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Jane McCabe, *Kalimpong Kids: The New Zealand story, in pictures*

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Jane McCabe, *Kalimpong Kids: The New Zealand story, in pictures* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2020), 139pp. Paperback. NZ\$35.00. ISBN: 978-1-9885-9236-7

Kalimpong Kids is a pictorial narrative of the lives of mixed-race, Anglo-Indian children institutionalised in a Scottish residential school established in 1900 by the Rev. Dr. John Anderson Graham in Kalimpong, Darjeeling district. Situated at the Himalayan foothills in Northeast India and in a temperate climate, the school was initially called St. Andrew's Colonial Homes, later renamed Graham's Homes post-Indian Independence in 1947. The Homes housed and educated the children of British tea planters and local women from the surrounding area.

Jane McCabe, a Melbourne-based historian, researched the stories of some of the children, including their families and descendants in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her initial engagement was ignited by a photograph of her grandmother, Lorna Peters, in a group of girls, with the name 'Kalimpong School' on the envelope. McCabe visited the Kalimpong School in 2007, where she found detailed information about her grandmother, who emigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1921. McCabe presented her Ph.D. in 2014 and published the book *Race, Tea, and Colonial Resettlement: Imperial families, interrupted* in 2017.

Visually appealing photographs, enhanced in sepia tones, depict the Home's settlement set amongst a backdrop of mist-covered mountains and a landscape of exotic and indigenous trees and plants. What is hidden through the photographic veneer is a story of children, abandoned for the most part by their British or European fathers from the ages of four onwards, raised and educated in a residential school, sponsored by well-off individuals and charities.

The Kalimpong narrative exposes an organised emigration scheme, initiated by the Reverend Graham which brought 130 of these mixed-race children and young adults from India to Aotearoa New Zealand, between 1908 and 1938. Aotearoa New Zealand was the only settler colony that permitted the immigration of these children into the country but discontinued this in 1938. Many more Home's children were sent out into the Indian community once they were of an age to work. Education may have assisted some of them, but what happened to the majority of these children?

McCabe invites us to understand the journey of the children from the sanctioned institutionalisation of the Home's School in Kalimpong to their Kiwi lives in Aotearoa New Zealand in a sympathetic way. Her respect and sensitivity for these families, including her own and their descendants in Aotearoa New Zealand is commendable. Without this respect, the descendants may have felt overly exposed and judged.

The Kalimpong children's stories are compelling, and hard to leave aside and although McCabe's book is not a polemic about racial and cultural assimilation, this was one underpinning rationale behind the development of the Home's School; known locally as 'Little Scotland'. For many readers, this may be a shocking indictment of colonisation and its ensuing acceptable practices of the age. McCabe alludes to the Home's School as one of the rescue schemes for mixed-race children, prevalent in the British Empire, but does not elaborate further. Her use of hegemonic language, however, alerts us to some of the colonising views. The children are called 'graduates' of the Homes, who were to be 'placed' either in India or with suitable people in Aotearoa New Zealand, reminiscent of and reinforcing insider/outsider colonising politics.

On the one hand the photographs unmask the lives of these children, always barefoot since shoes were too expensive, removed by their British fathers from their

Indian/Nepali mothers and family life in the European tea planter community. We fast forward to photographs of allegedly successful, happier lives in Aotearoa New Zealand, that depict ex-graduates working on farms or in domestic service, some enlisting as soldiers in WW1 or WW2, as well as marriage and having children. As a reader, I wanted to know and understand the impact of both being displaced from their families and transported far from home, on these children, both in India and Aotearoa New Zealand. We can only know this through the pictorial legacy, meticulously kept records about the children at the Home's School in Kalimpong, and the silence from the actual children themselves. Many descendants did not know their ancestors were Anglo-Indian or were born in India, brought up by strangers or 'aunts' in the Home's Schools. The Kalimpong children grew into adults and died leaving behind a pictorial story that belies the multi-layered realities of their lives and poses more questions than answers.

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