Introduction
Protecting children, projecting childhood

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Ten years can seem like the blink of an eye or a long time. Stars that (we are told) burned out millions of years ago continue to glow. Some of the world's children would have done well to have spent five years witnessing those same stars. For many, half a decade is a lifetime; for the majority caught up in the civil war raging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, five years is the *most* they might expect (see Chapter 1). The privileged of the world might reach an age where five or even ten years doesn't seem so long. I guess I fall into that category.

It is ten years since Nick Radcliffe and I edited *Making and Breaking Children's Lives.*[1] In that time I have become a grandfather, retired from my role as Director of Psychological Therapies in the NHS in Shropshire, lost my dad, attended the funerals of too many close friends, lived on and off in France, and been the songwriter, rhythm guitarist and vocalist for no less than four bands. Somewhere in the mix I moved house (gaining a greenhouse, pond and goat-shed in the process – ha!), watched my various children move from primary to secondary school or to university and postgraduate education, spent a fortune on school shoes, and published a volume critiquing the profession of clinical psychology and a second critiquing pretty much the entire Psy industry.[2]

But in the wider world of children and child services? *Making and Breaking Children's Lives* critically examined the nature of childhood, a history of child abuse, domestic violence and the discourse of responsibility as applied to young people. Four chapters were devoted to the inexorable, drug-company-sponsored rise of ADHD inscription.

A third of the volume was devoted to attempts by professionals to create better futures for children.

Ten years on it would be difficult – unaided by drugs – to feel sanguine about the current state of childhood and children's services. The current volume informs us that in those ten years some 30,000 US citizens have been *shot* (often accidentally) by *children under six* (see Chapter 1); children under 14 are at risk of electrocution (termed electroconvulsive therapy) in Australia, China and several US states, and, in Turkey, some as young as nine are given ECT explicitly as a form of torture (see Chapter 9).

Inscription of children as disordered (perhaps 'disordering' would be more accurate, though still individualised) continues as bipolar disorder competes with ADHD for ascendency. The drugging of children marked in these ways is ubiquitous and potentially lethal (see Chapter 7). Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states 'Children have the right to live.' Of the world's 195 nations, only the United States has yet to ratify the convention; Somalia is in the process of so doing at time of writing.

In the UK there are weekly revelations concerning historical sexual assaults on children by previously feted celebrities and politicians. In the last case we await the unearthing of some 'lost' files, files it is claimed that detail the deaths of assaulted children.

The role of many services – despite the best efforts of certain staff – continues to be one of inscription and assault in the name of treatment. Children are diagnosed by families, teachers, professionals and each other before embarking on careers as Psy recipients. For the majority a drug regimen remains the first response (see Chapter 7). As Grace Jackson noted in her chapter in *Making and Breaking Children's Lives*, the ingestion of psychiatric drugs by the young is a gateway to more drugs – prescribed and illicit – in later life.[3]

Over half this volume concerns efforts by policy makers and Psy professionals to change lives a little for children, at least in the UK, the US and Australia. All are marked by the sheer amount of effort the practitioners put into their work. Most of the authors are parents, some grandparents; all of us are children. Contributors explore the meaning of childhood and the tropes surrounding the concept – from 'vulnerability' to 'sexualised' and 'disabled'. Chapters examine the roles of parents and foster-parents in providing safer environments for children. Authors discuss the willingness of parents – sometimes against financial odds or the mistrust of professionals – to make the family home, with all its messiness, a place where children can feel safe and, dare I say it, love.

Some chapters didn't make it this time despite the authors' best intentions. Chapters on the oppressed lives of children in Palestine, the family court system and the ambiguous position of boarding school education await a third volume, perhaps in another ten years? Imagine – 2025. There are few signs that the world will be a better place for the majority. And for children? If the authors of this volume are anything to go by, then perhaps.

Endnotes

1.   Newnes, C. & Radcliffe, N. (Eds) (2005). *Making and Breaking Children's Lives.* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

2.   Newnes, C. (2014). *Clinical Psychology: A critical examination.* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books; Newnes, C. (2015). *Inscription, Diagnosis and Deception in the Mental Health Industry: How Psy governs us all.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

3.   Jackson, G. (2005). Cybernetic children: How technologies change and constrain the developing mind. In. C. Newnes and N. Radcliffe (Eds). *Making and Breaking Children's Lives* (pp. 90–104). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.