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A Yahgan for the killing: murder, memory and Charles Darwin

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Abstract. In March 1742, British naval officer John Byron witnessed a murder on the western coast of South America. Both Charles Darwin and Robert FitzRoy seized upon Byron's story a century later, and it continues to play an important role in Darwin scholarship today. This essay investigates the veracity of the murder, its appropriation by various authors, and its false association with the Yahgan people encountered during the second voyage of the *Beagle* (1831–1836). Darwin's use of the story is examined in multiple contexts, focusing on his relationship with the history of European expansion and cross-cultural interaction and related assumptions about slavery and race. The continuing fascination with Byron's story highlights the key role of historical memory in the development and interpretation of evolutionary theory.

Sometime in the middle of March 1742, John Byron witnessed a murder. He could only guess at the date because he had been shipwrecked and stranded on the western coast of South America, in the region commonly known as Patagonia, for nearly a year. The act of murder was awful, but it was only the latest in a series of harrowing events. Over the past few months, the surviving crew of the warship *Wager*, on which Byron served as midshipman, had endured a seemingly endless series of catastrophes. There were mutinies, arguments, gunfights and frequent desertions. Most of the survivors suffered a slow, agonizing death by starvation, while others struggled in vain to gather shellfish and seaweed along the 'tempestuous and inhospitable shore'.[1] The mortality rate among the remaining crew was staggering. Byron's small band dwindled rapidly from twenty to sixteen, then five, and finally four. Stripped of all their material possessions, facing complete social breakdown, they remained alive through a combination of luck and perseverance.

Indigenous nomads took pity on the eighteen-year-old Byron, fed him, and agreed to guide his group to the Spanish colony on Chiloé Island, about three hundred miles north of the wreck. But life among his indigenous rescuers provided little relief. Byron's guide

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1 John Byron, *The Narrative of the Honourable John Byron ... Containing an Account of the Great Distresses Suffered by Himself and His Companions on the Coast of Patagonia, From the Year 1740, till their Arrival in England, 1746*, 2nd edn, London: S. Baker, G. Leigh and T. Davies, 1768, p. iii.

and benefactor, a Catholic convert named Martin, held total power over the half-naked and starving band of survivors. He forced them to carry heavy bundles and paddle a large canoe, and carefully rationed their food supply. Scion of a noble family, accustomed to a highly structured world of privilege and deference, Byron felt that he had become nothing more than a slave to an arbitrary and cruel master. There were many indignities. But the homicidal scene to which he would be a witness was especially galling.

The story, as Byron tells it, is as follows: Martin and his wife returned from one of their frequent expeditions for sea urchins in the frigid waters of the Pacific coast. Their catch was disappointing, and both were unhappy.

> A little boy of theirs, about three years old, whom they appeared to be dotingly fond of, watching for his father and mother's return, ran into the surf to meet them; the father handed a basket of sea-eggs to the child, which being too heavy for him to carry, he let it fall.

Furious, 'the father jumped out of the canoe, and catching the boy in his arms, dashed him with the utmost violence against the stones'. The child died almost instantly and his mother 'appeared inconsolable for some time'. But the ostensibly Christian father 'shewed little concern about it'.[2] Byron says nothing more about this tragic incident. There is no need. For eighteenth-century readers, the scene was self-explanatory. It would become the perfect specimen of the irreducibly violent 'savage', the futility of religious conversion, and the moral supremacy of British civilization.[3]

This is the story of an encounter, and like many such stories, it is one-sided. There is no account of this alleged homicide from Martin's point of view. Nor is there any evidence to corroborate Byron, who had a well-documented fondness for exaggeration. This version survives only in his narrative, published in England over a quarter of a century after the event it purports to describe. Since then, Byron's story has achieved a life of its own. It has been told and retold in different ways to different audiences, in different times, and in different places. As a 'far-fetched fact', it has crept from the margins of empire to the heart of professional discourse.[4] Yet it would have been long forgotten if another ship had not followed in the wake of Byron's journey, nearly one hundred years later.

Both Charles Darwin and Robert FitzRoy were impressed by this graphic tale of savagery and murder, and both discussed it openly in their respective accounts of the voyage of the *Beagle*. And other, more modern, writers have followed suit. In his popular history of Darwin's experiences abroad, Australian author Alan Moorehead moves Byron's story to the 1830s and over eight hundred miles south to Tierra del Fuego. According to Moorehead, it was the *Beagle*'s surgeon, Benjamin Bynoe, who witnessed a

2 Byron, op. cit. (1), pp. 148–149.

3 Margaret Hunt, 'Racism, imperialism, and the traveler's gaze in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of British Studies* (1993) 32, pp. 333–357; Bridget Orr, '"Stifling pity in a parent's breast": infanticide and savagery in late eighteenth-century travel writing', in Steve Clark (ed.), *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*, London: Zed Books, 1999, pp. 137–138; Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, 1720–1900, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 45–46.

4 Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 30–54.

'Fuegian child' dashed against the rocks and 'abandoned to die'. A recent narrative of the *Beagle* expedition provides the correct date, but also insists that Martin was 'a Fuegian' of the same type that Darwin would encounter on the southern tip of Cape Horn.[5] Political theorist Lee Harris cites Darwin's version of the murder as evidence for 'the law of the jungle', and travel writer John Woram offers it as proof that the Fuegians who greeted the *Beagle* cared little for their children.[6] Surveying Darwin's many misinterpretations of Fuegian culture, Anne Chapman writes that the murder 'may be true', but offers no evidence to support her claim.[7] Although they do not comment on its veracity, even Darwin scholars Adrian Desmond and James Moore feature Byron's story in a crucial passage at the end of their study of the intersection between racial slavery and evolutionary theory.[8] What accounts for this lingering influence?

Historians have long pointed to the second voyage of the *Beagle* (1831–1836) as the defining moment in Darwin's career. With stops on both coasts of South America, in Australia and Africa, and on numerous islands in the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic oceans, this epic five-year journey exposed the fledgling naturalist to an intoxicating array of foreign cultures and ecosystems. The lengthy excursions combined with ample time for reflection, Darwin later wrote, supplied 'the first real training or education of my mind', and the expedition yielded, in the words of one contemporary, 'a harvest of fresh knowledge'.[9] Most historians agree that Darwin's extensive studies of geology, palaeontology and zoology during this period provided the catalyst for the development of the theory of evolution by natural selection, and recent scholarship on the 'geographies of scientific knowledge' has further underscored the central role of foreign travel in the production and diffusion of evolutionary science.[10] Yet Darwin's equally

5 Alan Moorehead, *Darwin and the Beagle*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969, p. 99; Nick Hazelwood, *Savage: The Life and Times of Jemmy Button*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000, pp. 23–24. Another account adds to the confusion by placing Byron's voyage in the 1820s and conflating him with his grandson, also a naval explorer. See Iain McCalman, *Darwin's Armada: Four Voyages and the Battle for the Theory of Evolution*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009, pp. 64–65.

6 Lee Harris, *The Suicide of Reason: Radical Islam's Threat to the Enlightenment*, New York: Basic Books, 2007, pp. 79, 88; John Woram, *Here Be Giants: Travelers' Tales from the Land of the Patagons*, Rockville Centre, NY: Rockville Press, 2009, p. 198.

7 Anne Chapman, *Darwin in Tierra del Fuego*, Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2006, p. 63. Chapman reiterates the false association of Byron's story with the people of Tierra del Fuego in subsequent work. See *idem*, *European Encounters with the Yamana People of Cape Horn before and after Darwin*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 187–188.

8 Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009, pp. 375–376.

9 *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, 1809–1882*, ed. Nora Barlow, London: Collins, 1958, p. 77; Roderick Impey Murchison, 'Address to the Royal Geographical Society', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* (1865) 9, pp. 195–274, esp. 217.

10 David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003; Frank J. Sulloway, 'Darwin's conversion: the *Beagle* voyage and its aftermath', *Journal of the History of Biology* (1982) 15, pp. 325–396; Roy M. MacLeod and Philip F. Rehbock (eds.), *Darwin's Laboratory: Evolutionary Theory and Natural History in the Pacific*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994; Ronald L. Numbers and John Stenhouse (eds.), *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; Richard Darwin Keynes,

extensive encounters with African slaves and indigenous populations have only slowly garnered serious scholarly attention.[11]

The true story behind Byron's tale of savagery and murder, and Darwin's reaction to it, illuminate important aspects of the acclaimed naturalist's relationship with the history of European expansion and cross-cultural interaction. It highlights the subtle role of historical memory in the development and interpretation of scientific knowledge. More importantly, it reveals how that memory is embedded in specific spatial contexts. The distant, semi-mysterious land of Tierra del Fuego looms large in the global gaze of scientists and historians, a regional backdrop for the 'play of memory and forgetting' at the heart of evolutionary theory.[12] Falsely associated with the people of Tierra del Fuego, uncritically transmitted from generation to generation, Byron's story occupies a nebulous place at the crossroads of geography and memory. But it all begins with a teenage castaway, a mutiny and a desert island.

The castaway

Like so many stories of the golden age of European imperialism, this one begins with a war. The twenty-eight-gun, six-hundred-ton *Wager* sailed from England in late September 1740, during the brief but colourfully named War of Jenkins' Ear. Part of a small squadron led by Commodore George Anson, her goal was to raid Spanish settlements along the Pacific coast of South America. Disaster arrived before any significant military targets, however, and she collided with a series of boulders off the Patagonian coastline eight months later. The surviving crew managed to rescue some provisions from the wreck, but found themselves stranded on a bleak and desolate island in the present-day Golfo de Piñas, about five hundred miles north of Tierra del Fuego. Authority quickly disintegrated among the marooned men as supplies were looted and

Fossils, Finches and Fuegians: Charles Darwin's Adventures and Discoveries on the Beagle, 1832–1836, London: HarperCollins, 2002; Patrick Armstrong, *Darwin's Other Islands*, London: Continuum, 2004; Diarmid A. Finnegan, 'The spatial turn: geographical approaches in the history of science', *Journal of the History of Biology* (2008) 41, pp. 369–388; K. Thalia Grant and Gregory B. Estes, *Darwin in Galápagos: Footsteps to a New World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009; Iain McCalman and Nigel Erskine (eds.), *In the Wake of the* Beagle*: Science in the Southern Oceans from the Age of Darwin*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009; Paul D. Brinkman, 'Charles Darwin's *Beagle* voyage, fossil vertebrate succession, and "The gradual birth & death of species"', *Journal of the History of Biology* (2010) 43, pp. 363–399.

11 Although she dismisses the significance of the *Beagle* encounters, see Sandra Herbert, 'The place of man in the development of Darwin's theory of transmutation: Part I. To July 1837', *Journal of the History of Biology* (1974) 7, pp. 217–258. For more recent interest, see Cannon Schmitt, *Darwin and the Memory of the Human: Evolution, Savages, and South America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 32–56; Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 68–110. Janet Browne argues for a trend in Darwin studies towards 'social-constructivist' interpretations, but neglects her own superb work on travel and cultural contact. See Janet Browne, 'Making Darwin: biography and the changing representations of Charles Darwin', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (2010) 40, pp. 347–373, esp. 371.

12 Schmitt, op. cit. (11), pp. 32–56, esp. 56. On modern Tierra del Fuego as a 'primitivist' playground see Paul Magee, *From Here to Tierra del Fuego*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

crewmembers deserted. Captain David Cheap, who had survived the initial disaster, became increasingly erratic, hoarded food and other material and shot one of his officers in the face during a heated exchange. After five months of confusion and arguments, the majority of the crew decided to abandon Cheap, seize the ship's longboat, and sail back around Cape Horn to Brazil.[13]

Midshipman John Byron (grandfather of the famous poet) was seventeen at the time of the wreck. At first enticed to sail south with the mutineers, he returned to Captain Cheap on the newly christened 'Wager Island' and remained there for two months while the officers plotted their escape. According to Byron's narrative, published in England more than twenty-five years later, the remaining castaways hoped to commandeer a ship and rejoin Anson's squadron in the north. But supplies ran short, and after an ambitious attempt to traverse the gulf ended in disaster, their condition deteriorated rapidly. Deaths and desertions increased, followed by whispers of cannibalism.[14] Nomadic inhabitants of the nearby Chonos Archipelago agreed to provide the remaining group with food and shelter and guided them to the Spanish colony on Chiloé Island. Only four survivors made their way to Valparaiso, and then on to Santiago, where they were held as prisoners of war until they were able to find transport back to Europe. Their journey home spanned almost five years altogether.[15]

Byron capitalized on his loyalty. He was given command of his own vessel within a year of his return and enjoyed a robust and tumultuous career until his death, at the rank of vice-admiral, in 1786. He achieved moderate fame as a naval explorer, earning the nickname 'Foul Weather Jack' for his uncanny ability to attract natural disasters, and though hardly a swaggering buccaneer, he did not hesitate to boost his heroic self-image. A 1759 portrait by Joshua Reynolds shows a steely-eyed, almost comically hyperbolic officer, arrayed in full imperial bravado, courageously defying a ferocious storm.[16] Byron had a special fondness for the dark-skinned women he encountered abroad, and like others in his position blurred the lines between sexual and colonial conquest. 'We find that the queens and princesses of the islands he discovered, were ever partial to

13 [Richard Walter and Benjamin Robins], *A Voyage Round the World, In the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV by George Anson*, 2nd edn, London: John and Paul Knapton, 1748, pp. 19, 203–217; John Bulkeley and John Cummins, *A Voyage to the South-Seas, In the Years 1740–1*, London: Jacob Robinson, 1743, pp. 1–105; Byron, op. cit. (1), pp. 1–65. On the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1742) see Philip Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories: the Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain*, Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY: Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 1998. On the Anson Squadron see Glyndwr Williams, *The Great South Sea: English Voyages and Encounters, 1570–1750*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 214–250.

14 Byron, op. cit. (1), p. 102.

15 For narrative overviews of the *Wager* disaster, see S.W.C. Pack, *The Wager Mutiny*, London: A. Redman, 1964; Richard Hough, *The Blind Horn's Hate*, London: Hutchinson, 1971, pp. 181–241; Peter Shankland, *Byron of the Wager*, London: Collins, 1975; Glyn Williams, *The Prize of All the Oceans: The Triumph and Tragedy of Anson's Voyage round the World*, London: HarperCollins, 1999, pp. 76–103. For the best (and most recent) scholarly treatment see Peter Hulme, 'Abject in Patagonia: stories from the *Wager*', in Fernanda Peñaloza, Jason Wilson and Claudio Canaparo (eds.), *Patagonia: Myths and Realities*, New York: Peter Lang, 2010, pp. 27–56.

16 Joshua Reynolds, *Captain The Honourable John Byron*, oil on canvas, 1759, Caird Collection, National Maritime Museum, London, object BHC2592. A facsimile is available online at http://www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/displayRepro.cfm?reproID=BHC2592.

Englishmen', mused a contemporary biographer.[17] A successful circumnavigation of the globe between 1764 and 1766 cemented his reputation as a dashing adventurer, and when his epic tale of shipwreck and survival finally appeared in 1768, he was at the pinnacle of his celebrity.

Of the six different accounts of the wreck of the *Wager* published during the eighteenth century, Byron's *Narrative* was by far the most popular.[18] 'It is scarcely possible to trace their miseries without feeling the most exquisite sensibility at every step they make', wrote one reviewer, 'and the heart involuntarily sympathizes with their distress, and throbs at every new danger that they encounter'. The *Gentleman's Magazine* pronounced it 'one of the most extraordinary literary productions that the world has ever seen'. Press coverage across the Anglo-American world was equally positive. Readers praised Byron as an authoritative source on Patagonian culture and pointed to the murder scene as particularly instructive.[19] The book had gone through at least twelve editions by the end of the century. It was well known among maritime explorers for the next hundred years and provided satiric fodder for the grandson's poem *Don Juan*.[20]

17 'Histories of the tête-à-tête annexed; or, memoirs of the nautical lover and Miss Betsy G–n', *Town and Country Magazine, or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment*, December 1773, p. 625; 'Memoirs of the Honourable John Byron, Vice Admiral of the White', *Hibernian Magazine, Or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge*, November, December 1778, January 1779, pp. 593–594, 654–655, 35–37; 'Some account of the life and adventures of the Hon. John Byron, Vice-Admiral of the Blue, and Commander in Chief of the British Fleet which now blocks up that of France in the Island of Martinique', *Westminster Magazine*, July–August 1779, pp. 331–335, 393–396; John Charnock, *Biographia Navalis; or, Impartial Memoirs of the Lives and Characters of Officers of the Navy of Great Britain, from the Year 1660 to the Present Time; Drawn from the Most Authentic Sources, and Disposed in a Chronological Arrangement*, 6 vols., London: R. Faulder, 1797, vol. 5, pp. 423–439; A.L. Rowse, *The Byrons and Trevanions*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978, pp. 130–139. On the link between sexual and imperial conquest see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

18 The other five were Bulkeley and Cummins, op. cit. (13); Alexander Campbell, *The Sequel to Bulkeley and Cummins's Voyage to the South Seas*, London: W. Owen, 1747; [Walter and Robins], op. cit. (13); Isaac Morris, *A Narrative of the Dangers and Difficulties Which Befel Isaac Morris, and Seven More of the Crew, Belonging to the Wager Store-Ship, Which Attended Commodore Anson, In His Voyage to the South Sea*, London: S. Birt, 1750; John Young, *An Affecting Narrative of the Unfortunate Voyage and Catastrophe of His Majesty's Ship Wager*, London: John Norwood, 1751.

19 *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1768*, London: J. Dodsley, 1786, p. 261; *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1768, p. 233; *Royal Magazine*, May 1768, pp. 221–226; *Critical Review, or Annals of Literature*, May 1768, pp. 334–344; *Political Register, and Impartial Review of New Books*, June 1768, pp. 404–405; *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, June 1768, pp. 281–287; *Scots Magazine*, July 1768, pp. 357–360; *Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement*, 7, 14, 21 July 1768; *Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 6 October 1768; *Monthly Review*, October 1768, pp. 319–320; *Gentlemen and Ladies' Town and Country Magazine*, May, June, August, September 1789, pp. 175–176, 251–253, 355–356, 409–410. On the significance of the murder story for contemporary readers see John Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*, London: John Murray, 1771, pp. 96–97; John Fawcett, *An Essay on Anger*, Leeds: Thomas Wright, 1787, pp. 80–81; [Robert John Thornton], *The Politician's Creed*, 3 vols., London: Robinsons, 1799, vol. 1, pp. 10–11; Orr, op. cit. (3), pp. 137–138; McDonagh, op. cit. (3), pp. 45–46.

20 [George Gordon Byron], *Don Juan*, London: Thomas Davison, 1819, p. 187. For the narrative's enduring appeal see 'The wreck of the Wager: shewing the improved state of naval discipline of late years', *United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal* (1842) 1, pp. 161–177; John D. Post, *The United States Reader . . . For the Use of Schools*, New Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1842, p. 252; Thomas Sutcliffe,

Byron's narrative continues to appeal to modern audiences. Twentieth-century novelist Patrick O'Brian used it almost exclusively in his fictionalized account of the *Wager* disaster, including the murder of the child, which he recommended as 'an almost perfect exhibition of savagery and the cult of toughness'. Byron served as the prototype for one of O'Brian's most popular characters, the fearless Captain Jack Aubrey (played by Russell Crowe in the 2003 film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*).[21] But the authenticity of Byron's published account is dubious at best, and his encounter with a homicidal benefactor during his journey to Chiloé is difficult to substantiate. A close reading of the surviving evidence makes it hard to accept his narrative at face value. In fact, there is significant evidence to suggest that portions of his story are exaggerated, if not outright fabrications.

Byron had a reputation for stretching the truth, a bad habit that became increasingly evident later in his career. During a subsequent voyage to Patagonia, he claimed to have discovered a mythical race of eight-foot-tall indigenous 'giants'. The reports created a sensation throughout Europe and captivated the scientists of the Royal Society, who encouraged the next generation of ship captains to carry measuring implements on their journeys to the southern hemisphere. Although no concrete evidence emerged to authenticate their existence, tales of Patagonian giants remained deeply embedded in the public imagination for decades, and when contemporary authors inflated the details of Byron's encounter to an absurd degree, offering a chance for self-correction or repudiation, he did nothing to stop them. If a letter published by the Welsh naturalist Thomas Pennant is accurate, Byron was still defending his account of the tribe's 'amazing size' at the end of his life.[22]

Crusoniana; Or, Truth Versus Fiction, Elucidated in a History of the Islands of Juan Fernandez, Manchester: P. Grant, 1843, pp. 113–191; John Byron, *Foul Weather Jack: Being the Narrative of the Hon. John Byron, Etc.*, London: John Neale, 1844; Alan Gurney (ed.), *The Loss of the Wager: The Narratives of John Bulkeley and the Hon. John Byron*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004, pp. vii–xvi.

21 Patrick O'Brian, *The Unknown Shore*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996, p. 254.

22 [Horace Walpole], *An Account of the Giants Lately Discovered: In a letter to a Friend in the Country*, London: F. Noble, 1766; *A Voyage Round the World, In His Majesty's Ship the Dolphin, Commanded by the Honourable Commodore Byron . . . by an Officer on Board the said Ship*, London: J. Newbery and F. Newbery, 1767; Abbé Coyer, *A Letter to Doctor Maty, Secretary of the Royal Society*, London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, 1767; Charles Clarke, 'An account of the very tall men, seen near the Streights of Magellan, in the Year 1764, by the equipage of the *Dolphin* Man of War, under the Command of the Hon. Commodore Byron', *Philosophical Transactions, Giving some Account of the Present Undertakings, Studies, and Labours, of the Ingenious, in Many Considerable Parts of the World* (1767) 57, pp. 75–79; John Hawkesworth (ed.), *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere, and Successively Performed by Commodore Byron, Captain Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook, in the Dolphin, the Swallow, and the Endeavour*, 3 vols., London: W. Strahan; and T. Cadell, 1773, vol. 1, pp. 2–139; David Henry (ed.), *An Historical Account of all the Voyages Round the World, Performed by English Navigators; Including Those Lately Undertaken by Order of His Present Majesty*, 4 vols., London: F. Newbery, 1773, vol. 3, pp. 1–51; Thomas Pennant, *Of the Patagonians*, Darlington: George Allan, 1788, p. 16; Helen Wallis, 'The Patagonian giants', in Robert E. Gallagher (ed.), *Byron's Journal of his Circumnavigation, 1764–1766*, Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1964, pp. 185–196; Jean-Paul Duviols, 'The Patagonian "giants"', in Colin McEwan, Luis A. Borrero and Alfredo Prieto (eds.), *Patagonia: Natural History, Prehistory and Ethnography at the Uttermost End of the Earth*, London: British Museum Press, 1997, pp. 127–139.

Literary historian Percy Adams considers Byron a minor offender in the giant craze, but the latter's tacit endorsement of the myth casts serious doubt on his credibility as a witness. Byron fits the definition of the 'travel liar', part of a thriving group of early modern adventure writers who competed with the likes of Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift. The only scholar to publish a comprehensive, comparative analysis of the various *Wager* narratives agrees that Byron 'was given to extraordinary exaggeration and distortion'.[23] To make matters worse, while there are authentic manuscript journals of Byron's later travels to South America, no notes or other documentary evidence are known to exist for his *Wager* narrative.[24] It seems likely, in fact, that he wrote entirely from memory, augmenting or embellishing earlier published accounts wherever he saw fit.

A careful reading of Byron's narrative reveals that he plagiarized heavily from fellow survivor Alexander Campbell, also a midshipman serving on board the *Wager*.[25] Campbell was among the few to remain with Captain Cheap after the final departure of the mutineers, and he published his own account of the northward journey of the loyalist faction. Printed in London in 1747, more than twenty years before Byron's version, Campbell's narrative contained few of the latter's dramatic flourishes or colourful details, and it failed to gain a wide readership. Rumours that its author had converted to Catholicism and defected to the Spanish did not aid the book's popularity in Protestant England.[26] No subsequent editions were published, and there is very little mention of it anywhere by the end of the century. Despite, or perhaps because of, all this, Campbell's narrative is probably much closer to being an accurate description of events.

Campbell remained close to Byron for most of their journey and his account confirms that they met a local chieftain and guide. Circumstantial evidence implies that the guide was a resident of Chiloé, a large island colonized by the Spanish just north of the Chonos Archipelago. Jesuit priest José García, who interviewed indigenous eyewitnesses twenty years after the wreck, suggests that he was a member of the Caucahue nation, adjacent to the Chonos. He appeared to hold an official appointment under the colonial regime, and according to Byron he was accompanied by a 'servant' named Emanuel. García states that the English made the guide 'governor' of the territory. Whatever the case, it is clear that he was a special figure and noticeably distinct from the Fuegian tribes farther south. All reports agree that he spoke the Spanish language and that he participated in regional trade networks with European settlers – which may explain how the Spanish military acquired over a dozen cannons from the wreck of the *Wager*. Campbell identifies the

23 Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660–1800*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, pp. 19–43; Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 53–79, esp. 55.

24 John Byron, 'Journal of the *Dolphin*, 1764–66', Manuscript Collection, National Maritime Museum, London, JOD/58; Gallagher, op. cit. (22).

25 I have identified over three hundred seemingly plagiarized fragments in Byron's narrative, which suggests that Byron used Campbell's book as an outline for his own. They also could be evidence of a forger or ghostwriter.

26 Campbell, op. cit. (18), pp. iii–viii; Williams, op. cit. (15), pp. 98–99, 101–102.

guide as a resident of Chiloé, but does not call him 'Martin' and makes no mention of the death of his young son.[27]

Compared with Byron's vivid recollection of the event decades later, his fellow midshipman's complete silence on the matter is striking. Letters from Captain Cheap and Spanish official Manuel de Guirior, composed after the survivors' arrival in Santiago, also fail to mention the murder. A rambling, ten-page missive sent by Cheap to a British factor in Argentina gives little attention to his indigenous rescuers. For the captain, his mutinous crew were the real barbarians. Even his loyal officers were reduced to a state of savagery, 'exposed to the Inclemency of the Weather, without heat, without cloaths, living in a dirtier manner than the Hottentots'. Obsessed with his imperial mandate, Cheap imagined 'that if half the number of Lice, that we had about us, had been armed men' he could have taken the colony.[28] Campbell completes the inversion. Though he complains of being 'obliged to submit' to indigenous authority, he praises his rescuers for their selfless generosity and suggests that they are morally superior to '*many well-educated* CHRISTIANS!' Father García's oral history also contrasts the ruthless English with 'heathen' altruism.[29]

The youthful, aristocratic Byron, on the other hand, seems to resent deeply his complete dependence on his native benefactors. It must have been a sobering blow for the son of a peer and a junior officer in the imperial Navy to be forced to appeal to an obscure nomadic tribe for food, shelter and geographic knowledge. Several authors have suggested that his later accounts of Patagonian giants were an unconscious manifestation of his humiliating subordination to native prowess.[30] Even worse, according to Byron, his indigenous saviour was a Catholic ally of the Spanish Empire, one of Britain's chief enemies in the American theatre. The image of the brutally homicidal Catholic thus plays a dual role in Byron's narrative – it demonstrates the irreducible savagery of indigenous populations as well as the pious hypocrisy of Spanish colonialism, to be contrasted with

27 José García, 'Diario de viaje i navegación hechos por el padre José García de la Compañía de Jesús desde su misión de Cailín, en Chiloé, hacia el sur en los años 1766–1767', *Anuario Hidrográfico de la Marina de Chile* (1889) 14, pp. 3–42, esp. 26; Byron, op. cit. (1), pp. 103–107; Campbell, op. cit. (18), pp. 52–53, 60; Rodolfo Urbina Burgos, *La Periferia Meridional Indiana: Chiloé en el Siglo XVIII*, Valparaíso: Ediciones Universitarias de Valparaiso, 1983, p. 219. On indigenous groups and the greater Chiloé region see Lorenzo Hervás, *Catalogo delle Lingue Conosciute e Notizia della Loro Affinita, e Diversita*, Cesena: Gregorio Biasini, 1784, p. 16; Rodolfo Urbina Burgos, 'Los Chonos en Chiloé: itinerario y aculturación', *Chiloé: Revista de Divulgación del Centro Chilote* (1988) 9, pp. 29–42. On the ambiguity surrounding the guide's ethnicity see John M. Cooper, *Analytical and Critical Bibliography of the Tribes of Tierra del Fuego and Adjacent Territory*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917, p. 76.

28 David Cheap to Richard Lindsey, 26 February 1744, Additional Manuscripts 35396, Department of Manuscripts, British Library, London (hereafter AM), ff. 192–196, esp. 195; Cheap to Lindsey, 26 March 1744, AM 15955, f. 216; Cheap to George Anson, 12 December 1745, AM 15955, f. 214; 'Extract of a Letter written by a Spanish Officer', *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1745, p. 218. A brief account of the journey to Chiloé, attributed to Cheap, is paraphrased in a longer text, but offers no new information. See John Bulkeley and John Cummins, *A Voyage to the South-Seas, In the Years 1740–1*, 2nd edn, Philadelphia: James Chattin, 1757, pp. 228–235.

29 Campbell, op. cit. (18), pp. 19–20, 58; García, op. cit. (27), p. 26.

30 Edwards, op. cit. (23), p. 78; Chris Moss, *Patagonia: A Cultural History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 67–70; Hulme, op. cit. (15), pp. 27–56. The murder itself is reminiscent of a biblical revenge story: 'Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones'. See Psalms 137:9.

Figure 1. 'Commodore Byron conversing with a Patagonian woman'. The exaggerated size of the Patagonians may have been an attempt to deflect embarrassment at their superior knowledge and skill. Illustration from David Henry (ed.), *An Historical Account of all the Voyages Round the World, Performed by English Navigators; Including Those Lately Undertaken by Order of His Present Majesty*, 4 vols., London: F. Newbery, 1773, vol. 3, facing p. 11.

the nobler example of Protestant England. This geopolitical context, combined with personal feelings of humiliation and resentment, the lack of corroborating evidence, a reputation for exaggeration and the extremely late publication date, renders Byron's story rather unbelievable.

Of course, the possibility remains that something similar to what Byron describes did occur. Western Patagonia was hardly an Arcadian utopia, where child abuse and murder were completely unknown, and no other survivors came forward to challenge the veracity of his account.[31] It is doubtful that we can ever know exactly what happened on the road to Chiloé Island in mid-March 1742. But, in a way, the exact details of this

31 For an intriguing, but very dated, analysis of infanticide and violence in the region see Cooper, op. cit. (27), pp. 171, 174–175.

macabre tale do not matter. What does matter is that Byron's narrative was accepted by a broad reading public and valorized as historical knowledge. As both thrilling adventure story and 'factual' account of the imperial frontier, it became part of the official memory of British encounters with the wider world. And a hundred years later it appealed to a fledgling naturalist as he attempted to make sense of his own international journey.

The naturalist

When Charles Darwin arrived at the southern tip of Tierra del Fuego in late December 1832, he was not the first European traveller to stand in awe of its primal wildness or marvel at its rugged, copper-toned inhabitants.[32] But there was still a certain romance in the experience, an initial rush of excitement that came with the encounter. The Yahgan people of the Cape Horn Archipelago captured his attention almost immediately. Also known as the Yagán or Yámana, they wore little clothing, spoke an unusual language, and had no system of government, no chiefs and no concept of private property. Although Darwin used the term 'Fuegian' as shorthand for a number of indigenous ethnic groups, his most extensive contacts were with the Yahgan.[33] They show up again and again in his writing, over a period of more than forty years, and he became convinced that they offered a living window on the prehistory of human civilization. 'The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me', he wrote at the end of *The Descent of Man*, 'for the reflection at once rushed into my mind – such were our ancestors'.[34]

In the second edition of his *Journal of Researches*, published thirteen years after his initial encounter, Darwin dwelled at length on the stark primitiveness of the Yahgans and theorized that their semi-nomadic lifestyle was responsible, in part, for their lack of societal development.[35] Because of the jagged, irregular terrain along the coast, 'they are

32 Tierra del Fuego and the Cape Horn Archipelago bordered a popular route for explorers and whaling vessels on their way to Asia and the South Pacific. See Francis Allyn Olmsted, 'Journal of a Voyage around Cape Horn, 1840', General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, vol. 151; Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition. During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*, 5 vols., Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845, vol. 1, pp. 119–129.

33 For ethnographic details on the Yahgans and their encounters with Europeans, see Michael Taussig, 'Tierra del Fuego – land of fire, land of mimicry', in McEwan, Borrero and Prieto, op. cit. (22), pp. 153–172. On Darwin's experience in Tierra del Fuego, see Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin: The Life of a Tormented Evolutionist*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991, pp. 132–148; Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin: A Biography*, 2 vols., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995–2002, vol. 1, pp. 234–253; Chapman, op. cit. (7), pp. 7–8, pp. 67–102.

34 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols., London: John Murray, 1871, vol. 2, p. 404. On Darwin's thoughts about the Fuegians in later life see Peter J. Bowler, 'From "savage" to "primitive": Victorian evolutionism and the interpretation of marginalized peoples', *Antiquity* (1992) 66, pp. 721–729; Jorge Martínez-Contreras, 'Darwin's apes and "savages"', *Comptes rendus biologies* (2010) 333, pp. 166–173; Gregory Radick, 'Did Darwin change his mind about the Fuegians?', *Endeavour* (2010) 34, pp. 50–54.

35 Darwin also believed that Fuegian egalitarianism and lack of private property would 'prevent their civilization'. See Taussig, op. cit. (33), pp. 171–172; Chapman, op. cit. (7), pp. 37–65. On the decision to expand the section on the Fuegians in the second edition of the *Journal* see Charles Darwin to John Murray,

compelled unceasingly to wander from spot to spot' in search of nourishment, and a crude form of patriarchal oppression only compounded their misery. 'They cannot know the feeling of having a home, and still less that of domestic affection', he wrote, 'for the husband is to the wife a brutal master to a laborious slave'. Darwin cited not his own research, but a much earlier anecdote, to substantiate this claim of filial iniquity. 'Was a more horrid deed ever perpetrated', he asked, 'than that witnessed on the west coast by Byron, who saw a wretched mother pick up her bleeding dying infant-boy, whom her husband had mercilessly dashed on the stones for dropping a basket of sea-eggs!'[36] Even if it did happen hundreds of miles away, outside the boundaries of Tierra del Fuego, and involve a completely different ethno-social group, it is a startling interjection. To understand its true meaning, it is necessary to delve much deeper into the young naturalist's ideas about savagery and civilization, his opinions on slavery and race, and his intellectual relationships with other authors.

'The Other is rarely met in a present divorced from all the meetings that have gone before', argues maritime historian Greg Dening.[37] This was especially true for Darwin, whose voyages at home and abroad were deeply structured by a long list of predecessors and heroes. Darwin had a penchant for travel books. Like many nineteenth-century Britons, he devoured Mungo Park's thrilling tales of adventure and discovery on the African frontier, and he cherished his early edition of Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative*.[38] An epic chronicle of scientific observation and exploration in the American wilderness, Humboldt's *Narrative* celebrated the romance of total immersion in the natural world, and Darwin claimed to have read it 'over and over again'.[39] The *Beagle* itself was a floating library, with adventure tales and travelogues figuring

[6 June 1845], in Frederick H. Burkhardt *et al.* (eds.), *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, vols. 1–18, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–2010, vol. 3, p. 204.

36 Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round the World, Under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy, R.N.*, 2nd edn. London: John Murray, 1845, pp. 215–216.

37 Greg Dening, 'The theatricality of observing and being observed: eighteenth-century Europe "discovers" the ? century "Pacific"', in Stuart B. Schwartz (ed.), *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 451–483, esp. p. 464.

38 On Park, see Charles Darwin to Emma Wedgwood, 6–7 January 1839, in Burkhardt *et al.*, op. cit. (35), vol. 2, pp. 159–160; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 67–83. On Darwin's early interest in travelogues, see Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 28–29. On the significance of heroic travel narratives for science history more generally, see Mary Terrall, 'Heroic narratives of quest and discovery', *Configurations* (1998) 6, pp. 223–242.

39 Charles Darwin to Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt, 1 November 1839, in Burkhardt *et al.*, op. cit. (35), vol. 2, pp. 239–240, esp. 240. On Humboldt's influence see Aaron Sachs, *The Humboldt Current: Nineteenth-Century Exploration and the Roots of American Environmentalism*, New York: Viking, 2006, pp. 41–72; Nigel Leask, 'Darwin's "second sun": Alexander von Humboldt and the genesis of *The Voyage of the Beagle*', in Helen Small and Trudi Tate (eds.), *Literature, Science, Psychoanalysis, 1830–1970: Essays in Honour of Gillian Beer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 13–36; Robert J. Richards, 'Darwin's romantic biology: the foundation of his evolutionary ethics', in Jane Maienschein and Michael Ruse (eds.), *Biology and the Foundation of Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 113–153. For a contrasting view see Michael Ruse, 'The romantic conception of Robert J. Richards', *Journal of the History of Biology* (2004) 37, pp. 3–23.

prominently among the 'immense stock' of books crammed into Darwin's cabin. And his travelling companion, the brooding and enigmatic Captain Robert FitzRoy, encouraged his pursuits.[40]

Largely forgotten and rarely studied in depth today, FitzRoy's account of the *Beagle* expedition appeared simultaneously with the first edition of Darwin's *Journal* and provided some of the raw material for the latter's scientific investigations. FitzRoy eagerly discussed Byron's story, which shows up in the middle of his chapter on the 'Horse Indians of Patagonia', and even reprinted the famous passage from Byron's narrative in a separate appendix.[41] Darwin marked the passage in his copy of the appendix, and since he does not mention the murder in his manuscript diary of the voyage or in the first published edition of his *Journal*, he almost certainly lifted it directly from FitzRoy when preparing the second edition of his *Journal* in 1845.[42] Another account, by Phillip Parker King, renowned surveyor and commander of the first *Beagle* expedition (1826–1830), no doubt fuelled the curiosity of both men. King alluded to a Fuegian who had 'killed his child for a most trifling offence'. He also retraced the *Wager* crew's journey to Chiloé and interviewed a man there who still recalled 'Don Juan' (Byron) and 'Don David' (Captain Cheap). FitzRoy, clearly impressed by King's detective work, added several footnotes to the text.[43]

40 Charles Darwin to John Henslow, 9 [September 1831], in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, pp. 148–150, esp. 149; Robert FitzRoy to Darwin, 23 September 1831, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, p. 167. For a partial catalogue of the *Beagle* library see Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, pp. 553–566. On FitzRoy's turbulent career and personal life see Peter Nichols, *Evolution's Captain: The Dark Fate of the Man Who Sailed Charles Darwin around the World*, New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

41 Robert FitzRoy, *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle between the Years 1826 and 1836, Describing their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America, and the Beagle's Circumnavigation of the Globe. Volume II. Proceedings of the Second Expedition, 1831–1836*, London: Henry Colburn, 1839, pp. 144, 154–155, appendix, pp. 130–131.

42 Darwin completed the first draft of his *Journal* in 1837, two years before FitzRoy's volume appeared carrying Byron's story. See R.B. Freeman, *The Works of Charles Darwin: An Annotated Bibliographical Handlist*, Folkestone: Dawson, 1977, pp. 32–34; Richard Darwin Keynes (ed.), *Charles Darwin's Beagle Diary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Charles Darwin, *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle between the Years 1826 and 1836, Describing their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America, and the Beagle's Circumnavigation of the Globe. Volume III. Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836*, London: Henry Colburn, 1839; Mario A. Di Gregorio and N.W. Gill (eds.), *Charles Darwin's Marginalia*, vol. 1, New York: Garland Publishing, 1990, p. 230. Although Byron's narrative is listed among the books Darwin consulted on the *Beagle*, it is unclear whether or to what extent he read the book during the voyage. A passing reference in Darwin's zoology notebook is offered as proof, but the reference is to Byron's 1764–1766 circumnavigation, not his *Wager* narrative. A quote from Byron scrawled on the back of another notebook page is more promising, though hardly conclusive. See Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, p. 559; Richard Keynes (ed.), *Charles Darwin's Zoology Notes & Specimen Lists from H.M.S.* Beagle, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 181; Hawkesworth, op. cit. (22), vol. 1, p. 17; Charles Darwin, 'Chonos and Tres Montes', Darwin Papers, Manuscripts Department, Cambridge University Library, DAR 35: 233–258, esp. 235v.

43 P. Parker King, *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships Adventure and Beagle between the Years 1826 and 1836, Describing their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America, and the Beagle's Circumnavigation of the Globe. Volume I. Proceedings of the First Expedition, 1826–1830*, London: Henry Colburn, 1839, p. 95, pp. 323–331, esp. 327. King also discusses Byron's narrative in a earlier work. See Phillip Parker King, *Sailing Directions for the Coasts of Eastern and Western Patagonia, from Port St. Elena on*

Unlike Darwin, FitzRoy did not view Byron's tale in the moralistic terms of domestic oppression. He offered it, instead, as evidence of the inherent bloodthirstiness of indigenous populations and the danger they posed to hapless Europeans. 'Neither man, woman, wife, nor even a smiling innocent child', he opined, 'is safe from that tiger in human shape – a savage in a rage'. Indigenous groups were not entirely evil, according to FitzRoy, and he provided numerous examples of their strong fidelity to their children. But, in his opinion, this was exactly the point. They lacked the allegedly superior European capacity for emotional restraint. Thus 'the man who, in a moment of passion, dashed his own child against the rocks, would, at any other time, have been the most daring, the most enduring, and the most self-devoted in its support and defence!'[44] Interestingly, Darwin borrowed this theme from FitzRoy, not in his *Journal*, but over three decades later in *The Descent of Man*, when he repeated the captain's injunction to 'never, never, trust the Indians'.[45]

Other travellers echoed FitzRoy's view of the mercurial relationship between aboriginal parents and their offspring. According to Thomas Edward Coffin, who lived among a Fuegian group (probably the Alacaluf) after a devastating shipwreck in 1855, 'maternal instincts were not very strong' and both parents would administer beatings to their children.[46] But most visitors could not help noticing a powerful and deep bond between family members. Husbands 'show a good deal of affection for their wives, and are careful of their offspring', wrote English sailor James Weddell in 1827. When surprised by foreigners, he observed, parents clutched their young in their arms to prevent them from being stolen. John MacDouall, a participant in the first *Beagle* expedition that same year, found the Fuegians 'very affectionate to their children'. Fathers 'evince considerable fondness for their wives and children', agreed American explorer Benjamin Morrell in 1832, and veteran sailor William Parker Snow found that little had changed a quarter of a century later. 'They were very fond of their children', Snow wrote after a visit among the Yahgans, 'and any notice we took of the little ones always gave them pleasure'. Snow was confident enough in their filial affection to conclude that 'a child in [his] arms' would be a good shield against a sudden attack or ambush. Indeed, the frontispiece of his memoir depicts a Fuegian woman holding her infant child by the hand, both cheerfully domestic and safely ensconced in a prelapsarian paradise.[47]

the East Side, to Cape Tres Montes on the West Side; Including the Strait of Magalhaens, and the Sea Coast of Tierra del Fuego, London: Hydrographical Office, Admiralty, 1832, pp. 123–125.

44 FitzRoy, op. cit. (41), pp. 154–155.

45 Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, p. 95; FitzRoy, op. cit. (41), p. 154.

46 P.A. Hanaford, *The Captive Boy in Terra del Fuego: Being an Authentic Narrative of the Loss of the Ship Manchester, and the Adventures of the Sole White Survivor*, New York: Carlton & Porter, 1867, pp. 208–209; Wilkes, op. cit. (32), vol. 1, p. 126; R.W. Coppinger, *Cruise of the 'Alert.' Four Years in Patagonian, Polynesian, and Mascarene Waters*, London: W. Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1883, p. 51.

47 James Weddell, *A Voyage towards the South Pole, Performed in the Years 1822–24. Containing an Examination of the Antarctic Sea, to the Seventy-Fourth Degree of Latitude: And a Visit to Terra del Fuego, with a Particular Account of the Inhabitants*, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827, pp. 156–157; John MacDouall, *Narrative of a Voyage to Patagonia and Terra del Fuégo, through the Straits of Magellan, in H.M.S. Adventure and Beagle, in 1826 and 1827*, London: Renshaw and Rush, 1833, p. 108; Benjamin Morrell, *A Narrative of Four Voyages to the South Sea, North and South Pacific Ocean, Chinese Sea, Ethiopic and Southern Atlantic Ocean, Indian and Antarctic Ocean*, New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832, p. 97;

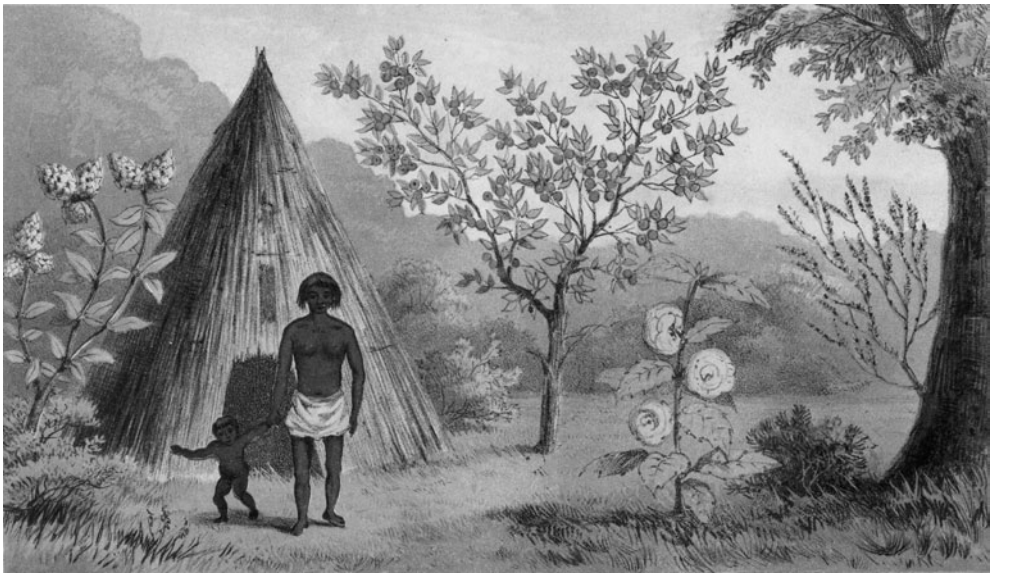

Figure 2. 'Woman of Fuegia and child'. The conical hut in the background, like much early ethnographic information about the Yahgans, represents an artist's fanciful interpolation. Illustration from W. Parker Snow, *A Two Years' Cruise off Tierra del Fuego, The Falkland Islands, Patagonia, and in the River Plate*, 2 vols., London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857, vol. 1, frontispiece.

These reports, situated in a variety of times and contexts, provide a radically different perspective on the moral anarchy described by Darwin and FitzRoy. They all involve some degree of wishful exaggeration, vestiges of noble savagery soon to be eclipsed by the teleology of the degraded 'primitive'. Still, the authors are remarkably consistent in their observations, and when considered together they point to an important reality: domestic affection was a cornerstone of Fuegian society.[48] Even if there were occasional incidents of child abuse, there is no contemporary evidence to support the claim of depraved indifference to murder. So why did Darwin feel the need to draw on an example from another century, featuring a Catholic colonial official from Chiloé, to construct generalizations about the Yahgans he encountered over eight hundred miles away in Tierra del Fuego? Why choose this particular story?

Both Darwin and FitzRoy were probably responding to contemporary social and political pressures that placed added cultural significance on the death of infant children.

W. Parker Snow, *A Two Years' Cruise off Tierra del Fuego, The Falkland Islands, Patagonia, and in the River Plate*, 2 vols., London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857, vol. 1, pp. 349, 362–363; Joseph G. Clark, *Lights and Shadows of Sailor Life, as Exemplified in Fifteen Years' Experience*, Boston: John Putnam, 1847, pp. 44–45.

48 It is worth remembering that the concept of the noble savage was applied retroactively to bolster a new view of marginalized people as perverse anachronisms. See Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. On domestic affection see Martin Gusinde, *Los Indios de Tierra del Fuego,* book 3, vol. 2, Buenos Aires: CAEA, 1991, pp. 375–376.

An estimated thirty-four percent of all murders in England and Wales between 1838 and 1840 involved children under the age of one, and that number would climb as high as sixty-one percent by 1864. The precise origin of this troublesome epidemic remains obscure, although most commentators point to the growing urban population and economic hardship precipitated by the Industrial Revolution.[49] Whatever the causes, British subjects were becoming increasingly aware of the problem of infanticide by the middle decades of the nineteenth century and published a growing number of newspaper articles and pamphlets on the topic that were rife with class-based anxieties about the urban poor. One incensed author observed that the London Police 'think no more of finding the dead body of a child in the street than of picking up a dead cat or dog'.[50] It is ironic to think that travellers would fixate on a single act of murder among a foreign population when so many more children were being killed on a daily basis at the very heart of the 'civilized' world. But, as was so often the case with imperial encounters, 'the colonized abroad and the poor at home occupied similar moral space'.[51]

The new level of attention directed to the death of small children was only one component of a larger revolution in the perception of violence in Victorian England. As cultural historian J. Carter Wood has shown, 'violence as a social idea was "invented"' during this period, 'becoming a key cultural concern and increasingly urgent topic for discussion and analysis'. The discovery of new forms of 'savagery', both at home and abroad, played a vital role in this process, offering a nemesis image through which 'civilized' society could be defined and affirmed.[52] Darwin was clearly working within this paradigm when discussing Byron's story. The murder also resonated on a personal level. By the time the second edition of his *Journal* appeared in 1845, Darwin's family included four children: William (aged five), Anne (four), Henrietta (two), and George (newborn). A daughter, Mary, had died in infancy a few years earlier. The naturalist's children were a cornerstone of his world, as well as raw data for his observational experiments; and the experience of fatherhood informed his work in subtle ways.[53]

Darwin returned to the subject of infanticide in *The Descent of Man*. It was, he argued, a relatively recent and 'perverted' instinct, not found among 'the lower animals',

49 R. Sauer, 'Infanticide and abortion in nineteenth-century Britain', *Population Studies* (1978) 32, pp. 81–93, esp. 81; Lionel Rose, *The Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain, 1800–1939*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986, p. 8. I am indebted to Cathy Monholland for these references. See Cathy S. Monholland, 'Infanticide in Victorian England, 1856–1878: thirty legal cases', MA thesis, Rice University, 1989, pp. 18–20. An 'infant' in contemporary parlance meant 'A child from the birth to the end of the seventh year'. See Samuel Johnson *et al.*, *Johnson's English Dictionary*, Boston: Nathan Hale, 1835, p. 509.

50 M.A. Baines, 'A few thoughts concerning infanticide', *Journal of Social Science* (1866) 10, pp. 535–540, esp. 535, quoted in Monholland, op. cit. (49), p. 21. See also Jennifer Thorn (ed.), *Writing British Infanticide: Child-Murder, Gender, and Print, 1722–1859*, London: Associated University Presses, 2003.

51 Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, 'Introduction: British identities, indigenous peoples, and the empire', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600–1850*, London: UCL Press, 1999, p. 4.

52 J. Carter Wood, 'A useful savagery: the invention of violence in nineteenth-century England', *Journal of Victorian Culture* (2004) 9, pp. 22–42, esp. 24.

53 Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (33), pp. 303–304, 287, 289, 312, 327; Randal Keynes, *Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter and Human Evolution*, London: Fourth Estate, 2001.

and was practised by 'barbarians' in order to alleviate the pressures of overpopulation in the struggle for existence.[54] The displacement of this phenomenon to indigenous populations abroad might have been Darwin's way of dealing with more pressing social anxieties at home – part of a carefully delineated moral geography of violence. It is possible that he noticed more areas of similarity between allegedly 'civilized' nineteenth-century Europeans and these seemingly prehistoric 'barbarians' than he was later willing to admit. Still, it is difficult to ignore the stark contrast between primitiveness and civilization that remains so explicit in all of his work. There is a latent polygenism in his depiction of the unnaturally perverse savage, 'a quality of feeling' that appears to run counter to his empirical defence of the common descent of all life.[55]

There is more to this story than just the naturalist echoing the captain echoing the castaway. It is tempting to conclude that these passages reveal Darwin the imperialist, or Darwin the 'social Darwinist' hard at work, carefully reinforcing the distance between the colonizer and the exotic other, laying the intellectual foundation for the genocides and holocausts yet to come. The controversy sparked by historian Richard Weikart's book *From Darwin to Hitler* points to the danger of exaggerating such claims. At the same time, the idea that Darwin's legacy 'turned predation into a sacrament', setting the stage for 'enormous crimes against non-Europeans', is common enough to warrant concern.[56] Could this be an example of Darwin applying evolutionary logic to make value judgements about social behaviour, a tacit endorsement of predatory morality?

Like Byron's account of the wreck of the *Wager*, there can be no doubt that Darwin's observations were deeply implicated in the imperial project. As recent scholarship has shown, the complex systems of trade and dominion established by European empires both shaped and were shaped by centuries of scientific voyages stretching back to the age of Columbus. Science and empire are mutually constitutive, and scientists' encounters with foreign populations played a key role in the development and solidification of racial hierarchies.[57] Even the seemingly innocuous act of natural history, writes Gillian Beer,

54 Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, pp. 134–135, vol. 2, pp. 363–365. Darwin acknowledged the role of infanticide among 'lower' animals, under exceptional circumstances, in the *Origin of Species*, but appeared less concerned with this nuance in *Descent*. See McDonagh, op. cit. (3), pp. 160–161, 170–171.

55 On Darwin's need to denaturalize 'savage' conduct see Ian Duncan, 'Darwin and the Savages', *Yale Journal of Criticism* (1991) 4, pp. 13–45, esp. 25; Rosemary Jann, 'Darwin and the anthropologists: sexual selection and its discontents', *Victorian Studies* (1994) 37, pp. 287–306; Schmitt, op. cit. (11), pp. 32–56.

56 Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004; Robert P. Forbes, '"Truth systematized": the changing debate over slavery and abolition, 1761–1916', in Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stauffer (eds.), *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, New York: The New Press, 2006, pp. 3–22, esp. 19. For some highlights of the Weikart controversy see Andrew Zimmerman, review of *From Darwin to Hitler* by Richard Weikart, *American Historical Review* (2005) 110, pp. 566–567; Hector Avalos, 'Creationists for genocide', *Talk Reason*, 24 August 2007, available at http://www.talkreason.org/articles/Genocide.cfm; Robert J. Richards, 'Myth 19: that Darwin and Haeckel were complicit in Nazi biology', in Ronald L. Numbers (ed.), *Galileo Goes to Jail, and Other Myths about Science and Religion*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 170–177.

57 Robert A. Stafford, 'Scientific exploration and Empire', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3: *The Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 294–319; James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew (eds.), *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World*, New York: Routledge, 2008. On the relationship between scientific voyages and racial formation see Bronwen Douglas and Chris

could be 'an expression of the will to control, categorize, occupy and bring home the prize of samples and of strategic information'.[58] Yet this line of analysis tends to distort the nuance of Darwin's position. Convincing in macro-historical terms, accusations of imperialist subjugation fail to account for potentially subversive narratives embedded in scientific encounters.

The social Darwinist label, although attractive, can be anachronistic and misleading. Popularized during the Second World War by historian Richard Hofstadter to explain various intellectual currents in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States, it has since become a kind of vernacular shorthand for the ethical pitfalls of extreme biological reductionism. Applied to earlier time periods, however, the phrase holds little explanatory power.[59] Most scholars acknowledge that biologically reductive and culturally chauvinist social theories were around long before Darwin's rise to fame. In fact, Darwin's own assumptions about the evolutionary trajectory of civilization mirrored contemporary texts by Herbert Spencer, Francis Galton and Alfred Russel Wallace, among others.[60] Evolutionary naturalism carried powerful social implications. But Darwin's views on the philosophical and political significance of his theories could be frustratingly obscure, if not contradictory, allowing readers to choose whatever fragments reinforced their own predetermined beliefs.[61]

Ballard (eds.), *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race, 1750–1940*, Canberra ACT: Australian National University E Press, 2008.

58 Gillian Beer, 'Travelling the other way: travel narratives and truth claims', in McEwan, Borrero and Prieto, op. cit. (22), pp. 140–152, esp. 143. For compelling arguments in support of Beer's statement see Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; Sarah Irving, *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire*, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008.

59 Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought, 1860–1915*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944. On the utility of social Darwinism as both category of analysis and blanket pejorative see Donald C. Bellomy, '"Social Darwinism" revisited', *Perspectives in American History* (1984) 1, pp. 1–129; Jim Moore, 'Socializing Darwinism: historiography and the fortunes of a phrase', in Les Levidow (ed.), *Science as Politics*, London: Free Association Books, 1986, pp. 38–80; Richard J. Evans, 'In search of German social Darwinism: the history and historiography of a concept', in Manfred Berg and Geoffrey Cocks (eds.), *Medicine and Modernity: Public Health and Medical Care in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 55–79; Thomas C. Leonard, 'Origins of the myth of social Darwinism: the ambiguous legacy of Richard Hofstadter's *Social Darwinism in American Thought*', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* (2009) 71, pp. 37–51.

60 John C. Greene, 'Darwin as a social evolutionist', *Journal of the History of Biology* (1977) 10, pp. 1–27; Robert J. Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 20–330.

61 David Kohn, 'Darwin's ambiguity: the secularization of biological meaning', *BJHS* (1989) 22, pp. 215–239; James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870–1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 157–161; Greene, op. cit. (60), pp. 2–3, 25–26. The question of Darwin's relationship with biological determinism remains hotly contested. For an impressively nuanced account of Darwin's non-reductive naturalism see Richards, op. cit. (60), pp. 71–242. For a more critical view see Richard Weikart, 'Was Darwin or Spencer the father of laissez-faire social Darwinism?', *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* (2009) 71, pp. 20–28. For an excellent introduction to the voluminous literature on this topic see Douglas Allchin, 'Was Darwin a social Darwinist?', *American Biology Teacher* (2007) 69, pp. 49–51.

It is not difficult to find condescending, even overtly racist, vocabulary scattered throughout Darwin's published material. He sometimes spoke of 'higher races' and 'lower races'. And, like almost all of his contemporaries, he believed that indigenous populations were doomed to extinction as a direct result of their contact with Europeans. 'The varieties of man seem to act on each other in the same way as different species of animals', he wrote in his *Journal*, 'the stronger always extirpating the weaker'.[62] Encounters on the Argentine pampas, where colonists engaged in a war of extermination against their indigenous rivals, left a bitter taste and a lasting impression, and the language of colonialism, of civilized and savage, competition and displacement, progress and paternalism, crept almost imperceptively onto the pages of his books. Ironically, as historian Dane Kennedy points out, some of Darwin's more rigidly racist colleagues were more critical of colonial efforts to subvert indigenous cultures.[63]

Darwin's personal chauvinism becomes strikingly clear when narrating his encounters with the Fuegians: 'I never saw more miserable creatures', he wrote in his *Beagle* diary, 'stunted in their growth, their hideous faces bedaubed with white paint & quite naked ... their red skins filthy & greasy, their hair entangled, their voices discordant, their gesticulation violent & without any dignity'. Boyish curiosity mixed with revulsion to create an almost lurid vision of the exotic, 'Man in his primitive wildness', virtually incomprehensible. 'Viewing such men', he famously reflected, 'one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow creatures placed in the same world'.[64] These statements echoed similar, if harsher, remarks by contemporary travellers, who branded Yahgans 'the most hideously ugly race in the world', 'imbecile in intellect & weak in body', 'destitute of the human quality of reason', the adults 'a large ourangoutang' and their children 'like a little baboon with its head shaved'. Even the Fuegians who accompanied the *Beagle* expedition showed signs of ethnocentrism, referring to other tribes as 'monkeys ... not men'.[65] But Darwin's thoughts on racial difference were

62 Darwin, op. cit. (36), p. 435; *idem*, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, pp. 201, 236–240; Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 164–188; Gillian Beer, 'Darwin and the uses of extinction', *Victorian Studies* (2009) 51, pp. 321–331.

63 Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005, pp. 131–163. For an overview of Darwin's strongly 'meliorist' paternalism see Stephen Jay Gould, 'The moral state of Tahiti – and of Darwin', in *idem, Eight Little Piggies: Reflections in Natural History*, New York: Norton, 1993, pp. 262–274; Janet Browne, 'Missionaries and the human mind: Charles Darwin and Robert FitzRoy', in MacLeod and Rehbock, op. cit. (10), pp. 263–282. For colonial tropes in Darwin's thought see Tony Barta, 'Mr Darwin's shooters: on natural selection and the naturalizing of genocide', *Patterns of Prejudice* (2005) 39, pp. 116–137.

64 Keynes, op. cit. (42), p. 222; Charles Darwin to Caroline Darwin, 30 March–12 April 1833, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, pp. 302–306; Darwin to John Henslow, 11 April 1833, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, pp. 306–309, esp. 306; Darwin to Charles Whitley, 23 July 1834, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 1, pp. 396–397. The 'hideous faces' passage is reproduced in the second edition of the *Journal*, minus the creationist rhetoric. See Darwin, op. cit. (36), p. 213.

65 William Reynolds to Lydia Reynolds, 22 May 1839, in Anne Hoffman Cleaver and E. Jeffrey Stann (eds.), *Voyage to the Southern Ocean: The Letters of Lieutenant William Reynolds from the U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838–1842*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988, pp. 50–67, esp. 63; Silas Holmes, 'Journal', 3 vols., Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter WAC), vol. 1, pp. 69–71, esp. 70; Joseph Underwood, 'Journal of a Cruise in the U.S.S. Relief',

unusually complex, and as the qualifier 'hardly' suggests, many of his conclusions tend to undermine the more prosaic social theorists upon whom he sometimes relied.

Darwin's use of the term 'laborious slave' to explain the status of the mother in his discussion of Byron's story is extremely significant and indicative of a powerful moral undercurrent that runs throughout his work. As Desmond and Moore point out, Darwin was an intense, almost visceral, opponent of chattel slavery. Like his intellectual hero, Alexander von Humboldt, he was convinced of the natural 'unity of the human species', and close encounters with Brazilian slavery during the voyage of the *Beagle* inflamed his sense of racial justice.[66] 'To this day', he wrote in the second edition of his *Journal*, 'if I hear a distant scream, it recalls with painful vividness my feelings, when passing a house near Pernambuco, I heard the most pitiable moans, and could not but suspect that some poor slave was being tortured'. His failure to prevent the beating of an enslaved child, 'six or seven years old', left a memory that was particularly embarrassing, if not emasculating.[67]

First-hand contact with slavery played a key role in the international anti-slavery movement. In Africa, the Americas and elsewhere these encounters contributed to a geography of abolition that also included lecture tours, missionary campaigns and political debates, and for Darwin the experience was life-changing.[68] To those who excused slavery as 'a tolerable evil' and insisted that subordinates were 'well treated', he replied that they had not 'lived among the lower classes'. They had not seen the physical abuse and interacted with the victims. In short, others lacked his intimate, personal experience among the oppressed. This grounded form of empathy distinguished Darwin from the aristocratic aloofness of Byron, not to mention many of his contemporaries, and he called for immediate action to end the nefarious institution once and for all.[69]

WAC, 29 January 1839; George Foster Emmons, 'Journal', 3 vols., George Foster Emmons Papers, WAC, vol. 1, 25 February 1839; Wilkes, op. cit. (32), vol. 1, p. 122; MacDouall, op. cit. (47), p. 109, p. 117, p. 168. For examples of Fuegian ethnocentrism, however credible, see FitzRoy, op. cit. (41), p. 203.

66 Although historians may quibble about the exact degree of its influence, there is little doubt about Darwin's abolitionist commitment. For a thorough treatment, see Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8). For an interesting critique, see Robert J. Richards, 'The Descent of Man', *American Scientist* (2009) 97, pp. 415–417. On Humboldtian Romanticism and encounters with slavery see Sachs, op. cit. (39), pp. 70–71, esp. 70; Richards, op. cit. (39), pp. 135–136.

67 Darwin, op. cit. (36), p. 499. On the immediate impetus for this passage see Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 180–183.

68 On the significance of witnessing slavery at first hand, although in a somewhat different context, see James L. Huston, 'The experiential basis of the Northern antislavery impulse', *Journal of Southern History* (1990) 56, pp. 609–640; Joseph Yannielli, 'George Thompson among the Africans: empathy, authority, and insanity in the Age of Abolition', *Journal of American History* (2010) 96, pp. 979–1000. On the key role of Brazil for supporters and opponents of slavery alike see Gerald Horn, *The Deepest South: The United States, Brazil, and the African Slave Trade*, New York: New York University Press, 2007.

69 Darwin, op. cit. (36), p. 500. On the significance of Darwin's emotional awareness see Jim Endersby, 'Sympathetic science: Charles Darwin, Joseph Hooker, and the passions of Victorian naturalists', *Victorian Studies* (2009) 51, pp. 299–320. Likewise, Desmond and Moore point to the 'moral fire' driving his work. See Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), p. xix. On the revolutionary temporality intrinsic to Darwin's brand of abolitionism see David Brion Davis, "The emergence of immediatism in British and American antislavery thought," in *idem, From Homicide to Slavery: Studies in American Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 238–257.

Even FitzRoy, who insisted that the Brazilians treated their slaves 'humanely', concluded that the institution should be abolished after what he had witnessed in South America.[70]

Long before he set sail on the *Beagle*, while still a medical student in Edinburgh, Darwin had met and befriended former Guianese slave John Edmonstone, whose taxidermic skill, thoughtful conversation, and tales of South American ecology left a strong impression. Interracial encounters and friendships of this sort were foundational for Darwin, as for the anti-slavery movement more generally.[71] Darwin also had strong family ties to organized anti-slavery in England – both his grandfathers and several sisters were avid supporters of the cause. But it was Brazil that prompted his most ardent racial egalitarianism. 'I was told before leaving England', he wrote to his sister Catherine from the Rio Plata,

> that after living in slave countries: all my opinions would be altered; the only alteration I am aware of is forming a much higher estimate of the Negro's character. – it is impossible to see a negro & not feel kindly towards him; such cheerful, open honest expressions & such fine muscular bodies; I never saw any of the diminutive Portuguese with their murderous countenances, without almost wishing for Brazil to follow the example of Hayti; & considering the enormous healthy looking black population, it will be wonderful if at some future day it does not take place.[72]

Given the intense political battles over the legacy of the Haitian Revolution and the future of Caribbean slavery during this period, it is astonishing that Darwin would contemplate this sort of revolutionary action.[73]

Following the legal abolition of slavery in the majority of the British colonies (1834–1838), the anti-slavery salvos in Darwin's *Journal* carry a whiff of smug triumphalism. Yet his commitment ran deep, and the lingering guilt of enslavement was enough to make his 'blood boil'.[74] Unlike FitzRoy, who stressed the deleterious effects of slavery on the ruling race, Darwin always identified most closely with the enslaved. He hoped that the United States would transform the Civil War into 'a crusade against slavery', even 'at the loss of millions of lives', and deeply admired Thomas Wentworth Higginson, an ally

70 FitzRoy, op. cit. (41), pp. 61–62.

71 R.B. Freeman, 'Darwin's negro bird-stuffer', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* (1978) 33, pp. 83–86; Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 18–26. On the significance of interracial contact and friendship for antislavery movements see John Stauffer, *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002; Richard S. Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002; Stanley Harrold, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C., 1828–1865*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003.

72 Charles Darwin to Catherine Darwin, 22 May[–14 July] 1833, in Burkhardt *et al.*, op. cit. (35), vol. 1, pp. 311–315, esp. 312–313. Desmond and Moore discuss the immediate context for this remarkable letter, but ignore the important comparison between the 'fine muscular' Afro-Brazilians and the 'murderous' Portuguese. See Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 82–83, 87.

73 Gelien Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006; Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008, pp. 42–142.

74 Darwin, op. cit. (36), p. 500; Browne, op. cit. (33), vol. 1, p. 245; Richard Huzzey, '"A nation of abolitionists"? the politics and culture of British anti-slavery, c.1838–1874', D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2009.

of the revolutionary John Brown, whose writing on slavery 'vividly recalled walks taken forty years ago in Brazil'.[75] Although 'on principle a free-trader', Darwin supported tariffs to block slave produce, and even his personal predilection for laissez-faire was consistent with the political economy of anti-slavery.[76] His lack of active participation in any major reform organization notwithstanding, these ideas rank him among the more radical of international abolitionists.

Much of Darwin's early writing on African slavery and indigenous populations exhibits traces of what George Frederickson would call 'romantic racialism'.[77] Darwin openly embraced and perpetuated racist stereotypes, such as the 'fine muscular' African and the 'murderous' Portuguese. His reflections on indigenous communities in Tierra del Fuego and elsewhere point to a conception of racial difference that blended the cultural with the biological, rendering superficial variations as manifestations of an inner essence. At the same time, he understood that human racial categories were intrinsically variable and artificial. Darwin was especially impressed by the three Fuegian captives who had been educated in England and who had accompanied him on his journey to South America. Well-dressed, affable and multilingual, they appeared to undermine completely the idea of static and discrete racial types, and he could not help but notice 'how similar their minds were to ours'.[78]

According to FitzRoy, exposure to civilized culture could even impact biology, updating and altering what seemed like stable racial features. A sketch published in his *Beagle* narrative showed the Yahgan captive Orundellico's amazing phenotypical transformation, after returning to his ancestral home, from inquisitive, well-groomed Englishman to low-browed, thick-lipped savage.[79] Europeans were also capable of this kind of physical metamorphosis. When Darwin returned home from the *Beagle* expedition, his father was convinced that the shape of his head was 'quite altered'. Although it may have been a joke aimed at the popular obsession with phrenology, the elder Darwin's remark highlights a fundamental assumption about the mutability of mental and physical characteristics. Darwin put little stock in FitzRoy's facial theories and even less in phrenology, with its zealously racist applications. But images of protean

75 Charles Darwin to Asa Gray, 5 June 1861, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 9, pp. 162–164, esp. 163; Darwin to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 27 February 1873, in Francis Darwin (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, Including an Autobiographical Chapter*, 3 vols., London: John Murray, 1887, vol. 3, p. 176.

76 Charles Darwin to John Higgins, 19 June [1852], in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 5, p. 94; Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), p. 167; Weikart, op. cit. (61), pp. 20–28; Richard Huzzey, 'Free trade, free labour, and slave sugar in Victorian Britain', *Historical Journal* (2010) 53, pp. 359–379.

77 George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987, pp. 97–129.

78 Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, p. 232. On Darwin's experience with the Fuegian captives see Christopher P. Toumey, 'Jemmy Button', *The Americas* (1987) 44, pp. 195–207; Browne, op. cit. (63), pp. 265–273; Hazelwood, op. cit. (5), pp. 109–152. Fuegian minds were 'similar', according to Darwin, but not identical. Although I emphasize his racial progressivism in this context, other authors point to a creeping pessimism about the Fuegians' ability to be successfully 'civilized'. See Ruth Mayer, 'The things of civilization, the matters of empire: representing Jemmy Button', *New Literary History* (2008) 39, pp. 193–215, esp. 200–203; Radick, op. cit. (34), pp. 50–54.

79 For FitzRoy's views on racial transformation see Beer, op. cit. (58), pp. 148–149; Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 94–95.

Figure 3. An early sketch of Yahgan captive Orundellico, also known as Jemmy Button. Like the illustrations in FitzRoy's narrative, it implies a successful transition from feral tribesman to European gentleman. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales.

naturalism could have subversive results.[80] For Darwin, race was a moving target, both tangible and ephemeral, and at times he appeared to question its underlying scientific validity across the entire biological spectrum. 'It may be doubted', he wrote in *The Descent of Man*, 'whether any character can be named which is distinctive of a race and is constant'.[81]

Other naturalists reached vastly different conclusions based on their international and cross-cultural encounters. Francis Galton, Darwin's half-cousin and the founding father of the eugenics movement, travelled extensively in Africa and the Middle East and published a best-selling guidebook for European sojourners in foreign lands.[82] Like his cousin, Galton's experiences abroad helped build the empirical foundation for his immensely popular scientific theories. 'I saw enough of savage races', he claimed many years later, 'to give me material to think about all the rest of my life'.[83] Yet he could barely contain his disgust at the racial otherness of sub-Saharan Africans. 'A row of seven dirty squalid natives came to meet us', he wrote after arriving off the coast of

80 *Autobiography of Charles Darwin*, op. cit. (9), p. 79; John van Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, pp. 165–201. Desmond and Moore dismiss the elder Darwin's remark as 'a joke', but the context is unclear. In the passage in question, Darwin claims that his father discovered physical proof of mental alteration despite his scepticism of phrenology. See Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 116–117.

81 Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, p. 225. As Stephen Alter has established, Darwin's 'account of human origins made little appeal to racial hierarchy but depended much on an original racial unity'. Edward Beasley offers a more critical view, noting that Darwin believed in the inheritance of acquired racial characteristics. Both are correct. See Stephen Alter, 'Race, language, and mental evolution in Darwin's *Descent of Man*', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* (2007) 43, pp. 239–255, esp. 240; Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences*, New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 97–111.

82 Francis Galton, *The Art of Travel: Or, Shifts and Contrivances Available in Wild Countries*, London: John Murray, 1855.

83 Quoted in *The Times*, 1 December 1886, p. 8.

present-day Namibia. 'They had Hottentot features, but were of a darker colour, and a most ill-looking appearance: some had trousers, some coats of skins, and they clicked, and howled, and chattered, and behaved like baboons'. For Galton, Africans were 'lazy, palavering savages', incapable of 'any respectable form of civilization', who needed to be 'out-[bred]' by a more 'suitable race'.[84]

Famed Swiss zoologist Louis Agassiz experienced a similar revulsion during an encounter with African American servants in Philadelphia in 1846:

> [S]eeing their black face with their thick lips and their grimacing teeth, the wool on their head, their bent knees, their elongated hands, their large curved nails and especially the livid color of the palm of their hands, I could not divert my eyes from their face in order to tell them to stay away,

he wrote in a letter to his mother. 'What unhappiness for the white race', he concluded, 'to have tied their existence so closely with that of negroes in certain countries! God preserve us from such a contact!'[85] Like Darwin, Agassiz expressed his opposition to chattel slavery during a research expedition to Brazil, but unlike Darwin he had little interest in racial justice. As his wife, Elizabeth, explained in their co-authored travel narrative, slavery should be abolished for its 'evil effects' on slaveholders rather than on the enslaved multitude, the latter of which Agassiz continued to view as separate and inferior.[86]

Compared to his colleagues, Darwin's strong empathy for African slaves and his abiding sense of humility when discussing the Yahgans ('such were our ancestors') are remarkable. Despite a clear Eurocentric bias, Darwin never once followed his contemporaries in referring to indigenous populations as 'ourangoutangs' or 'baboons', and he went considerably beyond most of them in calling for the revolutionary overthrow of slavery. If it is true, as Douglas Lorimer suggests, 'that science followed rather than led opinion on the racial question', Darwin's casual embrace of racial hierarchy is hardly surprising.[87] But to maintain even a modicum of social parity at a time when scientific

84 Francis Galton, *The Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa*, London: John Murray, 1853, p. 15; *idem*, 'Africa for the Chinese', *The Times*, 5 June 1873, p. 8; Raymond E. Fancher, 'Francis Galton's African ethnography and its role in the development of his psychology', *BJHS* (1983) 16, pp. 67–79. For an important caveat see Gavan Tredoux, 'Fancher on Galton's African ethnography', March 2004, available at http://galton.org/reviews/FancherGaltonEthnography.htm. Although Darwin admired 'the spirit & style' of his cousin's adventures, he showed little interest in the latter's brazenly racist screeds. See Charles Darwin to Francis Galton, 24 July [1853], in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 5, pp. 149–150, esp. 149.

85 Louis Agassiz to Rose Mayor Agassiz, 2 December 1846, Louis Agassiz Correspondence and Other Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 1419, pp. 13–14. A facsimile is available online at http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/12379926?n=326. For a closer analysis see Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 232–233.

86 Louis Agassiz and Elizabeth Agassiz, *A Journey in Brazil*, Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1868, p. 49, pp. 65–66, 128–131, 296–299; Molly Rogers, *Delia's Tears: Race, Science, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. The couple's position was similar to that of Thomas Huxley, another naturalist–voyager, who opposed slavery without 'the smallest sentimental sympathy for the negro'. Quoted in Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), p. 334.

87 Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-nineteenth Century*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978, pp. 131–161, esp. 149. Lorimer develops this point by tracing the hard-line racial science of the later nineteenth century. See Douglas A. Lorimer,

racism was growing rapidly on both sides of the Atlantic was no mean feat – and all of it was deeply embedded in the politics of encounter. Darwin's biological theories were directly connected to his humanist critique of slavery, and this critique, in turn, was closely tied to assumptions about the boundaries between savagery and civilization.[88]

Darwin called the English racists who continued to deny the brotherhood of man 'polished savages'.[89] Scrawled almost as an afterthought on a page in his *Beagle* diary, it is a wonderfully evocative phrase that speaks volumes about his sociological world view. For the young Darwin, at least, the ladder of civilization was deceptively precarious, with room for dramatic moral ascension or declension on either end. Savagery was neither static nor essential – it was a social disease that could infect and degrade even the most modern of civilizations – and the process cut both ways. Just as the Yahgan Orundellico could demonstrate his brilliance by adapting to English culture, so could English subjects and their American cousins demonstrate their depravity by condoning racist oppression. Not coincidentally, Darwin's colleagues referred to opponents of evolutionary theory as 'savages'.[90]

Despite all his talk about 'high' and 'low' races, even at the end stages of his career, Darwin could not help viewing all seemingly stable categories as fluid and malleable. In *The Descent of Man*, the capstone of his investigations into evolutionary theory, he returned almost immediately to Byron's story. Contrasting the father 'who dashed his child on the rocks for dropping a basket of sea-urchins' with the British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, the ageing naturalist suggested a fluid moral spectrum. 'Differences of this kind between the highest men of the highest races and the lowest savages, are connected by the finest gradations', he argued. 'Therefore it is possible that they might pass and be developed into each other'.[91] However vile and unforgivable the suggestion of innate inferiority, the emphasis was on the process of development, the potential for change.

Although he broke from tradition in important respects, Darwin was not immune from the Whiggish idealism of his age. The anti-slavery triumph spearheaded by Clarkson and others, more than anything, seemed to place Britain on the leading edge of an ongoing process of social improvement. And assigning unspeakably violent acts, such as the murder of a small child, to some distant, 'primitive', state of human development allowed for greater confidence in the advance of European civilization. This evolutionary optimism coexists in strange tension with viciously pessimistic asides on the extermination of inferior races and eugenic assumptions that would make most modern readers recoil in disgust. As he grappled with the issue, though, Darwin always returned to a core

'Theoretical racism in late-Victorian anthropology', 1870–1900', *Victorian Studies* (1988) 31, pp. 405–430; Lorimer, 'Science and the secularization of Victorian images of race', in Bernard Lightman (ed.), *Victorian Science in Context*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 212–235.

88 Darwin's early attention 'to the contrasts and to the similarities between civilized and uncivilized races of human beings', writes Janet Browne, 'created an intellectual context in which ideas about a real evolutionary connection could take root and subsequently flourish'. See Browne, op. cit. (33), vol. 1, pp. 244–250, esp. 249.

89 Keynes, op. cit. (42), p. 45.

90 Browne, op. cit. (33), vol. 2, pp. 271–272.

91 Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, p. 35.

belief in humanitarian benevolence. The ultimate criterion of civilization, he concluded, was universal respect for human life.[92]

Darwin's passionate opposition to chattel slavery and lifelong commitment to basic human unity help clarify why he would find Byron's story so alluring. He probably could not help sympathizing with the grieving mother left at the mercy of her murderous husband. Like so many aboriginal women of the Americas, she performed manual labour and gathered large quantities of food for her family. She resembled the Fuegian women of the Cape Horn Archipelago, skilled swimmers and divers, whose subaquatic harvests of sea urchins and other shellfish provided year-round nutrition. To a Victorian reformer, steeped in the cult of female domesticity, she would have seemed 'a laborious slave' indeed.[93] And the death of her 'infant-boy' was just as senseless and arbitrary as the violent beatings he had seen administered to enslaved Africans in Brazil. Whether Darwin interpreted this story as part of the larger struggle for existence, as just one more example of that basic principle that would come to be known as 'natural selection', remains unclear. But there can be no question that he found it morally repugnant – a sharp repudiation of crassly mechanical, biologically reductive ethics.[94]

The implications

Darwin never lost interest in Tierra del Fuego. He continued to receive reports on the culture and customs of 'semi civilised' Fuegians until the year before his death (in 1882) and agreed to sponsor a Yahgan child, James FitzRoy Button, named in honour of his *Beagle* shipmates.[95] At the same time, his reflections on South America became a key reference for nineteenth-century readers. Far more accessible than his technical studies of natural history and similar to the heroic travel narratives authored by Park and Humboldt, they inspired a lust for knowledge and adventure in the exotic wilderness of

92 Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 1, pp. 94–97, 100–101; David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, pp. 107–116; Peter J. Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989; Greene, op. cit. (60), pp. 25–26; Browne, op. cit. (33), vol. 1, pp. 248–249; Desmond and Moore, op. cit. (8), pp. 367–370.

93 For more on the 'enslavement' of indigenous women see Darwin, op. cit. (34), vol. 2, pp. 366–368. On gendered labour in Fuegian society, see Chapman, op. cit. (7), pp. 60–63. On Darwin's approach to gender difference and its ramifications, see Glenna Matthews, *'Just a Housewife': The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 116–144; Stephanie A. Shields and Sunil Bhatia, 'Darwin on race, gender, and culture', *American Psychologist* (2009) 64, pp. 111–119; Claudine Cohen, 'Darwin on woman', *Comptes rendus biologies* (2010) 333, pp. 157–165. Rosemary Jann points to 'the crucial role played by sexual conduct in Victorian (and later) attempts to construct the boundary that demarcates the fully human from the animal and to chart the progress of civilization'. See Jann, op. cit. (55), pp. 287–306, esp. 287.

94 On Darwin's rejection of 'evolutionary ethics' see Eve-Marie Engels, 'Charles Darwin's moral sense – on Darwin's ethics of non-violence', *Annals of the History and Philosophy of Biology* (2005) 10, pp. 31–54. For a slightly different view see Richards, op. cit. (39), pp. 113–153.

95 Bartholomew Sulivan to Charles Darwin, 13 February [1868], 1 July 1870, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 16, pp. 111–112, vol. 18, pp. 194–196; Sulivan to Darwin, 23 February 1874, 2 January 1879 (quote), 18 March 1881, Darwin Papers, DAR 177: 301, 308, 314; Radick, op. cit. (34), pp. 50–54. On FitzRoy Button, grandson of the famous Orundellico, see Sulivan to Darwin, April [1878], 13 October 1879, 3 December 1881, Darwin Papers, DAR 177: 304, 310, 317; Hazelwood, op. cit. (5), pp. 343–346.

faraway territories. Galvanized by 'the famous voyage of the *Beagle*', naval officer George Musters spent a year wandering the plains of Patagonia.[96] Likewise, botanist–adventurer Joseph Hooker, soon to leave for the Himalayas, 'sat up I cannot say how long' poring over Darwin's account of the Fuegians in the second edition of the *Journal*.[97] As Darwin's image has evolved from Victorian celebrity into a sprawling, multinational enterprise, his experiences and observations abroad have acquired even greater significance.[98] And Byron's story of savagery and murder has sailed alongside the *Beagle* into the canon of science history.

Darwin's neighbour and fellow naturalist John Lubbock paid special attention to the *Beagle* expedition when drafting his influential 1865 textbook *Pre-historic Times*. Although it is not clear if he was inspired directly by Darwin, Lubbock was well versed in the latter's work and cited Byron's story as a key piece of evidence proving the childlike intellect and 'moral inferiority of savages'.[99] Darwin revelled in 'the very interesting chapters on savage life' and marked the section comparing savage mentality to that of children in his copy of Lubbock's tome. It undoubtedly played a role in his decision to feature the murder as a moral counterpoint in *Descent*.[100] Thus the anecdote passed back and forth between authors, repeated so often that it became a truism. Some nineteenth-century writers plagiarized Darwin's version of events; others cited Darwin or Lubbock directly. As early as 1872, in the Italian translation of the *Journal*, 'Binoe', the *Beagle*'s surgeon, replaced Byron as eyewitness to the murder.[101] Yet it is worth asking why, amid the legions of historians and libraries of text devoted to the impact of Charles Darwin, Byron's story remains intact and unquestioned.

96 Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography (1879) 1, pp. 397–398, esp. 397; George Chaworth Musters, *At Home with the Patagonians: A Year's Wanderings over Untrodden Ground from the Straits of Magellan to the Rio Negro*, London: John Murray, 1871, p. 1.

97 Joseph Hooker to Charles Darwin, 14 September 1845, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 3, pp. 254–255, esp. 254. I am grateful to Nigel Leask for this reference. On Darwin's *Journal* as popular travelogue, see John Tallmadge, 'From chronicle to quest: the shaping of Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle"', *Victorian Studies* (1980) 23, pp. 325–345; Leask, op. cit. (39), pp. 13–36. For its use as a standard reference work see Snow, op. cit. (47), vol. 2, pp. 71–72; Alexander Sutherland, *The Origin and Growth of the Moral Instinct*, 2 vols., London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898, vol. 1, pp. 112, 117, 178, 350, 371.

98 Peter C. Kjærgaard, 'The Darwin enterprise: from scientific icon to global product', *History of Science* (2010) 48, pp. 105–122; Eric Simons, *Darwin Slept Here: Discovery, Adventure, and Swimming Iguanas in Charles Darwin's South America*, Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2009.

99 John Lubbock, *Pre-historic Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1865, pp. 464–465, esp. 465. For Lubbock's interest in the *Beagle* see John Lubbock to Charles Darwin, 2 September 1864, in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 12, p. 316.

100 Charles Darwin to John Lubbock, 11 June [1865], in Burkhardt *et al*., op. cit. (35), vol. 13, p. 182. Darwin scored the chapter in the second edition of Lubbock's book, published in 1869. See Di Gregorio and Gill, op. cit. (42), vol. 1, p. 513.

101 Carlo Darwin, *Viaggio di un Naturalista Intorno al Mondo* (tr. Michele Lessona), Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice, [1872], p. 189. For some post-Darwinian appropriations of Byron's story see James Hamilton, *A Memoir of Richard Williams, Surgeon: Catechist to the Patagonian Missionary Society in Tierra del Fuego*, London: James Nisbet and Co., 1854, p. 116; *Pictures of Travel in Far-Off Lands: A Companion to the Study of Geography. South America*, London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1871, p. 20; J. Clark Murray, *A Handbook of Psychology*, London: Alexander Gardner, 1885, pp. 373–374; Ellis Ethelmer, *Woman Free*, Congleton: Women's Emancipation Union, 1893, p. 61; Sutherland, op. cit. (97), vol. 1, pp. vii, 112.

To some, no doubt, it is a classic Darwinian moment. Here is aboriginal man stripped bare, consumed by the primeval evolutionary impulse to kill. Here is nature, in Tennyson's famous words, 'red in tooth and claw'.[102] The longevity of the murder story might be connected to the post-Darwinian obsession with pinpointing a biological explanation for human violence, the quest for a basic 'savagery' at the core of our genetic heritage.[103] But it also appeals to a larger, transhistorical concern. For audiences then and now, Byron's story serves as a vivid reminder of the boundaries between savagery and civilization, a marker of obscene otherness in a rapidly globalizing world. And, as such, it is both attractive and appalling. What crime could be more repulsive than infanticide? And what better setting for such a brutal act than an ancient, wild shoreline at the very end of the earth? For Darwin and others, the story seems to fit better in that 'primitive' space at the southern tip of Cape Horn, and the young boy, reconfigured as a Yahgan, is theirs for the killing.

Not all authors, to be fair, dwell on the darker side of Fuegian culture. In his classic statement of mutual-aid evolutionary theory, first published in 1902, Russian polymath Peter Kropotkin revisited Darwin's experience among the Yahgans. Rather than harping on their alleged proclivity towards violence, Kropotkin complimented the Fuegians' highly developed sense of morality and the peace that prevailed as a result of their strong communal ethic.[104] Wendell Phillips Garrison, son of the fiery New England abolitionist, praised Darwin's moral integrity and published a popular edition of his *Journal* together with a full-page portrait of Admiral Byron, but quietly expunged the murder from his text.[105] While they accepted the story's veracity, critics of *Descent* questioned Darwin's use of the murder as evidence for evolutionary change. '[I]t is not necessary to go to the antipodes to find such a savage as Byron describes', mocked creationist Charles Grant.[106] Anthropologist Otto Raum came closest to a full reckoning. In the opening paragraph of his 1940 field study of childhood in East Africa, Raum challenged Darwin's use of the story as 'hearsay', although he preserved its false Fuegian setting.

102 Stephen Jay Gould, 'The tooth and claw centennial', in *idem, Dinosaur in a Haystack: Reflections in Natural History*, New York: Harmony Books, 1995, pp. 63–75.

103 See, for example, Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson, *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996; Bradley A. Thayer, *Darwin and International Relations: On the Evolutionary Origins of War and Ethnic Conflict*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004; David Livingstone Smith, *The Most Dangerous Animal: Human Nature and the Origins of War*, New York: St Martin's Press, 2007; Malcolm Potts, *Sex and War: How Biology Explains Warfare and Terrorism and Offers a Path to a Safer World*, Dallas: BenBella Books, 2008. For an important critique see David Adams (ed.), *The Seville Statement on Violence*, Paris: UNESCO, 1991. Further information is available online at http://culture-of-peace.info/ssov-intro.html.

104 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, Boston: Extending Horizon Books, 1955, pp. 90, 95; Daniel P. Todes, *Darwin without Malthus: The Struggle for Existence in Russian Evolutionary Thought*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 123–142.

105 Wendell Phillips Garrison to Charles Darwin, 4 October 1879, Darwin Papers, DAR 165: 8; [Wendell Phillips Garrison], *What Mr. Darwin Saw in His Voyage Round the World in the Ship "Beagle"*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879, pp. 208–209.

106 [Charles William Grant], *Our Blood Relations; Or, the Darwinian Theory*, London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1872, p. 81; James Platt, *Men and Women*, London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1890, p. 46.

Unfortunately, his brief critique passed virtually unnoticed by the burgeoning Darwin industry.[107]

Darwin was well aware of the kindness and generosity of the indigenous nomads who rescued the *Wager* survivors from certain death. 'Miss Martineau says . . . charity is found everywhere', he scribbled in his notebook in 1838; 'I doubted it in Fuegians, till I remembered Byron's story of the women' – the Chonos Islanders who fed and cared for him when he was on the brink of starvation.[108] That he chose to ignore this fact in his later work is significant. Like the members of the Royal Society who swallowed Byron's tall tales about Patagonian giants, Darwin could not resist the juxtaposition of savagery and civilization conjured by the 'bleeding dying infant-boy'. Such contrasts, argues Ann Stoler, are the lynchpin of empire, and it behoves historians to pay closer attention to 'the politics of comparison' across space and time.[109]

Stoler's insight holds true for scholars as well as for their subjects. More than anything, the persistence of Byron's homicidal encounter, and its imaginary Fuegian locale, highlight the intersection of geography and memory in the practice and popularization of evolutionary theory. From an eighteenth-century castaway to a nineteenth-century captain to a famous naturalist to twenty-first-century historians, memory can be both a powerful tool and a dangerous weapon. And 'to kill an error is as good a service as, and sometimes even better than, the establishing [of] a new truth or fact'.[110]

107 Otto Friedrich Raum, *Chaga Childhood: A Description of Indigenous Education in an East African Tribe*, London: International African Institute, 1940, p. 1.

108 Charles Darwin, notebook M, 1838, Darwin Papers, DAR 125: 142; Gordon Russell Chancellor (ed.), 'Charles Darwin's St. Helena Model Notebook', *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History) Historical Series* (1990) 18, pp. 203–228, esp. p. 214. For the 'story of the women' see Byron, op. cit. (1), pp. 124–128.

109 Ann Laura Stoler, 'Tense and tender ties: the politics of comparison in North American history and (post) colonial studies', in *idem* (ed.), *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 23–67, esp. p. 55.

110 Charles Darwin to A. Stephen Wilson, 5 March 1879, in Francis Darwin and A.C. Seward (eds.), *More Letters of Charles Darwin: A Record of His Work in a Series of Hitherto Unpublished Letters*, 2 vols., London: John Murray, 1903, vol. 2, p. 42.