

Imperial Innocence: The Kawaii Afterlife of Little Black Sambo

ERICA KANESAKA KALNAY

About thirty years after Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted their famous doll experiments demonstrating that Black children in the United States often prefer white dolls, a researcher in Japan conducted another kind of experiment to study children's perceptions of racial difference. In 1976, Midori Okubo presented Japanese children, ages two to twelve, with various editions of the 1899 children's book *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, written and illustrated by the Scottish author Helen Bannerman, a book that intermingles elements of Africa and India in a fantasy setting. After World War II left Japan economically and spiritually devastated and subject to the American occupation, *Chibikuro Sambo* (ちびくろ・さんぼ), as it was known in Japan, became a runaway bestseller, inspiring such intense attachments that many proclaimed it exemplary. Under the logic that the book possessed a special ability to touch children's hearts, *Little Black Sambo* gained popularity over the next few decades, prospering alongside Japan's rise from postwar ruin to economic superpower. In her experiment, Okubo sought to understand the

ABSTRACT: This essay argues that the Victorian racial imaginary of Helen Bannerman's 1899 children's book *Little Black Sambo* lives on in the *kawaii*, or "cute," aesthetic of postwar Japan. While studies of Victorian children's literature have drawn attention to the ways in which these books reflect and reproduce the racial ideologies associated with British imperialism, I contend that Victorian "imperial innocence" continues to haunt children's culture far beyond the temporal and geographical boundaries traditionally ascribed to the period. After World War II left Japan subject to the American occupation, *Little Black Sambo* became a runaway bestseller, prompting anti-Black racist imagery to proliferate in *kawaii* commodities. By tracing the book's afterlife in *kawaii*, I illustrate how Victorian children's fantasies have been transmuted into flexible signifiers of racial forgetting.

ERICA KANESAKA KALNAY (kalnay@wisc.edu) is a Ph. D. Candidate in English Literary Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her work has appeared in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *Journal of Asian American Studies*, and *Oxford Literary Review* and received awards from the Association for Asian American Studies, North American Victorian Studies Association, and Northeast Victorian Studies Association.

intensity that characterized Japan's attachments to this book. To do so, she asked children to identify the moments in the text that they found most amusing. She discovered that many children were drawn to ostensibly innocuous scenes, such as a scene in which tigers melt into butter while chasing one another around a tree. Few of the children in the study identified the book's stereotyped depictions of Black characters as a significant element. For Okubo, this outcome provided evidence that the book need not be considered racist in a Japanese context. Moreover, for many Japanese people, Okubo's findings cohered with a broader faith in the nation's own racial innocence.

This essay examines how the Victorian racial imaginary of *Little Black Sambo* lives on in the *kawaii* (可愛い), or "cute," aesthetic of postwar Japan. Studies of "Golden Age" children's literature—the period of so-called classics published on both sides of the Atlantic from the 1860s to the 1930s—have drawn attention to the myriad ways in which these books reflect and reproduce racist ideologies. Robin Bernstein's *Racial Innocence*, for example, demonstrates how popular American children's books like Johnny Gruelle's *Raggedy Ann Stories* (1918) evince minstrel tropes and script the enactment of racial violence. Yet the majority of this scholarship has been concentrated in nineteenth-century American studies. The complicity of the British empire in embedding racist ideologies within many children's classics still cherished today—Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) and J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911), to name just two examples—has received comparatively less attention from an antiracist perspective. While recent scholarship in Victorian studies has worked to reengage the subject of empire with renewed force and bring the field into conversation with critical race theory, this scholarship has focused primarily on the realist novel.¹ The capaciousness of realist novels may capture both imperialism's impulse toward endless proliferation and the likelihood that diffuse colonial violence will be perceived from the dominant perspective as minor and seemingly ordinary. Elaine Freedgood, for instance, locates "a return of the imperial repressed" in the material objects circulating within realist novels (3), while Carolyn Betensky explores the pedagogical problem of teaching the "casual racism" scattered across these texts (724). Comparably, Grace Lavery turns to late-Victorian aesthetes and shows how their fetishization of "minor" Japanese aesthetics "*racialized* a narrative about aestheticized eccentricity" that persists today (24).² However, children's culture is also a critical domain for understanding Victorian racial fantasies and their ongoing unfolding in contemporary globalization. As scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Anne McClintock, and Ann Laura Stoler have argued, the domestic sphere has played a central role in the enforcement of imperial power. By attending to the

cute aesthetics underpinning a Victorian imperial fantasy, this essay aims to enrich our critique of empire as macrostructure by attuning us to some of its inner workings on a more intimate, affective level.

Bernstein uses the term “racial innocence” to refer to the ways in which the imagined innocence of the white American child performs a transcendence of race while obscuring histories of racial violence (*passim*). In other words, racial innocence exploits the “holy obliviousness” associated with sentimentalized notions of childhood common in the nineteenth century (8). Borrowing from Bernstein, I demonstrate how the imagined innocence of the white Victorian child enacts the erasure of imperial brutality under the pretense of obliviousness toward its legacies of racial trauma. In other words, the sheltered world of the white Victorian child carves out a space from which to feign ignorance toward imperialism as a system of power entrenched in the production of racial difference and in the deployment of that difference to construe colonialism as harmless or even benevolent. Yet while Bernstein considers anti-Black racism in an American context in which white Americans lived in close proximity to—and were often quite intimate with—Black Americans, the Victorian context necessitates accounting for how imperial expansion produced a racial imaginary that refused to remain grounded in a definite location. Children’s culture facilitated this deterritorialization of racial innocence by projecting it into fantasy worlds that imagined themselves as existing both everywhere and nowhere. This abstraction of racial difference would, in fact, augment these fantasies’ pretensions to innocence by allowing them to resist claims to racial representation. Thus, I adopt the term “imperial innocence” to refer to two phenomena: first, to the racist underpinnings of British imperialism in Victorian children’s fantasies, and second, to how easily the global spread of these fantasies can perform a secondary, retrospective forgetting of racial memory. That is, imperial innocence does more than just put racial innocence in a British context; it captures how Victorian children’s fantasies have been transmuted into flexible signifiers of racial forgetting.

Kawaii culture provides an especially striking example of the endurance of imperial innocence. Contemporary Japanese popular culture has borrowed liberally from the Victorian imagination in forms ranging from anime and manga, such as *Victorian Romance Emma* (英國戀物語エマ) (2002–08) and *Black Butler* (黒執事) (2010–), to Alice-in-Wonderland-themed fashions and restaurants. Elizabeth Ho, Anna Maria Jones, Waiyee Loh, and Judith Pascoe each explore how Japanese popular culture adapts Victorian stories and styles. Addressing the need for postcolonial approaches to Neo-Victorian studies, Ho argues, “Neo-Victorianism allows the present to imaginatively confront empire again

and weigh the consequences of working through the past—or not . . . in the interests of a post-imperial future” (20). Following Ho, this essay investigates how Victorian imperial innocence fortifies the popularity of *kawaii* Victoriana. The *kawaii* aesthetic rose to prominence in Japan in the aftermath of World War II, as the nation responded to defeat, disarmament, and the thwarting of its imperial ambitions. During this time, Victorian children’s books propagated winsome and nostalgic images of British imperialism that provided Japanese children with escapist fantasies in stark contrast to the nationalistic and militaristic children’s literature of the war years. Accordingly, a 2006 article in the *Times* of London remarks, “perhaps it should be no surprise that the country that reveres all things Hello Kitty should also have a soft spot for Beatrix Potter” (Cowan). The article quotes a man named Richard Foster, Chairman of the English Lake District Japan Forum, who explains, “Peter Rabbit is seen as a quintessential British character [in Japan]. . . . He represents a gentle, nostalgic view” of England. The history I trace here reveals that the affinities between Peter Rabbit and Hello Kitty—between British children’s classics and *kawaii* culture—cannot be viewed as merely coincidental. On the contrary, post-war *kawaii* drew directly from the imperial innocence attached to Victorian childhood. Hence, itself a global aesthetic based on the pleasures of childhood naïveté, *kawaii* not only replicated *Little Black Sambo*’s blackface imagery, but also adopted its imperialist desire for “cute” fantasy worlds seemingly untethered to racial and colonial politics. While other Western cultural influences, including American children’s culture, likewise played a significant role in propagating blackface within *kawaii*, the British imperial origins of *Little Black Sambo* proved especially crucial to introducing racist imagery into many of the Japanese children’s products circulating today.

Little Black Sambo’s afterlife in *kawaii* therefore reveals the importance of reading Victorian culture across a *longue durée* and expanded planetary scale. Our critiques of British imperialism fall short if they fail to acknowledge how Victorian racism was not a discrete historical phenomenon, but instead a violent shattering of lives and cultures that continues to reverberate. I therefore trace what Lisa Lowe calls the “intimacies of four continents,” or the processes by which liberal notions of interiority, closeness, and affection have latched onto race while stitching together Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas (*passim*). Lowe argues that the division of knowledge into isolated and overlooked archives has obscured residual histories, or “elements of the past that continue, but are less legible within a contemporary social formation” (19). The residues of historical traumas such as slavery, colonialism, and nuclear warfare remain emergent within “incomplete, still unfolding meanings, practices, and

relationships” (19). As Priya Joshi argues, Victorian studies in particular might take up the task of tracking the “half-life of Victorian ideas and ideals . . . far outside the Victorian metropolitan sphere and its legible historical boundaries” (22). Studies of the Victorian imagination’s ongoing influence might both acknowledge the forces of empire and racism and interrogate their centrality. This challenge to traditional periodization and nation-based disciplinary frameworks need not perform a theoretical reinscription of colonialist agendas, but might instead chart new possibilities for pursuing intentionally antiracist projects.

In a time when children’s products circulate globally, it has become especially necessary that we understand how the images and ideologies attached to Victorian children’s classics live on in an international context. To be clear, however, I do not wish to assert that Japan is uniquely racist, itself an essentializing notion that obscures the rich legacies of Afro-Asian solidarities advanced by activists like Margo Okazawa-Rey, a half-Black, half-Japanese feminist and founding member of the Combahee River Collective. Nor do I wish to deny Japan’s own agency in the production and dissemination of racist images, especially given the nation’s need to reckon with its ongoing histories of racial discrimination and colonial violence. What I hope to show is that the spread of imperial innocence demonstrates its remarkable power to afford forgetting. Imperial innocence’s deterritorialization of racist forms has lent them a slipperiness that has both facilitated their transnational circulation and enabled them to deflect critical scrutiny. Seemingly unanchored to a given cultural context, *Little Black Sambo* enables people with affective attachments to the story invariably to point fingers elsewhere. Thus, instead of attempting to fix the text within a given context, I turn to a transnational framework to contend with this very slipperiness. By piecing together a disconnected archive, I track Sambo’s journey from colonial India to Victorian England, to the segregated United States, to Japan after the American occupation, and finally to *kawaii*’s contemporary globalization. In so doing, I demonstrate the dizzying scalar movements by which tender emotions and small objects have threaded together distant temporal and spatial coordinates.

I. Kawaii Victoriana

When Natsuya Mitsuyoshi translated *Little Black Sambo* into Japanese for the 1953 Iwanami Shoten edition, the first edition to be published in Japan, he made an important change to Helen Bannerman’s original by adding the word “*kawaii*” to the book’s very first sentence. While the English version reads,

“Once upon a time there was a *little* black boy,” the translation reads, “Once upon a time there was a *kawaii* black boy” (emphasis mine; 2). This slippage from “little” to “*kawaii*” suggests that something about *Little Black Sambo*’s Victorian imperialist fantasy struck a chord with the aesthetic sensibilities of postwar Japan. If “little” represents a cognitive judgment with no compulsory feelings attached to it, then “*kawaii*” represents an aesthetic judgment, coupling feelings of pleasure with the formal characteristic of littleness. That is, as an aesthetic category, *kawaii* links a feeling to a form, associating Sambo’s diminutive size—and, significantly, his race—with an affectionate emotional response.³ This insertion of tender feelings into *Little Black Sambo*’s opening lines points to the role that the *kawaii* aesthetic played in kindling the book’s astronomical popularity. With a “*kawaii* black boy” as its protagonist, *Little Black Sambo* tapped into Japan’s postwar hunger for racial fantasies saturated with sweetness.

In English, the “cute” is typically defined as attractive, pretty, or charming. As a growing body of scholarship notes, however, the seeming triviality of this aesthetic conceals a complex play of power relations between subjects and objects. At face value, the cute object tends to be small, soft, and simple. In its associations with children and childish things, cuteness invites affectionate feelings like the desire to nurture and protect, but also potentially more sinister feelings like the desire to consume and control. In other words, the urge to “bring closer” that cuteness evokes can potentially slide into darker compulsions: to crush, to devour, to possess. Sianne Ngai therefore asserts that the cute is a “commodity aesthetic” (5). As such, it taps into twin fantasies of consuming and being consumed, of the aesthetic subject’s desire to dominate the cute object, and of the cute object’s own power to dominate.

Although “*kawaii*” is typically translated into English as “cute,” the Japanese term can carry a distinct set of connotations. If the origins of “cute” in “acute” reveal its underlying aggression, the Japanese word evolved from the term *kawai-sou* (かわいそう), meaning “pitiful,” an etymology that lingers in the word’s present-day connotations.⁴ In contemporary Japan, “*kawaii*” possesses an array of usages and associations in excess of the “cute,” encompassing English words such as “attractive,” “pretty,” “lovely,” “loveable,” “sweet,” “innocent,” “charming,” and “touching” (Nittono 81). Kanako Shiokawa claims that *kawaii* assumed these meanings following World War II, achieving “today’s status of a very useful, pleasantly positive, but strangely nondescript expression” (95). Many scholars read *kawaii* as a response to the traumas of the war and American occupation, with cute products putting a docile face on Japan’s diminished imperial ambitions and the horrors of the atomic bombings. In contradistinction to the U.S., with its oversized, masculinist displays of brute power through military force,

Japan is thought to have adopted a passive, childlike role in international military politics, metaphorically embracing defeat while assuming a subordinate position as a demilitarized nation.⁵

To take a classic example, the iconic *kawaii* character Hello Kitty, an anthropomorphized cat, draws heavily from British imperial nostalgia. Sanrio, a Japanese design company known for its *kawaii* “character goods” (キャラクターグッズ), created Hello Kitty in 1974. According to Sanrio’s website, Hello Kitty, whose full name is Kitty White, was born in “the suburbs of London” and lives with an idyllic British family, including her mother Mary White, who wears a mob cap and “loves cooking, cleaning and washing”; her father George White, who smokes a pipe and has “a wonderfully dry sense of humor”; and her grandmother Margaret White, who “makes a delicious pudding, and loves nothing more than to sit in her rocking chair doing embroidery” (*Shop Hello Kitty*). This fantasy of white British bourgeois domesticity emerged in the wake of the postwar flourishing of Japanese translations of Golden Age children’s classics, including Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *A Little Princess* (1905), Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* (1911), Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), and L. M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). Christine Yano explains that Britain provided an especially rich reservoir of imaginative material due to its image as the “home of canonical Western literature, ‘mother country’ to the United States, imperialist exemplar, model of the pomp (if not lives) of royalty, and source of nostalgia embedded within classics of English children’s literature” (17). Accordingly, manga and anime such as *World Masterpiece Theater* (世界名作劇場), a popular animated television series that began airing in 1969, adapted many British children’s classics, while *kawaii* characters like Hello Kitty assimilated and abstracted their forms and feelings.

Japanese children’s culture not only adopted Victorian stories and styles, but also borrowed from the racial logics of British imperial innocence. Yano argues that Hello Kitty performs commodity “white face,” embodying the ways in which whiteness becomes “racelessness” and attempts to transform itself into an imagined universal (15). Yano draws upon the concept of *mukokuseki* (無国籍), meaning “without a nationality,” a term used to explain the global popularity of Japanese cultural products believed to carry ambiguous, and therefore neutral, racial meanings. Through *mukokuseki*, Koichi Iwabuchi argues, the supposed racelessness of manga and anime characters like Sailor Moon (a blonde girl with the Japanese name “Usagi Tsukino”) enables them to slide seamlessly into new cultural contexts (58). As a *kawaii* character with a faux-British biography, Hello Kitty embodies *mukokuseki* in her pretensions to

be a floating signifier untethered to racial or national identity—neither British nor Japanese, neither white nor Asian—but instead an icon of a globalized world. Because of this abstract quality, she also invites emotional projection, her blank face promising to absorb the feelings of anyone who gazes upon her. Yet it is important to remember that Hello Kitty’s racelessness arises from the dominance of whiteness and its assertions of universality. In this way, the so-called racelessness of *kawaii* Victoriana carries the memory of British imperial nostalgia.

While empire and race have hitherto not been central to scholarship on *kawaii*, histories of imperialism play an integral role in an aesthetic that binds together affective communities. Leslie Bow shows how *kawaii*-style caricatures of Asian people “haunt the seamless movement of global commodities with the residues of colonial fantasy” and thereby “resurrect the ‘Yellow Peril’ stereotype in a new, seemingly innocuous form” (55). Yet in addition to demonstrating *kawaii*’s relationship to anti-Asian racism in the United States, the popularity of books like *Little Black Sambo* in postwar Japan should challenge the idea that *kawaii* ever transcended racial meanings. While Hello Kitty’s “white face” may at first seem distinct from Sambo’s blackface, these two exemplars of *kawaii* illustrate how the aesthetic’s use of racial abstraction can function not only to turn whiteness into an imagined universal, but also to blur various non-white ethnicities together into an undifferentiated Blackness. In the context of postwar Japan, this dialectical play between whiteness and Blackness provided the nation with a means of working through the problem of what it meant to be neither white nor Black, situated tenuously in a global racial hierarchy defined by the West. As John Russell notes in his work on representations of Black people in contemporary Japan, “as Caucasian features, Westernized names, and Western fashion once served, and continue to serve, as a marker of *mukokuseki* (‘stateless,’ ‘cosmopolitan’) sophistication, so today, black features and their accompanying paraphernalia have been added to the evolving archive of the cool” (69). Although Blackness in Japan has typically been associated with the opposite end of what Yano characterizes as a cute/cool dichotomy, *Little Black Sambo*’s “*kawaii* black boy” illustrates how Blackness came to be commodified across a range of consumer aesthetics, from the cool to the cute. Thus, by the late 1980s, Japanese marketers used Sambo-inspired products to express “new sexiness, *kawaii*, and fresh energy” (Greenwald and Mikiyama 26). Sambo’s significance within the development of the *kawaii* aesthetic suggests that, instead of achieving a culturally untethered globalism, many *kawaii* products perform imperial innocence, constructing a “cute” surface under which subliminal racial conflicts play out.

II. Never-Never People

When *Little Black Sambo* arrived in Japan in 1953, the book expressed *kawaii* through a whimsical story of affection toward the colonial subject. The book's imperial innocence, a quality that aligned it with *kawaii*'s *mukokuseki* qualities, might be traced back to the text's origins in colonial India: Bannerman first dreamed up *Little Black Sambo* in 1898 on a journey from Kodai to Madras. Originally created for the amusement of Bannerman's own two children, the book tells the story of a dark-skinned boy named Sambo and his encounter with tigers on a walk through the jungle. In the book's opening pages, Sambo's loving parents outfit him with clothing: a "little red coat" (12), "little blue trousers" (15), a "beautiful green umbrella," and a "lovely little pair of purple shoes with crimson soles and crimson lining" (16). The book thus begins by aestheticizing Sambo's vulnerability, his smallness and state of near-nakedness (fig. 1). Sambo initially appears in only his underwear and becomes instilled with affection as the narrative dresses him up in "beautiful" and "lovely" clothing (6). The narrative soon strips him again, however. Over the course of the story, the astute little boy trades his clothes with four hungry tigers in exchange for sparing his life. Later the tigers melt into butter after chasing one another around a tree, and Sambo retrieves his clothes and takes the butter home for his family to consume over large stacks of pancakes. This fanciful and nonsensical storyline reflects *Little Black Sambo*'s origins as a silly tale designed to amuse children and convey maternal love. As underscored by its preoccupation with clothing and eating, however, *Little Black Sambo* is also a story deeply concerned with vulnerability and consumption. These aspects of the storyline lent the book its *kawaii* qualities, rendering it a runaway bestseller shortly after its introduction to Japan.

Although Bannerman's son states that his mother "would not have published the book had she dreamt for a moment that even one small boy would have been made unhappy thereby," *Little Black Sambo* remains controversial across the many cultural contexts to which it has traveled (qtd. in Hay 155). Not only does the book enact colonialism's patronizing attitude toward people of color, but it also problematically combines signifiers of both Africa and India: a jungle setting and characters with names like "Jumbo," "Mumbo," and "Sambo" collide with tigers and butter that goes by the name of "ghi" (Bannerman, *Sambo* 52). To complicate matters further, the story's transatlantic publication spawned numerous new illustrated editions that layered American blackface imagery on top of Bannerman's original text. Among them, Frank Dobias's 1927 version (selected by Iwanami for the edition now considered canonical



Fig. 1. The opening pages of an 1899 edition of *Little Black Sambo*, with Helen Bannerman's original illustrations (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections).

in Japan) turned Sambo into a “cute” pickaninny caricature. These many iterations of *Little Black Sambo* muddle the problem of pinning down its racial content. Disagreement still exists concerning whether or not the book ought to be deemed racist and censored or banned, a debate compounded by the difficulty of determining Sambo's race in the first place. Many also point to Bannerman's authorship as additional proof of the text's innocence, asserting that, as an amateur woman writer and artist, she bore no malicious intent, but instead lent the story a sweet simplicity and affective purity. Furthermore, many Japanese critics have defended the text's innocence within a Japanese context, claiming that its mixture of British imperialism and American anti-Black racism becomes meaningless when received by Japanese audiences.

In many ways, *Little Black Sambo* is a quintessentially transnational book. Not only does it blend together different geographical locations, but it also emerged from the movement of British imperial subjects and came to be beloved across the globe. Born in Edinburgh, Bannerman spent part of her youth in Madeira, an archipelago off the coast of Morocco. After marrying and moving to India with her husband, a doctor in the Indian Medical Service, Bannerman wrote *Little Black Sambo* and passed it off to her friend, Alice Bond, who sold it in London to the publisher Grant Richards. Part of the pocket-sized “Dumpy Book” series, *Little Black Sambo's* diminutive scale emphasized both its

cuteness and its portability, placing it among the many other global commodities that animated British imperial culture. As McClintock writes, “commodity racism—in the specifically Victorian forms of advertising and photography, the imperial Expositions and the museum movement—converted the narrative of imperial Progress into mass-produced consumer spectacle” (33). Together with these other attractions and entertainments, children’s picture books provided a visual medium for consuming racial difference and rendered that consumption supposedly delightful.

Partly due to this transnationalism, debates concerning *Little Black Sambo’s* amalgamation of ethnic signifiers have arisen both in children’s literature scholarship and in popular discourse. Scholars of color take positions on both sides of the debate; some condemn the book while others reclaim it. Michelle Martin, a Black American scholar, assumes an ambivalent stance, but nevertheless maintains that Sambo might be recuperated, especially in light of contemporary retellings of the story by Black authors and illustrators. Sanjay Sircar, a scholar of East Indian descent living in Australia, states, “I responded to *Sambo* positively both as a child and as an adult, and have an emotional, aesthetic, and ultimately, a cultural/political investment in the text” (“Little Brown Sanjay” 132). These investments converge in his commitment to assert the book’s Indian origins. He writes, “Bannerman’s *Little Black Sambo* is not American literature. It is English literature and colonial-period Indian literature in the English language. Its transmogrification into Americanness is the sign of a transatlantic cultural imperialism, rather than an acceptance by the United States” (132–33). Sircar points to *Little Black Sambo’s* transition from British imperialism to transnational “cultural imperialism,” but nevertheless seeks to repair both appropriations by reclaiming the Indian origins of the story. Together, Martin and Sircar’s positions highlight the challenges of establishing a critical framework for interpretation due to the book’s propensity to mix cultural references and to travel across national borders, while also demonstrating the affective attachments the book has accrued through its numerous transnational afterlives.

Little Black Sambo’s resistance to contextualization can be traced back to its inception. In *Sambo Sahib*, a biography of Bannerman published in 1981, Elizabeth Hay explains that Bannerman “wanted to set her story somewhere far away and exotic; she chose an imaginary jungle-land and peopled it with what were to her daughters a far-away kind of people. To have made the setting India would have been too humdrum and familiar for them. Then, because she had a liking for terrifying tigers, she brought them in as villains” (29). Hay argues that, after growing up in Madeira and living in India for several years,

Bannerman must have been familiar with the differences between African and Indian cultures and could never have mistaken the two different landscapes and their animal populations. For Hay, Bannerman's decision to mix ethnic and geographical signifiers could only be intentional. In a review of Hay's book, Rosemary Dinnage elaborates: "the Sambo adventures, of course, happen to never-never people in a never-never land that is neither India nor Africa nor—certainly—the American South; alas for Anglo-Indian Mrs. Bannerman, her head full of perfectly real exotic scenes, and real snakes and tigers, innocently colouring her figures black to suit the story" (834). Because Bannerman was already familiar with "perfectly real exotic scenes," Dinnage writes, her imagination needed to overcompensate by running wild, fusing together various ethnic signifiers gathered from her travels to create "never-never people in a never-never land." The evocation of a "never-never land"—almost certainly borrowed from Barrie's work—points to the intimate relationship between magical fantasy and racial forgetting. Because she conceived them as "never-never people," Bannerman was supposedly able to "innocently [colour] her figures black." Through their double negation, "never-never people" become at once purely fictive and utterly dehumanized. In this way, *Little Black Sambo* could hold onto both its imperial innocence and its exotic appeal.

Accordingly, since its first publication, readers struggled to locate the book's setting while at the same time praising it for what they saw as its innocent charm. For example, an 1899 review in *The Outlook* identifies Sambo as Indian and asserts that "Little Black Sambo and his tigers are of the stuff that children take into their inmost heart" ("For Nursery Shelves" 590). Presaging Hay and Dinnage, other readers simply dismissed the importance of pinning down either Sambo's ethnicity or his geographical location, insisting that such efforts were futile and misguided. According to this view, race is meaningless in a fantasy story set in a realm of make-believe. In an 1899 review in *The Spectator*, a critic instead identifies Sambo as African and writes:

[Sambo's] history was not written with one eye on parents and guardians, or the inconsistency of mixing up the African type of black with delightful adventures with tigers in an Indian jungle would never have been allowed to pass. As it is, *Little Black Sambo* makes his simple and direct appeal in the great realm of make-believe without paying the slightest attention to the unities or caring in the least about anything but the amusement of the little boys and girls for whom he was so obviously created. ("Modern Nursery-Books" 842)

This Victorian critic pits the "simple and direct appeal" of make-believe against the importance of accurate cultural representation. Amusing child readers

becomes a purpose able to occlude all other concerns. The ostensible imperial innocence of child readers provides the conditions for creating a world of pure imagination where racial and colonial politics cannot enter.

Yet this repression of racial meaning would nonetheless soon rise to the surface. In 1905, the Garrick Theatre in London's West End staged a minstrel act inspired by the book as a Christmas entertainment for children. The actress Nellie Bowman played Sambo in blackface in a show that included "clever dancing, catchy coon songs, [and] whistling solos" ("Notes" 652). Again described as an ideal story for children, this performance attests to how *Little Black Sambo* never truly excised itself from racial meaning. While white Britons might assert their racial innocence by pointing to the 1833 abolition of the slave trade, blackface minstrelsy remained a popular form of entertainment across the Victorian period and into the twentieth century. Such performances cannot be separated from British imperialism because they functioned to augment the feelings of white supremacy used to justify colonial subjugation. Moreover, as Saidiya V. Hartman notes, these "innocent amusements," even when seemingly designed to support antiracist causes by inspiring empathetic identification, reinforced "the fungibility of the captive body": "by exploiting the vulnerability of the captive body as a vessel for the uses, thoughts, and feelings of others, the humanity extended to the slave inadvertently confirms the expectations and desires definitive of the relations of chattel slavery" (19). Thus, even in its earliest years in Britain, *Little Black Sambo* allowed British people to delight in racist tropes while at the same time insisting upon their remove from them.

When *Little Black Sambo* arrived in postwar Japan, the *mukokuseki* quality of its "never-never people" enabled the book to fit perfectly with the emergent *kawaii* aesthetic. Importantly, out of the many editions of *Little Black Sambo* then available, Iwanami elected to adapt Dobias's 1927 illustrations (fig. 2). Mitsuyoshi, the book's translator, explains this choice by pointing to the crudeness of Bannerman's originals, deemed unsuitable for young readers. In other words, the original drawings were not considered as *kawaii* as the story. In contrast, the Dobias illustrations were highly stylized, evincing an art deco aesthetic with their bold colors, stark outlines, and streamlined forms. This style abstracted Sambo: his skin became solid black and his features were simplified and exaggerated, qualities reflective of both racial caricature and *kawaii* design. Moreover, as Midori Todayama posits, *Little Black Sambo* tapped into Japan's yearning for silly and whimsical stories after the war. In Japan, *Little Black Sambo's* "simple and direct appeal in the great realm of make-believe" represented the dissolution of wartime children's books steeped in overt imperial propaganda. Instead, *Little Black Sambo* signaled a turn toward more playful,

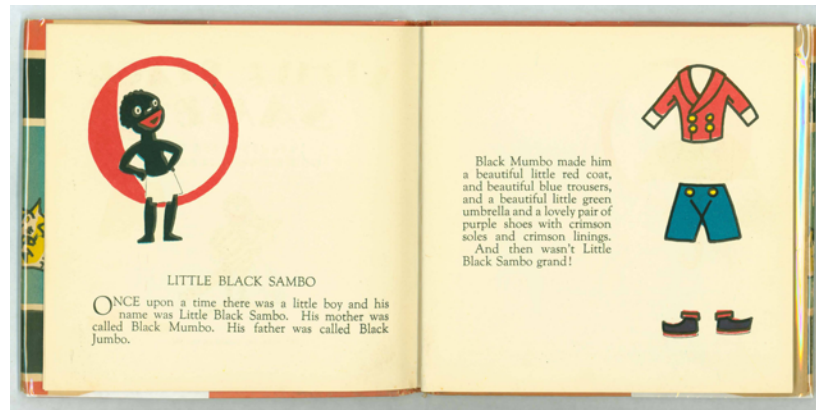


Fig. 2. The opening pages of a 1927 edition of *Little Black Sambo*, first published by the Macmillan Company in the United States, with illustrations by Frank Dobias (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections).

and seemingly more innocent, international books for young readers, just as it permitted ongoing escapism into imperial innocence.

Consequently, *Little Black Sambo* provoked strikingly powerful emotional responses, often predicated on the idea that the book spoke directly to children's hearts. William H. Bridges traces the stages of *Little Black Sambo's* reception in Japan from its introduction onward, noting that vehement defenses of the book surrounded it as early as the 1950s. For instance, Seiichi Miyahara, a University of Tokyo child psychologist, declared in 1954 that *Little Black Sambo* was "the kind of book that pleases children" (54). Momoko Ishii, a distinguished children's author and translator of the postwar period, wrote in 1965, "we need to study this book a hundred thousand times. . . . To me, this story is almost a flawless work. I am shocked that a single person produced such a work" (149). Miyahara, Ishii, and many others subscribed to the belief that children were uniquely able to project themselves onto Sambo. Like Hello Kitty, Sambo supposedly possessed an abstract quality that enabled children to identify with him. In one striking example, an American children's author named Phyllis Reid Fenner describes the fondness that the eldest son of Japan's Crown Prince, the toddler who would later become Emperor Naruhito, held for *Little Black Sambo*:

It was my privilege to have tea with the Crown Princess in the palace. . . . She had obviously been briefed, for she turned to me and said, "You are interested in children's literature?" In turn I asked what she read to the little prince. Her face brightened. "Oh," she said, "his favorite is *Little Black Sambo*. I am the tigers and he is Little Black Sambo." Thereupon she told me how he had to dress for the part. (qtd. in Barton 279)

The little prince's delight in dressing up and playacting as Sambo emphasizes the extent to which even the most privileged people in the nation identified with the "kawaii black boy."

Little Black Sambo's plotline of vulnerability reinforced the book's aura of innocence. The story supports a paternalistic attitude toward the racialized subject reminiscent of the ideologies used to justify colonization and slavery under pretexts of education, protection, and nurture. In *Little Black Sambo*, we find a comparable fiction of familial affection mixed with a deep, underlying anxiety: the story betrays its ambivalence toward Sambo in its indecision concerning whether it wants to clothe or unclothe him, whether Sambo is eating or being eaten. In this way, the story's fantasy world reflects its fascination, informed by turn-of-the-century so-called race science, with Sambo's ambivalent status as neither wholly "civilized" nor wholly "savage." Here, the anthropomorphized wild tigers serve as an important counterpoint, provoking a dialectical play between human and animal. Their attempts to wear Sambo's "fine clothes" are portrayed as ludicrous: one tiger wears Sambo's shoes on his ears, while another must use his tail to hold up Sambo's umbrella (20). The tigers' attempts at playing human are eventually thwarted by their animalistic desire to fight with one another. The Japanese text has an extra bit of fun with this idea by rendering their growls into a textual, visual play (fig. 3). While in the English version the tigers only say "gr-r-r-rrrr!" in response to Sambo's taunts (47), the Japanese translation puns on the word *gururu* (ぐるる). In Japanese, *gururu* can be equivalent to the onomatopoeic word "grr," but there also exists a similar-sounding word, *guruguru* (ぐるぐる), with another relevant onomatopoeic meaning: "to turn around in circles."⁶ As the tigers growl and whip themselves into butter, the illustration further exaggerates their fury through the use of emblematic verse. *Gururururururururururururururu* (ぐるるるるるるるるるるるるるるるるる) appears in a circle below their paws (18–19). The exaggerated dehumanization of the tigers becomes heightened as they resort to making mere animal sounds. Eventually, these wild tigers will turn themselves into something even less than living creatures: butter, an edible commodity. Yet Sambo's ontological status remains similarly uncertain. By melting across the boundaries between states of being—person, animal, commodity—the tigers call into question the extent to which Sambo himself always had only a tenuous claim to ownership over his clothing, his body, and his personhood.

Little Black Sambo is deeply concerned with questions of consumption. If the tigers want to eat Sambo, the story ends by playfully mocking Sambo's unusually large appetite. While his mother eats 27 pancakes and his father eats 55, Sambo consumes 169 pancakes because "he was so hungry" (60). As Tavia



Fig. 3. The beloved scene of melting tigers in the Japanese Iwanami Shoten edition of *Chibikuro Sambo*, first published in 1953.

Nyong'o observes, "the story defers and ultimately disavows its desire to eat Sambo, making a visual meal of the threatening tigers instead" (379). Again, the story's ambivalences toward Sambo catalyze an absurdist power battle wherein Sambo's racialization plays out in dialectical tension with animalistic and capitalistic desire. bell hooks ties this form of desire to imperialist nostalgia in her essay "Eating the Other," noting that, "in mass culture, imperialist nostalgia takes the form of reenacting and re-ritualizing in different ways the imperialist, colonizing journey as narrative fantasy of power and desire, of seduction by the Other" (369). Not incidentally, these power dynamics likewise are exemplified in the *kawaii* aesthetic. Ngai writes of "the tie between cuteness and eating" and argues that "the ultimate index of an object's cuteness may be its edibility" (78–79). *Little Black Sambo* embraces this aspect of *kawaii* as it enacts the cute object's dispensation both to be eaten and to threaten to eat you back. Further, it demonstrates the cute object's affective power to "soften" the emotions of the person beholding it in the manner of the tigers that melt into butter. Kyla Wazana Tompkins writes, "the image of the black body as food finds its roots in the violent intimacies of the slave economy and continues to be expressed today in a variety of visual and literary representations of black bodies, including Little Black Sambo" (90). In addition to reflecting the racial stereotype of Black people having large appetites, the book's cute intimacies therefore cannot be separated from violent histories of commodifying and consuming Black bodies, no matter how silly and innocent the story might seem.

Although *Little Black Sambo* enjoyed widespread success in Japan for many decades, dissenting voices emerged. Debates pitted the alleged literary and artistic merits of the book against its problematic elements. As Bridges notes, many of the earliest debates transpired with regard to the question of which Japanese translation and illustrated edition to favor. They were less concerned with whether or not the story itself should be rejected. For example, Tadasu Iizawa, one of the book's earliest Japanese translators, argued in 1965 that "colonial expansion of the British empire during the Victorian age . . . is at the roots of this tale" (6). In response, Japanese children's author Shin Torigoe defended the book's literary merits. He did so not by dismissing the significance of its "backdrop of the colonialism of the English empire," however, but rather by positing that such elements were of secondary significance in comparison to the redeeming artistic excellence of the story (Torigoe 7). For Torigoe, "the superb points this work has as a story for children" override the question of whether or not the book "runs the risk of implanting feelings of contempt for black people in the children of Japan" (7).

Given the ways in which *Little Black Sambo* has accumulated meanings and affects through its movements across space and time, we might turn from focusing narrowly on Bannerman's intentions to ask how the book has accrued illusions of innocence in circulation. While *mukokuseki* typically refers to cultural objects originating in contemporary Japan, the term might also be used to describe *Little Black Sambo's* amalgamation of India and Africa and the innocence frequently attributed to its floating racial imaginary. Bannerman was able to "innocently" color her figures black by lumping Indian and African people together into an undifferentiated mass, thereby giving the book what Sircar calls a "stylized blackness" ("International Case" 188). Yet while this stylized Blackness may represent neither Indians nor Africans nor African Americans, it is without doubt a racist and imperialist fantasy. The book's intermixture of ethnic signifiers suggests that racist *kawaii* objects cannot be understood as genuinely innocent but instead must be seen as objects that permit indulgence in dreams of racial forgetting. As I show in the next section, this imperial innocence facilitated Sambo's transference from the pages of the book to the character's proliferation in the flows of racial capitalism through blackface *kawaii* commodities.

III. Cute Britannia

In 1988, a ten-year-old boy named Hajime Arita began accumulating what one American journalist would call "the most controversial toy collection in all of Japan" (Covert). The collection consisted of over eight hundred Black *kawaii*

collectibles, an assemblage of items worth approximately \$33,000, or half of his family's yearly household income.⁷ A 22 July 1988 article in the *Washington Post*, written by a journalist named Margaret Shapiro, had sparked Hajime's desire to start the collection. Shapiro's article noted the lingering presence of Black caricatures in Japan, including in *kawaii* commodities inspired by *Little Black Sambo*. In 1985, Sanrio had created a line of summer products—including towels, bags, and stationery goods—featuring Sambo alongside a newly invented sister character named Hanna. Sanrio's Sambo remained indebted to Bannerman's fantasy in more than just his name: in one of the items, recalling the large appetite Bannerman had given him, he exclaims, "when I'm Hungry there's no stoppin' me. I'll be up a palm pickin' coconuts before you can count to three. (An' I can count way past three, too!)" (Shapiro). That same year, Sanrio, then a growing multinational corporation, also debuted Bibinba, a caricature of an African boy sitting astride a lion. Together, the two lines brought in over \$11 million in sales in 1987. The *Washington Post* article exposing this trend set off a flurry of protests, inciting what came to be called the *Chibikuro Sambo ronsou* (ちびくろ・さんぼ論争), or "*Little Black Sambo* controversy" (Graven 20). It thereby launched the first large-scale resistance against anti-Black racism in *kawaii* culture, setting the stage for numerous disappearances, reappearances, and transformations of the imagery that *Little Black Sambo* had helped to introduce many years before.

The Japanese media reported on the American backlash, and when Hajime's father heard the news, he wanted to see the items for himself. He began perusing shops in the family's hometown of Osaka in search of Sambo-inspired *kawaii* goods and found a wealth of these items. Over the next few years, Hajime became a poster child for a growing movement against anti-Black racism in Japan. While the Arita family worked to amass their collection of Black *kawaii* merchandise in order to prove its ubiquity, they also founded the *Kokujin Sabetsu wo Nakusu Kai* (黒人差別をなくす会), or "Association to Stop Anti-Black Racism." The association sent hundreds of letters demanding that Japanese companies stop manufacturing Black caricatures and wrote to publishers to insist that they cease publication of *Little Black Sambo*.

When first called upon to explain the Sambo line, Sanrio was defensive. Kenichiro Ide, a spokesperson for Sanrio, claimed that the items should be seen as "humorous" and "friendly" and that Japanese children "enjoy[ed them] with good will" (Shapiro). He insisted, "the characters reflect the idea of hot sun, rhythm, and a free feeling. Everyone thought they were cute. We didn't think they were discriminatory" (Graven 20). Many people in both Japan and the United States, however, remained troubled. In Washington, the Congressional Black Caucus assembled to demand that Japanese business

leaders and politicians resolve the problem. Thanks to their efforts, and that of the Association to Stop Anti-Black Racism, *Little Black Sambo* ceased publication in Japan for over fifteen years, with Iwanami being the final publisher to stop printing the book in December 1988. Sanrio apologized, halted production, and recalled the Sambo and Bibinba lines at a cost of \$15 million.

Very little of this history is remembered today, and Sanrio has erased all mention of Sambo from the story it tells about itself. Nevertheless, *Little Black Sambo* has continued to reappear in new guises, indicating the power of imperial innocence to resist critical dismantling. In 2005, Zuiunsha rereleased *Little Black Sambo* with the Dobias illustrations that had proved so popular many years before. Never quite forgotten, the book again achieved bestseller status, selling approximately 100,000 copies in two months.⁸ A few years later, a sequel based on Bannerman's *Sambo and the Twins: A New Adventure of Little Black Sambo* (1936) appeared. This sequel featured two of Sambo's siblings, the twins Ufu and Mufu, and motivated a new line of associated *kawaii* products, from electronic games to handbags, pillows, and plushies (fig. 4). In an Ufumufu music video, the two twins dance in a jungle among wild tigers, monkeys, elephants, and a man wearing an afro and bell-bottoms. The video reenacts some of *Little Black Sambo's* most beloved scenes—the tiger chase and pancake eating—together with a musical track that cheerfully repeats, “guruguru” (ぐるぐる), reprising the tiger's growls from the Iwanami translation. Here, rather than disavow the original, Ufu and Mufu give us both a literal and a figurative multiplication. Sambo's twin siblings unapologetically celebrate and replicate the original “*kawaii* black boy,” demonstrating the power of the story to not only linger but also to duplicate—just as its success inspired Grant Richards to publish imitative racist texts like M. C. Bell's *Little Yellow Wang-Lo* (1903) into the early twentieth century. This spawning of new iterations points to the iterability of Sambo himself, who finds himself duplicated not only in sequels and new editions, but also in actual twinning.

In this way, racist *kawaii* images haunt the present, revealing just how mutable and pervasive imperial innocence has become. While the Japanese Pokémon character Jynx, a monster with blackface elements, garnered belated criticism in the United States, *kawaii* characters like Sanrio's Badtz-Maru, a “bad” black penguin, have perhaps abstracted these elements past the point of easy recognition. If you travel to Tokyo, you can still find a blackface *kawaii* character peddling S&B Oriental Curry (エスビーカレー) in shops aimed at international tourists, not only demonstrating the ongoing conflation of Africa and India through capitalist consumption, but also forcing the question of who exactly finds these images appealing: Japanese people or Western spectators



Fig. 4. An Ufumufu window display at Kyoto Station in 2011 (photograph courtesy of Robert Moorehead).

who feel able to openly consume such imagery when they find it filtered through a so-called foreign culture.

Lest we forget the impact that these fantasies continue to have on children of color, Nyong'o reminds us that *Little Black Sambo* constructs a world in which "even moments of jarring violence are remembered as a charming encounter with a pickaninny" (378). Today, even in Japan, claims regarding *Little Black Sambo's* innocence are becoming increasingly specious in light of the nation's growing racial diversity and *kawaii's* global spread. In 2010, a video featuring Japanese preschool children singing a "Little Black Sambo" song "akin to what might be taught by a white supremacist group" went viral and sparked protest across social media after a biracial child's parents translated the song's lyrics and uploaded them to *Facebook* (Chozick). Moreover, while both Britain and the U. S. frequently deflect responsibility for the continued circulation of racist caricatures onto nations like Japan, Euro-American culture has been undeniably complicit in perpetuating such fantasies. Disney's 1967 film *The Jungle Book*, with a live-action adaptation released as recently as 2016, similarly borrows from the imperial innocence of Kipling's 1894 classic in mixing African diasporic and Indian signifiers in a fantasy setting, with the orangutan character King Louie singing "I Wan'na Be like You" in a style that borrows from Black jazz music.

In an interconnected world, one in which *kawaii* products frequently travel across the globe, it has become increasingly important that we understand the ways in which children's culture circulates transnationally, heightening the imagined innocence of racist caricatures by augmenting their illusions of contextlessness. While Sanrio never intended for its Sambo goods of the 1980s to be discovered by Western consumers, *kawaii* has now become a global phenomenon that animates Japan's "soft power"—the power that a nation gains through attraction rather than brute force—on an international stage (Nye *passim*). Yet, although Hello Kitty may serve as Japan's ambassador of cuteness in the twenty-first century, she remains, in many respects, Victorian. It can therefore be no coincidence that when the Japanese government began investing in strategies to strengthen Japan's international presence by capitalizing on the global appeal of Japanese popular culture, it borrowed its slogan "Cool Japan" from "Cool Britannia," itself a transmogrification of "Rule Britannia." As a 2013 headline in the *Times* of London declared, "Forget Blair, Britpop and Cool Britannia and prepare for the arrival of Cool Japan" (Alexander). While the soft power of children's culture may seem to muffle the "hard power" of imperial force (Nye *passim*), *Little Black Sambo's* continued presence in *kawaii* products demonstrates how these two forms of power—the hard and the soft—always coexisted in the spread of "cute Britannia."

For Victorian studies, the Victorian racial fantasies lingering in our global present point to the need for methodologies capable of contending not only with the violence of imperialist expansion, but also with imperialism's deployment of the small and the intimate, its enmeshment of hard and soft powers. It was often by way of minor affects and aesthetics that Victorian culture diffused across the world and continues to bleed into our everyday. Imperial innocence has both fixed racist fantasies in the global imagination and allowed them to seem to belong to some faraway place. By remembering that racism is historical and geopolitical, we might finally recognize that these fantasies belong to far too many of us.

University of Wisconsin, Madison

NOTES

I would like to thank Leslie Bow, the Northeast Victorian Studies Association "Expanding the Field" Essay Prize committee, and the *Victorian Studies* readers and editors for their feedback and support.

1. Sukanya Banerjee advances a transimperial framework that “continually [questions] the discrete solidities of the (British) nation and [places] it in an inexhaustible relation of contiguity and interconstitutiveness with empire ‘out there’” (925). Recently, Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, Ryan Fong, Nasser Mufti, Amy R. Wong, and others have discussed the importance of engaging critical race theory in Victorian studies alongside its attendant challenges.

2. Christoff’s “*Margaret and the Victorians*” offers another approach to reading Victorian imperial affects in contemporary global culture by tracking the echoes of the realist novel in post-9/11 cinema.

3. The original Mitsuyoshi translation used the anti-Black racial slur *kuwonbo* (くろんぼ) to describe Sambo’s race. In 1978, this word was revised to *kuroi* (くろい), a neutral color term for “black,” in the twenty-eighth Iwanami printing.

4. *Moe* (萌え), another related term, is often used in anime, manga, and gaming fan communities to describe feelings of affection toward cute characters who tend to exhibit vulnerable qualities such as shyness, awkwardness, and helplessness. *Moe* thus represents another way in which predatory and protective attachments coincide in Japanese popular culture. See Patrick W. Galbraith’s *The Moé Manifesto*.

5. The U.S. occupation of Japan officially ended in 1952. The period of postwar recovery, however, lasted much longer, and Japan remains dependent on U.S. military power to the present day according to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security signed in 1960. See John W. Dower’s *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*.

6. In Japanese, a more common onomatopoeic word for the sound a tiger makes is *gao* (ガオー).

7. I reconstructed this history of Sanrio and the “*Little Black Sambo* controversy” from articles that appeared in the popular press. See “Boy,” Covert, Graven, Greenwald, “Japanese,” McCombs, McCurry, Nagashima, and Shapiro.

8. Even before the book’s official rerelease, a 1997 revised edition titled *Chibikuro Sambo* (チビクロさんぼ) by Marimo Mori featured Sambo disguised in the form of a black Labrador puppy.

WORKS CITED

- Alexander, Lucy. “Forget Blair, Britpop and Cool Britannia and prepare for the arrival of Cool Japan.” *The Times*, 10 Dec. 2013.
- Banerjee, Sukanya. “Transimperial.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 46, no. 3–4, 2018, pp. 925–28.
- Bannerman, Helen. *Sambo and the Twins: A New Adventure of Little Black Sambo*. J. B. Lippincott Co., 1936.
- . *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. Grant Richards, 1899.
- Bannerman, Helen. バンナーマン・ヘレン. *Chibikuro Sambo* ちびくろ・さんぼ [*Little Black Sambo*]. Translated by Natsuya Mitsuyoshi 光吉夏弥, Zuiunsha, 2004.
- Barton, Phyllis Settecase. *The Pictus Orbis Sambo: Being a Publishing History, Checklist and Price Guide for The Story of Little Black Sambo*. Pictus Orbis, 1998.
- Bell, M. C. *Little Yellow Wang-Lo*. Grant Richards, 1903.

- Bernstein, Robin. *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*. New York UP, 2011.
- Betensky, Carolyn. "Casual Racism in Victorian Literature." *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2019, pp. 723–51.
- Bow, Leslie. "Racist Cute: Caricature, Kawaii-Style, and the Asian Thing." *American Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 1, 2019, pp. 29–58.
- "Boy Appeals Racism Against Blacks in Japan." *Japan Economic Newswire*, 11 Aug. 1989.
- Bridges, William H. "The Sun Never Sets on *Little Black Sambo*: Circuits of Affection and the Cultural Hermeneutics of *Chibikuro Sambo*—A Transpacific Approach." *The Affect of Difference: Representations of Race in East Asian Empire*, edited by Christopher P. Hanson and Dennis Washburn, U of Hawai'i P, 2016, pp. 304–27.
- Chozick, Matthew. "'Sambo' Racism Row Reignites over Kids' Play." *The Japan Times*, 13 Apr. 2010, www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2010/04/13/issues/sambo-racism-row-reignites-over-kids-play/.
- Christoff, Alicia Mireles. "Margaret and the Victorians." *PMLA*, vol. 134, no. 3, 2019, pp. 507–23.
- Clark, Kenneth. *Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development*. Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, 1950.
- Covert, Brian. "Racism in Japan: Hajime Arita's Ongoing Fight Against Negative African-American Images." *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 30 Aug. 1990.
- Cowan, Amber. "Konichiwa! Why Is Beatrix Potter Big in Japan?" *The Times*, 13 Dec. 2006.
- Dinnage, Rosemary. "Taming the Teatime Tigers." *The Times Literary Supplement*, 24 July 1981, p. 834.
- Dower, John W. *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. W. W. Norton, 2000.
- "For Nursery Shelves—I." *The Outlook*, 2 Dec. 1899, p. 590.
- Freedgood, Elaine. *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*. U of Chicago P, 2006.
- Galbraith, Patrick W. *The Moé Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*. Tuttle, 2017.
- Graven, Kathryn, and Urban C. Lehner. "Japanese Firm That Specializes in Cute Stumbles With Black Sambo Caricatures." *Wall Street Journal*, 31 Aug. 1988, p. 20.
- Greenwald, John, and Kumiko Mikiyama. "Prejudice and Black Sambo: American Blacks Are Up in Arms Over Japanese Racial Attitudes." *Time*, vol. 132, no. 7, Aug. 1988, pp. 25–26.
- Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford UP, 1997.
- Hay, Elizabeth. *Sambo Sahib: The Story of Little Black Sambo and Helen Bannerman*. Paul Harris, 1981.
- Ho, Elizabeth. *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*. Continuum, 2012.
- hooks, bell. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, South End Press, 1992, pp. 21–39.
- Iizawa, Tadasu 飯沢匡. "Ii kagen na kyodo kenkyu—ganbutsu hantei ni kogi suru" しい加減な共同研究—糞物判定に抗議する [Half-baked collaborative research—protesting the counterfeit judgement]. *Tosho shinbun*, 15 May, 1965.

- Ishii, Momoko 石井桃子. "Kodomo no toshokan" 子どもの図書館 [The Children's Library]. Iwanami Shoten, 1965.
- Iwabuchi, Koichi. "How 'Japanese' Is Pokémon?" *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, edited by Joseph Tobin, Duke UP, 2004, pp. 53–79.
- "Japanese Company Makes Amends on Doll." *New York Times*, 8 Nov. 1988, p. 22.
- Jones, Anna Maria. "The Victorian Childhood of Manga: Toward a Queer Theory of the Child in Toboso Yana's *Kuoshitsuji*." *Criticism*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1–41.
- Joshi, Priya. "Globalizing Victorian Studies." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2011, pp. 20–40.
- Lavery, Grace E. *Quaint, Exquisite: Victorian Aesthetics and the Idea of Japan*. Princeton UP, 2019.
- Loh, Waiyee. "Japanese Tourists in Victorian Britain: Japanese Women and the British Heritage Industry." *Textual Practice*, no. 34, 2020, pp. 87–106.
- Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. Routledge, 1995.
- McCombs, Phil. "One Small Force Against Racism." *Washington Post*, 12 Aug. 1989.
- McCurry, Justin. "Page Turner Japanese Publisher Defies Little Black Sambo Protest." *Guardian Foreign Pages*, 15 June 2005, p. 12.
- Martin, Michelle H. "'Hey, Who's the Kid with the Green Umbrella?': Re-Evaluating the Black-a-Moor and Little Black Sambo." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1998, pp. 147–62.
- Miyahara, Seiichi 宮原誠一. "'Chibikuro Sambo' no omoshirosa" 「ちびくろ・さんぼ」のおもしろさ [The appeal of *Little Black Sambo*]. *Bungaku*, vol. 22, 1954.
- "Modern Nursery-Books." *The Spectator*, 2 Dec. 1899, pp. 841–42.
- Mori, Marimo 森まりも. *Chibikuro Sambo チビクロさんぼ* [Little Black Go-for-a-Walk]. Kitaooji Shobo, 1997.
- Nagashima, Gwendolyn J. "Trying to Mend Fences." *Black Enterprise*, Nov. 1989, p. 24.
- Ngai, Sianne. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Harvard UP, 2012.
- Nitto, Hiroshi. "The Two-Layer Model of 'Kawaii': A Behavioural Science Framework for Understanding Kawaii and Cuteness." *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2016, pp. 79–95.
- "Notes." *The Academy and Literature*, 31 Dec. 1904, pp. 651–52.
- Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Public Affairs, 2004.
- Nyong'o, Tavia. "Racial Kitsch and Black Performance." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2002, pp. 371–91.
- Okubo, Midori 大久保みどり. "Chibikuro Sambo Ron—Jikken wo chushin ni" 「ちびくろ・さんぼ」論—実験を中心に [On *Chibikuro Sambo*: An Experimental Study]. *Jidou Bungaku Hyouron 児童文学評論*, vol. 12, 1976, pp. 137–52.
- Pascoe, Judith. *On the Bullet Train with Emily Bronte*. U of Michigan P, 2017.
- Reitherman, Wolfgang, director. *The Jungle Book*. Walt Disney Productions, 1967.
- Russell, John G. "Playing with Race/Authenticating Alterity: Authenticity, Mimesis, and Racial Performance in the Transcultural Diaspora." *CR: The New Centennial Review*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, pp. 41–92.

- Shapiro, Margaret. "Old Black Stereotypes Find New Lives in Japan." *Washington Post*, 22 July 1988.
- Shiokawa, Kanako. "Cute But Deadly: Women and Violence in Japanese Comics." *Themes and Issues in Asian Cartooning: Cute, Cheap, Mad, and Sexy*, edited by John A. Lent, Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1999, pp. 93–126.
- Sircar, Sanjay. "The International Case of Little Colourless Babaji: Reracinating, Returning and Retaining a Classic." *Signal: Approaches to Children's Books*, vol. 90, 1999, pp. 187–211.
- . "Little Brown Sanjay and Little Black Sambo: Childhood Reading, Adult Rereading; Colonial Text and Postcolonial Reception." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2004, pp. 131–56.
- Shop *Hello Kitty Products*—Sanrio. www.sanrio.com/categories/hello-kitty. Accessed 22 June 2019.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, 1985, pp. 243–61.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. U of California P, 2010.
- Todayama, Midori. "Revival of an Old Image: The Story of Little Black Sambo in Japan." *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2007, pp. 23–30.
- Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century*. NYU Press, 2012.
- Torigoe, Shin 鳥越信. "Chibikuro Sambo shingan ronsou ni suite—Iizawa Tadasu-shi ni kotaeru" ちびくろ・さんぼ真贋論争について—飯沢匡氏に答える [On the *Little Black Sambo* counterfeit texts debate—a response to Mr. Iizawa Tadasu]. *Tosho shinbun*, 29 May 1965.
- Toshio-chan としおちゃん. "Ufu to Mufu, futari dene" うーふとむーふ、ふたりでね [Ufu and Mufu: There are two of them]. *YouTube*, 10 June 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXLv6GTmJEc.
- Yano, Christine R. *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific*. Duke UP, 2013.