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Imperial Fantasies: Children's Literature in the White City

A few months before the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition officially opened, the city of Chicago hosted a gala event to showcase the fairgrounds to local residents. Crowds of visitors rushed into the city to participate in the festivities and witness the spectacles. According to accounts, scores of school children, "attired in red, white, and blue," flanked the grandstand on the east and west sides of the new Government Building and sang patriotic hymns—they looked like "living stars and stripes."¹ Potter Palmer, the president of the World's Fair and owner of one of the city's most famous hotels, remarked that day that he hoped that the lessons from the World's Fair would become "potent forces" in the nation's future.² The individuals who orchestrated the opening ceremonies featured children prominently in the day's events to demonstrate the benefits that the fair provided for them and their families.

Once the fair opened, young boys and girls flocked from their homes near and far to attend the fair. To facilitate youth participation, fair officials tailored the event to meet their needs. Chicago women worked closely with fair officials and raised money to fund the construction of a Children's Building. Families, for a small fee, left their younger children in the care of experienced and trustworthy nurses located in the building to give mothers the enjoyment of "perfect freedom" at the fair.³

1. Benjamin Cummings Truman and George R. Davis, *History of the World's Fair: Being a Complete and Authentic Description of the Columbian Exposition from Its Inception* (Philadelphia: H. W. Kelley, 1893), 88.

2. Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), 46. Hereafter cited as Rydell.

3. Julian Ralph, *Harper's Chicago and the World's Fair: The Chapters on the Exposition*

Officials furnished the building with a library, a gymnasium, and toys ranging from "the rude bone playthings of the Eskimo children to the wonderful mechanical and instructive toys of modern times."⁴ Fair officials discounted tickets and sponsored special visits, such as Children's Week, to entice families to bring their children to the fair. On average, between 8,000 and 10,000 children visited the fair daily; during children's week, this number surged to approximately 50,000.⁵ The World's Fair organizers created these options because children were central to the fair's educational mission: to learn about the country's progress and lifestyles of civilized and uncivilized people around the world (Rydell, 46–47).

Even though fair organizers devised ways to encourage families to bring their children to this World's Fair, they quickly realized that many of America's children would not actually be able to visit it. Officials marketed souvenirs specifically tailored to children so that their mothers and fathers could purchase gifts to commemorate the event. Among these souvenirs were a series of children's books about the 1893 Columbian Exposition. The juvenile authors who wrote these books provided children with a way to experience the fair and learn from the displays without ever visiting them. Building on the rhetorical devices and themes pioneered in the Western dime novels, these texts illuminate the imperial rhetoric and contemporary concerns that these young middle-class Americans would eventually inherit.⁶ In doing so, they provide historians with a deeper understanding of how these juvenile books promoted these ideals to the next generation.

Whereas most historical studies of the fair focus on the fair itself, this article examines the ways in which these texts packaged the fantasies of imperial conquests for children to imagine the future of America's great empire in the comforts of their home. It demonstrates that, just like the World's Fair itself, these books inculcated young readers with an understanding of the significance of Chicago as the site of the World's Fair, the progress of their great nation from the time of Columbus, the

Being Collated from Official Sources and Approved by the Department of Publicity and Promotion of the World's Columbian Exposition (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892), 226.

4. Truman and Davis, 194.

5. Truman and Davis, 608–9.

6. Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002), 214–47.

role of the nation's military powers, and finally, the accomplishments and challenges of the civilizing mission for both Native and African Americans living within their country. At the same time, these texts taught middle-class youth about the moral justifications for war and the oppressive Old World powers that controlled much of the world. In this way, these texts informally educated young children about the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition and, perhaps more importantly, about the nation's ability to realize the first phase of its imperial project and expand its boundaries from the shores of the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific.⁷

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, children's literature authors created fantasies for children about worlds that they had never seen. Books about adventurous conquests and imperial expeditions were incredibly popular during this period. Authors around the world capitalized on the popularity of this theme and composed exotic stories of wild jungles and primitive savages to delight the imaginations of children in the comforts of their homes. These books, as this paper demonstrates, reflected the romantic idea of adventure and conquest. They provided children with a visual representation of the majesty of the World's Fair and the country's imperial aims both within its continental boundaries and its desires to move this imperial project abroad.⁸ While there were a

7. My own understanding of the connections between empire and the Chicago World's Fair stems largely from Rydell; R. Reid Badger, *The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979); Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2008); Stanley Appelbaum, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893: A Photographic Record* (New York: Dover, 1980); Norman Bolotin and Christine Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition: The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2002); Mona Domosh, "A 'Civilized' Commerce: Gender, 'Race,' and Empire at the 1893 Chicago Exposition," *Cultural Geographies* 9.2 (2002): 181–201. For scholarship on American empire, see Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of US Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000); Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006); Thomas McCormick, "From Old Empire to New: The Changing Dynamics and Tactics of American Empire," in *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2009), 63–82.

8. While there is extensive scholarship on children's literature and empire among British authors, there is limited work on this relationship in American texts. For works on British texts, see Rashna B. Singh, *Goody Is Our Heritage: Children's Literature, Empire, and the Certitude of Character* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow P, 2004); M. D. Kutzer, *Empire's Children: Empire and Imperialism in Classic British Children's Books* (New York: Garland P,

variety of texts published during the fair, I used G. L. Dybwad and Joy Bliss's *Annotated Bibliography: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, a resource guide that lists the primary source texts published about the fair, to identify the source materials and juvenile texts for this study.⁹ This resource guide included the most popular books written for children about the fair's planning phase, enticing exhibitions, and lasting legacies.

The authors who penned the books about the 1893 Columbian Exposition were members of the middle class and leading figures in the nation's thriving children's literature market. Tudor Jenks, the author of *The Century World's Fair Book for Boys and Girls: Being the Adventures of Harry and Philip with Their Tutor, Mr. Douglass, at the World's Columbian Exposition* (1893), attended Yale University, lived in New York City, and fluctuated between two careers: a lawyer and a children's author. He published several children's books and served as the associate editor of *St. Nicholas* (1873–1902), a leading periodical for children founded and edited by Mary Mapes Dodge.¹⁰ Many of these authors shared connections to *St. Nicholas*. Frances Hodgson Burnett, who wrote *Two Little Pilgrims' Progress: A Story of the City Beautiful* (1895), published several series in the magazine. Burnett emigrated to the United States from England at the age of sixteen, started publishing stories at eighteen, and had amassed a fortune from the popularity of her works, such as *The Secret Garden* (1911), that few could match.¹¹ Hezekiah Butterworth, a prominent peace activist and lesser-known author of *Zigzag Journeys in the White City with Visits to the Neighboring Metropolis* (1894), also published his work in the *St. Nicholas*.¹² Critics compared Marietta Holley, the author of the *Samantha* series, to Mark Twain during her life. Like Frances Hodgson Burnett, she

2000); Jeffrey Richards, ed., *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989). For works on American texts, see Brian Rouleau, "Childhood's Imperial Imagination: Edward Stratemeyer's Fiction Factory and the Valorization of American Empire," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7.4 (2008): 479–512.

9. G. L. Dybwad and Joy V. Bliss, *Annotated Bibliography: World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: Book Stops Here, 1992).

10. "Tudor Jenks Dies Suddenly: Lawyer and Author of Books for Youth a Victim of Apoplexy," *The New York Times*, February 12, 1922, 20.

11. Susan R. Gannon, "Burnett, Frances Hodgson," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

12. Peggy Lin Duthie, "Butterworth, Hezekiah," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*.

earned her living solely from her book profits; however, she is hardly remembered today.¹³

Even though it is difficult to know the exact audience for these books or how they were received by their readers, when these books were published in 1893 these texts cost between \$0.90 for *Sweet Clover* to \$2.50 for *Samantha at the Fair*. These prices suggest that the audience for these texts were middle-class children whose families could afford to purchase them. Even though many of these texts have vanished from our memory today, in the late 1890s, several book reviewers enthusiastically encouraged these families to purchase these books so that their children might either relive the experiences that they had or learn about the great 1893 Columbian Exposition in the comforts of their homes. The reviews stated that these books were perfect Christmas gifts for children because they had beautiful illustrations and instructive text about the fair.¹⁴ Indeed, these books provided an informative overview of everything that happened at the fair starting with the contentious competition to host the 1893 World's Fair.

The Significance of Chicago as the Site of the 1893 World's Fair

As the nation buzzed about the World's Fair and the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage, city officials, newspaper reporters, and civically minded individuals debated the benefits and limitations of the potential sites for the 1893 World's Fair: Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Washington. By the early 1890s, the debate had narrowed to the two cities that had the private resources to finance the fair: Chicago and New York. New Yorkers insisted that their city was the ideal city for the fair. The city stood as the capital of the nation's financial system. Its location on the East Coast facilitated travel for European visitors. Chicagoans countered, arguing that the

13. Jane Curry, *Marietta Holley*, Twayne's United States Author Series (New York: Twayne, 1996).

14. "Boys and Girls," *Book News* 13 (December 1894): 197; Albert Shaw "Boys' Books and Juveniles," *Review of Reviews and World's Work* 12 (1895): 746; "Fiction," *Book News: A Monthly Survey of General Literature*, no. 136 (December 1893): 182; Albert Shaw, "Juvenile Literature," *Review of Reviews and World's Work* 8 (1893): 738-39; Alfred Sidney Johnson et al., "Literature," in *The Cyclopedic Review of Current History* (Buffalo: Garretson, Cox, 1893), 860-61; Albert Shaw, "Literature of the World's Fair," *The Review of Reviews* 9 (June 1894): 240; "The Famous Elsie Books," in *Book Notes: A Monthly Literary Magazine and Review of New Books* (New York: Siegel-Cooper, 1898), 1:194.

1893 fair should be an all-American event. The newspaper reporters claimed that Chicago, with its miraculous recovery from the 1871 fire and its strong sense of public spirit, embodied the principles of American progress and ingenuity.¹⁵

In 1890, from January to February, members of Congress listened carefully as representatives from the various cities made their case to become the host city for the upcoming World's Fair. On February 24, 1890, the day that the House of Representatives cast their votes, Abner Taylor, a representative from Illinois, gave a speech on the merits of Chicago as the site for the fair and chided New York as a site locked in the past. He stated:

A great empire has grown up west of the Allegheny Mountains in the last century that the people of New York seem to know but little about; and I desire that this fair shall be held in the West for the purpose of educating the people of New York to a knowledge of this great empire. For the last half century this great empire has furnished the cow and the grass and the corn, and New York has done the milking. This empire now desires to do some of the milking herself; and by the noise from New York I should judge that they realize there that the weaning time has come.¹⁶

As Taylor delivered his speech, several of his colleagues chuckled and applauded. While it is not clear if the speech actually swayed any votes, the House of Representatives cast their ballots that afternoon and announced that Chicago had edged out New York City as the site of the next world's fair. On April 28, 1890, President Harrison signed a bill that made this selection official. The members of Congress who chose this great metropolis of the West wanted American citizens and foreign visitors to come to Chicago to witness the majesty of

15. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 341–50; Badger, 46–52; William E. Cameron, *The World's Fair, Being a Pictorial History of the Columbian Exposition: Containing a Complete History of the World Renowned Exposition. . .* (Grand Rapids, MI: P. D. Farrell, 1893), 125–32; Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*, 1st ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995), 19–100. For a discussion about the benefits of New York, see Amos W. Wright, "World's Fair of 1889 and 1892," *Harper's Weekly* 33 (August 10, 1889): 652; "The World's Fair of 1892," *Harper's Weekly* 33 (August 3, 1889): 614. For a discussion about the benefits of Chicago as the fair site, see "Raising the Sectional Issue to Get the Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1889; "The Farmers at the World's Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 26, 1889.

16. "The World's Fair of 1892: Chicago Favored by the House of Representatives," *Scientific American* 62.10 (March 8, 1890): 146.

this modern American city. Chicago marked the center of America's first great empire—the one that stretched from the shores of the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific. The members of Congress who supported Chicago's bid wanted the World's Fair visitors to recognize this, and thus, they lobbied others to give the great metropolis of the West the right to host the country's next World's Fair.¹⁷

These texts document the intense rivalry between New York City and Chicago as these two cities vied for the right to host the World's Fair. In Clara Burnham's *Sweet Clover*, Miss Berry and Mr. Page discuss the competition to host the fair. Miss Berry tells Mr. Page that she has read several articles in the newspapers suggesting that "some o' the Western cities think they have as good a right as anybody" to be selected as the 1893 Columbian Exposition site.¹⁸ When she asks his opinion on the matter, he bluntly tells her:

Oh, I feel as though New York were the proper place. I think it is the general feeling that it would be a risk to trust a matter like that to Chicago. There has been a very clever cartoon published recently in New York, showing our principal cities represented as pretty women standing in a semicircle around Uncle Sam waiting to see which shall receive a bouquet which he holds in his hands labeled "World's Fair,"—that is, they are all pretty women except Chicago, who is a half-grown, scrawny girl, arrayed in an evening gown covered with a pattern of little pigs. She has huge diamonds blazing in her breast and ears, her thin arms are bare, and the hands she wildly stretches out to Uncle Sam wear [*sic*] white kid gloves with one button at the wrist. Her mouth is wide open, and she is evidently vociferously demanding the prize, while New York, a beautiful society girl, gazes at her with well-bred scorn. For my own part, I think New York may overdo the nonchalant business, and if she does, the energetic maiden stands a good chance to gain her end. (56–57)

Later in the novel, Mr. Page discusses the selection of Chicago as the site of the world's fair with a "tall young girl, who attracted his attention at once, by reason of her superb figure fashionably clothed in the plainest black" (65). As they talk, the young woman, who admits that she lives in Chicago, believes that Chicago is the ideal site for the Columbian Exposition.

17. Rydell, 40–42; Domosh, "A 'Civilized' Commerce," 201.

18. Clara Louise Burnham, *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1894), 55, accessed October 25, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1d7mxRt>. Hereafter cited as Burnham.

Even though she is not particularly excited about "the prospect of being jostled, and crowded, and having our streets torn up and our city extended, and all our comfort taken away for two years while we live in a perfect Pandemonium," she is willing to endure these headaches because it is better than trusting the duty of hosting the fair to New York City, which in her opinion, is "an old, slow town" (69).

Similar themes appear in Hezekiah Butterworth's *Zigzag Journeys in the White City*. When the protagonist finally arrives he notices that everyone in Chicago "seemed to be in a hurry" running from place to place. Like other authors, he compares Chicago's culture to other American cities and suggests "New York is slow and Boston slower, but here is the clock of destiny and one must *do*, ere it strike. The Chicagoan loves Chicago, and resolves to make it the grandest city in the world."¹⁹ Butterworth describes the city as a place that changes Eastern and Old World tourists. He notes that when Easterners actually enter Chicago they become "wonderfully enthusiastic . . . he lives for the future, and under new horizons; his soul becomes prophetic; he feels that the age of humanity is at hand, and that the city by the great inland sea is to be the capital" of the world (Butterworth, 114). Like the city's entrepreneurial boosters and congressional lobbyists, these passages remind middle-class readers that Congress selected Chicago instead of New York for the 1893 World's Fair because the western city embodied the nation's bright future, not its historic past.

The authors of these books also link Chicago with the sights and sounds of American ingenuity and innovation and the unique features of the city's rebirth after its devastating fire. As an Eastern-bred man, Page refuses to relent in his criticisms of the selection of Chicago as the fair's site. Even as the fair is being constructed, he discusses the matters with his Chicago-raised, Harvard College colleague, Jack. Page points out that Eastern men designed the fair's buildings and painted its art and suggests that Chicago is simply not ready for the task. Jack admits that Eastern men planned the buildings and contributed to the artwork at the fair but tells Page that he must realize that the individuals who constructed the fair are "Chicago men who have laid the brains of this country under contribution, and

19. Hezekiah Butterworth, *Zigzag Journeys in the White City with Visits to the Neighboring Metropolis* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1894), 101. Hereafter cited parenthetically as Butterworth.

whose indomitable energy has been the steam which has actuated the vast machinery of construction from the beginning, and will do so to the end” (Burnham, 127). These men, Jack notes, have contributed their ingenuity and labor to create the nation, which by the 1890s extended from sea to sea and beyond.

Robin and Meg, the protagonists in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Two Little Pilgrims’ Progress*, share Jack’s reverence for the individuals who built the World’s Fair. When the two young Easterners view the White City for the first time, Meg marvels at the white palaces and ornate structures. As she says this, Robin reminds her that they must not forget the people in Chicago who worked to build these great structures for the World’s Fair. The people, Robin argues, might have been afraid that they could not do it, but once they set their minds to it and tried, they were able to achieve their goals.²⁰ Even though many citizens doubted Chicago’s ability to meet the expectations of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, these authors remind their young readers that this great wonder of the west rightfully deserved the honor of being the site for the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

The books also highlight the marvelous structures in the modern city to highlight its rebirth and renewal. The children in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Two Little Pilgrims’ Progress* and in Tudor Jenks’s *The Century World’s Fair Book for Boys and Girls* discuss the marvelous skyscrapers that line Chicago’s streets. Robin and Meg, the leading characters in *Two Little Pilgrims’ Progress*, crouch on mounds of hay in their aunt’s barn and listen intently as two farmhands discuss why they think Chicago is an appropriate choice for the World’s Fair. The farmhands state that Chicago will “ring in the universe” with the exposition with its modern amenities and majestic twenty-story skyscrapers (Burnett, 11). Even the native New Yorkers in Jenks’s story, Philip and Harry, admit that Chicago is the perfect site for the fair since “New York had nothing just like . . . the lofty building of more than twenty stories.”²¹ In *Zigzag Journeys in the White City*, the narrator stops a young boy who has lived in Chicago for his entire life and asks the young lad to name the tallest houses in the city. Without pausing, the young boy turns to him and rattles off a list of buildings, “There’s the Ashland Block, sixteen

20. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Two Little Pilgrims’ Progress: A Story of the City Beautiful* (New York: Scribner, 1895), 67.

21. Tudor Jenks, *The Century World’s Fair Book for Boys and Girls*. . . (New York: Century, 1893), 164. Hereafter cited as Jenks.

stories high; this Auditorium, seventeen stories high; C. C. B., thirteen stories high; C. M. B., fourteen stories high; M. B., sixteen stories high; and the Masonic Building, twenty stories high" (Butterworth, 110). To the outsiders who have traveled from the East to visit the fair, these spectacular buildings represent a feat of human engineering and remind young readers about Chicago's ability to rise from the devastation of the 1871 fire. The city's modernity and rebirth make it the perfect choice for the site of the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

In addition to reminding readers about the city's modern conveniences and miraculous restoration, these texts also suggest that Chicago represented the perfect site for the World's Fair because the city is located on the geographic center of the country's first empire—its southward expansion to Mexico and its westward expansion to the Pacific.²² Just as the guidebooks and historical accounts of the fair stress Chicago's importance, these books repeatedly suggest that Chicago marks the center of the nation's westward "course of empire" (Butterworth, 149). On their first morning in Chicago, Samantha and Josiah, the protagonists in Marietta Holley's novel, walk into the breakfast room and notice a "stout, middle-aged man" with a "bald head, side whiskers, and a double chin" eating alone at a table in the corner.²³ Samantha begrudgingly agrees to Josiah's request to sit next to this man who "plunged to once into a conversation concernin' Chicago." Samantha believes that the man, Mr. Bolster, "knew that we wuz from [New] York State" and wants "to prove that Chicago wuz the only place in America at all suitable to hold the World's Fair" (210–11).

First, he tells Samantha that Chicago is a city of immigrants, which, according to him, makes it the only city where foreigners "feel perfectly at home" (211). Bolster continues and tells the visitors that his city "has the most energetic and progressive people in the world. It hain't made up, like a Eastern village, of folks that stay to home and set round on butter-tubs in grocery stores, talkin' about hens." Rather, he believes that Chicago "is

22. For a discussion of the idea of America's first empire within the nation, see McCormick, "From Old Empire to New," 63–82. For a discussion about the modernity of Chicago, see Camilla Fojas, "American Cosmopolis: The World's Columbian Exposition and Chicago across the Americas," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42.2 (2005): 271–73.

23. Marietta Holley, *Samantha at the World's Fair* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1893), 209, <http://bit.ly/1iitxeF>.

made up of people who dared—who wuz too energetic, progressive, and ambitious, to settle down and be content with what their fathers had. And they struck out new paths for themselves, as the Pilgrim Fathers did.” As a result, he suggests that the residents of Chicago “represent the advancin’ and progressive thought of the day” (212). Once again, Josiah agrees with Bolster’s assessment. Samantha, however, remains silent.

Finally, Bolster connects the city’s location to the nation’s westward conquests and reminds them that “Chicago is, as is well known, in the very centre of the earth” (212). To prove his point, Mr. Bolster pulls Samantha and her traveling companion aside and asks them to look at the map of the United States. He reminds them that, in the recent past, Boston thought it was the center of the world because it was the most important city on the eastern seaboard during the American Revolution. However, Chicago has now replaced Boston. Josiah, again, concurs with Mr. Bolster, but Samantha still does not agree. Instead, she peppers Mr. Bolster with a list of other places that might be considered the center of the earth. Mr. Bolster reminds her that residents of Chicago “say nothing about Chicago but what we can prove” and directs her to “look on the map and you will see for yourself that Chicago is right in the centre of the habitable portion of North America.” He takes her hand and says, “put your thumb down on Chicago, and then sweep round it in an even circle with your middle finger, and you will see that it takes in with that sweep all the settled portion of North America” (214). These books encourage their readers to realize that while the United States was once a small, young nation, whose land once only included the area east of the Mississippi, it now encompasses the entire area from its original shore of the Atlantic to the conquered lands that stretch along the Pacific. Through its military excursions and imperial purchases, the country has conquered and seized the lands that government officials had desired for decades. In short, the United States has completed the first phase of its empire-building project by creating a country that finally stretched from sea to sea. These texts help their young readers understand that Chicago is the perfect site for the world’s fair because it represents the country’s progress, its modern cities, and its great new empire.²⁴

24. McCormick, “From Old Empire to New,” 63–82.

Progress of the Nation since Columbus

After exploring the marvels in the city, these books expose young readers to the spectacles and wonders at the 1893 Columbian Exposition that showcase American ingenuity and progress since its founding. Many of the guidebooks describe the award-winning architecture on display at the fair and encourage visitors to see the buildings that the city created specifically for this occasion.²⁵ Like the guidebooks, these children's books provide young readers with vivid descriptions of these buildings for those who cannot see them firsthand. When Samantha and Josiah arrive at the fair, they stop and wonder at the fair's administration building with amazement. Holley tells her young readers that the buildings are covered with stucco that "made it possible for the artist and architect to carry out their ideas to a magnitude never before attempted" (226). When Jack, a native Chicagoan who has recently returned home to visit the fair after graduating from Harvard College, marvels at the "electric-lighted avenue" and the "lion-guarded Greek Palace of Art whose columns . . . send a thrill of grateful delight to the hearts of those who have passed within its portals" (Burnham, 178). These books describe these sensational buildings to showcase America's modern achievements on display at the fair for those who could not see these marvels firsthand.

In addition to the descriptions of the buildings, these books provide children with detailed accounts of the exhibits, highlighting inventions and technology that exemplify American progress. In *A Peep at the World's Fair*, James and Madeline visit the Machinery Court at the fair and observe "machines of all kinds, showing the fertility of human invention." They are particularly drawn to a "peculiar-looking box" that is sitting on a table nearby. A young man walks over and explains that they can listen to a concert recorded several months earlier in New York City on the machine. The children are "astonished" and tell their mother the "incredulous" thing this young man told them. Their mother calmly assures them that it is possible to do that on the machine. Then, she tells that them it is called a phonograph and says that "an American named Edison"

25. John J. Flinn, *Official Guide to the World's Columbian Exposition* (Chicago: John Anderson, 1893), 35.

invented it.²⁶ This book suggests to its readers that Americans are constantly inventing devices that few could even imagine.

Jenks also stresses the importance of American innovativeness suggesting that since his readers are Americans, they, too, can be famous inventors later in life. When Jenks's protagonist, Philip, reflects on the exhibits on display, he remarks that the exhibits demonstrate to "every man or boy . . . some device or method that he would either adopt or improve in his own work." Put simply, "with a people so quick of apprehension and so inventive as Americans, the benefits arising from the World's Fair must be beyond exaggeration" (Jenks, 184). These books teach their readers about the incredible American inventions on display at the fair to mark American progress and to encourage them to contribute to American progress when they become adults.

The Role of the Nation's Military

While there were exhibits of every kind that documented American life, some of the most popular exhibits depicted life in the United States military. In fact, soldiers seemed to be everywhere at the fair. They participated in the opening ceremonies, pitched tents on the fairgrounds, and helped organize an exact replica of the *Illinois*, a famous battleship, for visitors to witness the military's strength firsthand.²⁷ Several of the children's books also featured descriptions of the officers and the battleship to illustrate the country's military powers to readers. In Jenks's *The Century World's Fair Book for Boys and Girls*, Harry decides to visit the battleship *Illinois* to see the famous "man-of-war." After witnessing all the objects and the models of new battleships, Harry remarks, "I think I will go to Annapolis and become an officer in the navy" (Jenks, 37). Harry's captivation with the battleship and his dream to attend the naval academy illustrates the romantic and adventurous nature of military service for young middle-class boys, like Harry, who are reading these books in the comforts of their home.

The children in *Elsie at the World's Fair* also visit the battleship with their father, and like Harry, they marvel at its size and

26. Adrien Marie and Walker Hodgson, *A Peep at the World's Fair* (London: Tuck & Sons, 1893), 5. Rare Books Collection, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

27. "Opened by the President," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1893, 1; "Encampment of West Point Cadets, Government Plaza," Prints and Pictures Division, Free Library of Philadelphia, Chicago World's Fair collection.

beauty. Luckily for them, Captain Raymond, a famous naval officer, accompanies them and explains everything about the battleship. Elsie's father reminds everyone that the battleship, like the other exhibits at the fair, is an exact "facsimile" of the "powerful vessel." As Elsie approaches the ship, she hesitantly asks her father if the guns are real and admits that she is frightened. Her father tells her that even though most of the things on the ship are real, the guns are models, so "there is no danger of that." Ned, her brother, says that he is not afraid of the guns, at least not with his father around. His father reassures them both saying that they should not be afraid of the battleship "for most assuredly no one would dare to shoot on Captain Raymond or anybody under his care."²⁸ Finley's passage suggests that the United States military is so strong that no one would attempt to attack Americans on the ship. Both of these accounts depict war as an adventure that would attract any American boy, but that terrified American girls. These passages give children the impression that the wars that Americans engage in are not dangerous; rather, they are adventures for middle-class boys—an idea that the country promoted as it engaged in wars to conquer the West, and in the future, one that the country would rely on as it endeavored to invade foreign lands.²⁹

Clara Burnham echoes similar sentiments in her book *Sweet Clover* and makes a clear distinction between the appeal of military service for boys and girls. In the novel, Jack, the young Harvard graduate who has recently returned to his Chicago home, waits for his companions, Clover and Mildred, to arrive after a long day at the fair. As he waits, he notices Mildred, Clover's sister, sauntering "up to the steps accompanied by a young army officer" (Burnham, 211). Jack stares down this young army officer from his post on the balcony to show his disapproval. Mildred calmly says goodbye to the young officer, and once he has left, Jack asks her how she knew the young army officer. Mildred tells Jack that the young army officer is her friend's cousin. She met him earlier in the day when he gave the two young women a personal tour of the battleship. Jack

28. Martha Finley, *Elsie at the World's Fair* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1894), 92.

29. Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.2 (1998): 242–54; Amy Kaplan, "Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s," *American Literary History* 2.4 (1990): 659–90.

mentions that he had visited the battleship earlier that day, but much to his surprise, he did not see Mildred or the young army officer. Mildred explains that she found the battleship awfully stuffy, so the young army officer took her to a private room where they ate sherry cobbler. Jack is furious with her and demands that Mildred spend more time with him at the fair. Mildred quickly apologizes, and to assuage his jealousy, she promises to spend time with him during her visit. Even Jack, the young Harvard graduate, cannot compete with the excitement and adventure that these young officers offer to fair visitors. These young women might not be interested in participating in these imperial conquests at home and abroad, but Burnham's passage illustrates the appeal that these military men had among middle-class girls like Mildred (211–13).

Many of the exhibits at the fair illustrate the moral justifications that the country has historically used to persuade its citizens to support its entry into war. The books describe these exhibits to demonstrate to their readers that the United States is different from other European powers: it only engages in wars to free others from oppressive forms of government. In *Elsie at the Fair*, Ned and his grandmother visit the exhibit on the War of 1812 where they see a sign that says that only one American man died during the war while hundreds of British men died. When Ned reads this sign, he asks his grandmother if it is wrong to kill other people. She responds, "Yes, dear, unless it is necessary to prevent them from killing or badly injuring us or someone else." She continues, and says that the War of 1812 was justified because "the British were terribly abusing our poor sailors." A few moments later, Grace, her granddaughter, notices an exhibit showing Jackson's victory at New Orleans and says that she remembers her grandmother's lesson, saying that the Americans "were in the right—fighting against dreadful wrongs done to our sailors—and God helped us to drive away our haughty, powerful foe, and deliver our brave tars from her unendurable oppression."³⁰

Earlier in the novel, Lulu and Grandma Elsie stroll through the fairgrounds and notice the *Statue of the Republic* towering over the east end of the Grand Basin. Grandma Elsie describes this magnificent structure for the young middle-class children reading at home, "in one hand she holds a pole bearing a liberty

30. Finley, *Elsie at the World's Fair*, 100, 102.

cap, in the other a globe, an eagle with outstretched wings resting upon it; that symbolizes protection, which she has ever been ready to extend to the oppressed of all the earth." Grandma Elsie's description alerts young readers that the country must protect foreigners living under tyrannical rule even if it costs the country "money or . . . life and limb."³¹ In other words, just as the country has already proven its ability to save oppressed Native Americans in the West and African Americans in the South, the United States is prepared to use its military power to overthrow corrupt governments abroad if that becomes necessary.³² These books reflected the national discourse put forth by individuals, such as A. T. Mahan, about the need to strengthen the nation's naval forces and muscular foreign power as much as they foreshadowed the justification for using military force to bring liberty and civilization to oppressed people within the nation and beyond.³³

The Creation of an Empire within the Nation

In addition to documenting the country's military power, the books describe the process of creating an empire within the nation and discuss what this project had already achieved as well as ongoing challenges that remained.³⁴ The children's books focus on the process of civilizing Native and African Americans in the United States to showcase the achievements of American empire as well as the remaining vestiges of savagery that must be tamed. In *A Peep at the World's Fair*, James and Madeline visit the fair and remark they are "delighted to visit the home of a Redskin, or a North American Indian," noting that the "half-savages" seem "perfectly satisfied" with their "primitive" but "solid" tent.³⁵ Even though the home seems primitive, they

31. Finley, *Elsie at the World's Fair*, 20.

32. See also Elbridge Brooks, *The True Story of Christopher Columbus* (Boston: Lothrop, 1982), 7.

33. Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1890), accessed October 25, 2013, <http://bit.ly/HIGsjZ>; Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1890), accessed October 25, 2013, <http://bit.ly/H73knG>.

34. These books describe both the project of empire within the nation and abroad, especially the displays of foreign countries on the Midway. However, for the scope of this paper, I will focus solely on the imperial project within the nation.

35. Marie and Hodgson, *A Peep at the World's Fair*, 18.

classify these men and women as only half-savages, indicating that the Americans have made progress toward civilizing them while reminding the young readers at home that there is still much to accomplish. The authors of these books describe these displays so that children at home can begin to build their own fantasies about the empire's future.

Outside the fair, Chicagoans took advantage of the interest in Native Americans and brought Wild West Shows to the city so that visitors could attend these spectacles after observing their lifestyles and traditions at the fair. In Jenks's novel, Harry and Philip ask their tutor if they can attend one of these shows during their visit, arguing that even though the show seems like entertainment, it is really "an educational exhibit . . . where one may see various nations at their sports and pastimes." Mr. Douglass, the tutor, consents to their request saying that "a whole day of systematic sight-seeing at the Fair" may be a "little too much when one is busy at it for a week or two at a time" (Jenks, 149). When the boys finally settle into their seats, the announcer shouts the name of the first Indian group to perform, "The Arapahoes!" Suddenly, the boys witness "a troop of almost naked savages painted and bedecked" storming onto the stage (151). Then, the chief arrives with "a well-known markswoman" who shoots "clay pigeons and glass balls as fast as they can be supplied by the attendants." The narration continues stating that "several usual features follow. A race between riders of different nations . . . an emigrant-train attacked by Indians, but saved by the blank cartridges of the Hon. Mr. Cody and his rough-riding friends; and then come Syrians and Arabians in wonderful feats of balancing" (152). Jenks seems to want his readers to consider the similarities inherent in the savage customs of the Syrians, the Arabians, and the Arapahoes and to realize the importance of expanding American empire to protect white settlers from the dangers that savages pose within the nation and beyond.

The children's books also document the racial inferiority of the Indians living in the United States to illustrate that while progress has been made, these men and women will always be inferior to their Anglo brethren. When Harry and Philip visit the Cliff-Dwellers exhibit, they remark about the primitive lifestyle and note that some people believe that this particular group of Indians no longer exists while others think that the Pueblos are the same type of people. As they examine the objects on display—the "sandals woven of cord, cloth remnants some as

finely woven as canvas; bit of bones, scooped out into spoons or sharpened and faced for needles"—they are captivated by the "skeletons, skulls, and mummies." They walk toward the skulls and notice a skull of a "Cree Indian . . . set in the case, in order to show how much finer . . . the foreheads of the Cliff-Dwellers" are in comparison (Jenks, 194). As historian Robert Rydell suggests, the World's Fair laced the idea of American progress with ideas about scientific racism (5). The display that Harry and Philip see includes skulls, presumably to demonstrate that Indian skulls are not as developed as white skulls, and thus even if Americans try to educate Indians in the ways of civilization, they will always remain genetically and racially inferior to white men and women. These books convey that message to readers who, unlike Harry and Philip, did not have the opportunity to visit Chicago and see these displays of savagery and conquest firsthand.

Historians have documented the controversy surrounding the exclusion of African Americans from the fair's planning process and the restrictions placed on fair exhibits that highlighted their history and culture. Even though a narrative about their transition from slavery to emancipation would have fit neatly with the idea of American progress, fair organizers refused to allow black representation on the fair's board of directors and stipulated that exhibits about African Americans had to go through a screening process by an all-white committee. Like other cultural artifacts from the fair, these children's books rarely mention African American visitors at the fair. Their absence in these books reinforces the idea that blacks were, in fact, an unwanted presence at the 1893 Columbian Exposition.³⁶ However, two authors deliberately incorporated black characters into their fictional accounts to remind young readers about the country's increasingly rigid racial hierarchy.

As Harry and Philip return to their cabin after dinner, Philip looks through a porthole on the train and notices that the sun has finally set. He turns to his brother and comments that it looks like someone has been "boring a hole through a big dark." Jenks tells his readers that "one of the colored porters" overheard Philip's comment and "looked curiously at Philip as if he overheard this remark without understanding its poetical

36. Bridget R. Cooks, "Fixing Race: Visual Representations of African Americans at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," *Patterns of Prejudice* 41.5 (2007): 435.

bearing" (9). Jenks's narration suggests that the porter lacked Harry's intellect and, thus, did not understand the significance of Philip's witty remark. Moments later, the boys notice a group of ladies laughing at the African American porter as he attempts to rearrange their room and make their beds in the crowded sleeper. Jenks narrates this section and tells his young readers that the method that the porter used to tidy the room differed from the method that the "ladies" presumably used in their own homes. Jenks writes, "a woman seems to coax the bed into shape, but a man bullies it into submission." Harry pulls Philip over and whispers "in an undertone" that these women probably "think it's funny to see him make a bed . . . but if they were to try to throw a stone, or bait a fish-hook, I guess the darky would have a right to smile some too" (10).

The characterization of the African American Pullman porter that Jenks creates in this scene delineates the racial and class divisions between the laboring black porter and the elite white children. Historian Carl Smith notes the connections between visiting the fair and riding in a Pullman palace car when he writes, "merely attending the fair was, like living in Pullman or riding on a Pullman Palace Car, an 'uplifting' experience that taught the value of middle-class habits of decorum and self-improvement."³⁷ Harry and Philip, two wealthy white children from New York City, have combined these two experiences to reinforce their own racial and class status as elite children who are being trained to assume their roles as leaders in this nation. In contrast, Jenks portrays the black porter as an individual who lacks the intellectual capacities that Harry and Philip supposedly possess and, thus, is relegated to domestic work on a Pullman car. In doing so, Jenks reinforces the larger conversation about race, class, and labor that the Pullman porters represented at the turn of the century. Even though the porters challenged these racial and class divisions in a national strike, this passage reminds white middle-class male youth about their superior position in American society.³⁸

In *Zigzag Journeys in the White City*, Hezekiah Butterworth discusses the arrival of a black couple at the fair in his chapter entitled, "The Funniest Thing at the Fair." Butterworth tells his

37. Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief*, 224.

38. For an excellent analysis of the black resistance and the strike's importance, see Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), 5–42.

readers that his protagonists decide to visit the famed "Street in Cairo on the Midway Plaisance." When they arrive they notice "a young colored man and woman" who had decided to visit the area as well. Butterworth narrates the story stating that this young couple was talking loudly enough "to attract attention" and that the woman was "gayly dressed" with a hat that seemed "conspicuous even in the Street of Cairo." Butterworth continues that the hat "was a kind of pyramid of feathers, flowers, and streamers" and that her dress looks "Oriental." He wants his readers to understand that this "young colored man and woman" do not conform to the social norms of white middle-class individuals. They talked "loudly" and dressed "gayly," and as a result, they blended with the exotic cultures of the Midway Plaisance more than they did in their own nation (Butterworth, 137).

Butterworth reinforces this idea further when he describes the young black woman's request to ride the camel in the Street of Cairo. When the black woman notices the wedding procession coming down the street, she asks one of the guards, "Wot is that?" pointing to the camel and the group of individuals (137). He explains that the camel is the "ship of the desert" and that it is a wedding procession. The young black woman exclaims, "I am a bride; *we is*. That is wot we are," expressing her recent nuptials to the young black man (138). Suddenly, a man asks if anyone would like to ride the camel, and Dinah, the young bride, shouts, "I—I—I—I!" and a "crowd gathered around the scene, a comical grin on every face" (141). As soon as she mounts the camel, the animal raises his hind legs and tosses her in the air. She grasps the reins and screams, "Here yo' dar, yo', let me get off!" The narrator says, "it was such a comical sight that the good-natured crowd stood laughing, each one looking at the other, to share the humor" (142). This passage suggests that African Americans were more likely to be drawn to exotic experiences and used a distinctive dialect that marks them as inferior to white visitors. Many children lacked the opportunity to visit the Midway Plaisance for themselves, but these books transport them there and convey the racial hierarchy that existed in the country. These texts suggested that African Americans were not equal citizens despite their emancipation a few decades earlier.

Conclusion

When Harry and Philip hear that their father wants their private tutor to escort them on a visit to the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition, they are ecstatic. They have heard about the fair from the elite urbanites living near them, and they are eager to see it for themselves. Like many of the other adults in these texts, their tutor justifies the costly excursion based on its educational value, saying, “a visit to the Fair is worth more than all the studying here you boys could do in twice the time you’ll spend there” (Jenks, 2). This is exactly what the fair organizers had hoped for when they tried to lure families and children to visit the exposition in person. Similarly, the authors who wrote these stories about the fair hoped that their middle-class readers would also learn the lessons from the fair even though they were not necessarily able to visit in person. The books provided children with a justification for hosting the fair in Chicago; the development of their great nation since its founding; the importance of the nation’s military powers; and finally, the accomplishments and challenges of the civilizing mission for both Native and African Americans living within their country. The texts visually transported children to the fair and informally educated them about the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair, and perhaps more importantly, about the great new empire that existed in their nation. These themes reinforce the reasons for westward expansion and foreshadow the justifications for invading lands under colonial rule in the near future. In short, this article illustrates how these texts showcase the imperial project within the nation and highlight the country’s desires to expand this project to other lands. The books truly are imperial fantasies for young middle-class citizens who will inherit the nation’s empire within its continental borders and beyond.³⁹

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