Oxford established a chair of English literature in 1893, though a philologist, rather than an English literary specialist, was appointed to it. John Macmillan Brown led the way for English literary studies in Australasia. English was taught in the Australian universities under the umbrella of modern languages and literature, until the appointment of Mungo MacCallum in 1887 to the foundational chair of Modern Languages and Literature at Sydney University. Unlike Macmillan Brown he maintained that classical studies should take precedence over English literary ones.

20 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, p. 75.

21 Schouten, ‘The “Encyclopaedic God-Professor”’, pp. 113–14.

not do justice to a developing commitment to literature as a form of presenting moral values in a way that was consistent with the lessons of the ancients.<sup>22</sup>

Whatever interpretation is attached to it, Macmillan Brown's initial appointment to Canterbury College required him to teach classics and English.<sup>23</sup> By 1879, as student numbers had increased, he had relinquished the teaching of classics to concentrate upon English literature, history and political economy. He argued in support of such a step that it would be far easier to find another classics professor 'from home' than it would be to find an English literature professor.<sup>24</sup> In public his justification of modern literature was couched in pragmatic and utilitarian terms. 'Even to the most enthusiastic student of ancient classics there is a dead and foreign matter clinging round them that makes his enthusiasm an effort', he told the student audience at the inaugural meeting of the Canterbury College Dialectical Society in 1881. The 'ordinary student' would be better off 'reading good translations' of the original classical texts; 'the mere effort of getting to know their meaning is so great that it rises to the rank of exquisite torture'.<sup>25</sup> Schouten presents this pragmatism as a denial of the relevance of classical literature and 'decidedly un-Arnoldian'—in the sense of rejecting the notion that the ancient works contained truths of 'universal worth'.<sup>26</sup> It is perhaps equally arguable that Macmillan Brown was not so much questioning the relevance of classical literature and the intrinsic value of its moral compass for modern times, as suggesting a need for representation of such ideas in a more recognisable form:

[E]very age must have its own version of the common thoughts and emotions of humanity ... we need a re-utterance of the old thoughts and old expressions—a renaissance such as we had before the Elizabethan era ... the scholar in a new country, whilst studying the past, must look more to the future; he must not use the past as his

22 John Macmillan Brown, *Student Life and the Fallacies that Oftenest Beset It: An Inaugural Address Delivered to the Canterbury College Dialectic Society at the Commencement of Its Session 1881*, The Canterbury College Dialectic Society with Tombs and Co., Cathedral Square, Christchurch, pp. 23–24.

23 The University of Otago also lumped the two subjects together.

24 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 89–92.

25 Macmillan Brown, *Student Life*, pp. 23–24.

26 Schouten, 'The "Encyclopaedic God-Professor"', pp. 115–16.

tyrant to trample upon his own impulses, but as his guide, whom he must reverence, but never bow to without the use of reason. No age is incapable of being great; no great past should shut out the possibility of a great present.<sup>27</sup>

Regardless of the rationale that lay behind it, John Macmillan Brown pioneered the study of English literature in New Zealand and, indeed, Australasia. Such was 'his mastery', argues Gardner, that he 'became a legend in his lifetime' and in doing so ensured that Canterbury College 'moved more quickly and more successfully into the field of English literature' than any 'other Australasian university'.<sup>28</sup> Apart from his experiences in the English literature classes of John Nichol, Regius Chair of English Literature at Glasgow University, and Benjamin Jowett's essay-writing tutorials at Oxford, Macmillan Brown had little upon which to model his courses. The system he ultimately developed was an extension of the method he was using in his teaching of classics and was designed to suit colonial conditions. It consisted of essay classes, composition classes and what he termed 'art lectures', in which he aimed in four years to give his students a familiarity with all the great writers and works in English literature.<sup>29</sup> Sermon-like and rhetorical in their delivery, the lectures were primarily vehicles for the exposition of deep philosophical and moral themes.<sup>30</sup> Typical of them was his 5,000-word lecture on Carlyle's 'Sartor Resartus' which ended in dramatic and stirring terms:

the noblest of the old beliefs ... the brotherhood of man ... the kinship of all human souls with their divine source puts human love upon a new and loftier footing. We feel that all we do for our fellows, for our race, is a part of the highest worship; we labour that those who come after us may be more noble. And there is a new meaning in the divine mandate, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work.'<sup>31</sup>

27 Macmillan Brown, *Student Life*, pp. 24, 30.

28 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 60.

29 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 86–88, 92–93, 109–11, 128–29.

30 Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 90, 104.

31 John Macmillan Brown Papers (JMBP), Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, MB 118, B3/1/18.



As performances made available to the public, such lectures attracted a large following—especially among middle-class women—and did much to build his popular reputation.<sup>32</sup> Upon his retirement in 1895 the *Christchurch Press* gave formal recognition of this achievement:

It is due to him alone that the teaching of English literature has taken its proper place in the curriculum of the University. He had no precedents to go upon. When he began his work English was not seriously thought of as a subject of study in any University ... He had to invent his own methods, to formulate his own system. And the thoroughness and completeness of that system is demonstrated not merely by the results it has achieved within the University, but by its adoption in nearly every institution of learning in the colony ... the system pursued by Professor Brown makes mediocrity at least serviceable; and where talent exists it stimulates and directs it.<sup>33</sup>

In Macmillan Brown's view, the utilitarian aspect of his English studies system had important ramifications for social development. The ability to write clearly, to present a logical, balanced reasoned argument, was predicated upon the ability 'to think out any subject in a systematic and logical way' and was, he argued, the fundamental characteristic of a rational human being and the basis of a humane society.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, he exhorted his students to read the great works of literature in ways that helped improve the way they lived their lives. In this way he believed, language and literature would inform and improve the tenor of civic life and cement its place within the British cultural tradition.<sup>35</sup>

If the establishment of English literature as a discipline was the critical aspect of the John Macmillan Brown legend, it is rivalled by his role as 'the first practical promoter of higher education for women in Australasia'.<sup>36</sup> The precursor of Canterbury College, the non-degree granting Canterbury Collegiate Union, had freely admitted female students. At its establishment Canterbury College had no formal policy regarding the admittance of female students to degrees. When its officials received a request in 1874 from the mother of 17-year-old Helen Connon for her daughter to study at the college for a BA degree, they directed the request to the newly appointed John Macmillan

32 Agnes Gribbling to John Macmillan Brown, JMBP, A7/81.

33 'Professor Brown', *Press*, 2 April 1895, p. 4.

34 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 92–93.

35 Macmillan Brown, *Student Life*, pp. 9–19, 22, 25–31.

36 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 69.

Brown, then on his way to Christchurch. The much 'celebrated' and now legendary meeting between Helen Connon, her mother and Macmillan Brown took place shortly after his arrival, in December 1874. Without hesitation he enrolled the young woman as his first BA degree student, offering, as he did so, to smooth her way with the other professors and students.<sup>37</sup> Thereafter he publicly championed the rights of women to a university education and entry into the professions, and acted as a guide and mentor to women within the university, often providing special group tuition for them.<sup>38</sup> Helen Connon became one of the first two women to graduate with a BA in 1880 from Canterbury College, and in 1881 the first woman in the British Empire to graduate with an MA honours degree.<sup>39</sup>

Though women themselves sought entry, they did not have to fight to gain admission to Canterbury College. Rather than a story of the politics of exclusion and admission, the Helen Connon episode was at the time celebrated as a sign of Christchurch's liberalism and an example of a wider colonial progressivism.<sup>40</sup> As its facilitator, John Macmillan Brown thus became almost immediately thrust to the forefront of progressive thinkers within the colony and assumed something of a patron-like status for the embryonic suffrage movement. As such, he was consulted by its leading advocates Kate Sheppard, Edith Searle

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37 J. Macmillan Brown, 'Early Days and Early Students', *Canterbury College Jubilee*, *Lyttelton Times* supplement, 12 May 1923, p. 1; Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 156–57; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 82–83; Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, pp. 26–27.

38 Macmillan Brown became more conservative with age in his attitudes towards women's education and role: see J. Macmillan Brown, 'Woman and University Education', Wilding Memorial Lecture, No. 2, Christchurch, 1926, p. 31.

39 The other was the Australian Anne Bolton, who came from Sydney to get her degree. Australian universities were later in admitting women to degrees than New Zealand's. These developments were part of a wider international movement for women's higher education, with parallel, albeit slower, developments at Otago University, the Australian universities and the newer British institutions. See, for example, Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 68–89, 92, 101; Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, pp. 28–29, 31–39; and Theobald, *Knowing Women*, p. 61.

40 See, for example, Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, pp. 71–72; McAloon, 'Radical Christchurch', pp. 162–92; Theobald, *Knowing Women*, pp. 56, 64–66; Macintyre, *Colonial Liberalism*, passim; Grimshaw, *Women's Suffrage in New Zealand*, pp. 2–4. Gardner, in *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 86–87, argues that 'colonial apathy' also had a part to play in the admission of women to degree courses on the same terms as men.

Grossmann and Ada Wells.<sup>41</sup> Writing in 1923, Macmillan Brown added a gloss to his reputation as an advocate for women students by claiming that his admission of Helen Connon to Canterbury College in 1874 had 'committed the new college to a new attitude to women's education in the history of the world; that which gave them equality with men in university life; it determined Canterbury College as a coeducational university institution, the first of its kind in the world'.<sup>42</sup> A more considered appraisal might, as Gardner argues, suggest that Canterbury College's pre-eminence in this respect was confined to the British Empire.<sup>43</sup>

Macmillan Brown's support for the admission of women to the university is perhaps best seen as part of his wider view of education. Central to his thinking was a belief in the potential for colonial societies to be swamped by a tide of vulgar materialism.<sup>44</sup> In Gardner's view, Macmillan Brown saw teachers as the foot soldiers in a 'cultural revolution', which would reshape society and allow it to shrug off the dangers of the rawness of colonial society.<sup>45</sup> This was a view that sat well with the conception of Canterbury College's founding fathers, that the BA should be a teacher's rather than a scholar's degree, reflecting both the needs of the developing colony and inevitably low standards of academic attainment at first.<sup>46</sup> Most Canterbury students who sat before Macmillan Brown pursuing degrees were teachers or teacher trainees of middle or lower middle-class origin, with little formal

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41 For examples, see letters to John Macmillan Brown from Kate Sheppard, 1893, JMBP, A8/15, A8/20, Ada Wells, c. 1893, JMBP, A8/29, Edith Grossmann, 2 May 1907, JMBP, A9/103, Edith Grossmann c. 1910, JMBP, A9/109, Edith Grossmann, 31 May 1910, JMBP, A13/107, Edith Grossmann, 21 June 1911, JMBP, A13/107. All three were prominent in the New Zealand women's movement. Both Ada Wells and Edith Grossmann studied with Helen Connon and John Macmillan Brown. Wells (1863–1933) attended Canterbury College (1881–82), followed by a brief period working at Christchurch Girls' High School, under Helen Connon's principalship, as an assistant teacher; Grossmann (1863–1931) attended Christchurch Girls' High School in 1879, where she was head girl, then studied at Canterbury College, graduating with an MA (Hons) in Latin, English and Political Science in 1885.

42 Macmillan Brown, 'Early Days and Early Students', *Lyttelton Times*, 12 May 1923.

43 Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 155–56; Barbara Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985, pp. 45, 63; Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, p. 26. American colleges led the way in coeducation.

44 'Prof. Brown's Opening Speech', *Press*, 12 May 1878; Macmillan Brown, *Student Life*, pp. 28–29.

45 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 64. See Raymond William's *Culture and Society 1870–1950*, Pelican, Harmondsworth, 1982, on the association during the Industrial Revolution of the arts with human improvement, civilisation and culture.

46 Gardner, 'The Formative Years', p. 96.

education themselves. Classes were held in the early morning, late afternoon, evening, and all day Saturday to allow country teachers to attend.<sup>47</sup> Such was the range of educational attainment within the college that one of the governors was, in 1878, prompted to proclaim that 'they had not a College here in the home acceptance of the word—it was halfway between a College and a big public school'.<sup>48</sup>

The comment may have been meant as a criticism, but it would not have gained support from Macmillan Brown. In his view, teaching was the 'noblest' of professions, and he promoted it in terms that were as much spiritual and moral as educational.<sup>49</sup> The roles of the school teacher and the university lecturer were to be complementary. The former aimed to train the recollection and promote good citizenship, while the university's aim was 'to stir into active life the higher faculties' and promote the 'independence of thought and originality of research' essential for 'a leader of progress'.<sup>50</sup> Teachers, he believed, would spread the civilising influence of the university throughout the wider society. Thus, if his Oxford mentor Benjamin Jowett envisaged his 'boys' as future statesmen of Empire, Macmillan Brown saw his most notable students—'boys' and 'girls'—as its headmasters and headmistresses.<sup>51</sup>

If the teacher within a secular educational system was to replace the priest as moral guardian, Macmillan Brown came increasingly to argue that the 'spiritual destiny' of the nation might rest also upon its journalists. Newspapers offered a daily pulpit from which an educated priesthood of letters might inform and guide society. It was this lofty conception of the potential of the press that had initially shaped his

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47 Gardner, 'The Formative Years', pp. 94–100, 139, 141–43; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 91–99, 106–7; Kay Morris Matthews, *In Their Own Right: Women and Higher Education in New Zealand before 1945*, NZCER Press, Wellington, New Zealand, 2008, pp. 12–14.

48 W. J. Hamilton, quoted by Gardner, 'The Formative Years', p. 100.

49 'Advice To Teachers: Professor Brown's Address', *Lyttelton Times*, 25 March 1889, p. 5.

50 'Prof. Brown's Opening Address', *Lyttelton Times*, 12 May 1878.

51 Perhaps the most notable of Macmillan Brown's students during this period who went on to become secondary school principals were Helen Connon (MA Hons 1881), Principal of Christchurch Girls' High School; Kate Edger (MA Hons 1882), Principal of Nelson College for Girls from 1883; Jeanette Grossmann, Principal of Maitland Girls' High School, Sydney, 1890–1913, and North Sydney Girls' High School from 1914; and Frank Milner (MA Hons 1896), Principal of Waitaki Boys' High School (1906–44). Gardner, in *Colonial Cap and Gown* (p. 107), points out that the majority of male university graduates at this time also expected to enter the teaching profession.

university studies in Scotland and later found its fullest expression in *Modern Education: Its Defects and their Remedies*, published in 1908. In a chapter on 'Religion, Morality and Education', he argues that:

The daily paper is the preacher and priest for six-sevenths of the life of the community, and colours ... a dye that not all the Sundays of the year could wash out. The editors of our local papers are the true bishops of the diocese ... journalism is on the fair way to becoming the conscience and the religion of mankind.<sup>52</sup>

Whether teacher or journalist, members of this educated elite were, in Macmillan Brown's view, more likely saviours of civilisation than politicians and the political parties they were in the process of creating.<sup>53</sup>

In asserting his role as a protector of civilisation, Macmillan Brown willingly embraced much of what A. P. Rowe had in mind when he wrote of the 'Encyclopaedic God-Professor' especially prevalent within colonial universities, where economic constraints required professors to teach a broad range of subjects.<sup>54</sup> It was a role that made them instant public figures and provided a pedestal for men with a sense of personal mission. It is in this sense also, perhaps consciously modelling himself on the character of Benjamin Jowett, his Oxford mentor, that Macmillan Brown simply assumed the role of de facto rector at Canterbury College and exercised an overall pastoral supervision of all students. He took each of his male students for a meal at least once a term and insisted that they join him for long walks (again reminiscent of his own Oxford experience), where

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52 J. Macmillan Brown, *Modern Education: Its Defects and their Remedies*, Lyttelton Times Company Limited Printers, Christchurch, 1908, p. 13. See also Schouten, "The "Encyclopaedic God-Professor"", pp. 119–20.

53 Gardner has argued in *Colonial Cap and Gown*, pp. 64–65, that Macmillan Brown's apolitical stance cast a long shadow in the history of the University of Canterbury. See also Macmillan Brown's *Memoirs*, p. 127, and *Modern Education*, pp. 5–7.

54 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 66; Schouten, "The "Encyclopaedic God-Professor"", pp. 113, 118.

the discussion often took the form of an intense grilling rather than a relaxed conversation.<sup>55</sup> His female students were given extra group tuition in groups of three or four at his university study.<sup>56</sup>

Embracing the role of 'God-Professor' did not encourage universal admiration, but it did provide a status that guaranteed a public voice. Macmillan Brown was more than willing to accept invitations to write leading articles for either of the city's newspapers, whether they came from William Pember Reeves's *Lyttelton Times*, the organ of liberal and radical opinion within the city, or the conservative *Christchurch Press*.<sup>57</sup> Equally, he rarely declined a public appointment. In 1877 he became a member of the University of New Zealand Senate, and the following year he was appointed to a royal commission into higher education in New Zealand. The annual meetings of the Senate, the controlling administrative body of the federal University of New Zealand, in different parts of the colony helped to provide the profile of a national figure and brought him into contact with members of political, professional and commercial elites. His appointment as an examiner for matriculation and junior university scholarship exams added further to his colonial status. Locally, he became an inspector of secondary schools and, in 1885, chairman of the North Canterbury Education Board. In short, within a decade he had immersed himself in just about every facet of the education system and exerted considerable influence on it.

A critical factor in Macmillan Brown's establishment was the relative ease with which he found 'kindred spirits' within the professional community that was taking shape within the colony. None more so than Robert Stout. A Scot from the Shetland Islands, he had reached New Zealand in 1864 as a qualified teacher and surveyor. When Macmillan Brown arrived a decade later, Stout had completed articles in law, was finishing a degree at the University of Otago while lecturing in law, and about to embark upon a political career, in which he attempted to place himself at the forefront of colonial liberalism. Opposed to the

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55 Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 62; Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 180–83; 'Prof. Brown', *Press*, 2 April 1895; O. T. Alpers, 'Recollections of an Under-graduate', special supplement to the *Press*, 12 May 1923, p. ii; James R. Wilkinson, 'Educational Reminiscences from 1866', Canterbury Museum, ARC 1992.54, p. 38, cited by Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, p. 38.

56 K. W. Evans, 'The First Girl Graduates', *Lyttelton Times*, 12 May 1923, p. 16; Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, pp. 38–39.

57 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 89–90.

notion of party politics, he nonetheless played a significant role in attempts to bring together a Liberal 'party' in parliament in the 1880s and 1890s. Like Macmillan Brown, he was steeped in the writings of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. He is said to have stood in the House of Representatives with the works of Mill 'piled "three feet high" in front of him'.<sup>58</sup> Above all else, their friendship grew around a shared belief in the fundamental importance of education. Each thought of the teacher and not the priest as the custodian of public morality and argued that social improvement would ultimately rest upon education rather than legislation. It was this philosophy that led each to champion women's rights and to support the suffrage movement. By 1885 Stout had served two brief terms as premier, and while his political career withered, his role within higher education made him a powerful ally.<sup>59</sup>

Of the multitude of friendships that Macmillan Brown developed amongst the professional elite, two others stand out as providing representative strands. Among the earliest was that with Julius von Haast. The son of a well-to-do merchant and burgomaster of Bonn, he had come to New Zealand in 1858 and, after establishing an international reputation as explorer and geologist, played an important role in the foundation of Canterbury's museum, as well as being one of the founders of the Canterbury Collegiate Union (1871), the precursor of Canterbury College. As the college's first professor of Geology from 1877, he became an academic colleague and close friend of Macmillan Brown. In 1879 he joined Macmillan Brown on the Senate of the University of New Zealand, to be followed in 1885 by Robert Stout. All three were on reciprocal visiting-terms with Frederick and Julia Wilding, who, as we observe elsewhere, were prominent shapers of the new professional elite that was developing within Christchurch.

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58 David Hamer, 'Stout, Robert 1844–1930', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography (DNZB)*, Volume Two, 1870–1900, Bridget Williams Books and Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1993, pp. 484–87; Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 83–84.

59 Robert Stout was New Zealand's Premier (1884–87), Attorney-General (1878–79), and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (1899–1926).

As a group, they frequently attended musical concerts in the city, where on occasion Julia Wilding and Lady von Haast as pianists and Julius von Haast as violinist were amongst the performers.<sup>60</sup>

Macmillan Brown's friendship with James Collier, now remembered for his pioneering work on Australian pastoralism, illustrates both how quickly a newcomer might become a patron, and the way in which individual professional migrants sought each other out and recognised the familiar elements in each other's circumstances. Born in 1846 in Dunfermline, son of a Scottish handloom weaver, Collier had in 1882, like Macmillan Brown, left the old world, as a disenchanted academic. He had read classics and mathematics at St Andrews (1863–67) without graduating and spent some 10 years as assistant to Herbert Spencer, initially as an amanuensis, but later played a much larger role in the preparation of *Descriptive Sociology*. Macmillan Brown helped Collier obtain a number of tutorships and sought the assistance of Robert Stout in gaining his appointment as the colony's Parliamentary Librarian in 1885. Their common interest in literature and history and a shared propensity to see links between the biological and sociological worlds were the basis of a friendship that spanned some 40 years. Collier resigned as Parliamentary Librarian in 1891 and lived precariously off earnings from tutoring posts, secured for him by Macmillan Brown, until 1895 when he left New Zealand for Sydney. Macmillan Brown retired from his post at Canterbury College

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60 Peter B. Maling, 'Haast, Johann Franz Julius von (1822–1887)', *DNZB, Volume One, 1769–1869*, Allen & Unwin and Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1990, pp. 167–69; Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 102–3, 128; 'Lady von Haast', press cutting WFP, box 42/3–4, p. 116; Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, 'The High Arts in a Regional Culture: From Englishness to Self-Reliance', in Cookson and Dunstall (eds), *Southern Capital Christchurch*, p. 302.



in 1895 also. Thereafter, as both pursued careers as prolific writers and commentators, the nature of their relationship changed; Macmillan Brown became less of a patron and more of a scholarly colleague.<sup>61</sup>

Within this emerging cultured community that he himself was helping to create, Macmillan Brown developed a reputation as 'a people's professor'. It is a reputation that rested, as we have noted, on the popularity of his Saturday 'art lectures' that examined the 'great works' of literature and drew large audiences comprised predominantly of middle-class women. There was similarly significant support from within this community for his public proclamations that Canterbury College should shun the 'pedantic narrowness' of the ancient universities, and that its graduates should avoid the 'limp superciliousness' of their Oxford and Cambridge equivalents.<sup>62</sup> Yet while it is clear that Macmillan Brown took great pains to assist students from humble backgrounds, it is also clear that the 'people' he had at the forefront of his mind were the educated elite capable of exerting moral leadership within the community. When he spoke of life as an 'unending battle' with labour as its essence, he was championing a 'purification of the soul'.<sup>63</sup> In this sense he was advocating an educated, scholarly elite absorbed in a life of solitary study and asceticism that would assume the moral guardianship of a secular society.<sup>64</sup> These were views that were seen by the aspirant lower middle class as consistent with their desire to gain the academic credentials that would allow them to find a place within the city's expanding professional ranks. They had particular appeal to the

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61 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 146, 184–85; Jill Waterhouse, 'Collier, James (1846–1925)', *ADB*, vol. 8, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1981, pp. 69–70; J. Collier to Macmillan Brown, 2 April 1910, JMBP, A4/33; J. Collier to Macmillan Brown, 25 March 1908, JMBP, A7/22; J. Collier to Macmillan Brown, 24 November 1907, JMBP, A7/66; J. Collier to Macmillan Brown, n.d., JMBP, A7/79; J. Collier to Macmillan Brown, 22 December 1912, JMBP, A13/81; J. Collier to Macmillan Brown, 31 May 1914, JMBP, A14/35; Herbert Spencer, *Descriptive Sociology, or Groups of Sociological Facts, parts 1–8*, classified and abstracted by David Duncan, Richard Schepping, and James Collier, Williams and Norgate, London, 1873–81; James Collier, Introduction to D. Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Whitcombe & Tombs, Christchurch, 1911; James Collier, *The Pastoral Age in Australasia*, Whitcombe & Tombs, London, 1911; James Collier, Introduction to E. G. Wakefield, *A View of the Art of Colonization*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1914. Collier also wrote articles on contemporary Australasian topics such as the old age pension and land legislation for the *New York Nation*, religious reconstruction in France and Germany (*Hibbert Journal*, 1906), as well as articles on sociology (*Knowledge*, 1902–4) and colonisation (*American Journal of Sociology*, 1905–6).

62 'Prof. Brown's Opening Address', *Press*, 12 May 1878.

63 Macmillan Brown, *Student Life*, pp. 4, 5, 29.

64 Macmillan Brown, *Student Life*, pp. 20–21, 28–31.

parents of academically inclined young women for whom a career in teaching was thought to satisfy prevailing expectations of what was socially acceptable for women.

Macmillan Brown's prescription was a high-minded one. It was also an accurate enough description of his first decade as a 'God-Professor'. His life now conformed in all essentials, save that of campus residence, to that of the traditional Oxbridge don. By his own account, a typical day of scholarship and teaching stretched some 16 hours.<sup>65</sup> Board at a private suburban household catered for his domestic arrangements for the first five years after which Macmillan Brown took up residence at the Christchurch Club on the fringe of the developing educational precinct, in which the university was taking shape. As the meeting place of the city's rural and professional classes, the Christchurch Club was the hub of the social networking that facilitated community activity. It was here that Macmillan Brown's high-mindedness rubbed up against the acquisitive instincts of the commercial classes. He himself acquired a capacity for investment that laid the foundation for the accumulation of considerable personal wealth. It was here also that he met migrant professionals like himself, seeking to find a place in the society they had just joined, and keen not to recreate Britain, but find ways to a better one.<sup>66</sup>

The club-land of Macmillan Brown's daily life was by its very nature a male preserve. Membership denoted a degree of acceptance, but continued permanent residence might be read as indicating ambiguous commitment to and involvement in the community. For an educationalist proclaiming a life of asceticism and scholarship, and the nurturing of talent amongst the young regardless of gender, club-land was an unsuitable address. It brought into question an individual's understanding of the family and the dynamics of domestic life. Macmillan Brown's apparent reluctance to abandon the life of the academic don wedded to his books and embrace family life has produced speculation amongst historians.<sup>67</sup> The discussion has taken shape around his eventual marriage to his protégé Helen Connon in

65 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, p. 112.

66 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 89, 90–92, 134–39; Megan Woods, 'Behind Closed Doors: A Study in Elite Canterbury Masculinity 1856–1900', BA (Hons) essay, University of Canterbury, 1995; McAloon, 'The Christchurch Elite', pp. 196–97.

67 Lovell-Smith, *Easily the Best*, pp. 56–63, 87, 107–9; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 111.

1886 and will be discussed in this context in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to observe that his marriage was a critical component in his establishment and acceptance within the city.

Viewed purely as an example of the migration process, Macmillan Brown's establishment years were ones in which family played few of its familiar roles. His departure from Britain was not influenced by the prior migration of family members. The fact that a younger sister was soon to migrate to Sydney with her shipping-merchant husband was a fortuitous development that was to provide Macmillan Brown with a family base, from which he could engage directly with the Australian academic and intellectual community.<sup>68</sup> Rather, the manner in which Macmillan Brown took his place amongst the colonial elite is best seen as illustrating the workings of the academic imperial network that developed as part of the expansion of the British world in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup> The transplant of the British university to the settler societies provided a ready status for migrant academics and a cocoon within which the personal adjustment to colonial life might take place. This was an environment in which men like Macmillan Brown, imbued with a sense of mission, were able to build for themselves a role that fulfilled any needs they had to identify with their new home. For Macmillan Brown this sense of identification grew naturally from his academic career and required little external stimulus.

There is little evidence that Macmillan Brown cultivated leisure or sought escape from work. Saturday evenings were spent with his 'club friends' at musical concerts and the theatre. There are some signs, however, that he recognised and enjoyed the sanctuary of the domestic haven. On Sundays and during trips to Dunedin, he spent time in the family homes of his academic colleagues, which encompassed a range of domestic settings, from the New Brighton open homes of the controversial chemistry and physics professor Alexander Bickerton to the more conventional environments of the households maintained by

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68 Macmillan Brown's *Memoirs*, p. 81; Malcolm S. Earlam, 'Craig, Robert Gordon (1870–1931)', *ADB*, vol. 8, 1981, pp. 133–34. The husband of Macmillan Brown's sister Elizabeth (Bessie), Ayrshire-born shipping master Capt. Robert Craig (1837–1917), was appointed marine superintendent of the Eastern and Australasian Steamship Company, Sydney, in late 1874. Craig and his wife settled in Neutral Bay, Sydney.

69 See Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World 1850–1930*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2013.

von Haast, Sale and Stout.<sup>70</sup> He readily accepted and possibly sought invitations to join in the family activities of academic colleagues. Yet there seems little doubt that the missionary-like zeal and total absorption that characterised Macmillan Brown's engagement with the world of scholarship and education called for a high degree of self-reliance and left little room for other forms of community involvement.

Walking may have provided a partial exception. Among the professional classes of the mid-nineteenth century walking had come to be seen as a healthy pursuit in its own right, a means of escaping the city and communing with nature.<sup>71</sup> Macmillan Brown absorbed these attitudes at Oxford, and, as we have seen, introduced walks with students as a part of his teaching, very much in the manner of his patron Jowett. As well as an educational tool and a form of exercise, walking also provided a point of contact with young, migrant and unmarried members of the Australasian academic community, keen to explore the flora and fauna of their new antipodean environment. Amongst them were two very different Irish friends making their mark in Australia: the deeply religious, vigorous, athletic John MacFarland who, in 1881, had become Master of Ormond College at the University of Melbourne; and Henry Higgins, later a keen foundation member of the Wallaby Club (1894), a 'walking and talking' society of professional men.<sup>72</sup>

70 For a description of Sunday 'open homes' at the Bickertons attended by Macmillan Brown, see E. S. White, 'A Lady Student's Recollections'; S. Page, 'An Enthusiastic Genius'; Thomas Rowe, 'Forty Years Ago', and K. W. Evans (Kate Edger), 'The First Girl Graduates', in *Canterbury College Jubilee*, *Lyttelton Times*, 12 May 1923 (*Press* supplement). In 1895–96 Bickerton formed a 'federative home' in Wainoni: see Jim McAloon, 'Radical Christchurch', pp. 172–73; Gardner, 'The Formative Years', p. 110; Jane Tolerton, *A Life of Ettie Rout*, Penguin, Auckland, 1992, pp. 28–31.

71 Millicent Baxter, John Macmillan Brown's daughter, later wrote in her introduction to Macmillan Brown's *Memoirs* (p. xvii) that they were a family of 'inveterate walkers, always in Indian file, my father in the lead'. See also John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870–1914*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, pp. 30–31; Melissa Harper, *The Ways of the Bushwalker*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2007; Frederic Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking*, Verso Books, UK, 2014; Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Granta Books, UK, 2014.

72 Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 58–59, 165–66; Geoffrey Serle, 'MacFarland, Sir John Henry (1851–1935)', *ADB*, vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1986, pp. 266–67; Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 35, 130–31. Macmillan Brown notes that most of the Melbourne University professors holidayed in the South Island while those from Sydney generally went to the North Island, presumably a result of the available shipping routes. Macmillan Brown accompanied Melbourne professors Herbert Strong (Classics) and Edward Nanson (Mathematics) on a trip through the Otira Gorge on the West Coast of the South Island. His old Oxford friend, Pitt Cobbett, appointed to the Challis Chair of Law at the University of Sydney, holidayed in the North Island. See F. C. Hutley, 'Cobbett, William Pitt (1853–1919)', *ADB*, vol. 8, 1981, pp. 40–41.

Whatever the context in which these explorations of the Australasian environment were formulated, they represent a level of engagement with the new world. In some degree they reflect a shift in Macmillan Brown's attitude to colonial life. At the time of his emigration from Scotland, he spoke of a period of exile that lay before him and envisaged an eventual return to claim a place within the British university system. A decade later, when he took six months leave to return 'Home', he came as a representative of the Australasian academic community and as a pioneer of English literary studies. The world of writers, poets, academics and publishers opened up to him in ways that reveal the interconnectedness of the British intellectual world and its smallness. He discussed literary developments with David Masson, pioneer of English literary studies and father of Orme Masson, soon to make his way to Melbourne. As a close friend of Herbert Spencer, David Masson's recommendation, together with a letter of introduction from James Collier, Spencer's former assistant now in Christchurch, smoothed the way for several meetings.<sup>73</sup> Stopping off in America on the return journey, Brown discussed developments in the teaching of English literature with Professor F. J. Child, its pioneering exponent at Harvard, and was greatly impressed by Walt Whitman, whose poetry and particular brand of humanism he admired.<sup>74</sup>

The return to Christchurch at the beginning of 1885 was beset by none of the doubts that surrounded his arrival in 1874. At Merton College, Oxford, he had been offered the newly established chair in English literature. There was also an offer from Ormond College at the University of Melbourne. By his own later account, Oxford weather held no appeal, and neither appointment matched his current earnings at Canterbury. Such recollections may contain an element of truth but they sit awkwardly alongside other developments in his life.<sup>75</sup> Within months of returning to Christchurch, Macmillan Brown became engaged to his protégé Helen Connon, now Principal of Christchurch

73 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 139–50.

74 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 162–67, 174–75; McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature*, pp. 65–110. Harvard professor Frances James Child (1825–1896), author of *The English and Scottish Ballads*, had studied at Harvard, Göttingen and Berlin, and took up a Harvard professorship in Rhetoric and Oratory in 1851, going on to occupy Harvard's first chair of English literature in 1876. Macmillan Brown also met Professor Lounsbury, English professor at Yale.

75 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 94, 143–44; Gardner, *Colonial Cap and Gown*, p. 61; J. Macmillan Brown, 'University Pioneering', special supplement, *Press*, 12 May 1923.

Girls' High School. The courtship, conducted away from the public gaze, had been a protracted affair, as the city's two most influential educationalists sought to envisage a marriage that would accommodate not one but two careers.

## Alexander and Adeline Leeper

For Alexander Leeper, academic life in the new world was to be an 'experiment of an anxious kind'.<sup>76</sup> His pathway to Melbourne University had been strewn with false starts. He had returned to Australia in 1875 to marry Sydneysider Adeline Allen, whom he had met on his first sojourn to Australia in 1869–70. To facilitate his return and make marriage possible, he applied for the advertised principalship of Melbourne Grammar School, but was offered and accepted the position of Second Master and Senior Master of Classics.<sup>77</sup> He had sailed to Melbourne with his closest friend, John Winthrop Hackett, a young barrister fully conscious of the difficulties Leeper had experienced teaching in Sydney.<sup>78</sup> Always morbidly concerned for his health, he was on the brink of abandoning his teaching post and taking up a tutoring position in the country, when he was offered the principalship of Trinity College, established in 1872.<sup>79</sup>

The college was to become the 27-year-old's 'life's work'.<sup>80</sup> His initial establishment period was not without its problems. His preoccupation with his health continued. There was opposition to his appointment from members of the Melbourne Anglican community concerned about his youth and lack of experience, and opposition to the new college itself as a drain on Church finances. Money for the college was short. Leeper's salary was a modest £300, and he was required to run Trinity College as a private business funded out of student

76 Alexander Leeper's speech at the opening of the Bishops' Building, Trinity's Theological School, on 17 June 1878, ALP, T9a, box 29/1.

77 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 45–46.

78 Lyall Hunt, 'Hackett, Sir John Winthrop Hackett (1848–1916)', *ADB*, vol. 9, 1983, pp. 150–53.

79 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 48–49, 58–59. For a general history of the boys' school see Weston Bate and Helen Penrose, *Challenging Traditions: A History of Melbourne Grammar*, Australian Scholarly Publishers, Melbourne, 2002.

80 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 60.

fee-payments and private contributions. Indeed, so precarious was his financial position, that his marriage to Adeline had been delayed until 1879, four years after their 'engagement' in 1875.<sup>81</sup>

When Leeper took over Trinity College, it was little more than a hostel with five residents. The fact that he was able to establish it as the hub around which Melbourne University built its version of the collegial system speaks of persistence and dedication. His observation that initially he 'did not get much encouragement from anyone' accurately reflects his crucial role.<sup>82</sup> His brief was to establish a theological school and ensure that the college was successful financially. From the outset, however, Leeper was considerably more ambitious and was determined that Trinity College should not suffer the fate of earlier university colleges. In Sydney, St Paul's Anglican College (1856) had by 1878 a grand building and only three students; St John's, the Roman Catholic College (1860), had been reduced to the residence of the coadjutor Bishop.<sup>83</sup> Leeper welcomed the challenge to succeed where others had failed: 'It would be so much a greater glory to raise this miserable place and make a decent college of it than to begin with everything so smooth and perfect as at St Paul's. There is a strange satisfaction in overcoming difficulties.'<sup>84</sup> His determination to achieve academic affiliation of the college to the University of Melbourne aroused opposition from those who saw the very existence of an affiliated church college as a threat to the secular foundational principles of the university and from others who thought it an unwanted agent of class and snobbish elitism best left in the old world.<sup>85</sup>

Such a characterisation of Leeper's vision for Trinity College was a harsh assessment of what Leeper had in mind. His personal experience of residential colleges, at Trinity College, Dublin, as well as St John's, Oxford, did not leave him uncritical of them. There was no place in Australia, he told a Social Science Congress held in October 1880, for what he regarded as the 'aristocratic exclusiveness', 'petty cliquism' and 'luxury and apathy' of the Oxbridge colleges. It would be 'indeed

81 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 66–71, 78–99, 121.

82 Alexander Leeper's 'Reminiscences', *Argus*, 13 July 1918.

83 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 61–73.

84 Alexander Leeper to George Boyce Allen, 6 December 1876, ALP, T1, box 30/68.

85 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 68–71. Those that opposed the move included the foundation chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Redmond Barry, the Melbourne Age's David Syme and Charles Henry Pearson.



deplorable', he thought, if Australian colleges 'became aristocratic clubs for the idle, from which the poor or humbly born student could be practically shut out'.<sup>86</sup> The Trinity College he envisaged for Melbourne was by contrast to be a place of strenuous effort. Scholarships would enable gifted but economically constrained students to enjoy the benefits of residential student life. The college would operate on two levels—academic and moral. A tutorial system like that of Oxford and Cambridge was in Leeper's view essential, because lecture classes at the University of Melbourne were too large and the number of university professors too few for teaching to be adequate. The students' need for more individualised tuition was borne out, he believed, by the popularity of the 'university coach'. At the same time, in a break with Oxbridge tradition at least, Leeper envisaged that colleges might become the centres of research within the university. The overworked lecturers, confronted by large classes, often inadequately prepared for university, were, he argued, in no position to carry out much research of their own. The encouragement of competition within a residential college and between the other colleges, which Leeper thought would follow in the future, would raise the university's academic standards, contribute to an increase in new knowledge, and provide an esprit de corps which was the lifeblood of a university.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, Leeper believed it to be imperative that the sense of moral purpose that infused the ancient universities should be replicated in their colonial offspring. Indeed, he sought to establish himself within Trinity College as a patriarchal head of a household of young men, standing, as it were, in loco parentis. He insisted upon twice-daily attendance at what he called 'family prayer' and saw supervised study as a means of inculcating steady work habits and self-discipline among students.<sup>88</sup> For Leeper '[n]o better preparation for the world exists than free association with one's contemporaries' that such guided communities of scholars provided.<sup>89</sup> As Geoffrey Blainey has put it, Leeper's ideal college would be 'a disciplined democracy and a training school in citizenship, a forum of unrestrained intellectual

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86 Jubilee Calendar of Trinity College, 1897.

87 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 100–102. The research ideal was derived from German universities.

88 *Australasian*, 12 February 1876; Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 67–68.

89 *Australasian*, 12 February 1876; Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 67. Poynter speculates that Leeper 'must have briefed the author personally, if not written the piece personally'.



fellowship for students ...'.<sup>90</sup> The Trinity College tutors would, like their Oxbridge and Trinity College Dublin counterparts, have a considerable role in shaping the characters and outlook of those who in Leeper's conception would be leaders of the next generation. Leeper aimed at establishing nothing less than, as John Poynter puts it, a 'training [school] for the nation's intellectual élite'.<sup>91</sup>

Leeper pursued this goal with a steadfastness derived from a moral certainty. At its centre lay a deeply ingrained belief in the importance of classical studies as the basis of a 'liberal education' that would 'furnish the community with its best leaders and thinkers'.<sup>92</sup> It was a set of beliefs kept alive and refreshed by his personal scholarship, as he continued to publish even as his administrative teaching and pastoral duties grew. He collaborated with Professor H. Strong to publish *A Guide to Classical Reading Intended for the Use of Australian Students* (1880), published a translation of *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal* (1882), and for several decades worked on an annotated edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek–English lexicon.<sup>93</sup> More immediately important in establishing his place amongst Melbourne's cultural elite was his production of classical plays performed by Trinity College students and, for the first time in the city, delivered in Latin. Further Latin plays followed in 1884 and 1887, and the staging of a more ambitious Greek tragedy in 1898, the first Greek play performed (in the Greek language) in Victoria, attracted a large audience.<sup>94</sup>

The energy that Leeper poured into classical studies undoubtedly cemented his reputation within academe and amongst the educated community. Such constant engagement with the ancient world reinforced a frame of reference that inspired a teaching regime stressing the importance of civic values. Leeper took from his studies

90 Blainey, *A Centenary History of the University of Melbourne*, p. 80.

91 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 102.

92 Alexander Leeper, *A Plea for the Study of the Classics. Inaugural Lecture delivered before the Classical Association of Victoria, 22nd April, 1913*, Melville and Mullen, Melbourne, 1913; *Age*, 23 April 1913.

93 Alexander Leeper (with H. A. Strong), *A Guide to Classical Reading, Intended for the Use of Australian Students*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1880; Alexander Leeper (with H. A. Strong), *Juvenal: Thirteen Satires*, translated into English, after the Latin text of J.E.B. Mayor, Macmillan, London, 1882. Leeper also had published his *Fourteen Satires of Juvenal*, translated into English, Macmillan, London, 1912.

94 The Greek tragedy performed in 1898 was *The Alcestis of Euripides*, for which Leeper provided the audience with an English translation. Another Greek play, Aristophanes's *Wasps*, took place in 1906. See Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 107–8, 124–25, 135, 269–72, 326.

an understanding of how human beings might seek to behave in ethical ways, and of how a sense of community might be encouraged amongst the educated few. Historians have recently drawn attention to the ways in which late-Victorian and Edwardian philosophers were drawing upon the ancient world and developing a ‘theory of “community” and of collective social action’ previously ‘lacking in the established mainstream of English political thought’.<sup>95</sup> Leeper’s advocacy of the ancient world as an exemplar was consistent with this analysis. His understanding of the ancients led him to place them at the centre of thinking, informed his vision for Trinity College, and lent his stewardship a missionary zeal and moral certainty that has led historians to describe him as both liberal progressive and bigot.<sup>96</sup>

Evidence of both can be found in his long tenure at Trinity. It is argued here that in the establishment of Trinity College Leeper’s role was constructive, energetic and directed towards an understanding of community building. Once the college had achieved affiliation with the University of Melbourne in 1876, opened its Theological College and been suitably rehoused in grounds within campus, Leeper proceeded to develop his ideal tutorial system. Classical studies occupied central place, but the program he constructed was broad and at times innovative. Among its early features were an essay and debating club and a Dialectical Society based on the Trinity College Dublin model designed to develop collegial spirit. An annual public lecture sought to provide engagement with the wider educated community. In response to the widening of the University of Melbourne’s matriculation exams to include four science subjects, and the looming introduction of a Bachelor of Science degree in 1887, Leeper established a biology and chemistry laboratory and appointed tutors in practical and medical chemistry, biology, histology and physiological chemistry. Despite his personal preference for classical languages and literature, by 1889 he had added modern languages—French and English—to his tutorial program.<sup>97</sup> Nothing better testifies to the success of Leeper’s endeavours to establish Trinity College than the appearance of two further colleges, the Presbyterian Ormond College (1881) followed by

95 Jose Harris, ‘Platonism, Positivism and Progressivism: Aspects of British Sociological Thought in the Early Twentieth Century’, in Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community*, p. 354.

96 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 2–4; O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, p. 190.

97 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 75, 103, 105.

the Wesleyan Queen's College (1888).<sup>98</sup> Leeper would become locked into a rivalry with MacFarland's better-endowed Ormond during the 1880s.

Leeper's enthusiastic advocacy of learning within a collegial system was at its most progressive and controversial when he championed the inclusion of women students. He had taken up the cause after the admittance of women to courses and degrees at the University of Melbourne in 1881. Two years later, he admitted the first non-residential female student to Trinity College lectures. A visit to Girton College, England, in 1884 spiked his enthusiasm further and he persuaded Melbourne University authorities to approve, on a 12-month trial basis, a residential hostel for women students. From the outset, Leeper intended women students to be integrated fully into Trinity College life and strove to provide them with access to the same educational opportunities as the male students, namely tutorials, lectures and use of his personal library. Leeper made the experiment something of a personal crusade. Initially there were few women students and little demand for a woman's hostel. As originally conceived, the hostel was farmed out to a principal appointed by Leeper and run as a private business concern. In practice Leeper personally provided scholarships and bursaries for female students, and his wife, Adeline, propped the hostel up financially.<sup>99</sup>

As well as financial hurdles, there was scepticism, misunderstanding and controversy. Bishop Moorhouse probably spoke for many within the Anglican community when he expressed a fear that 'penniless' female students would trap wealthy Trinity College men into marriage.<sup>100</sup> The generally sympathetic *Daily Telegraph* thought the experiment contained the 'germ of an Australian Girton', but this was an emphasis that did not quite do justice to Leeper's conception of full integration.<sup>101</sup> It was certainly true that Leeper had looked initially to Girton and Newnham Women's colleges at Cambridge and Somerville

98 Stuart Macintyre (ed.), *Ormond College Centenary Essays*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1984; Owen Parnaby, *Queen's College, University of Melbourne: A Centenary History*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1990.

99 On the establishment of Trinity College Hostel see Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 131–50, 202–23; Lyndsay Gardiner, *Janet Clarke Hall 1886–1986*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1986, pp. 1–69; Theobald, *Knowing Women*, pp. 40, 75–80.

100 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 133; Morna Sturrock, *Bishop of Magnetic Power: James Moorhouse in Melbourne 1876–1886*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2005.

101 *Daily Telegraph*, 5 December 1885.

at Oxford University for legitimising models, but he came increasingly to favour the more integrated American practice of coeducation. As Leeper saw it, integration offered the surest way to the full participation of women students. Establishing independent women's colleges in the manner of the English universities would, he believed, be a backward step for women that would lower their academic standing.<sup>102</sup> It was a position that did not always sit comfortably with the Ladies Council appointed to assist in the management of the hostel. The lady councillors, perhaps partly influenced by the establishment in Sydney of a government-funded independent (non-denominational) women's college in 1892, sought publicly and unsuccessfully to push Leeper aside.<sup>103</sup> In the slanging match that ensued in the pages of the *Melbourne Age*, Leeper's patriarchal and authoritarian tendencies are well revealed. Whatever the merits of the integrated versus independent models propounded, and whatever the motivations behind the skirmish, Leeper rode out the controversy. His role in the admission of women to the university stands as positive, encouraging and persistent. The first intakes of the women's hostel distinguished themselves academically and produced a steady stream of teachers and doctors, as well as an outstanding classical student, Melian Stawell.<sup>104</sup> By any assessment, Leeper had made good his claim to have established at Trinity College 'a fair Home of Religion and Learning' for women students.<sup>105</sup>

The phrase 'religion and learning' describes Leeper's academic evangelism and defines the parameters of his engagement with the wider community of his time. As warden of Trinity College, essentially a private business affiliated to the university, he was always conscious of the need to attract funding and publicise university and college wherever and whenever possible. To this end he willingly assumed and assiduously cultivated a public role as a champion of Melbourne's

102 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 133–42.

103 On the Women's College at Sydney University, see Theobald, *Knowing Women*, pp. 80–90; Ursula Bygott and K. J. Cable, *Pioneer Women Graduates of the University of Sydney, 1881–1921*, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1985, pp. 15–23.

104 Gardiner, *Janet Clarke Hall*, pp. 5, 6, 49, 52, 65, 67. Melian Stawell (1888), daughter of the Chief Justice, 'completed her degree at Cambridge, became Classics tutor at Newnham and later published several books on classical literature and translations of classics texts'. See also K. J. McKay, 'Stawell, Florence Melian (1869–1936)', *ADB*, vol. 12, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1990, pp. 55–56; Charles Francis, 'Stawell, Sir William Foster (1815–1889)', *ADB*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1976, pp. 174–77.

105 Alexander Leeper to Lillian Alexander, 30 August 1888, cited by Gardiner, *Janet Clarke Hall*, p. 8, and by Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, p. 140.

cultural community. He founded and maintained an active lifelong involvement in a Shakespeare Society (1884); from 1887 until 1928 he was a trustee of the omnibus organisation that oversaw the city's Public Library, museums and National Gallery; and founded the Classical Society of Victoria in 1913. In a similar and complementary way, the essentially religious component of his role as secretary of the Theological Faculty at Trinity College and warden of the Anglican Trinity College allowed Leeper to quickly become increasingly influential within the Anglican Church in Victoria.<sup>106</sup> As a lay canon of St Paul's Cathedral and a member of the Synod, he was a visible participant in Church affairs and attracted public attention promoting the rights of the laity, as opposed to that of the bishops, and supporting the ordination of women. It is a measure of his growing status within Melbourne that in 1888, 13 years after settling in the city, Leeper was nominated for membership of the prestigious Melbourne Club. Leeper's description of his acceptance—involving an expense he thought extravagant—as presenting a further opportunity to promote Trinity College suggests an academic evangelism tinged with more than a touch of entrepreneurial vigilance.<sup>107</sup>

The religiosity of Leeper's academic evangelism places him closer to the clerical Oxbridge dons who characterised the ancient English universities than either Macmillan Brown or Masson, whose minimal religious convictions continued to wither in the colonies. It is tempting to see Leeper's Anglicanism as intensifying the evangelical element of his personality and shaping the nature of his marriage and family life. He was to be married twice. It is his first marriage, in 1879, to colonial-born Adeline Allen, of Sydney, that sealed his commitment to life in Australia and helps define the nature of the Leeper family. The eldest

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106 For Anglicanism in Victoria and Australia see: James Grant, *Episcopally Led and Synodically Governed: Anglicans in Victoria, 1803–1997*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2010; Reginald Stephen (ed.), *The First Hundred Years: Notes on the History of the Church of England in Victoria*, Executive Committee of the Anglican Assembly, Melbourne, 1934; Brian H. Fletcher, *The Place of Anglicanism in Australia: Church, Society and Nation*, Broughton Publishing, Mulgrave, Victoria, 2008; Bruce Kaye (ed.), *Anglicanism in Australia: A History*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2002; James Grant, *Old St Paul's: The Story of St Paul's Church, Melbourne, and its Congregation, 1850–1891*, Melbourne, 2000.

107 Alexander Leeper was nominated as a member of the Melbourne Club by two prominent businessmen, R. Murray Smith, a member of the University Council (1887–90) and F. A. Keating. See Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 114–19, 444, n. 37; Ronald McNicholl, *Number 36 Collins Street, Melbourne Club 1838–1988*, Allen & Unwin/Haynes, Sydney, 1988; Ernest Scott, *Historical Memoir of the Melbourne Club*, Specialty Press, Melbourne, 1936; Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigree*.

daughter of a wealthy and prominent Sydney legal and politically active family, Adeline undoubtedly improved Leeper's social and professional standing and she brought to the marriage sufficient capital to prop up Leeper's often-shaky personal finances. Throughout the marriage, it was frequently Adeline who provided the money that was remitted to Leeper's Irish relatives and underwrote the struggling Trinity Women's Hostel in its earliest years.<sup>108</sup> She also chaired the Ladies' Committee appointed to assist in running the hostel and often bore the brunt of day-to-day management when Leeper was absent. It could be said that life for the Leepers revolved around operating a family enterprise within the cloistered and institutional environs of Melbourne University.

More than any other of the women in this study Adeline brought extended family to her marriage. The role of her Sydney-based family during the establishment years at Trinity College took several forms. Adeline spent the greater part of her four 'confinements' at her parents' home in Glebe and stayed for lengthy periods until each of her newborns had settled into a routine. During busy or stressful times her sister Ida often joined the Leepers' Trinity College household to provide an extra pair of hands. For Adeline, her Sydney family and friends remained a central component of her life and offered a respite from the intensity with which her husband lived his life. That her family recognised this and readily facilitated it is made clear in letters that passed between Alexander Leeper and Adeline's brother, Boyce.<sup>109</sup> There can be little doubt that the extended family and its preoccupations necessarily lessened Adeline's engagement with the Melbourne community in which her own family took shape. She spent little time, for example, forging social networks in the traditional female manner of paying calls, and devoted herself to the domestic arrangements of college and family.<sup>110</sup> Within this small community of academic families clustered within the confines of Melbourne University, Adeline participated in the networks that developed amongst university wives and was closest to Mary Masson, with whom she shared a preference for the private and domestic aspects of family life.<sup>111</sup> It was a preference

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108 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 120–21, 144. Adeline Leeper received a £200 annuity from her father upon her marriage.

109 For example, Boyce Allen to Alexander Leeper, 20 August 1892, ALP, T1, box 30/68.

110 On social calls and networking, see Russell, 'A Wish of Distinction'.

111 Adeline Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 30 June 1889, 5 July 1889, 10 July 1889, 26 July 1889, 4 August 1889, ALP, T1, box 23/52.

facilitated by the institutional environment of Melbourne University, which minimised many of the more mundane elements of maintaining a household and gave greater scope to women who sought to play active roles in the education of children.

In this collegial and family context Adeline's life conforms to the prevailing norm of her class and generation: the supportive wife whose talents complemented those of her husband. If there was one area of her life more than any other that illustrates the point, it was her love of music. She possessed sufficient talent as a pianist to take her beyond 'accomplishment' to the margins of performance quality. Whether she judged the gap too large or lacked the confidence to pursue the opportunity is unclear. But she chose, instead, a less conspicuous and conventional means of giving expression to her musical talent. As organist for the Trinity College chapel, she assumed responsibility for church music, and, somewhat shamefacedly at the age of 36, took singing lessons, so that she might offer a more effective lead.<sup>112</sup> Religious settings such as these had long been an acceptable semi-public performance platform for women.<sup>113</sup> That Adeline confined public expressions of her musicality to chapel and concert-going reaffirmed to contemporaries her status as a supportive wife who shared her husband's religious beliefs.

In summary, the Leeper family established by Alexander and Adeline Leeper occurs within a cloistered household dominated by an intense and anxious academic evangelist, whose energy and persistence had carved out a niche within Melbourne's educated establishment. The extent to which his mercurial personality and intellectual certainty shaped the nature of the family that lived out its life within the sheltered environs of a colonial university is pursued in later chapters. At this point, it is safe to say that Alexander's controversialist tendencies and certainties loom largest and point to pronounced patriarchal and paternalistic tendencies, embedded in a high-minded liberalism derived from an understanding of the classical world. Family life was to take its place within this framework and, as the following chapters reveal, became infused with a similar anxiety to make the idealised colonial family a reality.

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112 Adeline Leeper to Alexander Leeper, 28 July 1889, ALP, box 23.

113 Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870–1914: 'Encroaching on all Man's Privileges'*, St Martin's Press, New York, 2000, pp. 33–62.



## Orme and Mary Masson

The process of establishment was smoothed for the Massons by a university system dependent for its continued expansion upon a steady stream of new academic staff from Britain. The smallness of the academic enclaves that were taking shape in the metropolitan centres, and the eagerness with which they embraced replenishment from 'Home' British universities, had been evident to Orme and Mary even before they reached Melbourne. They were nonetheless surprised when, en route to Melbourne, they were greeted in Adelaide by Archibald Watson, Chair of Anatomy at that city's university, who declared himself a 'fervent' admirer of Mary's father, John Struthers's work in comparative anatomy.<sup>114</sup> In fact, both Massons came from academic families: David Masson, Orme's father, was Chair of English Literature and Rhetoric at Edinburgh University. Less surprising was the presence in the welcoming party of Edward Henry Rennie, Australia's first native-born professor of Chemistry. Newly appointed to the University of Adelaide's foundation chair, Rennie had completed a DSc in London in 1882. He was to develop a close friendship with Masson and they became collaborators in the quest for a greater research focus within the universities.<sup>115</sup> When the Massons reached Melbourne on 16 October 1886, their welcome on board the Orient-liner *Garonne* at Port Williamstown was similarly conducted, at least in part, in old world accents and accompanied by academic familiarities, although a number of medical students had ducked off to watch the Caulfield Cup.<sup>116</sup> Mary and Orme Masson did not join the Australian university as unknowns, but as accepted, if not yet proven, members of a select and socially narrow community.

114 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 1.

115 Ann Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land: Scientists in Colonial Australia*, Collins, Sydney, 1986, pp. 165–66, 173; I. Inkster and J. Todd, 'Support for the Scientific Enterprise, 1850–1900', in R. W. Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*, Cambridge University Press in association with the Australian Academy of Science, Cambridge and Melbourne, 1988, p. 115; Ian Rae, 'Chemists at ANZAAS: Cabbages or Kings?', in Roy MacLeod (ed.), *Commonwealth of Science: ANZAAS and the Scientific enterprise in Australasia, 1888–1988*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 167. E. H. Rennie (1852–1927) was a graduate of Sydney University (1871) and London University with a doctorate in organic chemistry. He held the Chemistry chair at the University of Adelaide from 1885–1927.

116 Marnie Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, South Melbourne, 1985, pp. 57–58; Orme Masson to Irvine Masson, 13 January 1927, DOMFP, box 6/8/1.



The practicalities of establishing a household were similarly eased by university authorities. Even so, more than two years went by before they were installed in a recently completed professorial house within Melbourne University grounds, one of five identical houses in domestic-Gothic style. The first months of life in Melbourne were spent in rented accommodation of various kinds: a boarding house in Fitzroy, furnished rooms in East Melbourne, and a 'small brown brick villa' in Bruce Street, Toorak, close to the 'large mansions set in spacious grounds' of Melbourne's professional and business classes.<sup>117</sup> It was in this 'little brown house', as Marnie Masson was later to describe it, that the process of adjustment to the new world began and the first of the Masson children was born.<sup>118</sup> From here also the Massons made their first social contacts with members of the city's establishment. Inside this suburban villa, they were able to surround themselves for the first time with their wedding presents, comforting reminders of 'Home'. Prominent among them was a grand piano, made possible, Marnie Masson speculates, by 'combined family cheques'.<sup>119</sup>

The surrounds of Melbourne University, rather than suburban Toorak, were to shape the Massons' establishment in Melbourne. As we have observed, Masson was one of the new generation of career academics recruited by the universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and the foundational universities of New Zealand during the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>120</sup> Their appointments reflected a commitment to expanding the teaching of scientific subjects in the wake of the growing specialisation, whereby natural history, previously approached as one overriding subject, was divided into separate fields. Research was

117 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 58.

118 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 59.

119 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 59.

120 The chemistry professors were: John Black (University of Otago, Dunedin, appointed 1869); Archibald Liversidge (University of Sydney, appointed 1872), Alexander Bickerton (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, appointed 1874), F. D. Brown (University of Auckland, appointed 1883), E. H. Rennie (University of Adelaide, appointed 1885), Orme Masson (University of Melbourne, appointed 1886). In 1898, T. H. Easterfield was appointed at Victoria University, Wellington. Apart from Rennie, who was Australian-born, all came from Britain. Rennie completed degrees at Sydney University and was the first Australian to complete a DSc (London, 1882). Neither Black, who was pre-eminently a natural scientist, nor Bickerton, who was more interested in cosmology and university politics, played much part in chemical research. See Ian D. Rae, 'Chemists at ANZAAS: Cabbages or Kings?', in *Commonwealth of Science*, pp. 166–70. At the University of Melbourne, Masson was part of a trio of research-orientated scientists and teachers appointed during the late 1880s: biologist Walter Spencer Baldwin joined him at the university in January 1887; mathematician and physicist Thomas Lyle was appointed in 1889.

seen as a desirable concomitant, rather than an essential component, of this expansion. With varying degrees of success, Masson and his cohort of research-minded scholars attempted to shift the balance between the teaching and research functions of the universities they entered.<sup>121</sup> As Masson discovered and historians of science confirm, research in chemistry was stronger outside the universities. Based in industry, mining and medicine, its concerns primarily lay in applying established methods and knowledge rather than in pure research. By comparison the universities were laggards on both fronts. Within the University of Melbourne, chemistry remained encased within the School of Medicine, and it was to be some years before Masson was able to establish its right to be considered a separate discipline.<sup>122</sup>

Against this background, Masson introduced himself in his inaugural lecture at Melbourne University on 23 March 1887. Titled 'The Scope and Aims of Chemical Science', it can be read as the manifesto of the foundational generation of university research scientists.<sup>123</sup> Expressed in idealistic and high-minded terms, it rested upon the classical concept of knowledge as the ultimate truth and sought to enshrine scientific research as offering the surest road to social progress: 'The Science of chemistry is organised knowledge of natural truths, and it is an instrument of natural truths, and it is an instrument for the discovery of new truths.' The pursuit of these truths was best achieved by academic scientists, whose fundamental duty was 'the development of science itself'.<sup>124</sup> Universities should thus become centres of research unfettered by the constraints of the marketplace. As creators of new knowledge rather than pre-eminently purveyors and examiners of established knowledge, they would thus contribute more to the development of humankind.

The language in which Masson's inaugural lecture was delivered was the language of a rising generation of research scientists, who saw science as the handmaiden of progress. It was a view that looked backwards to classical antiquity for its validation, and from it derived a moral certainty that had the potential to turn its advocates into

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121 Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, pp. 164–68, 173; Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*, pp. xii–xiii, 111–18, 125.

122 Rae, 'Chemists at ANZAAS: Cabbages or Kings?', MacLeod (ed.), *Commonwealth of Science*, pp. 167–70.

123 Melbourne *Argus*, 24 March 1887.

124 Melbourne *Argus*, 24 March 1887.

crusading apostles. The ideal of the research university had begun in Germany, initially with a cultural and indeed religious orientation, which it quickly discarded to emphasise the nature of science as open inquiry. In Masson's subsequent career, there is much that might be read in terms of secular evangelism, nowhere more clearly than when he confronted and sought to define the relationship between science and the state. To pursue 'truth', as Masson and his generation appreciated, required them to profess public neutrality. Such proclamations of "'disinterestedness" implied that their judgements deserved special respect'.<sup>125</sup> When their opinions were discounted, the moral certainties in which they were grounded ensured that those who ignored them were seen as enemies of progress. For Masson and his generation of scientific idealists, the ranks of the enemy were thick with bureaucrats and politicians.<sup>126</sup> This did not mean that Masson and his generation avoided engagement with the marketplace or politicians. Indeed, Masson's idealism, as sketched in his inaugural lecture, had skilfully pointed to the utilitarian value of research and the importance of strengthening the links between research and industry, manufacturing and government agencies. To this end he had proposed the establishment of a Victorian section of the British Society of Chemical Industry, formed in 1881.<sup>127</sup>

The desire to create a research environment that encouraged the 'scientific idealist', as he categorised the university scientist of the future, dominated Masson's establishment years and indeed his academic career.<sup>128</sup> As he confronted the realities of Melbourne University, he became increasingly conscious of the gap between aspiration and realisation. A small university staff had limited time to devote to research and was confronted with students inadequately prepared for scientific study. The laboratories upon which research depended did not exist. His initial goals were tailored to meet the circumstances. He envisaged 'a small band of students devoting the

125 Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, and Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, p. 224, and more generally: pp. 2–3, 68–69, 204–9, 224–25.

126 See here A. G. Austin (ed.), *The Webbs' Australian Diary 1898*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Son, Melbourne, 1965, p. 65; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 77–97, 106–9, 115–18, 124–29, 135–46, 149–57; Orme Masson to Marnie Masson, 27 November 1917, DOMFP, box 6/9/1; Marnie Masson to Orme Masson, 24 March 1918, DOMFP, box 3/2/1.

127 Melbourne *Argus*, 24 March 1887.

128 Melbourne *Argus*, 24 March 1887.

bulk of their time for a few years to the study of chemistry', guided by teachers whose task was to instil a 'practical familiarity with the methods of inquiry'.<sup>129</sup> The university's standing as a school engaged in original work would ultimately depend, Masson argued, upon such elite groups of scholars.

Masson's mission statement encapsulates the idealism of the foundational-generation research scientists, of which he stands as exemplar. The extent to which this collective idealism was realised has been variously assessed, as historians have sought increasingly to understand the process by which science developed in Australia. Until the 1970s, the prevailing view depicted the science practised in Australian universities from the 1850s until after World War Two as dependent, suffering from isolation from the main scientific centres of research, parochial, teaching-focused rather than research-orientated, derivative and incapable of making original contributions to knowledge. Within this stunted scientific community, university science is seen as inferior, but capable of attracting a small band of brilliant young British scientists, who had missed out on the limited number of new positions available at 'Home'. Once in Australia, they remained unsettled and anxious to end the 'colonial interludes' in their careers as soon as they could. A critical historiographical shift in this understanding followed a path-breaking study by Donald Fleming and George Basalla that applied core-periphery analysis to the transfer of western science and provided a diffusionist framework that allowed for increasingly independent scientific activities at the periphery.<sup>130</sup> Within this paradigm, Australian historians, most notably Michael Hoare and Ann Moyal, developed a periodisation of Australian scientific development that sees Masson and his generation as representing the final phase of Australia's struggle to achieve an independent scientific community with its own institutions and research agenda.<sup>131</sup>

129 Melbourne *Argus*, 24 March 1887.

130 Home, 'Introduction', in Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*, p. ix–xi; Jan Todd, *Colonial Technology: Science and the Transfer of Innovation to Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 7–8.

131 Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, pp. 162–73; Todd, *Colonial Technology*, p. 7.

Neither framework nor conclusion has gone unchallenged.<sup>132</sup> The thrust of the critique, however, is directed at the persistence of the imperial connection. For Roy MacLeod, Australian science remained, even in the 1930s, a pawn in the imperial plan. Such changes of focus as occurred within Australian science were directed from the core, reflected changes in imperial policy and the changing needs of Britain for markets and products. Inkster concedes that, while Australia developed its own scientific societies in the late nineteenth century, the 'mental map' of its scientists remained fixed on Britain, 'even into the early twentieth century'.<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, these characterisations contain little that diminishes Ann Moyal's assessment of Masson and his generation of Australian scientists. They were, she argues, a band of energetic young British scientists, trained in research methodology, who took up positions in the Australian universities during the 1870s and 1880s in their respective specialist fields, established schools of scientific research, carried out their own research, made significant contributions to both the local and international scientific community, and enjoyed long, rewarding careers in the colonies.<sup>134</sup>

However historians have judged the efforts of his generation, Masson endeavoured to make the most of the opportunities his appointment as Melbourne University's first formally qualified professor of Chemistry offered.<sup>135</sup> His blueprint for the establishment of chemistry laboratories, presented to the University Council six weeks after his arrival in Melbourne, was ambitious without being excessive.<sup>136</sup> Its implementation was soon complicated by the straitened economic realities that followed a severe downturn in the Victorian economy in 1889. It is a measure of the persistent financial constraints under which Masson operated that in 1901 he offered to contribute £100 to help maintain science laboratories.<sup>137</sup> If money was in short supply,

132 Todd, *Colonial Technology*, pp. 7–8.

133 Todd, *Colonial Technology*, pp. 7–8.

134 Moyal, *A Bright and Savage Land*, pp. 162–73.

135 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 21; Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 196. Orme Masson succeeded the first chair of Chemistry, John Drummond Kirkland, senior, who died in 1885, three years after the chair was established. Kirkland was largely self-taught in chemistry and acquired medical qualifications while lecturing in Chemistry at the university's medical school.

136 The University Council considered Orme Masson's 'Memorandum on the Requirements of the Chemistry Department of the University of Melbourne' on 29 November 1886.

137 His colleague, biologist Walter Spencer Baldwin offered £100 and to withhold part of his salary to prevent the reduction of the Engineering Department. Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 59; Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 354–55, 359.

so also were the science students who might become Masson's band of elite researchers. In 1888, just two undergraduate chemistry majors enrolled, and by 1893 Masson had four research students.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, most of Masson's energies were directed to teaching a first-year chemistry course with as many as 160 students, most of whom were medical students, and supervising their chemistry laboratory work.<sup>139</sup> The slowness with which these circumstances changed and the frustration involved is manifest in a report Masson presented to the University Council some 22 years after he took up his post.<sup>140</sup> Large first-year classes continued, he claimed, to be made up of students with little scientific training, which meant that much time needed to be devoted to elementary teaching, and opportunities for research were limited. There were few serious students of science wishing to pursue postgraduate research. Most students, Masson lamented, regarded time in the laboratory as 'merely an agreeable amusement'.<sup>141</sup> Enrolments in science as a whole had indeed grown slowly from eight in 1888 to 17 by the turn of the century, and 58 by 1914.<sup>142</sup>

Masson's frustrations were widely shared within the scientific community. Beatrice Webb, visiting Sydney and Melbourne universities in 1898, recorded a general dismay among university scientists, and in her characteristically acerbic manner, she attributed it to the 'utter indifference of well-to-do Australians for learning of any kind'.<sup>143</sup> This judgement nonetheless echoed the views of Sydney University scientist Edgeworth David, who in 1902 condemned the general lack of interest in science. Similarly, Sir Samuel Griffith,

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138 Masson and his colleague Spencer, professor of Biology, designed the science course, with Masson offering Chemistry Parts I, II, and III to undergraduates. Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 180; Orme Masson to Irvine Masson, 12 January 1936, DOMFP, box 6/8/1. The first science students enrolled in 1888. On the introduction of the BSc and DSc, see Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 284–85.

139 Amongst these students were the first female medical students, who gained admittance to the University of Melbourne's medical school in 1887. Orme Masson was to give them particular encouragement.

140 Masson presented his report in 1908 on the state of science courses at the University of Melbourne in his capacity as Dean of the Faculty of Science, established in 1903. Masson became Dean in 1905.

141 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 62.

142 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 182, 496. The University of Melbourne's total number of students was 539 in 1888, 647 in 1900, and 1,375 in 1914. Roy MacLeod notes that, in 1904, 1,104 arts degrees were awarded at the University of Sydney and only 47 science degrees, none of which were doctorates: Roy MacLeod, 'From Imperial to National Science', in MacLeod (ed.), *Commonwealth of Science*, p. 55.

143 Austin (ed.), *The Webbs' Australian Diary 1898*, p. 33.

Queensland's Chief Justice and former premier, suggested that the apparent lack of interest pointed to '[t]he great defect of Australian life ... the want of apprehension of the value of knowledge in itself'.<sup>144</sup> A brief meeting with Masson led Webb to describe him as a 'charming person and an enthusiast', developing a 'thoroughgoing contempt for democratic institutions'.<sup>145</sup> Whatever prompted Webb's assessment, Masson's thwarted scientific idealism was evident enough. The difficulties of establishing science within the universities weighed heavily upon him, and his absorption as practitioner and proselytiser in finding ways to overcome them and foster scientific development generally dominated his working life. They were also to dominate a domestic and family life that was lived out within the confines of Melbourne University.

Science also defines the nature of the family's integration within Melbourne's professional community. Within two years of his arrival in Melbourne, Masson was one of two University of Melbourne academics appointed to a royal commission set up after an outbreak of typhoid to investigate the need for improved sanitation in Melbourne. Chaired by Professor Harry Allen, Dean of Melbourne University's medical school, the commission which Masson joined was a cross-section of Melbourne's commercial, professional and medical establishment, and thrust Masson into direct engagement with the industrialist community. He visited industrial sites in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne to observe the discharge of industrial pollutants into the water supplies. So began an engagement with industry and government which was to produce a knowledge of Australian industrial practices that was, in the judgement of one historian, 'unrivalled by any of his successors' at the University of Melbourne.<sup>146</sup> More immediately, the consequences were twofold: it led to appointment, in 1890, to the

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144 T. W. Edgeworth David, 'University Science Teaching', *Record of the Jubilee Celebrations of the University of Sydney*, Brooks and Co., Sydney, 1903, p. 24 (cited by MacLeod, 'From Imperial to National Science', p. 55).

145 Austin (ed.), *The Webbs*, pp. 65, 88.

146 Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 48–49, 180; Orme Masson to Irvine Masson, 12 January 1936, DOMFP, box 6/8/1; Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 312, 740 n. 59; Progress Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon the Sanitary Conditions of Melbourne, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1889*, vol. 2, part 2.

newly formed Board of Public Health; and it encouraged Masson to double his efforts to establish a society of chemical industry—realised in 1900—as a means of widening the research base for chemistry.<sup>147</sup>

Participation in the royal commission confirmed for Masson the belief that, in Australia, the expansion of science would ultimately rest upon the scientific evangelism of its university component. Missionary activity was at times as pragmatic as it was idealistic. Industry was a source of employment and a recruiting ground for the universities (Herbert Gepp, one of Masson's four honour students in 1896–97, worked at an explosives factory).<sup>148</sup> Whatever the mix of motives, Masson put his support enthusiastically behind the creation of institutions designed to advance scientific knowledge. He played a prominent role in the development of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, based in Sydney and founded by Professor Archibald Liversidge in 1888, and, in 1891, as president of the association's chemistry section. In this role he assiduously developed working relationships with the scientific communities of Australasia and internationally.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, as a frequent presenter of papers, he joined a cluster of academics bent upon injecting a theoretical perspective into the proceedings of the association.<sup>150</sup>

Less visible, though perhaps more crucial to an understanding of Masson's academic evangelism, was his commitment to a mode of teaching that has much in common with the intense and morally laden tutorship commonly ascribed to Balliol.<sup>151</sup> In Masson's case,

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147 Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 48–49; Len Weickhardt, 'Masson, David Orme (1858–1937)', *ADB*, vol. 10, 1986, pp. 432–35; Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 312, Orme Masson to Irvine Masson, 12 January 1936, DOMFP, box 6/8/1.

148 Herbert Gepp (1877–1954) was a junior chemist at the Australian Explosives Factory at Deer Park. Masson recruited him to his chemistry course and Gepp continued to work at the factory while attending university. The factory was taken over by Nobel Industries Scotland in 1897. Gepp was taken on as a cadet by the company in Scotland in 1897, returning to Victoria to head the Melbourne plant. He was to become a leading industrialist in Australia. Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 48–49.

149 Selleck, *The Shop*, p. 299; Home, 'Introduction', in *Australian Science in the Making*, pp. xiii, 117–18.

150 See here MacLeod, 'From Imperial to National Science', Ian D. Rae, 'Chemists at ANZAAS', in MacLeod (ed.), *Commonwealth of Science*, pp. 43, 166–67, 173. Other such chemists included professors Archibald Liversidge (Sydney), John Booth Kirkland (Masson's demonstrator at the University of Melbourne), Norman Wilsmore (former student of Masson) Edward Rennie (Adelaide) and T. H. Easterfield, (Wellington, New Zealand). By 1911 Masson was president of the entire association.

151 Jones, *Balliol College*, pp. 202–24.



as we have seen in an earlier chapter, the more direct link is to the literary tradition that prevailed within Scottish education. Moral in its purposes and heavily reliant upon the mentoring resources of the individual tutor, it provided a model for how the young Masson might go about encouraging others to share his enthusiasm for and faith in science as an agent of progress. The model placed great demands upon the teacher and, as John Macmillan Brown's early retirement at the age of 50 attests, could be crippling in its effects.<sup>152</sup> In Masson's case it proved effective. His reputation as an energetic, adventurous if not exciting lecturer, who couched his message skilfully and with literary flair, brought converts from the ranks of arts students and produced acolytes.<sup>153</sup> He took pains to ensure that his best students were able to pursue their studies with either his former colleague William Ramsay, at University College, London, or at one of a number of German universities.<sup>154</sup> 'Masson's men', as they came to be called, were noted overseas for the quality of their research training. Many returned to Australia to take up leading scientific roles, and, as they did so, Masson's network of influence grew.<sup>155</sup> Throughout all this Masson managed to continue his own research, publishing a number of papers in British and European journals that were acknowledged in 1903, when he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society.<sup>156</sup>

By any assessment, Orme Masson's adjustment to his new environment was a successful and productive one. For his young wife Mary the process of adaptation and establishment took longer and was fraught with the anxieties of the unsettled. Indeed, her migration story is, by her own later admission, one of failure to adapt and withdrawal from the public gaze. In a sense, Mary Masson was to remain an expatriate

152 Macmillan Brown, *Memoirs*, pp. 128–30, 139, 183–84, 186–87; 'Canterbury College: Farewell to Professor Brown', *Lyttelton Times*, 6 March 1896. During his farewell speech Macmillan Brown went so far as to encourage his students to 'cultivate idleness to some extent'.

153 Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 185–86; I. W. Wark, Notes on Masson, 31 August 1972, p. 22.

154 The 1851 Exhibition science research awards were established in 1891 to allow outstanding colonial science students to continue their studies overseas. Several of Masson's postgraduate students won these and other scholarships. Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 49, 50, 54, 58, 69.

155 Weickhardt, *Masson*, p. 190. Weickhardt writes that Masson's 'style and influence' was maintained by Rivett and Hartung in particular. Furthermore, by 1989 'seven out of the twelve recipients of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute's Leighton Memorial Medal, awarded since 1965', were product of the Masson-Rivett-Hartung epoch. Two were professors and later vice-chancellors, one was president of the Australian Academy of Science, three held senior posts in the CSIRO, and two were industrialists who served as university chancellors.

156 Masson has been credited with providing the inspiration, during his trip 'home' in 1895, for friend William Ramsay's later discovery of gases neon, argon, krypton and xenon.

all her life, and it was around this very migrant identity that she assumed a more public role. Attempting to explain why Mary should experience more difficulty adjusting to married life in the colonies than the other young migrant wives of this study would require deeper exploration of the individual personalities involved than is possible here. It is possible, however, to place Mary's experience within the context of changes that were taking place within the nineteenth-century family, and to explore the ways in which migration affected these changes.

In her recent study, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780–1920*, Leonore Davidoff describes these changes in a manner that characterises professional couples, such as Mary and Orme Masson, as part of a transitional generation that looked backwards to the 'long family' with its intricate network of cousinage, and anticipates the smaller, more socially isolated family that was gradually replacing it. As children of professionals, they possessed the social advantages that might enable them to enter the professions at a time when entry was becoming increasingly competitive. But, as we have seen, they had done so at a time when professional opportunities were shrinking and women stood on the fringes. It was from within this more constrained environment that the professional classes were in the vanguard of the trend towards smaller families that saw family size fall from between 'over six for those married mid-century to around three' at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup> Migration improved professional prospects for men and solidified the trend to smaller families, but it also effectively severed the vestiges of cousinage that had, in a variety of ways, provided a support structure which, as Davidoff points out, made it possible for lives to be lived out very largely within family contexts.<sup>158</sup>

Perhaps the 24-year-old Aberdeen-born and raised Mary Masson (1862–1945), daughter of a famous Aberdeen professor, engaged at 22, three weeks after meeting Orme Masson (26), and married 26 days before sailing for Melbourne, underestimated the impact migration would have upon her life. Like so many other middle-class migrant wives, she arrived in Melbourne with *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1880 edition) and little practical knowledge

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157 Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, p. 103

158 Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, pp. 84–85.

that would help in the establishment of a household.<sup>159</sup> She took a methodical approach to the task, recording lists of wedding presents and household equipment she had gathered before leaving Scotland, and colour-coding dusters according to their purpose, as a guide to servants.<sup>160</sup> Once she had engaged a general domestic servant to take care of household duties in the Fitzroy boarding house at which they first lived, Mary was left with little to occupy herself, apart from shopping and returning the calls of 'Melbourne matrons'.<sup>161</sup> Looking back upon these times, Mary conceded that there had been too much time to indulge in 'comparisons' between Melbourne and Scotland, and that the habit bred a homesickness and nostalgia that continued to impair her engagement with the new community she had entered.<sup>162</sup>

Pregnancies came swiftly and easily for Mary Masson. Unlike Julia Wilding, Helen Connon and Mary Higgins, she was untroubled by fertility problems and untouched by infant mortality. While the pregnancies were welcomed and lent purpose to her life, they also increased her loneliness, isolation and longing for distant family members. Embarrassed by her changing shape, a feeling common amongst her generation, Mary cloistered herself within the bounds of her home during the day and emerged in the evenings to go for walks with Orme. Without the familiar family networks of Aberdeen, this retreat from the public gaze was all the more isolating.<sup>163</sup> Her withdrawal largely cut off whatever potential there may have been for developing, as Julia Wilding was able to do, friendships with females, who might act as surrogate mothers, sisters or cousins and ease both the transition from the old world to the new and the approach of motherhood. The experience of Sydney-born Adeline Leeper suggests that the dominantly masculine university environment in which she and Mary lived most of their married lives was not a congenial one for young, expectant mothers. During each of her four pregnancies Adeline departed from Trinity College's Warden's Lodge and sought refuge in her parents' home in Sydney, where she remained for a lengthy period after each child was born.<sup>164</sup>

159 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 56–57.

160 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 59; Mary Masson, 'Household Lists', ms, 1886, DOMFP, box 7/10/5; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 24.

161 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 58, 60.

162 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 58–59.

163 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 61–63.

164 Poynter, *Doubts and Certainties*, pp. 119–20.

Whatever role the university environment played in Mary Masson's troubled early years in Melbourne, she later described the early phase of motherhood as the loneliest time in a woman's life.<sup>165</sup> By September 1890, she was the mother of three children under four years of age. Irvine, born in 1887, in the villa the Massons rented in Toorak, had been followed by Flora Marjorie (Marnie) in 1889 and Elsie in 1890. Both girls were born in the professorial house the family was to call home until Orme Masson retired. So similar were these spacious two-storey red-brick homes to the family residences built during the 1870s at Oxford University to house the first Oxford dons permitted to marry without forfeiting their fellowships, they may, as Marnie Masson suggests, have been modelled on them.<sup>166</sup> The Massons named it Chanonry after Mary's childhood home in Aberdeen.<sup>167</sup> As the institutional residence of a domesticated don and family, Chanonry made few demands upon either of the Massons. The almost half-acre in which it was set offered the potential to create a garden, and, with Mary's enthusiasm and the labour of university groundsmen, it became a reality. Three servants—cook, general housemaid and nursemaid—provided the domestic labour.<sup>168</sup>

As mistress of the household and mother of three young children, Mary's days were busy ones. They were also ones passed in an environment that relieved the domestic dons of the worries of home ownership and maintenance, but offered limited opportunities for wives apart from those they created for themselves as individuals. Such involvement as Mary developed outside the confines of the university took place in contexts that were expatriate in nature, related to her husband's interests or both. At no time was this more clearly the case than when, in 1892, she became a foundation associate lady member and one of two inaugural vice-presidents of the ladies'

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165 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 71.

166 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 61–63; Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 223–24.

167 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 61. Mary Masson's home in Aberdeen was situated in a street called The Chanonry, according to Selleck, *Finding Home*, p. 10. Apart from the Leepers, whose home was imbedded within Trinity College, all the families in this study followed a practice common amongst the professional migrant class of naming their homes after some known old world rural arcadia or nostalgic reminder of 'Home'. See Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, pp. 137–38, on the Melbourne custom of naming homes.

168 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 62–64.

section of the Royal Melbourne Golf Club.<sup>169</sup> As John Lowerson points out, there is much that is 'mythical' about the spread of golf from a base amongst eighteenth-century Lowland Scots as following 'the spider's web of Caledonian *émigrés*'.<sup>170</sup> But in Melbourne the role of migrant Scots is manifest. Of the 100 foundation subscribers to the Royal Melbourne Golf Club (RMGC), the good majority were Scots by birth or parentage.<sup>171</sup> Orme Masson was one of 100 willing to pay 15 guineas to become a foundation subscriber. In doing so, he was joining a body of 'predominantly successful businessmen and pastoralists' leavened with a 'sprinkling of lawyers, doctors and high-ranking civil servants', of whom 32 were or became members of the Melbourne Club, 52 were members of the Australian Club, and 15 belonged to both.<sup>172</sup> In short, the RMGC mirrored in social composition the cross-section of society to which Mary and Orme were accustomed.

The manner in which the RMGC made space for women reflects both the social nature of the new pastime and attitudes prevalent amongst the educated professional sections of society, of whom it was composed. Most of the 69 women who joined during the first year were the wives and daughters of members. There was a core of enthusiastic players among them, but a large percentage of associates (and, for that matter, members) did not play. Many who did play were, as the club historian delicately puts it, not 'conversant with the rules'.<sup>173</sup> A great many of the members' wives fell readily into the role of tea-makers, just as most members readily assumed they would. Mary Masson was not one of them, or at least not before she had played the customary 11 shorter holes then allotted to the women's game. She took part in the first ladies' competition in August 1893, for which she had donated a prize of three custom-made balls, and was chosen for the first interclub match against Geelong and the return home-game in October.<sup>174</sup>

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169 Joseph Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club: A Centennial History*, Royal Melbourne Golf Club, Black Rock, Victoria, 1991, pp. 27–35, 50–51; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 51, 181; Orme Masson to Irvine Masson, 12 January 1936, DOMFP, box 6/8/1. Orme Masson was a foundation member of the Royal Melbourne Golf Club, established in 1892, a member of the club council and vice-captain of the club.

170 Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, p. 126.

171 Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club*, p. 27.

172 Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club*, p. 27.

173 Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club*, p. 51.

174 Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club*, pp. 50–51.

Nonetheless, golf was never to become a sporting passion for Mary Masson. It did not in any way become an expression of public individuality or a rejection of domesticity in the way Eric Hobsbawm has suggested sport did for some late nineteenth-century European women.<sup>175</sup> Indeed, it may be more accurate to see her involvement in golf as standing closer to issues of psychological adjustment to colonial life. The golfing community was a congenial one, redolent of the Scotland she had left behind. That it was also a setting that reinforced and extended developing colonial networks is evident when we note the names of Mary's acquaintances, who joined her as associate members of the RMGC. As well as the wives of the academic colleagues, we find Mary Alice Higgins and Kate Morrison.<sup>176</sup> The daughter of George Morrison, Headmaster of Geelong College, Mary Alice was the wife of Henry Higgins and linked to the academic community through her husband's membership of the Melbourne University Senate. Her cousin Kate, daughter of Alexander Morrison, Headmaster of Scotch College, was similarly a familiar face within the extended academic community.<sup>177</sup> Both were Australian-born of Scots parentage and drawn into the golfing fraternity by its Scottishness rather than by any sporting enthusiasm. Whatever their sporting prowess, the 'twenty ladies' who had established the women's section of the RMGC shrewdly convinced Lady Janet Clarke, the city's pre-eminent social 'lioness' and philanthropist, to become its inaugural president.<sup>178</sup>

Golf was a diversion that could briefly dispel homesickness, but did little to aid Mary's acceptance of her life in Melbourne. The prospect of a return 'Home' was a realistic one that became more so as Orme Masson's career flourished. Indeed, of all the subjects of this study, his career possessed an international dimension, built around the

175 E. Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1670–1914', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 29.

176 William Harrison Moore (Law), Thomas R. Lyle (Natural Philosophy) and Thomas Tucker (Classics) had been encouraged by Orme Masson to take up golf, and, together with their wives, they were the core of an active university set within the early Royal Melbourne Golf Club. See Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club*, p. 35; Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 51, 181.

177 E. L. French, 'Morrison, Alexander (1829–1903)', *ADB*, vol. 5, 1974, pp. 295–97; B. R. Keith, 'George Morrison (1830–1898)', *ADB*, vol. 5, 1974, p. 298. Amongst the academics' wives were law professor Moore Harrison's wife, Edith Eliza à Beckett, suffragist (daughter of a judge, Sir Thomas à Beckett); physics professor Thomas Lyle's wife, Frances Clare (a grazier's daughter) and classics professor Thomas Tucker's wife, Lancashire-woman Annie Muckalt.

178 Johnson, *The Royal Melbourne Golf Club*, pp. 50–51.

nurturing of links with scientific and academic institutions. Such networks gave rise to offers of posts that allowed a return, if not to Scotland, then at least to the old world.<sup>179</sup> Such prospects encouraged a sense of temporariness and made engagement with new and unsettling surroundings seem to Mary less necessary or pressing. In 1895, they returned to Scotland for six months leave without salary to introduce their three children to their grandparents and the extended Masson and Struthers families. We do not know whether Orme took the opportunity to explore the job market. If he did, he was unsuccessful. Marnie Masson has suggested that the visit added to her mother's sense of loss and separation.<sup>180</sup>

The disabling impact of nostalgia and the withdrawal that accompanied it gradually lessened. It was not until the 1920s that the Massons abandoned thoughts of seeking a post in Britain, or contemplating a return 'Home' upon retirement.<sup>181</sup> But their joint decision in 1912 to decline the chair in chemistry at University College, London, marks a growing acceptance by Mary that she was now, for better or worse, committed to life in Melbourne and Australia.<sup>182</sup> Two decades had passed since the pair had arrived in Melbourne. The demands of children and household had diminished, and, as the wife of a now well-established professor of chemistry, Mary made the transition from the domestic to the public sphere in ways that were consistent with the prevailing expectations of middle-class professional women of her day: to pursue charitable and philanthropic endeavours and act as an advocate of social causes. This neat bifurcation of Mary's life in Melbourne mirrors a common enough pattern: an early phase dominated by the demands of motherhood and domesticity, followed by a more public presence as these demands lessen. Yet Mary's depiction of her establishment years as blighted by nostalgia and

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179 Orme Masson declined the position of foundational principal of the proposed Indian Research Institute, offered to him in 1901. A posting as head of the Chemistry department at the Imperial Institute of Technology at South Kensington, England, was mooted in 1911. Six months later he declined the chair of Chemistry at University College, London, about to be vacated by his colleague, William Ramsay. See Weickhardt, *Masson*, pp. 51–53, 72, 84–87.

180 Marnie Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 67–72.

181 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, pp. 85–86, 129; Marnie Bassett to Elsie Malinowski, 6 December 1921, DOMFP, box 5/5/2.

182 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 72.

withdrawal and a reluctance to commit to her new environment seems also to rest upon a sense of lost opportunity or perhaps even unfulfilled obligation.

This ambiguity is best discussed by examining briefly the nature of the public activity in which Mary became increasingly involved. The public phase of Mary Masson's Melbourne years may be described as having four characteristics: it took its initial shape within the university environment familiar to her; its focus drew heavily upon her own migrant experience; it was given full expression during World War One; and it was a persistent aspect of her life thereafter. As her husband's status within the university hierarchy grew, she came to play the traditional role of hostess of social gatherings, some of which took place in the Chanonry. It was a function that allowed her to play 'an increasing and influential part in University affairs'.<sup>183</sup> Mary devoted considerable time to assisting newly arrived academic families combat the loneliness and isolation with which she was only too familiar. She aided the small group of female students to find their way amongst the male-dominated student body by putting their case to university authorities for representation on the university students' union committee.<sup>184</sup> When most male university staff ignored Lucy Archer, the Principal of Trinity College Hostel for Women (1906–18), because she lacked academic qualifications, she joined Mary Moule Leeper and insisted upon 'proper recognition'.<sup>185</sup>

The university environment also allowed Mary Masson to develop intellectual interests. She regularly attended meetings of the University of Melbourne's Chemical Society, founded in 1900 by Orme's students. Her support of female students flowed through into their efforts after graduating to establish cultural societies for women. In 1910, for example, she became a foundation member of the Melbourne Lyceum Club, established by a small group of women graduates. In discussion of membership qualifications, Mary led opposition to following the

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183 Orme Masson was chairman of the Professorial Board between 1912 and 1916 and had much to do, in this capacity, with the vice-chancellor, John MacFarland, a confirmed bachelor. Mary Masson assumed some of the university roles of a vice-chancellor's wife, drawing the wives of the 'sub-professorial staff' into the university social life and suggesting ways to improve the institution. See Marnie Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 71–73; Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 75.

184 Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 523–24.

185 Weickhardt, *Masson of Melbourne*, p. 75; Joan M. Gillison, *A History of the Lyceum Club*, Lyceum Club, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 32–33; Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, pp. 72–73.



example of its British counterpart and accepting women purely on the basis of the achievements of their fathers or husbands. Rather, women would qualify for admission on the basis of a university degree and/or distinction in art, music, literature, philanthropy, education and public service. In this way, intellectual purpose would be preserved and the club could take its rightful place alongside its male equivalents.<sup>186</sup>

It was the outbreak of war in August 1914 that provided the opportunities which allowed Mary to transcend the sheltered confines of the University of Melbourne and assume a public space of her own. Her experience mirrors that of countless middle-class women, who assumed leadership roles in the myriad ladies' service organisations that sprang quickly into life throughout the British Empire after the outbreak of war. Mary's first tentative steps into community service are visible in her involvement with the Victoria League for Empire, the initial purpose of which was to achieve closer bonds with Britain by entertaining overseas visitors. Women's role within the league was, however, primarily that of hostess.<sup>187</sup> Her first direct engagement with the service community began with her election as President of the University Branch of the Australian Red Cross Society in 1914. From this position, her talent for organisation, already evident within the university setting, led to participation in the administration of a host of organisations, most notably as an executive member of the Australian Comforts Fund, which provided provisions for soldiers. In the judgement of her daughter Marnie, these positions gave Mary 'her own activities', 'brought that now-diminished nostalgia to an end', and provided 'opportunities for wide human contacts [that] gave her greater satisfaction than her music, or even her experiences of Scotland'.<sup>188</sup> With liberation came community recognition: in 1918, she was awarded a CBE.

What made her experience different, however, was the extent to which, after the war had ended, she continued her civic involvement. She did so in ways that hark back beyond the exigencies of wartime to her own difficulties as a young, married migrant. In 1921, she became

186 Gillison, *Lyceum Club*, pp. 26–28, Selleck, *The Shop*, pp. 523–24.

187 Ann Else (ed.), *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand*, Daphne Brasell Associates Press and Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1993, p. 292.

188 Bassett, *Once upon a Time*, p. 72; Weickhardt, 'Masson, Sir David Orme Masson (1858–1937)', pp. 432–35.

a foundation member of the New Settlers League, which sought to help young British women who came to Australia as the wives of Australian servicemen. She was similarly a foundation member of the Country Women's Institute of Victoria, attracted by its concern to seek to minimise the isolation of rural life by providing communal opportunities for country women. Her concern for the unsettled or isolated extended also to helping Australians going abroad, especially students, writing countless letters of introduction, and providing contacts that might prevent them from having their experience blighted by an inability to cope with an unfamiliar environment. That such activity gave Mary particular satisfaction has been well attested by her daughter Marnie. The satisfaction may have stemmed from the belated fulfilment of a sense of duty and a quest for social usefulness.

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