
International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature

Second Edition, Volume I

Edited by Peter Hunt

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Preface

This book is about children's literature – but that term is far from simple: children's literature is (among many other things) a body of texts (in the widest senses of that word), an academic discipline, an educational and social tool, an international business and a cultural phenomenon. Within these broad categories there are areas of study that scarcely recognise each other: for example, if children's literature is taken as a body of texts, that body of texts includes ancient Sumerian artefacts, modern reading schemes, classic texts in hundreds of languages, and film. If it is seen as an academic discipline, that might embrace literary theory, historicism, psychology and many other (perhaps conflicting) approaches; it might include or exclude the child from the literary equation. Children's literature – whatever it is – is at once the concern of biographers and historians, librarians and teachers, theorists and publishers, reviewers, award-givers, writers, designers, illustrators – and these and others are represented here.

If it is not surprising to find a huge diversity of subject-matter; what the cross- or interdisciplinary nature of the field also reveals is a huge diversity of approach and tone – quite different concepts of *what is thought to be worth saying*. It is evident from the voices of this book that specialists in different disciplines (and in different parts of the world) do not merely deal with different subject-matter, they *think differently*, and this thinking differently extends to how they use words and how they structure arguments and chapters. And yet, because there is a common interest – however difficult to define – these many voices do not descend into cacophony. Rather than attempting to impose arbitrary conventions upon the 116 authors (should such a thing have been possible) of this book, I have been careful to encourage subject-specialists to write within the norms of style and structure appropriate to their specialisations. It seems to me that this diversity (which can be stark) is one of the fundamental, radical strengths of this area of study. This is not an area of cosy agreement; rather, it is an area of developing dialogues along many axes.

A central difficulty of a book like this, which has been pointed out by the (generally helpful) reviewers and users of the first edition, is the word 'international' in the title. It is one of the basic problems in the study of children's literature that the adjective 'children's' does not have the same status as the adjective 'English' in 'English Literature' or 'German' in 'German Literature'. There is a widespread assumption that there is a commonality of childhood, and a commonality of the relationship between the child and the book, that transcends culture and language. Whether this is true or not (and it is discussed at length in this revised edition), such a proposition has two practical implications for an editor. The first is that it potentially expands the subject to unmanageable proportions – a subject area based on a 'horizontal', age- or experience-related division

takes in millions of books and thousands of cultures – and that unmanageability is exacerbated by the necessity of specialisation in any of the hundreds of potential fields. Thus ‘international’ implies that much of our work should be comparative. Attractive as this may be, there is a simple practical difficulty in finding the polyglot polymaths who can discuss the subject in these terms.

This leads us to a second problem, that of how far the book is Anglocentric, rather than truly ‘international’ in its outlook. It has been remarked that the sections on Theory and Critical Approaches, Forms and Genres, Contexts, and Applications are all English-language based: that is, the historical developments described and the examples given are overwhelmingly of English first-language-speaking countries and their empires; the theorising is largely based on Western – and specifically English-language – schools of thought. Equally, the gathering of articles on separate countries and areas of the world in a separate section (National and International) suggests that the ‘rest’ of the world is ‘other’ – that colonialism is not dead.

The answer to these quite reasonable criticisms is *not* that English-language children’s books have one of the longest histories, have been most internationally influential, and currently dominate the world market. Nor is the answer that English-language theory and criticism are better than or more influential or more extensive than their equivalents in other languages, even given the status of English as a world language. Even the briefest inspection of this book demonstrates that such assumptions cannot hold – indeed, editing a book like this is a very good training in humility, and I would hope that using it engenders an appreciation that there is no neutral place to stand in the world of children’s books.

The answer to the charge of Anglocentrism, then, is far more pragmatic than any of these. This is an English-language work, primarily written by scholars working in English, for a predominantly English-speaking audience. (There are other wide-ranging ‘international’ reference books of the highest quality – but they are not written in English.) Therefore, it is not only natural (however theoretically regrettable) that the emphasis should fall upon English topics, writers and historical concerns, or that, say, theory should be based on Western/English models: it is, until the promised land of genuinely international scholarship is reached, inevitable. As yet, I do not think that a scholar does, or perhaps could, exist, who could speak at first hand of the intricacies of, for example, reader-response criticism as developed in the indigenous languages of China, Germany, Norway ... and everywhere else. Books in those languages remain mutually inaccessible except to a very few. Every effort has been made by the contributors to this book to acknowledge what they do not know, and to suggest, however tentatively, where links might be made or common ground found.

The organisation of these volumes is, at least in intent, practical rather than sinister, but it is clear that other groupings could easily be devised, and that a large number of chapters could have found other homes.

For this new edition fifty-one new chapters have been written, either to extend the range of topics, or to replace chapters in the first edition where the original author was unable to update the work (and these replacement chapters, because they represent a different point of view, can be read profitably alongside the originals). Almost all the other chapters have been substantially rewritten, revised or extended, and the bibliographies have been brought up to date. I have attempted to take into account world political developments over the last ten years, as, for example, in the extended essays on the Baltic States and South East Europe. However, despite the advances in information technology and the

considerable expansion of interest in children's literature in some parts of the world, it has not always been possible to find reliable information. What may seem at first glance to be imbalances in the treatment of different countries and regions are due partly to the lack of emphasis that some cultures place upon children's books, and to the immense variability in resources, researchers and communication channels.

The philosophy behind the format of this *Companion Encyclopedia* has been to provide, where possible, in-depth discussion of topics, as well as information. Clearly, the information-function of reference books is rapidly being overtaken by the resources of the internet, and this is demonstrated in this volume by the number of websites cited, and by the absence of, for example, the chapter on children's magazines. It has become clear that, with relatively ephemeral materials, print versions of lists or descriptions rapidly become out of date and the information can more easily and reliably be found elsewhere.

We are living in a period of unprecedented production and sales of children's books, which in turn has generated an unprecedented level of interest, and this book has been compiled in the context of the consolidation of children's literature studies in the West, and its steady development elsewhere. It may well be that, in future, children's literature may be found within the rapidly developing meta-discipline of Childhood Studies, where it can be placed in the context of real and theoretical childhoods, and in the context of (adult) literary constructions and portrayals of childhood (see Travisano (2000) and Lesnik-Oberstein (1998)). Equally, concern about the 'commodification' of childhood, and the way in which children are positioned as consumers of texts, may shift children's literature into the areas of social, political and cultural studies (Kehily and Swann 2003).

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International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature

Second Edition, Volume I

I Introduction

Definitions, themes, changes, attitudes

Margaret Meek

Acts of definition

Encyclopedias are usually designed to assemble and to encompass, for the purposes of recognition and study, as much of what is known about a subject of interest and concern as the conditions of its production and publication allow. Children's literature is an obvious subject for this purpose. Its nature and social significance are most clearly discerned when activities associated with children and books are brought together. These activities may be as diverse as creating a book list, a publisher's catalogue, a library, an exhibition, a school's Book Week, a rare collection, a prize-giving ceremony, as well as the compilation of scholarly works of reference. Children's literature is embedded in the language of its creation and shares its social history. This volume is its first avowed encyclopedia, and thus a representation of children's literature at a particular time.

The by-play of an encyclopedia is the view it offers of the world as reflected in its subject-matter. Promoters and editors long for completeness, the last word on the topic, even when they know there is no such rounding off. Instead, there is only an inscribed event, which becomes part of the history of ideas and of language. When this moment passes for works of reference, we say the book has gone 'out of date', a description of irrelevance, calling for revision or reconstitution. But later readers continue to find in encyclopedias not simply the otherness of the past, but also the structures of values and feelings, which historians teach us to treat as evidence of the perceptions a culture has, and leaves, of itself.

In this, as in other ways, the present volume differs from many of its predecessors. Earlier compilations of information about children's books were more heroic, written by individuals with a commitment to the subject, at the risk, in their day, of being considered quaint in their choice of reading matter. It is impossible to imagine the history of children's literature without the ground-clearing brilliance of F. J. Harvey Darton's *Children's Books in England* (1932/1982). But although Darton's account has a singleness of purpose and matching scholarship, it is not the whole story. There is more than diligence and systematic arrangement in John Rowe Townsend's careful revisions of *Written for Children* (1965/1990), a text kept alert to change; it is still a starting place for many students. Over a period of forty years, Margery Fisher's contribution to this field included both a series of finely judged comments on books as they appeared, and a unique vision of why it is important to write *about* children's books, so that writing them would continue to be regarded as serious business. Better than many a contemporary critic she understood how, and why, 'we need constantly to revise and restate the standards of this supremely important branch of literature' (Fisher 1964: 9). *The Oxford Companion to Children's*

2 Introduction

Literature (Carpenter and Prichard 1984), however, shows how acts of definition are upheld by editors and their friends. Collectors, cataloguers, bibliographers and other book persons stand behind all works of summation, including those of the single author-as-editor-and-commentator.

By virtue of its anthologising form, this volume replaces the *tour d'horizon* of the classical encyclopedia with something more characteristic of the culture of its epoch, a certain deliberate untidiness, an openness. The writers brought together here are currently at work in different parts of the field of children's literature. Encompassing all their activities, their individual histories and directions, children's literature appears not as something which requires definition in order to be recognised or to survive, but as a 'total text', in what Jerome J. McGann calls 'a network of symbolic exchanges' (1991: 3), a diverse complexity of themes, rites and images. There are many voices. Each writer has an interpretative approach to a chosen segment of the grand design, so that the whole book may be unpacked by its searching readers, or dipped into by the curious or the uninitiated. Some of the writings are tentative and explorative; others are confident, even confrontational. As the counterpoint of topics and treatments emerges, we note in what is discussed agreement and difference, distinction and sameness. Thus the encyclopedia becomes not a series of reviews, but a landmark, consonant with and responsive to the time of its appearance.

Children's literature is not in this book, but outside, in the social world of adults and children and the cultural processes of reading and writing. As part of any act of description, however, a great number of different readers and writers are woven into these pages, and traces of their multiple presences are inscribed there. This introduction is simply a privileged *essai*, or essay, of the whole.

Common themes and blurred genres

Our constant, universal habit, scarcely changed over time, is to tell children stories. Children's earliest encounters with stories are in adults' saying and singing; when infants talk to themselves before falling asleep, the repetitions we hear show how they link people and events. As they learn their mother tongue they discover how their culture endows experience with meaning. Common ways of saying things, proverbs, fables and other kinds of lore, put ancient words into their mouths. Stories read to them become part of their own memories. Book characters emerge in the stories of their early dramatic play as they anticipate the possibilities of their futures.

The complexity of children's narrative understandings and the relation of story-telling to the books of their literature become clear from the records many conscientious adults have kept of how individual children grew up with books (Paley 1981; Crago and Crago 1983; Wolf and Brice Heath 1992). One of the most striking of these is Carol Fox's account of the effect of literature on young children's own story-telling, before they learn to read for themselves. In her book *At the Very Edge of the Forest*, she shows how, by being read to, children learn to 'talk like a book'. This evidence outstrips the rest by showing how pre-school children borrow characters, incidents and turns of phrase from familiar tales and from their favourite authors in order to insert themselves into the continuous storying of everyday events. Children also expect the stories they hear to cast light on what they are unsure about: the dark, the unexpected, the repetitious and the ways adults behave. Quickly learned, their grasp of narrative conventions is extensive before they have school lessons. For children, stories are metaphors, especially in the realm of feelings, for which they have, as yet, no single words. A popular tale like *Burglar Bill* (1977) by Janet

and Allan Ahlberg, invites young listeners to engage with both the events and their implications about good and bad behaviour in ways almost impossible in any discourse other than that of narrative fiction.

Narrative, sometimes foregrounded, always implied, is the most common theme in this Encyclopedia. Most writers engage with children's literature as stories, which gives weight to Barbara Hardy's conviction, sometimes contested but more often approved, that for self-conscious humans, narrative is 'a primary act of mind transferred to art from life' Hardy 1968/1977: 12. The same claim is made in various ways by Eco 1983, Le Guin 1981, Lurie 1990, Smith 1990, Bruner 1986, Barthes 1974 and others. Stories are what adults and children most effectively share. Although myths, legends, folk and fairy tales tend to be associated particularly with childhood, throughout history they have been embedded in adult literature, including recent retellings as different as those of Angela Carter (1990) and Salman Rushdie (1990).

It is not surprising, therefore, that modern studies of narratology, their accompanying formalist theories and the psychological, linguistic, structural and rhetorical analyses developed from adult literary fictions are now invoked to describe the creative and critical practices in children's literature. Ursula Le Guin, whose renown as a writer of science fiction is further enhanced by her imaginative world-making for the young, acknowledges the continuity of story-telling in all our lives, and the vital part it plays in intellectual and affective growth.

Narrative is a central function of language. Not, in its origin, an artefact of culture, an art, but a fundamental operation of the normal mind functioning in society. To learn to speak is to learn to tell a story.

(Le Guin 1989: 39)

Narrative is not a genre. It is a range of linguistic ways of annotating time, related to memory and recollections of the past, as to anticipations of the future, including hypotheses, wishes, longing, planning and the rest. If a story has the imaginative immediacy of 'let's pretend', it becomes a present enactment. If an author tells a reader about Marie Curie's search for radium, the completed quest is rediscovered as a present adventure. While their experience is confined to everyday events, readers do not sort their imagining into different categories of subject-matter. Until they learn different kinds of writing conventions for different school subjects, children make narrative serve many of the purposes of their formal learning. The words used by scientists, historians, geographers, technologists and others crop up in biographies and stories before formal textbooks separate them as lessons.

Quite early, however, children discover that adults divide books into two named categories: fiction and non-fiction; and imply that books with 'facts' about the 'real' world are different from those that tell 'made up' stories. In modern writing for children this absolute distinction is no longer sustainable. Both novels and 'fact' books deal with the same subjects in a wide range of styles and presentations. Topics of current social and moral concern – sex, poverty, illness, crime, family styles and disruptions – discovered by reading children in newspapers and in feature films on television, also appear as children's literature in new presentational forms. The boundaries of genres that deal with actualities are not fixed but blurred. Books about the fate of the rainforests are likely to be narratives although their content emphasises the details of ecological reasoning.

Although stories are part of young children's attempts to sort out the world, children's literature is premised on the assumption that all children, unless prevented by exceptional

circumstances, can learn to read. In traditionally literate cultures, learning to read now begins sooner than at any time in the past. Books are part of this new precocity because parents are willing to buy them, educators to promote them and publishers to produce them. At a very young age, children enter the textual world of environmental print and television and soon become at home in it. Encouraged by advertising, by governmental and specialist urgings, parents expect to understand how their children are being taught to read, and to help them.

They also want their children to have access to the newest systems of communication and to their distinctive technological texts. In England, the national legislation that sets out the orders for literacy teaching begins with this sentence: 'Pupils should be given an extensive experience of children's literature.' No account of the subject of this Encyclopedia has ever before carried such a warrant.

Over the last decade the attention given to how children learn to read has foregrounded the nature of *textuality*, and of the different, interrelated ways in which readers of all ages make texts mean. 'Reading' now applies to a greater number of representational forms than at any time in the past: pictures, maps, screens, design graphics and photographs are all regarded as text. In addition to the innovations made possible in picture books by new printing processes, design features also predominate in other kinds, such as books of poetry and information texts. Thus, reading becomes a more complicated kind of interpretation than it was when children's attention was focused on the printed text, with sketches or pictures as an adjunct. Children now learn from a picture book that words and illustrations complement and enhance each other. Reading is not simply word recognition. Even in the easiest texts, what a sentence 'says' is often not what it means.

Intertextuality, the reading of one text in terms of another, is very common in English books for children. Young children learn how the trick works as early as their first encounter with Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *Each Peach Pear Plum*, where they are to play I Spy with nursery characters. The conventions of intertextuality encourage artists and writers to exploit deliberately the bookish nature of books, as in John Burningham's *Where's Julius?* (1986) and Aidan Chambers's *Breaktime* (1978), both of which can be described as 'metafiction'.

Few children who have gone to school during the past twenty-five years in the West have learned to read books without also being proficient in reading television, the continuous text declaring the actuality of the world 'out there'. Book print and screen feed off each other, so there is a constant blurring of identifiable kinds. The voice-over convention of screen reading helps young readers to understand that the page of a book has also to be 'tuned'. Then they discover the most important lesson of all: the reader of the book has to become both the teller and the told.

Most of the evidence for children's reading progress comes from teachers' observations of how they interact with increasingly complex texts. But to decide which texts are 'difficult' or 'suitable' for any group of learners is neither straightforward nor generalisable. Children stretch their competences to meet the demands of the texts they really *want* to read.

Distinctive changes

Changes in the ways children learn and are taught to read indicate other symbiotic evaluations in children's literature. It has a continuous and influential history which is regularly raided for evidence of other social, intellectual and artistic changes. Encyclopedias are

bound up in this tradition, and this one extends the breadth of its subject to include the diversity of the scene at the time of its compilation. This includes textual varieties and variations such as result from modern methods of production and design and the apparently inexhaustible novelty of publishing formats.

Picture books exhibit these things best. However traditional their skills, authors and artists respond both to new techniques of book-making and to rapid changes in the attitudes and values of actual social living. The conventional boundaries of content and style have been pushed back, broken, exceeded, exploited, played with. Topics are now expected to engage young readers at a deeper level than their language can express but which their feelings recognise. In 1963, Maurice Sendak rattled the fundamentals of the emotional quality of children's books and the complacent idealised psychologies of the period by imaging malevolence and guilt in *Where the Wild Things Are*. Some contemporary critics said he threatened children with nightmares; in fact, Sendak opened the way for picture stories to acknowledge, in the complexity of image-text interaction, the layered nature of early experiences, playful or serious, by making them *readable*.

Spatial and radial reading, the kinds called for by the original illustrated pages of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794), are now in the repertoires of modern children who know Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *The Jolly Postman* (1986) and all the other works of their contemporaries discussed in these pages. Children's imaginative play, the way they grow into their culture and change it, is depicted in visual metafiction. In 1993 appeared Babette Cole's *Mummy Laid an Egg*, a picture story of two exuberant children who, when told by their parents the traditional fabled accounts of procreation, turn the tables on them. 'We don't think you really know how babies are made,' they say. 'So we're doing some drawings to show you' (Cole 1993: np). Adult reactions to illustrations of this topic are always hesitant, despite contemporary convictions which support the idea of telling children the 'facts of life'. The sensitive delicacy of Cole's presentation of the children's exact and explicit understanding puts to rout any suggestion that this is a prurient book. Humour releases delight and increases children's confidence in understanding the metaphoric nature of language. It is also memorably serious.

Despite the attraction and distraction of many different kinds of new books, children still enjoy and profit from knowing myths, legends, folk and fairy tales. Some of these texts come in scholarly editions preferred by bibliophiles, but more often the versions are modern retellings, variable in quality and authenticity. Where the story is 'refracted' or told from a different viewpoint, the readers' sympathetic understanding undergoes a change. *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs by A. Wolf* (Jon Scieszka 1989) caught the imagination of young readers in just this way. It also lets them see how stories can be retold because they are something *made*. Neil Philip's exploration of the history of Cinderella (Philip 1989), Jack Zipes's collection of the versions of Little Red Riding Hood (Zipes 1983), Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* (1985) and his reworking of the texts of the plays to accompany animated films devised by Russian puppeteers, all show how multiple versions of traditional stories are matched by different ways of learning to read them.

A perceptive suggestion about versions of stories is made by Margaret Mackey. She points out that adults of a post-war generation have read popular and classic authors (Beatrix Potter, for example) in reprints of the original forms. Sequentially over time, they see reproductions of the texts and pictures on plates, mugs, calendars and aprons. The next generation that reads Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman* also encounters multiple versions of the pictures in different book formats, on video and film, wallpaper and sweaters *simultaneously*, and has the skill to choose from a number of versions the one

they prefer. This commodification of children's literature is examined by Mackey in the case of *Thomas the Tank Engine* (1946) and its sequels. Forty years after their first appearance as books, the BBC produced animations of these stories. This generated 'a small industry of toys, games, pyjamas and so forth' (Mackey 1995: 43–4). This is how one part of the past of children's literature moves into the future.

Those small children whose first fictional love is Thomas the Tank Engine are meeting a creation whose roots are deep in the certainties of a bygone era but whose branches and blossoms are so multifarious as to be confusing to the uninitiated. One of the striking things about the saga of Thomas the Tank Engine, as well as about other picture-book characters who are the focus of industrial empires, is that they make it possible for very small toddlers to belong to the ranks of the initiated, and to know it. Their first approach to fiction is one of coming to terms with different versions, an experience which makes them experts in the settings and characters even as they learn the basic conventions of how story works.

Thomas's illustrations provide one single and small example of the way in which little readers learn the need to deal with plurality.

(Mackey 1995: 44)

General agreement that picture books exemplify and adorn the domain of children's literature is countered by arguments about the nature and worth of novels written for adolescents. This age group is usually subdivided into those who are discovering, usually at school, the kinds of writing related to 'subject' learning, and the pre-higher-education teenagers (a word now less in use than it was when books were first deliberately written to distinguish them as readers) engaging with more complex subjective and social issues and making deliberate life choices. By this later stage, boys are often differentiated from girls in their tastes and reading habits. Critics of the bookish kind and teachers concerned that their pupils should tackle 'challenging' texts emphasise the importance of 'classic' literature, usually pre-twentieth century. Adolescents choose their reading matter from magazines commercially sensitive to the shifting identities of the young, and from the novels that connect readers' personal growth to a nascent interest in the world of ideas and beliefs, their nature and relevance. Adolescents are prepared to tackle sophisticated texts in order to appear 'in the know', adult-fashion. At other times, both boys and girls, pressurised by examinations and the social complexities of their age groups, take time out to read the books they came to earlier, and to ponder the kind of world they want to live in.

To account for the range of texts, the diversity of topics, the differences between readers, and the vagaries of critical reactions in literature for adolescents, is to write a version of the history of social events of the last thirty years. It is also to engage with the issues that emerge, including hypocrisy in social and political engagements, and global debates about how to protect the universe. As they confront incontinent streams of information in world-wide communication networks, young adults want to read about what matters. Dismayed by the single economic realism of their parents' generation, they salvage their imaginations by reading the chilling novels of Robert Cormier, where they discover the complexities of intergenerational betrayal in a book like *After the First Death* (1979). With some tactful help to encourage them to tolerate the uncertainties induced by unfamiliar narrative techniques, teenagers rediscover reading as an intellectual adventure. They learn to ask themselves 'Do I believe this? How reliable is this story-teller?

What kind of company am I keeping in this book?’ Good authors show their characters confronted by indecisions like their own in making choices. Happy endings are less in vogue than they once were.

Perhaps the most significant of the distinctive changes implied and dealt with in this Encyclopedia are those which differentiate readers and books in terms of gender, class and race. These issues and their ideological attachments go well beyond children’s literature, but they have a part to play in books for readers more interested in the future than the past. As readers’ responses are part of the adult involvement in writing for adolescents, and ‘positive images’ are now expected to be text-distinctive, then the influence of current thinking about these matters on authors of novels for adolescents is strong. Consider the effect of feminism on literature. ‘Children’ are no longer a homogeneous group of readers; they are constituted differently. The situated perspectives of boys and girls have now to be part of the consciousness of all writers and all readers. Girls have always read boys’ books by adaptation, but boys have shown no eagerness, or have lacked encouragement, to do the same in reverse. Their tastes are said to be set in the traditional heroic tales of fable and legend and their reworkings as versions of Superman and other quest tales. Boys also seem to be more attracted to the portrayal of ‘action’ in graphic novels. Ted Hughes’s modern myth *The Iron Man* (1968) has a hero more complex than the Iron Woman, who, in her book of that name (1993), has little effective linguistic communication. She relies on a primeval scream.

At the end of the twentieth century, the most distinctive differences in children’s books were those which reflected changes in social attitudes and understandings. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the dominant white middle-class elite of children’s book publishers in English-speaking countries was forced to acknowledge the presence in school classrooms of children who could not find themselves portrayed in the pictures or the texts they were given to read. In Britain, the Children’s Rights Workshop asked publishers how many books on their lists showed girls playing ‘a leading part’, and let it be known that there were very few.

First attempts to redress the balance, the inclusion of a black face in a playground scene or an indistinct but benign ‘foreigner’ in a story, were dismissed as inept tokenism. In post-imperial Britain, two revisions were imperative: the renewal of school history texts to include the perspectives of different social groups, and the welcoming of new authors with distinctive voices and literary skill to the lists of books for the young. Topics, verbal rhythms and tones all changed, especially when a group of Caribbean writers went to read to children in schools. Consequently, as part of a more general enlightenment, local storytellers emerged, as after a long sleep, to tell local tales and to publish them. Now in Britain, children’s literature represents more positively the multicultural life of the societies from which it emerges. At the same time, however, it is also the site for debates about ‘politically correct’ language to describe characters who represent those who have suffered discrimination or marginalisation.

Books of quality play their part in changing attitudes as well as simply reflecting them. But we are still a long way from accepting multicultural social life as the norm for all children growing up. Too many old conflicts intervene. Year by year, the fact that more and more people move to richer countries from poorer ones becomes evident. The next generation will encounter bilingualism and biliteracy as common, and the promotion of positive images of multicultural encounters is consequently important. Perhaps the isolation of monolingual readers of a dominant language such as English, who read ‘foreign’ literature in translation or not at all, will be less common.

Changes in the creation, production and distribution of children's books do not happen in a vacuum. They have been linked to the mutability of their economic environment at least since John Newbery offered *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* for 6d, or 'with ball or pincushion' for 8d, in 1744. Publishing is as subject to market forces, take-over bids, the rise and fall in fashionable demand as other trading. 'Going out of print' is believed to be a more common occurrence now than ever before, but this may be an impression rather than a fact. Although their intrinsic worth is judged differently, all books are packaged to be sold. Publishers are involved in advertising deals, literary prizes, best-seller lists, and are careful when they select texts to carry their name. Authors also estimate their worth in pelf as in pages. Copyright laws are organised internationally but there too changes are current and continuous. It is interesting to note that when Geoffrey Trease wrote *Tales Out of School* in 1949, the 'outright purchase of juvenile copyright' (185) was still a common practice.

The number of outlets for children's books has increased; their locations are also different. This does not mean that the book in the shopping basket with the grocery beans is a lesser object of desire than one bought elsewhere. A bookshop may be a better place to choose from a wider range of books than a supermarket, but the popularity of books for the very young owes more to their availability than to the formal institutions intended to establish children's books as literature.

Academic attitudes

The first section of the Encyclopedia makes the claim, which the rest of the book is summoned to support, that children's literature is worthy of serious scholarly attention. The implication is that, like its adult counterpart, children's literature promotes and invites critical theory, notably in the study of the relation of texts to children's development as readers. The essays in this section document some recent moves in this direction so as to demonstrate the evolution of a discipline fit for academic recognition and institutionalised research.

Although many serious books about children's literature throw light on established ways of studying literature *tout pur*, conservative scholars and teachers, concerned about the dilutions of their topic specialisms and the blurring of canonical boundaries, have declared children's literature to be a soft reading option, academically lightweight. Once fairly widespread, this attitude has been increasingly eroded by those who have demonstrated in books for children both different kinds of texts and distinctive interactions between texts and readers. Scholars interested in the relation of literature to literacy, who ask questions about access to texts and exclusion from them, know that social differences in children's learning to read are part of any study of literary competences. Resistance to the notion of the 'universal child' and to common assumptions of what is 'normal' in interpretative reading provoke new questions, especially feminist ones, in ethnography, cultural studies and social linguistics. In all of these established disciplines there is a context for discussing the contents of children's books. But there is also the possibility for new perspectives which begin with books, children and reading. These have been slowly growing over time, but have not simply been accommodated elsewhere.

Shifts in this kind of awareness can be seen as far back as Henry James's recognition of the difference between *Treasure Island* and other Victorian novels for children. In 1949 Geoffrey Trease insisted that reviewers of post-war children's books needed new categories of judgement. For many years in the second half of the twentieth century in Britain, just to make children's books visible beyond the confines of specialist journals such as *Junior Bookshelf* and *The School Librarian* was something of a triumph. More support came from

the London *Times Literary Supplement* in the 1960s, but children's literature remained a kind of appendage to serious publishing until the artists and authors who transformed it were backed by contracts, distribution and promotion so that they became socially recognisable. The world inside the books continued for a long time to be predominantly that of the literate middle classes. Critics thought that their obligation was to set the standards for the 'best' books, so as to separate 'literature' from ephemeral reading matter, comics and the like. If there was no evident body of criticism, no real acceptance of the necessary relation of literature to literacy, there were prizes for 'the best' books in different categories. Among these was The Other Award to recognise what more conventional judges ignored or thought irrelevant: minority interests and social deprivation.

Academic research in children's literature is still a novelty if it is not psychological, historical or bibliographical – that is, detailed, factual, esoteric, fitting into the research traditions of diverse disciplines, especially those which establish their history, closed to those unschooled in the foundation exercises of the disciplines of dating. There is, I know, splendid writing about careful observations of children reading selected texts in hard-bound theses in some university libraries where education studies admit such topics. But who, besides competent tutors, admits as evidence the transcripts of classroom interactions which show readers breaking through the barriers of interpretation? Peter Hunt, reminding an audience in 1994 that the first British children's literature research conference was in 1979, suggested that this research enterprise has 'followed inappropriate models and mind-sets, especially with regard to its readership'. That is, 'we often produce *lesser* research when we should be producing *different* research' (Hunt 1994: 10). He advocates 'the inevitable interactiveness of "literature" and "the literary experience"' as worthy of analysis. Readers of the Encyclopedia will doubtless comment on this proposal.

Meanwhile, the most fully developed critical theory of children's literature is that of readers' responses to what they read. Most of the evidence for children's progress in reading and interpretation of literary texts comes from classrooms where teachers observe and appraise children's interactions with books as they read them. By foregrounding the readers' constitution of textual meaning, reading-response theory has become the most frequently quoted theoretical position in relation to books for children. What it also makes clear is the lack of any fully grounded research on the nature of the development of these competences over the total period of children's schooling.

In contrast to the notion of 'response', critics who derive their insights from social linguistics stress the power of authors to make young readers 'surrender to the flow of the discourse'; that is, to become 'lost in a book'. Sociolinguists are concerned that, having learned to read, young people should be taught to discern the author's 'chosen registers', so as to discover how a text is composed or constructed. Then, the claim is, readers will understand, from their responses to the text, 'who is doing what to whom', and thus become 'critically' literate.

Even more challenging is Jacqueline Rose's assertion about the 'impossibility' of children's fiction:

the impossible relation between adult and child. Children's literature is clearly about that relation, but it has the remarkable characteristics of being about something which it hardly ever talks of. If children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp.

(Rose 1984: 1)

There are ways of countering this view, but none the less it has to be considered. Later, Rose offers a less controvertible utterance, probably the reason so many adult readers find solace in children's literature:

Reading is magic (if it has never been experienced by the child as magic then the child will be unable to read); it is also an experience which allows the child to master the vagaries of living, to strengthen and fortify the ego, and to integrate the personality – a process ideally to be elicited by the aesthetic coherence of the book.

(Rose 1984: 135)

Rose's examination of the textual condition of *Peter Pan*, the new tone of this criticism and the different paths she follows have opened up a number of possibilities for the theoretical consideration of children's books, even beyond the revelations that come from her social editing of the texts. One of these considerations is extended in Peter Hollindale's 'Ideology and the Children's Book'. Here children's literature is detached from the earlier division of those concerned with it into 'child people and book people', and firmly joined to studies of history and culture in the 'drastically divided country' that is Britain. Going beyond the visible surface features of a text children read in order to discover how they read it, Hollindale insists we 'take into account the individual writer's unexamined assumptions'. When we do that, we discover that 'ideology is an inevitable, untameable and largely uncontrollable factor in the transaction between books and children' (Hollindale 1988: 10). Thus we are bound to accept that all children's literature is inescapably didactic.

In the 1980s and 1990s, critics of children's literature experimented with the take-over of the whole baggage of critical theory derived from adult literature and tried it for its fit. Most now agree that reading is sex-coded and gender-inflected, that writers and artists have become aware that an array of audiences beyond the traditional literary elite are becoming readers of all kinds of texts. Moreover, before they leave school, children can learn to interrogate texts, to read 'against' them so that their literacy is more critical than conformist. Some theoretical positions are shown to have more explanatory power than others: intertextuality is a condition of much writing in English; metafiction is a game which even very young readers play skilfully (Lewis 1990). There are also experimental procedures, as yet untagged, which show artists and writers making the most of the innocence of beginning readers to engage them in new reading games.

If children's literature begets new critical theory and moves further into the academic circle it will become subject to institutional conventions and regulations which are not those of the old protectionist ethos. This may give new scholars more recognition, more power even, to decide what counts as children's literature and how it is to be studied. There will be no escape, however, from learning how children read their world, the great variety of its texts beyond print and pictures. Interactions of children and books will go on outside the academy, as has ever been the case, in the story-telling of young minds operating on society 'at the very edge of the forest', inventing, imagining, hypothesising, all in the future tense.

The contents of this Encyclopedia are a tribute to all, mentioned or not, who have worked in the domain of children's books during the twentieth century, and earlier, and to those who continue to do so. The hope is that, in the third millennium, by having been brought together here, their efforts will be continued and prove fruitful.

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2 Internationalism, the universal child and the world of children's literature

Emer O'Sullivan

In 2001 a new international award, the Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature, was announced in an article in *World Literature Today Magazine*:

Today's children perceive the world from the perspective of photographs taken in outer space. They understand the concepts of lands and waters without national boundaries – boundaries that were never capable of limiting the flow of air or ocean currents or ideas. It is therefore especially appropriate that the highest prizes for children's literature should be international, representing the universality and diversity of children and their literature and offering young readers books and ideas that flow as freely as ocean currents.

(Latrobe 2001: 101)

The notion of children everywhere perceiving the world as a place without borders, with their books freely transcending all linguistic and political boundaries, is not new in academic discourse about children's literature. Its most eloquent exponent was the French scholar Paul Hazard with his concept of a 'universal republic of childhood'. The twentieth century increasingly projected a vision of small beings who magically commune with their counterparts in the whole world without any of the concomitant problems of language, culture, religion or race. Among the most visible commercial manifestations of a United Nations of childhood are the 'United Colours of Benetton' advertisements which exhibit children of every race and colour coexisting peacefully under the banner of the international clothing manufacturer. This projects and sentimentalises adult desires for universal peace and understanding. Children's literature is one of the major areas in which the utopia of internationalism has prospered. But children's literature is also part of a marketplace which is global in its reach and has little or nothing to do with the professed ideals of international children's literature.

Universal childhood: a Romantic model

Children's books keep alive a sense of nationality; but they also keep alive a sense of humanity. They describe their native land lovingly, but they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live. They understand the essential quality of their own race; but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships. Every country gives and every country receives – innumerable are the exchanges – and so it

comes about that in our first impressionable years the universal republic of childhood is born.

(Hazard 1944: 146)

With his influential survey of children's literature in Europe and America, *Les Livres, les enfants et les hommes* (1932), Paul Hazard, Professor for Comparative Literature at the Collège de France, was the first scholar to write at book length about children's literature from an international perspective. Others before him had focused on children's literature as an agent of international education, notably the Bureau International d'Education in Geneva which, in the general spirit of reconciliation of the nations after the First World War, organised a major exhibition in 1929, part of which was dedicated to international children's literature. Hazard, however, managed to create a pervasive image of world childhood, '*la république universelle de l'enfance*', which still echoes through the halls of children's literature.

Hazard was one of the founders of comparative children's literature, employing a cross-cultural perspective of studying texts across languages and cultures, and considering how children's books form a specific cultural identity. Childhood, for him, is a natural, fixed category, ontologically distinct from and far superior to adulthood; Hazard's innocent Others are decisively prelapsarian. He links childhood, in the Romantic tradition, to a primitive state and regards the imagination as the child's strongest drive; hence this appeal by children to adults in one of the most frequently quoted passages:

'Give us books,' say the children; 'give us wings. You who are powerful and strong, help us to escape into the faraway. Build us azure palaces in the midst of enchanted gardens. Show us fairies strolling about in the moonlight. We are willing to learn everything that we are taught at school, but, please, let us keep our dreams.'

(Hazard 1944: 4)

All this is part of Hazard's legacy, but most influential of all was his vision of the 'universal republic of childhood' which knows no borders and no foreign languages; in it, the children of all nations read the children's books of all nations: 'Smilingly the pleasant books of childhood cross all the frontiers; there is no duty to be paid on inspiration' (Hazard 1944: 147). Children's books, ambassadors of their countries, transcend borders with ease and forge bonds between all the children of the world: 'Every country gives and every country receives.' This is an idealistic way of talking about children's literature which ignores both the conditions that determine its production and those which influence its transfer between countries.

The Second World War prevented the immediate international reception of Hazard's book, but the same war was also in part responsible for his dream being enthusiastically embraced. In the preface to the American translation published in 1944, Bertha E. Mahony wrote:

Today it seems likely that humanity's longing for a world commonwealth of nations, which shall move towards the abolishment of periodic wholesale destruction and make the brotherhood of men more possible, will express itself in a second attempt at such an organisation. Paul Hazard reminds us in words which can scarcely be bettered that the world republic of childhood already exists.

(Mahony 1944: vii)

Hazard's dream is gratefully declared reality, the ideal antidote to war, hate and destruction. Children's literature, and indeed children themselves, become the repository of the means to heal the trauma caused by war.

The cultural importance of this ideology led to a cementing of Hazard's vision in post-war Europe and America and to the founding of an international children's literature movement by his successors which will be discussed later. Before that, I would like to turn to other, current, concepts of universality which apply not to children themselves but to the development of children's literature.

Universal children's literature: semiotic models

Semiotic models of literary history would seem to have little in common with Hazard's Romantic notion of universal childhood. But here, too, we find universality, with children's literature itself rather than childhood the object of this discourse which seeks a single explanatory key to unify the diversity of international children's literature.

In *Poetics of Children's Literature* (1986), an influential study which introduced systems theory and the idea of 'ambivalent' texts into children's literature studies, Zohar Shavit devotes a chapter to the model of development of children's literature. The issue at stake is 'the universal structural traits and patterns common to all children's literatures' (Shavit 1986: xi). She comes to the conclusion – based on a brief analysis of the development of British children's literature, central elements of which she sees later repeated in its Hebrew counterpart – that children's literature initially develops after a stratified system of literature for adults is in place, and does so through the framework of the educational system; it then becomes stratified in response to the need to combat popular literature. Shavit takes this to be a pattern which applies to every literature:

I contend that the very same stages of development reappear in all children's literatures, regardless of when and where they begin to develop. That is to say, the historical patterns in the development of children's literature are basically the same in any literature, transcending national and even time boundaries. It does not matter whether two national systems began to develop at the same time, or if one developed a hundred or even two hundred years later (as with Hebrew, and later with Arabic and Japanese children's literatures). They all seem to pass through the very same stages of development without exception. Moreover, the same cultural factors and institutions are involved in their creation.

(Shavit 1986: 133f)

Models like these are problematic from the point of view of comparative literary studies because, above and beyond a useful systematic view of the development of children's literature in specific (usually Northern European) cultures, they develop a theory of cultural conditions which claim to be universally valid. However, a differentiating look at the conditions of the development of children's literatures in a variety of cultures will reveal that this patently is not the case. Factors which had and have a decisive influence on the development of children's literature in some African countries, for instance, such as the effect and legacy of colonialism; or concepts of family, childhood, education and leisure which differ greatly from those in the northern European cradle of children's literature in the eighteenth century; or the (negative) influence of the global market players on the development of an indigenous publishing industry; or the role of mass media which, in

predominantly oral cultures, establish a direct, non-Western relationship between orality and audio-visual media bypassing the written word. None of these factors are accounted for in Shavit's model which cannot adequately address the question of how children's literature can develop under conditions diverging significantly from those prevalent in Britain, Germany or France during the late eighteenth century. A genuinely comparative history of children's literature – as yet to be written – would examine the social, economic, political and cultural conditions which have to prevail for a children's literature to become established in the first place, would register such formative influences as religion on its development, and would reveal how the unique histories of postcolonial children's literatures differ from the postulated 'standard' model based on northern European countries (cf. O'Sullivan (forthcoming) for a more detailed discussion of children's literature in African countries which deviate from this model, and O'Sullivan (1996) which shows how even a northern European children's literature – in Ireland – can differ significantly in its development from Shavit's norm).

Another recent semiotic model of children's literature addresses the development of children's literature not in these terms of external influences and formative factors, but in terms of an evolutionary pattern of development of the literary texts themselves. The focus is aesthetic but this model, too, postulates identical phases of development for children's literature following similar patterns in all cultures, a universal progression from didacticism towards artistically elaborate children's literature. The evolutionary perspective of its author, Maria Nikolajeva, is revealed in the title *Children's Literature Comes of Age* (1996), and her touchstone of quality is the complex literary work. She believes that 'children's literature in all countries and language areas has gone through more or less ... four stages' of development (Nikolajeva 1996: 95), namely: (1) adaptations of existing adult literature and of folklore; (2) didactic, educational stories written directly for children; (3) canonical children's literature (in Lotman's sense of the term (Lotman 1977)), with clear generic forms and gender specific address, whose characteristic feature is the typical epic narrative structure; and finally (4) polyphonic, or multi-voiced, children's literature, 'a convergence of genres which brings children's literature closer to what is generally labelled modern or post-modern literature' (Nikolajeva 1996: 9). On top of this, Nikolajeva attempts to link each of these stages to a period in the development of 'mainstream' literature: didactic children's literature corresponds to 'medieval literature of the mainstream', canonical children's literature 'corresponds to Classicism, the Baroque and to some extent Romanticism'. These strange analogies link the apparently universal evolutionary model firmly to a very European model of literary history.

Children's literature is, without doubt, becoming more aesthetically elaborate – especially in those countries where it has had the longest time to develop. But the singular noun 'children's literature' denotes a simultaneous coexistence of a plurality of textual manifestations and of all the types of literature – literary, didactic, formulaic, retellings and folklore – named by Nikolajeva. To see children's literature in terms of stages of development to be overcome, of didactic and formulaic texts being cast off to make way for the exclusively elaborate, to claim that 'the evolution of modern children's literature leads towards a state in which traditional epic narratives are gradually replaced by new structures which ... I call polyphonic' (Nikolajeva 1996: 9) is deterministic and ultimately impoverishing. To privilege one of the many forms of children's literature, the elaborately aesthetic, at the expense of all others, and to imply that they will simply become extinct in the course of evolution is to negate the various functions that this literature will always continue to serve and to ignore its rich and necessary diversity.

One of these universal models fails to recognise the divergent development of children's literature in different cultures while the other ultimately negates the necessary coexistence of various forms of children's literature. A differentiating comparative study of the development and manifestations of children's literature and the functions that these serve will necessarily reject the quest for a single key to fit the multiplicity of locks.

International understanding through children's books

Paul Hazard's concept of literature as an agent of communication between the children of the whole world was enthusiastically adopted, especially in post-war Western Germany and America. International understanding through children's books was one of the most discussed topics among German-language children's literature professionals in the 1950s and 1960s. The personification of this ideal in the immediate post-Second World War years was Jella Lepman, the energetic woman who returned, in a US Armed Forces uniform, to the war-devastated German homeland she had been forced to leave as a Jew, and set herself the task of providing a source of spiritual sustenance for the starving children. Her rallying cry to the world in 1946 as she went about organising an international exhibition of 4,000 children's books from twenty nations, the majority of whom had still been at war with Germany one year previously, was: *'Lassen Sie uns bei den Kindern anfangen, um diese gänzlich verwirrte Welt langsam wieder ins Lot zu bringen. Die Kinder werden den Erwachsenen den Weg zeigen'* (Lepman 1964: 51). (The English translation is shorter on passion and rhetorical effect: 'Bit by bit ... let us set this upside-down world right again by starting with the children. They will show the grown-ups the way to go' (Lepman 2002: 33)). As an idealist dedicated to the practical realisation of what she believed, Lepman was tireless in her activities for children at the International Youth Library (IYL) in Munich, which she founded, and in canvassing publishers to ensure that international children's literature of quality got translated into German. She was convinced that the only hope for world peace lay in children learning about and understanding other cultures and nations. Hence the first mission statement of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), founded by Lepman and others in Zurich in 1953, 'to promote international understanding through children's books'. But she and her colleagues were also concerned about the availability of good books to children around the world, and IBBY is dedicated to eradicating illiteracy and engaging in projects to promote good reading habits and improvement of publications for children all over the world. What Carl Tomlinson calls the 'International Children's Literature Movement' (1998: 8) is closely bound with IBBY and has many sung and unsung heroes, such as children's librarian Mildred L. Batchelder, whose name has been given to an award presented by the American Library Association to a US publisher for the most outstanding translation of a children's book.

In the face of much talk about internationalism from the 1950s on, it is easy to sympathise with Jella Lepman's successor at the IYL, Walter Scherf, and his exasperated lament in 1976 that countries and cultures, in the world of children's literature, actually knew very little of each other 'in spite of our using the word *internationalism* ten times every day' (Scherf 1976: 140). This statement still holds true today, as a look at figures on translations will show.

What children's literature can realistically contribute towards international understanding is a question which has not yet been – and perhaps cannot be – answered satisfactorily. There is no doubt that literature, when read in an empathising mode, can

contribute towards creating a bond between a reader and people from a country or culture read about. Katherine Paterson bears witness to this in her Hans Christian Andersen Award acceptance speech in 1998. As an eleven-year-old she read *Struggle is Our Brother*, about Russian children in Stalingrad facing the Nazi destruction of their city, and she 'became their sister in the struggle' (Paterson 1999: 21). When she was told a few years later that she must hate and fear the Soviet Union she could not, 'because *Struggle is Our Brother* had given me friends in the Soviet Union – friends that I cared about and could not bear to see harmed'. Paterson believes that literature can serve as a sort of shield against propagandist lies and cultural and racial prejudice:

we must give our children friends in Iran and Korea and South Africa and Serbia and Colombia and Chile and Iraq and, indeed in every country. For when you have friends in another country, you cannot wish their nation harm.

The potential of literature to foster intercultural understanding by the reader adopting a foreign perspective is currently an important area of investigation in foreign-language teaching research. Only observations based on reader-response analysis will be able to tell us if and exactly how literature and reading can contribute towards this goal.

Studies on the formation of children's images of other nations and ethnic groups and of the changes in those images would not suggest unqualified optimism. In addition, the translated literature of other countries, cited as a main site of exposure to foreign cultures, is often so heavily adapted that the 'foreign' elements supposed to foster understanding between nations are obliterated or heavily adapted. Notions of international understanding through literature are also often belied by the findings of reading research which show, for example, that most adults are unaware when reading a translation. It is therefore little more than wishful thinking when Mildred Batchelder claims, 'Children, who know they are reading in translation the same stories which children in another country are reading, develop a sense of nearness with those in other lands' (Batchelder 1972: 310). How could children have such superior knowledge about literary processes? Can they really know and understand what a translation is? And can their self-consciousness of the reading situation realistically extend to knowing that they are reading the same stories as children in other countries? In a statement such as this it is the idea rather than any practical realisation of international communication through books which predominates.

The ideology of internationalism

It's not difficult for 'international understanding through children's books' to become a mere catch-phrase. But the ills of the world will not be cured by the right books being read by children, no matter how often mantras of this type are repeated: 'Globalisation has brought the children of the world together and this is going to usher in a more peaceful and conflict-free world' (Singh 1999: 125).

On the pragmatic level, many people motivated by the concept of internationalism made important and lasting contributions towards a practical international understanding through children's literature, as the case of Jella Lepman shows. This does not deflect from the realisation that the concept of the universal child is a Romantic abstraction which ignores the real conditions of children's communication across borders. There is no 'universal republic of childhood' in which the conditions of childhood are in any way on a par with one another. It comes back to the question of which childhood – or, more

precisely, which children – one is talking about: children in developing countries who are excluded from all but the most basic education and are often indentured at an early age, or children in wealthy countries who are afforded a protracted and protected childhood and education. The former might probably never see or read a children's book; the latter have access to unlimited books and other media which cater for their age groups and leisure habits. We have long since known that we can't speak about *the* child as a singular entity – class, ethnic origin, gender, geopolitical location and economic circumstances are all elements which create differences between real children in real places – and, as we also know, children are constructed very differently in different parts of the world.

The vision of the universal child, the same the world over, refuses to acknowledge difficulties and contradictions in relation to childhood, offering in their place a glorification of the child. The child is pure potential, cast in the role of innocent saviour of mankind in a tradition reaching back to Rousseau's *Émile*, with its creed that with every child humankind is reborn and receives another chance for positive renewal. This concept, as Nancy Ellen Batty shows in her analysis of the Western media image of the starving Third World child, is used by international children's relief efforts, with their ambivalent narratives about children in which it is implied that the 'geopolitical landscape they occupy and the adults who occupy it are other, having crossed into a corrupt or fallen world beyond the projection of our nostalgic desire for the withered possibilities within ourselves' (Batty 1999: 29).

In her acclaimed study *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, Jacqueline Rose identified how adults use the image of the child to deny difficulties in relation to themselves: 'The child is rendered innocent of all the contradictions which flaw our interactions with the world' (Rose 1994: 8–9). Children's fiction, according to Rose, sets up the child as a pure point of origin in relation to language, sexuality and the state. The innocence of the child and 'a primary state of language and/or culture' (1994: 9) are placed in a close and mutually dependent relation. It is in this sense that the international mystification (alongside Rose's 'sexual and political mystification') of the child must be seen. In it the child is related not to a specific language or a specific culture but to a pre-Babylonian state as a speaker of the original language, thus negating the divisions and strife which came about after the Linguistic Fall. Children's literature thus serves as a site on which adult difficulties are addressed and often placated; it is about promises which the adults' generations could not keep, among them international understanding and world peace.

It is important for young readers to experience a range of different cultural understandings, otherwise their perception of their own remains narrow and impoverished. As former *Bookbird* editor Jeffrey Garrett writes: 'The preconditions for international, transcultural, and transethnic understanding include prominently an appreciation for the validity of the cultures of others. And books are a very compact and highly mobile source for engendering precisely this kind of appreciation' (Garrett 1996: 4). And there is no doubt that this is best achieved by exposure to international literature. But how international is (international) children's literature?

How international is international children's literature?

International children's literature, for those who live in the USA, 'is that body of books originally published for children in a country other than the United States in a language of that country and later published in this country' (Tomlinson 1998: 4). Excluded from this

definition by Carl Tomlinson in *Children's Books from Other Countries* is every non-English-language children's book which has not been published in translation in the US, as well as ones in English which haven't been issued there. As some sources estimate that not many more than fifty translations are published annually in the USA, that excludes the vast majority of children's books.

Another connotation of the phrase was alluded to critically by Jeffrey Garrett:

We too hastily confer the status of 'international children's books' on our own [American] works that have attracted a worldwide following ... This makes it easy to project our own assumptions about quality out into the world, never stopping to let the rest of the world speak to us.

(Garrett 1996: 3)

Neither of these exclusive definitions can satisfy us here, but what, beyond a maximalist notion which includes all the children's books of the world, could 'international children's books' be taken to mean? Those with international locations and subject matter? Those which could possibly support international and transcultural understanding by inducing an appreciation for the validity of the cultures of others? International classics for children? Books by authors themselves international or transnational, at home in more than one country, culture or language such as Gaye Hiçiyılmaz, who has spent many years of her life in Turkey, Switzerland and England, or Nasrim Siege, an Iranian who has lived in Germany and Africa, who writes in German and mediates between cultures with her literature?

Literature which features countries, cultures, locations other than those of the receiving ones is usually, in a broad sense of the term, referred to as international. Like 'foreign', it is a relational term: for a Scottish reader Paraguay will be an international location, and vice versa. In the past, the very fact that a children's book was set in a 'foreign' location was regarded in itself as a good thing, introducing young readers to cultures other than their own. However, we have become aware that it is of no little significance whether a country or culture is written about from an insider perspective and has been made available through translation, or whether it is authored from the outside. The translator Patricia Crampton speaks of translated books inviting the readers to see the other country 'with the eyes of love and familiarity rather than of rubber-necked curiosity' (Crampton 1977: 3), and the discussion of colonial and neocolonial writing has increased the awareness of issues involving those 'more written about than writing, more spoken about than speaking' (McGillis 2000: xxi). While children's literature from so-called developing countries hardly ever reaches European and American readers, a recent survey revealed that 80 per cent of books for children set in non-European and non-American cultures are written by European and American authors (Fremde Welten 2001). There is a need for children's books from and not just about other regions. Among the eleven reasons he gives to underline the necessity of international literature, Tomlinson mentions how a lack of exposure to foreign-language books gives American (and, we can safely add, British) readers the false notion that all that is worth knowing is written in English.

'World literature' – international classics

The Wonderful Adventures of Nils falls into the hands of a bronze colored child at Singapore or Calcutta ... Meanwhile, far away, near the borders of Lapland, a child

bundled in furs and hugging the fire reads the *Arabian Nights*, adapted for his enjoyment.

(Hazard 1944: 151f)

The Swedish children's literature specialist Mary Ørvig expressed her amazement 'to see over and over again how readily ... one tends to generalize about the internationality of (children's books) on the strength of some classical novels' (Ørvig 1972: 24). But how international are the classics? Often one famous example, translated into countless languages, is cited to prove that children all over the world have the same taste. If we take one such example – *Alice in Wonderland* – which, although almost untranslatable, has been translated into most languages, what do we see? Rather than any evidence of global child preferences, we find *Alice* 'rendered lovingly into exotic languages by English missionaries or anglicised colonials – much like the Bible and for many of the same reasons' (Garrett 1996: 3). And, as Jeffrey Garrett goes on to remind us, the Australian edition of 1975 in Patjantjatjara was not created in anticipation of any demand from aboriginal children or their parents but was commissioned by the Department of Adult Education at the University of Adelaide and decorated with 'aboriginal' illustrations by a Texan artist. Here, 'international' classics serve as an instrument of cultural hegemonism. Looking at the European reception of the same classic, we find that many German books with the title *Alice im Wunderland* cannot be equated with Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Compared to its reception in England and in other countries, Lewis Carroll's book simply wasn't a success in Germany, for which the poor quality of many of the thirty-one translations issued in the course of 130 years is partially responsible (cf. O'Sullivan 2001). The translations themselves are clear indicators of how translators and publishers felt such an excitingly innovative but also puzzling book should be presented to young German readers. The notion that children the world over selected *Alice in Wonderland* as their favoured book and that the version they were reading in their part of the world bore more than a passing resemblance to versions elsewhere is little more than a myth.

Children's books – especially the classics – are frequently regarded and referred to as the product of an international culture of childhood. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, the Grimms' fairy tales and those of Hans Christian Andersen, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Heidi*, *Pinocchio*, *Treasure Island*, *Peter Pan*, *Mary Poppins*, *Pippi Longstocking*, to name but a few, originate almost exclusively in the northern and western European countries and the USA. Due to the conditions of the production and export of children's literature, the dominance of 'foreign' products, particularly children's literature in English and the classics in translated and revised form produced without much trouble or expense, can undermine the development of indigenous children's literature. As Sunindyo reminds us: 'The traditional classics of Western literature have been translated and published over and over again [in Indonesia] by different publishers. In a developing country this is wasteful of precious capital' (Sunindyo 1980: 53).

Children's literature – predominantly in English – has become an international commodity in an increasingly global market, and among the most fruitful branches of this commodity are its classics. It is an extraordinary indication of the dominance of English-language publishing that today a number of German editions of *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri are actually translations from English. The novel, written in German and hailed as Switzerland's envoy, has been adapted countless for the English market, and global players such as Dorling Kindersley have sold the rights to their versions to be (re)translated into German.

The international market

'Every country gives and every country receives – innumerable are the exchanges': that was Paul Hazard's vision of the international exchange of children's books. The proportion of translations in children's literatures varies greatly, ranging from 1 per cent to around 80 per cent. The countries that 'give' (export) the most also 'receive' (import) the least: they are Great Britain (approximately 3 per cent imports) and the USA (approximately 1 per cent imports), the mighty leaders in the production tables of children's literature. In the developed children's literatures the Scandinavian countries top the list as those who are most welcoming to literature produced outside their linguistic areas, with Finland leading at around 80 per cent. Figures for the Netherlands and Italy are above 40 per cent, and Germany produces around 30 per cent translations.

The culture-specific attitude towards foreign literature is one of many determining factors which encourage or discourage translation activity. The publisher Klaus Flugge described the bleak British situation:

Over the last few years ... the British children's book market has changed. I feel the British have more or less turned their backs on foreign books for children and, to my regret, the number of translations I publish has diminished to one or two, in a list of at least forty titles a year. You may be surprised to know that this is more than most publishers. The reason for this is not so much that British editors or publishers don't read foreign languages or don't want to spend money on translations but simply that there is a lack of interest in this country in anything foreign.

(Flugge 1994: 209)

Flugge was writing in 1994 but his assessment still holds valid today. The translator Anthea Bell, winner of the Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation in 2003 for her translation of *Where Were You, Robert?* by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, related how a British publisher rejected the time-travel novel because 'There is nothing in this book that English readers need to know.' As Anthea Bell commented laconically:

She meant, I suppose, that one episode in 1950s Soviet Russia, one in just postwar Australia, a third in pre-war Nazi Germany, a fourth in 19th-century Norway, a fifth in a petty state of 18th-century Germany, a sixth in Germany of the Thirty Years' War and the final chapter in the Netherlands some forty years before that were beneath the consideration of young English readers because no episodes of British history were described.

(quoted from private correspondence)

Most cultural commentators agree that this kind of cultural narrow-mindedness leading to the exclusion of works translated from other languages in Britain and the USA 'is a form of cultural poverty and testifies to a lack of imagination in an information-rich world' (Stahl 1992: 19).

Alongside these countries which only export children's books while almost failing entirely to import any are those which provide a market for the global corporations – 70 to 90 per cent of books available to reading children in non-European/American cultures are by European or American authors – but whose own books rarely cross the linguistic, political or cultural divide to partake in the Western market. A few organisations and indi-

vidual publishers actively address this situation and undertake to distribute books from distant countries. The Swiss Baobab children's book foundation (http://www.evb.ch/index.cfm?page_id=461), for instance, funds the publication of literature for children and young people by authors from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Producing three or four Baobab books (in German translation) every year, it also provides reading lists of children's literature on the subjects of the Third World and ethnic minorities. And Vagn Plenge, proprietor of the Danish Forlaget Hjulet ('The Wheel Press') has been purchasing translation rights and books from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania (which he calls collectively 'the warm countries') and initiating co-productions since 1976 (cf. Plenge 1999).

Baobab and Forlaget Hjulet are unconvinced by the notion that a genuinely international literature is available for the children of the world and they try, within the scope of their scant resources, to redress the situation. They address what Anne Pellowski, founding Director of the Information Center on Children's Cultures of the US Committee for UNICEF, recognised when, in 1968, she published *The World of Children's Literature*, an extensive annotated bibliography on the development of children's literature in every country. Unclouded by idealism but nonetheless fuelled by hope for a genuinely international literature for children, the assessment of this far-sighted woman has lost none of its pertinence today:

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of translations and exchanges, but the greatest proportion has involved the dozen or so countries which produce three-fourths of the world's books. Exchanges among these countries are not to be disparaged, because there is as much need for understanding among them as there is anywhere else. Yet might it not be true that the commercial and governmental channels are so taken up with the volume of materials to be contended with from these dozen countries, that they have no time, patience or resources left to explore sufficiently the possibilities of exchange with their neighboring nations and with others passing through the same phases of development? Are the private and governmental publishers too concerned with the profits (both monetary and ideological) of exchange, to the detriment of quality? Is there sufficient exchange between the economically advanced and the developing countries, or is this pretty much a one-way passage? What can possibly be the results of world education which relies on so few countries for its textbooks and materials? Will it work for the common good and for mutual understanding or will it rather stifle the creative impulse to search for new and better forms? The massive programs of international aid in the production of reading and teaching materials would do well to consider these questions more carefully.

(Pellowski 1968: 10f)

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Part I

Theory and critical approaches

3 Theorising and theories

The conditions of possibility of children's literature

David Rudd

'What – is – this?' [the Unicorn] said at last.

'This is a child!' Haigha replied eagerly ... 'We only found it to-day. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!'

'I always thought they were fabulous monsters!' said the Unicorn. 'Is it alive?'

'It can talk,' said Haigha solemnly.

(Carroll 1970: 287)

Competing critical histories and the status of the child

Just as there are competing histories of children's literature, so there are of children's literature criticism – and the two are interlinked. Most of these histories set the beginnings of children's literature in the eighteenth century – sometimes dated as precisely as 1744 with John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, as it is in Harvey Darton (1982: 1) – and most draw on the tension between instruction and entertainment, often explicitly (for example, *From Primer to Pleasure* (Thwaite 1964), *Fantasy and Reason* (Summerfield 1984)), which is seen as a battle eventually won by entertainment. Harvey Darton, again, dates this precisely, to Carroll's *Alice* (1865), which he speaks of as the first appearance 'in print ... of liberty of thought in children's books' (1982: 260), instigating a golden age in children's literature (Carpenter 1985). However, we need to be aware that such 'grand narratives' about the area's development are only that. Through them children's literature critics frequently construct a 'story' of a movement from darkness to light – just as developmental psychologists, like Piaget, envisage the child growing from an original, autistic state to adult rationality. The notion of a *Bildungsroman* is, therefore, often implicit, celebrating the discipline as having recently 'come of age' (for example, Broadbent *et al.* 1994; Nikolajeva 1996). But there are other stories, querying this. At one extreme, Gillian Adams (1986) takes children's literature texts back some 4,000 years, to Sumer; at the other, Jacqueline Rose (1984) argues that the whole enterprise is impossible anyway – something that Karin Lesnik-Oberstein (1994) extends to its criticism. In this chapter, I shall try to get behind these various stories, to see what 'regimes of truth' they draw on, in order to tease out what I shall term the conditions of possibility of children's literature and its criticism – and, particularly, to revisit those who see it as impossible.

This will involve steering a course between, on the one hand, notions that there is an underlying 'essential' child whose nature and needs we can know and, on the other, the notion that the child is nothing but the product of adult discourse (as some social constructionists argue). I shall suggest that neither of these positions is tenable: that the

problematic of children's literature lies in the gap between the 'constructed' and the 'constructive' child, in what I shall term a 'hybrid', or border area.

Let me begin with Jacqueline Rose's provocative suggestion that, despite the possessive apostrophe in the phrase 'children's literature', it has never really been owned by children:

Children's fiction rests on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple ... If children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp.

(Rose 1984: 1–2)

Adults, she argues, evoke this child for their own purposes (desires, in fact), as a site of plenitude to conceal the fractures that trouble us all: concerns over a lack of coherent subjectivity, over the instabilities of language and, ultimately, existence itself (Rose 1984: 16). Barrie's *Peter Pan* texts are seen as perfect examples of this, purporting to be about the eternal child, but actually acknowledging the problems of such a construction, especially in the way that Barrie himself had problems producing a final, definitive version of his text.

Rose's book remains a revolutionary work, opening up children's literature to wider debates in cultural studies. However, her insight into the power of the child as a cultural trope (standing for innocence, the natural, the primitive, and so on) has led to a neglect of the child as a social being, with a voice. Rose herself does not deny the existence of the child 'outside the book', on whom she actually draws at times, conceding that things are indeed different 'at the point of readership' (1984: 84); her emphasis is simply elsewhere, just as is James Kincaid's in his related work, *Child-Loving* (1992), which details how the figure of the child, constructed as innocent, a site of purity, thereby became, in the Victorian period, an erotic lure for adults. However, Kincaid's work has been misread in similar ways to that of Rose; Carolyn Steedman thus laments that

James Kincaid's conclusion ... that the child 'is not, in itself, anything', is very easy to reach (and quite irresponsible proposals may follow on it) ... children were *both* the repositories of adults' desires (or a text, to be 'written' and 'rewritten', to use a newer language), *and* social beings who lived in social worlds.

(Steedman 1995: 96–7)

Like Rose, Kincaid does not deny the child as a social being; indeed, he too draws on what he terms 'children with quite ordinary child needs' (1992: 388). But Steedman's point is still valid: that the thrust of much of this criticism has tended to make the child appear voiceless. Lesnik-Oberstein goes further, arguing that this must be so for, unlike other disempowered groups such as women, who can speak for themselves, 'Children, in culture and history, have no such voice' (1994: 26).

Ironically, even to make such a claim is to have already separated out 'the child' as a special being, subject to its own rules, distinct from other social groups. Furthermore, such a universal claim effectively adulterates (forgive the pun) a social constructionist perspective; for if children are merely constructions, social conditions might construct them otherwise. In effect, in order to make such a wide-sweeping claim, it would seem that Lesnik-Oberstein is, tacitly at least, invoking more enduring qualities, such as, to quote Allison James and Alan Prout, the 'different physical size of children and their rela-

tive muscular weakness compared to adults'; however, as they continue, it would be absurd were it otherwise, exempting 'human beings from the rest of the animal kingdom by denying *any* effects of our biological and physical being'. This, as they say, is 'cultural determinism' (1990: 26), as problematic as its opposite: a humanistic essentialism.

The claim, therefore, 'that the "child" has no "voice" within the hierarchies of our society, because "adults" either silence or create that voice' (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994: 187), actually helps construct the child as a helpless, powerless being, and contributes to the culturally hegemonic norm. As Rex and Wendy Stainton Rogers put it, 'To model the child as constructed but not as constructive ... permits us to see the young person as having their identity constructed by outside forces but not the young person constructing their identity out of the culturally available.' They, therefore, are of the opinion that the child's voice 'should be heard' (1992: 84).

The doubleness of discourse: constructed/constructive

The Stainton Rogers' more Foucauldian notion of power, seen as not only repressive but productive, too, allows us to overcome what is otherwise a problematic shift; that is, from the spoken-for child to the controlling adult. In Foucault's (1980, 1981) model, power is not held by one particular group over another, powerless one; rather, power is conceived of as immanent in all encounters, through which certain discursive relations are possible.

So, while children can be construed as the powerless objects of adult discourse, they also have subject positions available to them that resist such a move. Valerie Walkerdine, also known for her work on girls' comics, illustrates this process in action. In one instance she records a nursery class in which a group of three- to four-year-old boys undermine a female teacher's authority with a barrage of comments like 'Miss Baxter, show your knickers your bum off' (Walkerdine 1990: 4). By effecting a sexist discourse they disempower her while empowering themselves.

As this more dynamic notion of discourse is crucial to much that follows, let me spend some time clarifying its implications before I move on to broader issues about the conditions of the discipline's existence. First, it should be noted that the boys, above, are not free agents; they are simply positioned in another discourse: that of sexism. Children, in other words, become subjects through multiple discourses, which is to reject earlier notions of the process, like Althusser's, where one is more summarily subjected.

This leads to a second point: that for many of these other discursive positions, 'childhood' *per se* is irrelevant; thus the sexist discourse above can be seen to upset the adult-child binary. But there is still a tendency – among constructionists as well as those more biologically inclined – to overextend the term 'child', such that 'childhood' is seen to ground their entire being. A more familiar example might make this clear: the position of 'women' in the nineteenth century, who were automatically opposed to 'men' on all counts, as 'frail vessels', 'emotional', 'unstable', 'spontaneous', 'weak', 'irrational', and so on. With childhood, overextension of the term persists, being applied to discourses where, in fact, children are often as competent as adults.

Looking at children 'in culture and history', then, we find that in some cultures they *are* regarded as having more of a voice. Among the Tonga, for example, children are 'accorded positions of dignity and worth ... They are valued for themselves and ... as companions and workers. They are accorded rights and these are upheld at public forums such as during court cases' (Pamela Reynolds, quoted in Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998: 11; see also Hoyles 1979). As James *et al.* (1998: 120–1) have noted, in societies

where children work alongside adults, they are often seen in more egalitarian terms. In contrast, the more economically 'useless' children become, as in America towards the end of the nineteenth century, the more emotionally priceless seems their value (Zelizer 1994) – and the more pervasive a restrictive, overextended notion of childhood. Most recently, the anonymity of cyberspace has opened up a particularly powerful area where age is irrelevant, expertise among the young being legendary (Katz 1997; Kincheloe 1988) – although, with adults 'passing' as children, it has raised opposing worries. But the key issue is that cyberspace effectively disembodies the child, removing many markers that often produce more condescending responses – of being 'talked down to'.

The third point also relates to the above for, though the world is constructed through discourse – language being 'the ultimate prosthesis' (Braidotti 1994: 44) – not everything is thereby discursive. The body itself influences how we speak, not only through the metaphors it tends to generate (Johnson 1987; Bakhtin 1968), but in the simple fact that discourse itself 'is the product of a speaking or writing body located at a point in space and a moment in time' (Burkitt 1999: 37). Moreover, the body, being part of social relations, can itself resist certain discursive shaping (inappropriately breaking wind, and so on). Children are, therefore, seen as playing a key role in 'the civilising process' (Elias 1978: 53–4) and are, hence, a source of worry, of disturbance (as I'll discuss later).

Unfortunately, an exclusive emphasis on discourse has led to a neglect of the role of bodily comportment and action in producing 'the child', 'the model pupil', 'the girl' – or whatever. A good example of the latter is 'throwing like a girl', as detailed by Iris Marion Young (1990), referencing Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. 'Bodily conduct' – part of what Pierre Bourdieu terms 'habitus', the cultural dispositions that influence our social behaviour – is, therefore, a crucial, non-discursive aspect of childhood (James *et al.* 1998: 161), albeit discursively constructed. With some notable exceptions – for example, Engel (1995), Grainger (1999), Paley (1981), Wolf and Heath (1992) – this embodied component of children's discourse has been neglected. In the latter, for example, Shelby Wolf's daughter, Lindsey, is shown enacting texts using role play and costume, and delighting in the sound and 'musicality' of words; on one occasion she is observed leaping on to the kitchen counter to hasten her breakfast, bellowing 'Fee Fi Fo Fum ...'. As the authors comment, 'The giant, with his all-encompassing power, would never have had to wait, and neither should she. Motion takes the mind to action, and action brings results' (Wolf and Heath 1992: 97). Given earlier comments on the perceived relation between power and physical size, Lindsey's enaction of the giant's discourse is particularly interesting.

To recap, then: not only are there problems with each model – an authentic, essential child and a voiceless, discursive construction – but the two notions are, in fact, impossible to keep apart (just like adult and child), the essential child still being tacitly evoked by constructionists, in that a perennially voiceless child is juxtaposed to a dominating adult, though no similar questions are raised about, say, a fifty-year-old writing for a twenty-something. However, it is surely unacceptable for either side to argue that one must *be* a child in order to write genuine children's fiction, or to read it, for the simple fact that language cannot ground authenticity, language itself being a construction or, in a Lacanian version of development, a misrepresentation. Moreover, as Spivak notes, 'The position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women and so on ... predicates the possibility of knowledge on identity' (1988: 253–4). Were one to accept such an 'identity politics', then, the ramifications would be ultimately self-defeating: not only would class, gender and ethnicity delimit reading and writing, but one

would end up with only a boy of thirteen and three-quarters from a working-class broken home being able to appreciate the exploits of an Adrian Mole (Townsend 1982).

But, as I've also suggested, this cannot relegate the child to a discursive effect. Many feminists have already trodden this ground, moving away from essentialist notions of an authentic women's experience to a discursive position which then permitted men to emulate their voice, both in writing as a woman (Cixous 1976: 878) and reading as one (Culler 1983: 43–64). Elaine Showalter describes this disparagingly as 'male cross-dressing' (Showalter 1987; also Braidotti 1994; Young 1990). What seems missing here is, again, some notion of embodiment, of discourse having a concrete location. The same applies to children, who, as the Stainton Rogers put it (1998: 184), must be granted legitimacy in 'the *practically real* (that which passes for "real" in practice)'.

In terms of children's literature, though, it might still be argued that, unlike women and other minority groups, children still have no voice, their literature being created for them, rather than creating their own. But this is a nonsense. Children produce literature in vast quantities, oral and written, both individually wrought and through collaborative effort (sometimes diachronically), and in a variety of forms: rhymes, jokes, songs, incantations, tall tales, plays, stories and more. Yet, apart from a few collections and studies (for example, Fox 1993; Opie and Opie 1959; Rosen and Steele 1982; Steedman 1982; Sutton-Smith *et al.* 1999; Turner *et al.* 1978), plus the isolated publishing exceptions (such as nine-year-old Jayne Fisher's (1980) Garden Gang series), it goes largely unrecognised – though some of it does feed back, intertextually, into subsequently published works (as, for example, did material that 'Lewis Carroll' wrote in his own magazines, as a juvenile). And, of course, it should be emphasised that all this literature comes from reworking the discourses around them, through which children negotiate their social and embodied positioning.

The fact that children are seen *not* to have a stake in this is, once again, a product of the way children's literature (in its texts and its criticism) has become institutionalised, such that – ironically – only commercially published work is seen to count; or, to put it another way, only adults are seen to 'authorise' proper children's literature. Certainly, more work needs doing on this, but it does not help when scholars underwrite this culturally dominant version of events.

Origins and the genealogy of children's literature

Foucault's 'genealogical' approach is helpful here. Rather than engage in internal disputes about origins, such an approach asks, more broadly, what makes children's literature possible – or, to pursue the metaphor used earlier, how it has been 'storied' in a particular way (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 1992), and how certain other stories become 'disqualified' (Foucault 1980: 81). Of singular note is Foucault's rejection of any simple social constructionism. Thus, in looking at madness, he rejects the notion that the term is just a label, recognising that, certainly, there were 'mad' people before the advent of psychiatry; however, rather than being seen as a uniform category, they were 'read' in different ways (Foucault 1967). Turning to children's literature, we can similarly point to a range of elements existing in separate discursive spaces (books of manners, folk tales, children's Bibles, nursery rhymes, chapbooks – even Sumerian instructional texts!), some of which purport to address 'children' specifically, others of which do not. The point is, these constituent elements were not considered a separate cultural entity until the eighteenth century (when the figure of the child in its modern form was also increasingly

being shaped as an ‘essence’), only to be fully consolidated late in the nineteenth, when the various institutional apparatuses of children’s literature were in place – including an educational system promoting literacy (Morgenstern 2001). As Jack Zipes puts it, ‘until the system of production, distribution and reception was instituted’ it was simply not possible ‘for a broad range of books to be approved and to reach children in specific ways’ (Zipes 2001: 46).

However, the more that children’s literature became institutionalised (in its texts and its criticism), the more it filtered out, or ignored, that which didn’t fit, ‘in the name of some true knowledge’ (Foucault 1980: 83). Thus ‘folklore, nursery rhyme and nonsense’, as Rose (1984: 139) notes, became sidelined as mere ‘rhythm and play’, for fear of their disruptive potential (interestingly, these literary forms are also those linked more closely to the body and to performance – to, in fact, the semiotic order, which Kristeva (1984) theorises as disruptive of the Symbolic). Likewise, the standard ‘his-story’ of how male Romantics (featuring Locke and Rousseau as progenitors) fathered modern children’s literature, with fantasy emerging victorious over the instructional writings of the matriarchal ‘cursed Barbauld crew’, goes mostly unchallenged; though scholars like Mitzi Myers (1995) have consistently attacked such a patrimony and, along with discoveries like the material that Jane Johnson devised for her own children (Hilton *et al.* 1997), there are attempts at telling a new ‘story’. Folk and fairy tale (Harries 2001; Warner 1994), nursery rhyme and nonsense (Rollin 1992; Warner 2000) are similarly being retold.

So, although children’s literature might be seen as ‘impossible’ in some ways (ideologically, in inscribing an ‘eternal child’ to suture problematic cultural issues), there is no question of its social and economic reality. It is part of the ‘practically real’, which warrants attention, and will not go away (any more than madness) just because it is shown to be a social construction. A similar point can be made about the uncritical recycling of Philippe Ariès’ claim that, ‘In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist’ (Ariès 1973: 125); it was, rather, ‘*our* concept of childhood’ that medieval society lacked (Archard 1993: 19); other constructions of childhood there certainly were, as Ariès himself later conceded (Alexandre-Bidon and Lett 1999: 1). Given children’s literature’s social, cultural and economic reality, then, it is hard to comprehend how Rose ‘closes down the field of children’s fiction, and therefore, by implication, children’s literature criticism’, as Lesnik-Oberstein claims (1994: 158–9). For, powerful as the universal child is – lingering in many constructionist accounts too – the literature’s criticism is not dependent on it. Rose’s commendable work itself demonstrates this, marking a shift in paradigm towards a more culturally nuanced analysis. And much other work published around this time (for example, Barker 1989; Hunt 1991; Kincaid 1992; McGillis 1996; Nikolajeva 1996; Nodelman 1992; Sarland 1991; Shavit 1986; Stephens 1992; Wolf and Heath 1992; Zipes 1983) contributed to this widening of perspectives, albeit from – healthily – differing theoretical stances. This said, all would probably be united in signing up to Lesnik-Oberstein’s provocative statement – though without her intended irony – that ‘Children’s fiction criticism ... cannot do without some “child”’ (1994: 140). While society cannot do without it, it would certainly be a mistake for criticism to do so (cf. Meek 1995; Nodelman 1996).

Hybridity

The above, more culturally sensitive notion of the constructed child and its literature, however, should not allow us to lose sight of the constructive child, for, as suggested

earlier, it is in the gap between the two that a way forward lies. Language, of course, is central to this, for the move from ‘infant’ (literally, one incapable of speech) to a discursively situated being is fraught with anxiety – as this statement from a fictional children’s writer captures:

Each new generation of children has to be told: ‘This is a world, this is what one does, one lives like this.’ Maybe our constant fear is that a generation of children will come along and say, ‘This is not a world, this is nothing, there’s no way to live at all.’
(Hoban 1975: 100)

Accepting the proviso that ‘People do not “accept” their native language – it is in their native language that they first reach awareness’ (Vološinov 1973: 81), the fear is no less valid. Which is why children are so central to the ‘civilising process’:

children necessarily touch again and again on the adult threshold of delicacy, and – since they are not yet adapted – they infringe the taboos of society, cross the adult shame frontier, and penetrate emotional danger zones which the adult himself can only control with difficulty.
(Elias 1978: 167)

The concept of hybridity, originally meaning ‘the offspring of a tame sow and a wild boar’ (Young 1995: 6), imaginatively encapsulates this ambivalence surrounding child- and adulthood noted by numerous commentators (for example, Banerjee 1984; Lesnik-Oberstein 1994: 28; Morrison 1997; Rollin 1992; Shavit 1986; Stahl 1996: 46; Taylor 1998: 91). The term is expressive of that uneasy transaction along borders, in which something other is gradually brought within, melded into adulthood. So, while Rose is surely right about ‘writers for children’ leaving undisturbed any ‘psychic barriers ... the most important of which is the barrier between adult and child’ (Rose 1984: 70), her emphasis, I would argue, needs shifting; for it seems to me that there is a disturbing recognition of the frailty of such barriers. As the British children’s writer John Gordon puts it, ‘The boundary between imagination and reality, and the boundary between being a child and being an adult are border country, a passionate place in which to work. Laws in that country are lifelines’ (Gordon 1975: 35). The ever-present speech tags, the instances of telling rather than showing, the intrusive narrators (Hunt 1991; Knowles and Malmkjær 1996), the ‘have to’ tone that Rose detects (1984: 141), are all examples of such ‘lifelines’, masking a relationship that is often disturbing.

Homi Bhabha (1994) has explored this troubling hybrid relationship in the colonial situation, arguing, similarly, that those who effectively wield power – adults, in this case – are never secure in their position. As detailed earlier, this is because power is not an abstract possession, but an effect of discursive relations which are productive as well as repressive (as we saw with Walkerdine’s boys, and with Lindsey, above).

The constructed child, as *tabula rasa* – an ‘empty’ being on which society attempts to inscribe a particular identity – becomes, in that very process, the *constructive* child, and sameness is disrupted. Traces of otherness, of difference, creep into children’s repertoires as they learn language, ‘sense’ being shown to emerge from non-sense, words being stripped down to bare – and, indeed, to bear – signifiers in parent-child interactions, and in children’s own crib monologues (Weir 1960; Nelson 1985, 1989). Moreover, the fact that the sign is itself ‘multi-accented’ produces increasing slippage, as

songs, stories and dialogue are forever reworked (Bruner 1987; Fox 1993; Kimberley *et al.* 1992; Wolf and Heath 1992). Staying with Shelby Wolf's study, her son, Ashley (aged three; 1992: 11) amusingly reworked 'Max stepped into his private boat' (Sendak 1967) as 'Max stepped onto their private parts' (Wolf and Heath 1992: 44). In learning language, then, the child is also inadvertently learning 'how to curse', in Caliban's phrase (*The Tempest*, I ii; see also Dunn 1988: 157).

Children's speech is hybrid, therefore, in that official, adult language is responded to from a new social and physical location (it is discursively situated), with different nuances and inflections and, often, with intentional revision and intertextuality – as children both disentangle and interweave discursive threads (Rudd 1992, 2000). Bhabha (1994: 126) describes this process of 'mimicry' as inherently unstable. Adult behaviour, being emulated, becomes unoriginal, excessive, comic – which, in turn, undermines what it is to be an 'adult', self-contained and rational. Michael Rosen captures this eloquently in his poem, 'Mind Your Own Business', where we are told what 'Father says' as he upbraids his sons (the civilising process, again). Then, in the last two lines, the tables are turned, the mimicry made overt:

My brother knows all his phrases off by heart
So we practise them in bed at night.

(Rosen 1974: 72)

The father's authority is effectively undermined, seen to be located in nothing more than his 'say so', and it happens by the adult's 'look of surveillance' being turned back on him, as 'the observer becomes the observed' (Bhabha 1994: 89). Peter Pan does the same with Hook, such that his adult adversary finds his own authority, and identity, undone, 'his ego is slipping from him' (Barrie 1995: 122). Eventually, of course, Hook loses more than this to Pan, who replaces him 'on the poop in Hook's hat and cigars, and with a small iron claw' (Barrie 1995: 146).

Bhabha (1994: 92) notes similar slippages when 'the English Book' (the Bible) was introduced to the colonised subjects of India. Its 'representational authority' was displaced by more utilitarian needs – becoming, for example, a natty tear-off dispenser of wrapping paper for snuff! Children's physical mistreatment of their books is, likewise, a perennial concern for adults, often being thematised in the texts themselves; to cite Max again (an obvious hybrid), he is depicted provocatively standing on some worthy tomes, foreshadowing his later dismissal of 'the Word' in the Wild Rumpus. There is no notion of the child as an innately subversive being here, though. The child is simply positioned as not yet adult (one of the civilised) and, as an apprentice, is coming to terms with the differential relations of power involved, themselves negotiated through discourse and its embodied practices.

We can thus see how a hybrid and always contested area of childhood is dialogically engendered in the 'practically real'. As Bakhtin puts it (writing under the name Vološinov):

Utterance ... is constructed between two socially organized persons, and in the absence of a real addressee, an addressee is presupposed ... The *word is oriented toward an addressee*, toward *who* that addressee might be.

(Vološinov 1973: 85)

Exactly what a representative of that amorphous, socially constructed group – children – does with the word depends on the addressee (their situatedness in relation to other discourses). But the key point is that the word is not *owned* by either party, lodged in neither the child's nor the adult's inner-being. Rather, the word constitutes a 'border zone' (Vološinov 1973: 86), in which the addressees – children, in this case – orient themselves precisely in the way that they 'lay down' their own set of 'answering words' (Vološinov 1973: 102); in this process they – the children – can only ever be *constructive*.

In the 'practically real', then, there can only ever be constructed positions: the child constructed by the text, and the response (itself constructed) from the constructive child, the product being necessarily co-authored. Just as an adult initially talks on behalf of an infant, 'scaffolding' its meaning (Bruner 1987), so it is in that very address that 'the child' becomes constituted as a social category – as what Diana Fuss (1989: 4) terms, following John Locke, 'a nominal essence ... a classificatory fiction we need to categorize and label'. The child has nowhere else to be. This said, the process is anything but mechanical, given the multiple subject positions available, and the way language itself is multi-accented. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the process is not simply top down: the habitus of childhood has its own performative dimensions (learned from peers, books, playground folklore, the media, and so on, as mentioned in the last section). In practice, this means that, while it is almost impossible for adults to *avoid* addressing children, their success in doing so will vary remarkably. But even when judged successful, there is no notion of 'identification' by the child, only of 'talkings to' and 'responses from' different social locations.

Conditions of possibility

It has been argued, then, that children's literature occurs in the space between the constructed and the constructive – and that this must be so, given the nature of language and our positioning within a variety of discourses. The attempt to prevent such slippage, to keep language 'single-voiced', tolerating 'no play with its borders' (Bakhtin 1981: 343), is doomed; such a 'sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia' (Bakhtin 1981: 61) is elegantly figured in the unyielding shell of Humpty Dumpty, who, of course, also foreshadows the fate of such intransigence: 'When *I* use a word ... it means just what *I* choose it to mean – neither more nor less' (Carroll 1970: 269). Unfortunately, he never was master of his words, perilously ignoring the discursive chain in which he was positioned – the nursery rhyme – as a consequence of which, he has a great fall.

In early children's literature this monological, authoritarian voice is quite popular, often bolstered by 'the English Book' (the Bible), but even this does not obviate the anxiety mentioned earlier: the fact that, however much such work directs the reader down the path of righteousness, it inevitably sketches in the surrounding landscape, the delights just beyond the path, the grass that must be kept off (Caliban's curse, again).

Of course, it is only from records of children's reading that we can interpret how such works may have been received. So that when Victor Watson (1992: 14–15) says of Mrs Sherwood's heavily didactic *History of the Fairchild Family* (1818–47) that the children in it 'are voiceless. It is a coercive text', we can point to some readers, at least, who were not coerced, and who did voice their views: 'I liked the book notwithstanding. There was plenty about eating and drinking; one could always skip the prayers and there were three or four very brightly written accounts of funerals in it', as the young Lord Frederick Hamilton commented (quoted in Lochhead 1956: 51).

Because the word is always half someone else's, as Bakhtin notes, the attempt to avoid hybrid contamination is fated: it refuses to mean just what the author intends, 'neither more nor less'. This means that, though Lesnik-Oberstein rightly points out that children's literature can never escape 'the didactic impulse' (1994: 38), neither can the didactic impulse escape this hybrid relation, the excess and play of the signifier, such that an entertaining surplus is ever present. Partly in recognition of this lack of control, children's texts have become increasingly explicit in their hybridity. Even in Victorian times, Knoepfelmacher (1983) notes an increasing number of 'childlike' adult characters in the books, besides more amorphous creations like E. Nesbit's Psammhead. Clearly, as this corpus of targeted 'children's books' burgeoned, children could more readily draw on a larger body of texts, and intertextually comment on them – as, most famously, does Lewis Carroll's work, with its savage reworking of earlier homiletic verses, such as the Duchess's 'sort of lullaby' in *Alice*: 'Speak roughly to your little boy,/And beat him when he sneezes', revoking the sentiments of Isaac Watts' original, 'Speak gently! It is better far/To rule by love than fear' (Carroll 1970: 85). (Carroll, of course, also points up the ambivalence between adult and child in the lullaby itself, in which care of the child goes hand in hand with fantasies of its destruction: 'down will come baby, cradle and all' (Parker 1995; Warner 2000)). It was also in the nineteenth century that the fairy tale became a popular form for staging hybrid relations (Auerbach and Knoepfelmacher 1992; Zipes 1987), especially as it became more directly aimed at children. And today this hybrid relation has been foregrounded to the extent that many see a blurring of boundaries between adult and child literatures, theorised as 'cross-writing' (Knoepfelmacher and Myers 1997) or writing for 'dual audiences' (Beckett 1999).

However, although the hybridity has recently become more explicit, my main point is that it has always been there: a product of the differential power relations and signifying latitude of language. So, without wishing to diminish the importance of the works that speak about how the child is constructed – or 'implied' – in its literature, it would be a mistake to see them as the whole story: they miss, precisely, half of it, in neglecting the constructive powers of the child.

Naturally, this also makes children's literature studies far more messy and complex, and challenges traditional forms of scholarship. The oral roots of much children's literature make it particularly problematic, with published work often taking shape in stories told to specific children, either privately or in small groups (famous examples being Barrie, Blyton, Carroll and Grahame; see also Hilton *et al.* 1997). In such a context, the dialogic negotiation of the 'children's text' is far more explicit, and no doubt involves both verbal and non-verbal elements. Furthermore, even after publication, children are renowned for feeding back their views to their authors, influencing subsequent works (for example, Enid Blyton, through her *Sunny Stories* magazine).

But the physical response of a child is not necessary. The dialogic process of anticipating answering words must still occur, as authors construct notional readers – even if only to coerce them into voicelessness! Often the addressees will be younger, or idealised versions of themselves, as so many writers attest, for, as Rose (1984: 12) notes, following Freud, childhood is never really left behind; it 'persists as something which we endlessly rework in our attempt to build an image of our own history'. Ursula Le Guin (1975: 91) expresses something similar, if more poetically: 'an adult is not a dead child, but a child who survived'. Thus many of the imagined concerns of childhood live on, inflecting later discourses, and feeding back into what Nina Bawden (1975: 62) terms 'the emotional landscape' of authors' writings about childhood – which will either have a resonance for

certain children, or not. But it should not be thought that the adults are secure in their status. Bawden herself is quite outspoken about her wish to ‘*expose*’ adults, those ‘uncertain, awkward, quirky, *dangerous* creatures’, who, she says, wrote books in which ‘they didn’t want to give themselves away; show themselves to us children, to their *enemies*, as they really were’ (Bawden 1995: 110). Again, this example is not used to point to the truth of adults or children, but a concern over the hybrid relation.

All these approaches to the subject are obviously fallible: whether we look at what *the writers* say in, or about, their work; or whether we explore what *the readership* says – but this is the nature of the subject: exploring the ‘practically real’, which is forever open to dialogic revision in that contested space between the respective parties.

Conclusion

Drawing on a Foucauldian notion of power as both repressive and productive, I have tried to steer a course between biological essentialism and a cultural determinism, arguing that the child is necessarily both constructed and constructive, and that this hybrid border country is worthy of exploration. Here the tired verities about the child and its literature are seen to be less secure – but more revealing. As Bhabha (1994: 38) puts it, ‘it is the “inter” – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture’. The children’s writer C. Walter Hodges (1975: 57) uses different terms, but invokes the same space: ‘if in every child there is an adult trying to get out, equally in every adult there is a child trying to get back. On the overlapping of those two, *there* is the common ground.’ One thing is certain, though. Without recognition of this ‘someone else’ who half-owns the words, then, by fiat, children’s literature *will* be impossible, a generic plaything for adults, satisfying their desires for a point of stability, with the child as indeed but an ‘empty’ category, effectively muted. As Patricia Holland says, ‘the trap of recurring childishness is only escaped by attention to actual children’ (1996: 170).

Where, finally, does this leave us in terms of a definition? Clearly, it cannot rest on an essential child, nor an essential children’s book (as impossible as an essential ‘Orient’ (Said 1978)) – which means that an essential definition is equally impossible. However, it is not enough to declare that children’s literature is just ‘a Boojum’ (Carroll 1967: 96) – a meaningless construction – and leave it at that. So here, finally, is an attempt to depict its nominal essence:

Children’s literature consists of texts that consciously or unconsciously address particular constructions of the child, or metaphorical equivalents in terms of character or situation (for example, animals, puppets, undersized or underprivileged grown-ups), the commonality being that such texts display an awareness of children’s disempowered status (whether containing or controlling it, questioning or overturning it). Adults are as caught up in this discourse as children, engaging dialogically with it (writing/reading it), just as children themselves engage with many ‘adult’ discourses. But it is how these texts are read and used that will determine their success as ‘children’s literature’; how fruitfully they are seen to negotiate this hybrid, or border country.

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4 Criticism and the critical mainstream

Deborah Cogan Thacker

In a radio broadcast in 1929, Walter Benjamin expressed anxiety about the state of children's literature and made a distinction between children's 'literature' and children's 'books'. Claiming that the latter was marked by 'sterile mediocrity', Benjamin entered into a debate that continues today, not merely in relation to the market forces that control the availability of children's fiction, nor in terms of educational policy, but in terms of the discourses of scholarship that surround the subject.

Despite the growing popularity of children's books which 'cross over' in the twenty-first century, it is still a rare occasion when a cultural critic will deign to discuss actual children's books, and Benjamin's remarks reflect the concerns of those regarding children's literature 'from the back of the tapestry'. By that, I mean those who express a concern for children's literature by virtue of, perhaps, the fact that they were once children and imbue their childhood reading with value. These individuals are not children's literature scholars and rarely engage in discussions of actual books for children, but whether they are literary critics or cultural theorists, their observations can often be significant to the specialist. Walter Benjamin's brief broadcast, frequently quoted in books and articles about children's literature, may be viewing it 'from the outside', yet he recognises a truth about children's literature which continues to echo today.

Their [children's] reading is much more closely related to their growth and their sense of power than to their education and their knowledge of the world. That is why their reading is as great as any genius that is to be found in the books they read.

(1999: 251)

The celebratory tone of Benjamin's claim and his focus on power suggests a significance for children's literature, and for the relationship between children and fiction, that goes far beyond that commonly described by children's literature specialists.

This chapter will focus on the relationship of children's literature scholarship in the wider contexts of literary history and literary theory, first in terms of the influence of other disciplines on children's literature, and second in terms of the gaps or silences in mainstream literary critical activity where the perspectives offered by children's literature scholarship would be beneficial.

Developments in children's literature criticism over the past twenty years have focused to a large extent on the appropriation of a wide range of theoretical discourses. Although the scholarship that surrounds children's texts remains firmly embedded in the area of education and librarianship, the adoption of wider perspectives has brought the subject into the field of the study of literature at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Although

many in the academic mainstream of literary studies might see this as a negative step, equating an interest in children's literature to the 'dumbing-down' sometimes associated with the inclusion of popular literature in general, there is a sense in which the power and relevance of children's literature is beginning to be recognised (although it must be admitted that the subject does remain marginalised to a large extent).

The growth of childhood studies programmes, which include children's literature, suggests that the richness and variety of the subject has been fertilised by the incorporation of theoretical perspectives from psychoanalytical criticism to narratology. The importance of cultural theory to Masters programmes in children's literature indicates that the future of the subject (for the Masters students of today might be the lecturers and critics of tomorrow) rests in an understanding of the multiple discourses – of education, family, book supply, media influence – which surround children's books.

While many of these developments have problematised the ways in which children's literature can be defined, and have created a tension between those who read these texts 'on behalf of' actual children and those who examine them as cultural artefacts, the growth in books, articles and curricula which focus on the application of theory has invigorated the subject and taken it beyond the boundaries of its primary audience.

Influential texts, such as Peter Hunt's *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* (1991) and John Stephens's *Language and Ideology in Children's Literature* (1992), in addition to the work of Hugh Crago, Perry Nodelman, Rod McGillis, Hans-Heino Ewers, Jack Zipes and Aidan Chambers, among others, marked a departure from the (in some ways) cosier world of the bibliographer and book historian. Whether it is possible to draw any conclusions from the fact that many of the prominent players in this shift of emphasis are male, embracing what was an almost exclusively female preserve, contemporary children's literature scholarship is well represented by both genders. Although the children's literature specialist within a department of literature was more likely to be female a decade ago, even this is changing.

The shift in focus towards explorations of children's books through a range of eclectic perspectives from postcolonial theory to psychoanalysis may be due, to some extent, to the proliferation of theory in literature teaching. For many scholars, the recognition that theory is applicable to children's books is not only a surprise, but also represents new opportunities to venture into largely uncharted territory. Rather than rely on the already read, digested and criticised texts, the excitement generated by the possibilities of innovation and discovery in the study of children's literature promises a more radical application of critical theory. Susan R. Gannon rightly emphasised the fact that, increasingly, 'literary critics are borrowing insights from psychology, social science, cultural studies, media analysis, semiotics, philosophy, [and] art history ... and the same can be said of children's literature "practitioners"' (2000: 27).

But what do the specialist insights of children's literature contribute to the subjects from which it draws? The answer is – not very much. Gannon suggests that 'interdisciplinary collaboration is a two-way street: specialists in children's literature have much to contribute to art and cultural history as well as a good deal to learn from it' (2000: 29); she might perhaps have said '*should be* a two-way street', for much of the traffic is one way.

While those working in the subject, whether children's literature or childhood studies, adopt and adapt the theoretical perspectives that emanate from the contemporary academy, the contemporary theorist, from whatever school of thought, rarely acknowledges the validity or significance of texts written and published for children, or of theories about them. More crucially, in terms of the demands of cultural theory, children-as-

readers are largely invisible. This often means that the sense of reading as part of a continuous process that begins in childhood is largely absent in an understanding or definition of 'literature' in its social and cultural contexts. Although many theorists acknowledge that education has a function in an 'adult' approach to literature, the implication that there is complexity in the relationship between children and books, or a need for further exploration, is hardly noticeable. Walter Benjamin's own view, based on reminiscence and nostalgic contemplation of childhood, is often reflected in the lip service paid by contemporary critics, such as Francis Spufford (2002). While it is significant that 'childhood' is thus read as a text, such a distanced view belittles the way in which the play of power in childhood reading experiences influences literary engagement within a continuum.

The same absence can be said to exist within considerations of literary history. If constructing a literary history is concerned with identifying the shifts in the ways in which literature articulates the relationship between the individual and society, then children's literature has a place in that sense of history. Yet literary history, particularly that focused on twentieth-century and contemporary history, on modernism and modernity, excludes or marginalises such texts, ignoring the fact that children's literature participates in and responds to both literary and social change.

There are, of course, exceptions. There are a few children's texts that are considered to be of sufficient complexity and ambiguity to cross the boundary and provide fodder for the mainstream theorist or critic. These are frequently texts which are more likely to be problematic as children's literature, precisely because they are thought to have 'literary' qualities and so might be judged to be 'too good' for children, despite the fact that numerous studies have demonstrated the sophistication of children's engagement. Fantasies such as *Alice in Wonderland* or *The Wind in the Willows* achieve classic status and a place on literature courses because they might, as in the case of *Alice*, offer perspectives on Victorian values or illuminate the philosophical premises of nonsense and logic. In the case of *The Wind in the Willows*, it is possible to suggest that its constructions of 'Englishness' or 'masculinity' can contribute to an understanding of literature at the turn of the twentieth century.

However, it is the status of these texts as books written *for* children (ostensibly specific children in both of these cases) and the fact that both texts circulate in the children's publishing marketplace that dictate that their potential contributions are left out of mainstream discussions. Consideration of the fact that such texts offer perspectives on the continuity of reading and the construction of readers within a continuum is left to the education departments or the children's literature specialists. While in some sense this division appears to be unavoidable, it is precisely perspectives that acknowledge continuity and the influence of texts deliberately aimed at children as readers that are needed as critical theory focuses on the relationship between language and power and, thus, the socio-cultural mediation on the reading of literary narrative.

At times, commentators have laid the blame for these silences at the door of the children's literature specialists. Numerous 'calls of action' have been made in the past, rallying those working in children's literature to broaden their view and include themselves in mainstream literary activity: to 'speak across the gap; to engage in ... dialogues' (Thacker 2000: 13). Jack Zipes, for instance, urges children's literature critics to 'stop talking about how children's literature crosses boundaries and should be treated similarly to adult literature' and that they need to be 'crossing, if not violating boundaries and forming links with critics in other disciplines' (2001: 37). Jerry Griswold also refers to Zipes's argument in suggesting that it is the responsibility of the children's literature specialist to make the difference.

Sometimes, essays on Children's Literature give the impression of having been written in a closed system. It needn't be that way. When someone writes, for example, about colonialism in Burnett's *The Secret Garden* ... references might be made to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* or Aphra Behn's *Orinoko*.

(Griswold 2002: 238–9)

There is an obvious element of truth in the suggestion that children's literature specialists are often concerned only with children's texts and, though they embrace the terminology of theory and the methodology of mainstream research to critique these texts, they retain a separation that perpetuates the false sense that there is little in the nature of a 'shared' project. There are, however, studies which have attempted to draw children's literature out of its 'ghetto' and thereby suggest its relevance to discussions of culture and the power of the literary.

The bridging of gaps is, perhaps, most evident in literary history, and there are many scholars who have been able to 'cross over' because their expertise has relevance to an understanding of literary movements.

It may be that mainstream literary historians assume that books written for children are independent of the forces that influence literary change. Alternatively, the texts themselves, focused as they are on educational values, may appear merely to be exercises in social control. Children's literature specialists have demonstrated repeatedly that the exclusion of such texts belies the complexity of their engagement with literary questions, whether thematic or formal.

(Thacker and Webb 2002: 2)

Two such critics are Mitzi Myers and Claudia Nelson, each developing an oeuvre that, while predominantly concerned with children's literature, contributes, in the former case, to an understanding of Romanticism and, in the latter case, to nineteenth-century studies. They have been helped by a change in the nature of literary history over the last thirty years. The influence of women's studies, particularly with regard to the recuperation of texts written by women, has transformed the ways in which literary histories are now written, and children's literature scholars in general have benefited from and been enriched by the emphasis on aspects of literary history concerned with gender, and thus with the importance of the embedding of cultural 'norms' through education and nurture. Contributions by Myers and Nelson, among others, in mainstream collections of essays suggest the importance of children's literature and childhood to an understanding of both literary movements. This is hardly surprising. The changing perception of the figure of the child, so well rehearsed in a wide range of critical texts on children's literature, was key to the development of Romanticism. So, too, the cultural shifts that brought about the 'fetishising' of the child in Victorian England cannot be understood without an investigation of the ways in which children were represented in fiction. As mentioned above, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books are the most significant texts to cross the boundaries of critical study, finding significance for a large number of critical, philosophical, historical and psychoanalytic discourses. In fact, these books have been appropriated in so many different ways that it is possible to deny that they are children's books at all. This may be one of the reasons why they are acceptable in the literary mainstream. The fact that, before the nineteenth century, many texts were read by a shared audience of adults and children also contributes to the possibility of including children's literature in wider investigations of literary history.

The absence of children's literature in studies of twentieth-century literature is more obvious and also, perhaps, more surprising. While children's literature specialists have begun to acknowledge the significance of modernism and modernity to the texts produced for children, mainstream literary studies of modernism remain ignorant of texts for children. Some critics might argue that there is no such thing as modernist children's literature; one of these is Jacqueline Rose, who refers to 'the relative exclusion of modern experimentation in children's books' (1984: 142). It is important, however, to acknowledge that the extent to which the aesthetic of modernism embraces notions of the changing relationship between the individual and society, the lack of certainty and the need to challenge 'old ways of saying' might contribute to children's books written since the beginning of the twentieth century. It is also possible to suggest that one of the criteria for producing 'enduring' children's literature anticipates the fascination with transformative language and the challenge to power structures frequently associated with modernist experiment (Thacker and Webb 2002).

While there are many useful discussions of the cultural and historical contexts of twentieth-century children's books, these largely rely on a separation of the concerns of the specialist reader and the literary historian, whereas the interconnectedness of the texts discussed and readings of mainstream literature of the period would enrich both an understanding of children's texts and the cultural dynamics of modernism.

Juliet Dusinberre's highly individual discussion in *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art* (1987) provides a useful perspective on the symbiotic relationship between children's books and adult writing. Her argument is

not that children's books created books about children, but that cultural change was both reflected and pioneered in the books which children read. Radical experiments in the arts in the early modern period began in the books which Lewis Carroll and his successors wrote for children.

(1987: 5)

Yet Dusinberre's separation of the two literatures reinforces the idea that children's literature is merely a genre with its own independent traditions and developments. While it is useful to draw parallels between Virginia Woolf's desire to challenge the 'already said' and her experience of reading Victorian fantasies (such as *Alice*) as a child, Dusinberre only begins to suggest the ways in which modernist poetics can exist in books for children, as well.

The notion that children may have a different relationship to language than adults, a relationship that suggests a revolutionary alternative to 'conventional' uses of language, is familiar in the work of key modernist writers such as Gertrude Stein. Her fascination with, for instance, Mark Twain's ability to reflect the naivety of childhood in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, contributed to her own experimentation in her search for a way to 'make it new'. Her own book for children, *The World is Round* (1939), reflects an interest in childlike usage of language and point of view that contributed to both her adult fiction and, in subtler ways, to children's literature of the period. James Joyce in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* demonstrates an awareness of children's relationship to language through story in ways that suggest a new way of understanding modernist writing in its search for a more direct relationship between the self and the social world.

Narrative fracture, disruptions of time and other features which communicate anxiety about the future and an inability to offer children, as readers, unproblematised 'possible

worlds' mark much of the enduring children's literature since the middle of the twentieth century. In *Children's Literature of the 1890s and 1990s* (1994), Kimberley Reynolds recognises the relevance of these texts to a reading of mainstream literature of the time, but texts such as Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden*, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* or Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* are not mentioned in 'mainstream' discussions of the literature and culture of the 1950s, nor do critical surveys of modernism refer to children's literature at all (see, for example, Childs 2000).

This separation of audience is even more surprising in the criticism of contemporary fiction. Modes of thought that pertain to notions of the postmodern and postcolonialism clearly influence texts which are written for both adults and children. If the division between children's literature and mainstream culture is due to the assumption that children's literature is automatically 'popular' and not 'literary', a fact that many would dispute, then the advent of the 'post-' phenomena suggests a collapse of that division. By exploding the literary canons of the past, contemporary literature and readings of it should embrace the wealth of children's texts that challenge the real and reveal the ludic qualities celebrated by postmodern artists and writers. So, too, the recognition of children as 'colonised others' in relationship to language and culture encourages parallels to be drawn with postcolonial criticism. Rod McGillis points out, however, that 'it is not the postcolonial critic who engages with the texts written for children, but the children's literature specialist' (1997: 8).

Explaining the significance of the publication of a special 'Children's Literature' edition of the journal *ARIEL A Review of International English Literature* in 1997, McGillis defines the problem and the implications for mainstream literary study: 'Simply to acknowledge children and their literature in a journal such as *ARIEL* is a postcolonial act; it is a gesture toward reconceiving the canon and toward redefining what academic and professional criticism does and says' (McGillis 1997: 9).

While the act of including children's texts in any discussion of the relationship between power and language has political significance, this was *ARIEL*'s only excursion into children's literature and, while similar projects, such as the special 'Children's Literature' issue of *Mosaic* (34, 2 (2001)) are useful, they continue to marginalise both the texts and the criticism discussed. While many of the contributors in these special issues are children's literature specialists, there are rare occasions that demonstrate the promise of an approach which is inclusive and interdisciplinary. Philip Nel's article in the special edition of *Mosaic* '“Said a Bird in the Midst of a Blitz ...”: How World War II Created Dr Seuss' (2001) is derived from a larger study which provides an analysis of surrealism in American literature. In *The Avant-garde and American Postmodernity: Small Incisive Shocks* (2002), Nel provides the opportunity to consider children's literature in the context of 'mainstream' literary history. By including the work of Dr Seuss and Chris Van Allsburg in his attempt to connect modernism and postmodernism, Nel is able to demonstrate the relevance of experimentation and challenge in children's books. Not only that, but the work of children's authors provides otherwise unavailable insights into the ideological power of the avant-garde, complementing discussions of such authors as Nathaniel West, Donald Barthelme and Don de Lillo.

For instance, Nel regards Dr Seuss's *The Lorax* as a 'successful critique of capital' (2002: 68) in his argument for an 'oppositional postmodern' – uncovering the 'radical politics of the avant-garde, suppressed in definitions of high modernism, to which postmodernists return in order to counteract the effects of affirmative culture' (2002: 69). By acknowledging the power that children's authors have to challenge and undermine the affirmative

structures of culture, Nel is able to contribute to a re-evaluation of postmodernism which rescues it from the oppressiveness of high culture. Children's literature specialists, particularly those working with contemporary children's fiction and picture books, such as David Lewis (2001), know this well. Although Nel cannot go as far as attributing similar value to children's literature as a fully effective social critique, he admits 'it is a start ... Dr Seuss helps children to subvert dominant modes of socialization' (2002: 72). While Nel begins to explore this tension between the socialising and subversive functions of children's literature, he could go further to explore the fact that it is precisely this assumption, that children's literature has a predominantly educative function, that gives it the potential to present a challenge to those forces that encourage conformity and seek to control.

Similarly, the idea that parody is a form of resistance to the symbolic order of language could be strongly supported and illustrated in children's literature, an essentially or potentially subversive form. Julia Kristeva, although she does not go so far as to acknowledge their presence in children's books, warns that such radical expressions of resistance can be subsumed by the forces of bourgeois ideology, which allows them as a 'safety valve for repressed impulses it denies in society' (Selden and Widdowson 1993: 142).

For example, in *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (1993) and *Squids Will Be Squids*, (1998), Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith offer examples of parodic texts which upend the assumed purpose of stories for children, whether fairy tales or fables, in order to liberate their readers from the instructional and moralistic power of such traditional tales. By making children's stories their subject, the authors not only create a subversive humour through a stylistic parody, but they also invite readers to consider the extent to which such stories can acquire the power to subdue individuality and freedom of thought (see Thacker and Webb 2002: 157–63).

YOU have just finished reading fables about all kinds of bossy, sneaky, funny, annoying, dim-bulb people ... I mean *animals*. 'What fun,' you are thinking. 'I should write some of those myself,' you are thinking. BUT before you get started, it just occurred to me that you might want to know one more little bit about Aesop. AESOP used to tell this one fable about a real bossy jerk 'Lion' who ruled a city. When the real bossy jerk guy who ruled Aesop's city heard this fable, he didn't like it.

So he had Aesop thrown off a cliff.

(Moral: If you are planning to write fables, don't forget to change the people to animals and avoid places with high cliffs.)

(Scieszka and Smith 1998: np)

The humour that arises from texts such as this depends on the realisation that the premise of writing for children is predicated on an exercise of power. By revealing and then overturning these power structures, authors and illustrators of children's books continually provide evidence that the relationship between children and the books they read is complex and embedded in a web of discourses which surround both the texts and their readers. While it is more common to attribute this type of challenge to contemporary children's writers, a similar process can be seen to take place in the writing of some Victorian fantasy writers, such as Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley and George MacDonald. The use of the familiar authorial address and the inclusion of a social critique in, for instance, *Alice's Adventures Underground*, *The Water Babies* or *At the Back of the North Wind*, offer opportunities to engage with the text in ways which subvert dominant values and undermine the power of literature as a force of control by calling attention to it.

While texts such as those by Scieszka and Smith encourage openness and a subversion of adult value systems, such impulses are 'controlled and contained by those forces which relegate children's literature to the margins of culture' (Thacker 1996: 69). The absence of children's texts in theoretical explorations, and thus our understanding of the ways in which literary engagement is controlled by cultural discourses, may be seen as both an impoverishment of critical and cultural theory in general and a direct contribution to the impoverishment of children's reading. Far from being a two-way street, traffic is not moving at all!

Similarly, by uncovering the ideological function of postmodernity and awakening readers to the constructedness of reality, contemporary theorists need to understand the ways in which these challenges operate in children's books. As both readers and writers are introduced to the play of power through the texts and reading experiences encountered from childhood, it seems a ridiculous omission to ignore those texts from which expectations of narrative derive.

Postmodern experiment and poststructuralist theory, by uncovering structures and challenging boundaries, have created a range of discourses which suggest that it is necessary to consider children's literature as a relevant subject for the mainstream literary theorist. Yet while this is recognised by the children's literature specialist, there is little evidence to suggest that progress has been made since Aidan Chambers first called attention to this gap in 1985:

I have often wondered why literary theorists haven't yet realised that the best demonstration of almost all they say when they talk about phenomenology or structuralism or deconstruction or any other critical approach can be most clearly and easily demonstrated in children's literature. The converse of which is to wonder why those of us who attend to children's literature are, or have been, so slow in drawing the two together ourselves.

(1985: 133)

Whether discussing the ideological function of literary texts, the origins of narrative desire or the importance of previous reading experiences to an understanding of the ways in which literature functions, theorists have not yet explored the ways in which ideology, desire and intertextuality are inscribed in early reading experiences. Although children's literature specialists continually engage with such perspectives, the academic mainstream from which such ideas originate may admit to a vague awareness of 'pre-text', but are either unwilling or unable to engage with children's books in any significant way.

An exception to this rule could be Jacqueline Rose. Although she has since set children's literature behind her, her book *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984 (revised 1992)) promised to change the way in which children's literature would be regarded in the mainstream. However, although its influence continues to be felt in children's literature scholarship, Rose's challenge has not yet been considered by the literary theorist and there seems to be no one ready to take her on. By breaking down the premise of much traditional children's literature criticism, Rose focuses on the socialising function of children's books and the adult discourses which surround it. While her mission may have seemed destructive and dismissive of the scholarship which she criticises, she suggests a way of looking at children's literature which invites its inclusion in wider discussions of literature.

The history of children's fiction should be written, not in terms of its themes or the content of its stories, but in terms of the relationship to language which different children's writers establish for the child. How ... do these early works present their world to the child reader; what are the conditions of participation and entry which they lay down?

(1984: 78)

This revision of the project of children's literature criticism implied by Rose suggests that an understanding of the ways in which language is introduced through early experiences of reading; as a 'laying down' of expectations of fiction, is essential to an understanding of the relationship between readers and literary language. What is more, Rose claims that children's literature is 'one of the central means through which we regulate our relationship to language' (1984: 139). If literary theory attempts to explore the means by which any reader is admitted into a power relation to language through literature, then childhood experience of story, fiction and books must be seen as an essential element.

If mainstream theory is to include children's literature, theorists must be able to acknowledge that the value of the books themselves must be judged, not in terms of their content or relevance to children's lives, but in terms of the degree to which they offer readers authoritative positions. According to Wolfgang Iser in *The Act of Reading* (1973), it is '[t]he development toward a theoretical mapping of literature that focuses on the function of language' to encourage 'the recreative dialectics in the reader' (cited in Thacker 1996: 30). It is only when children's experience of literature is considered that this mapping can occur, for the possibilities of any text are met with the reading experiences that have preceded it.

While Terry Eagleton does not acknowledge the role of childhood reading as a valid 'previous reading experience', his claim for the importance of such experience suggests that it is precisely those texts encountered in childhood which trigger the recognition of intertextuality.

All literary texts are woven out of other literary texts, not in the conventional sense that they bear traces of 'influence' but in the more radical sense that every work, phrase or segment is a reworking of other writing which preceded or surrounded the individual work ... all literature is intertextual.

(1983: 38)

The implication that readers can be offered authoritative positions in the texts they read is dependent on intertextuality. Whereas it is not possible to claim that children-as-readers are able to recognise patterns in the sophisticated way familiar to students of literature, the degree to which literary texts allow readers access to meaning in different ways is significant to any theory which aims to address the continuity of the reading experience. Although the text may be aimed at children and the reader may be unsophisticated, the act of 'interpretation' is embedded in the reader, to be carried to subsequent reading experiences. Jonathan Culler suggests that

Interpretation is not a matter of recovering some meaning which lies behind the work and serves as a centre governing its structure; it is rather an attempt to participate in and observe the play of possible meaning to which the text gives access.

(1975: 247)

For those familiar with children's literature, it is clear that neither the age nor the sophistication of the reader will exclude them from an act of interpretation in these terms. The freedom to respond to possible meanings and the opportunity to engage with literary language in a variety of ways describes what young readers do in encounters with texts and also describes the invitations which children's authors frequently offer to their readers.

An admission that the meaning of a text can shift and change demands a critical practice which takes account of the fact that it is not merely the meaning embedded in a work that drives the ideological force of the text. The reader, too, brings a process of making meaning to each text read, suggesting that the construction of readers over time determines the interpretative act of reading. However, as Rose suggests, it is not only the invitations within the texts themselves, but the ways in which these texts are culturally situated that have a bearing on the relationship to language offered by any particular reading experience. While the psychoanalytic critic is able to explore the transition between the chaotic and uncontrolled relationship to language in the *semiotic* and the law-based functionality of language in the *symbolic*, it is the contiguity of this process and early encounters with children's books that is often ignored. The proximity of the beginning of experience with story to the entry into the symbolic order of language suggests that there is much to be discovered about the extent to which these early encounters embed a relationship to literary language that persists into adulthood. The opportunities to take up the invitations for individual interpretation may only be available to those enabled by their previous encounters with fiction, whether it is through oral story-telling or early reading experiences.

If this process is operating through the continuous process of intertextuality and the interpretation, in Culler's sense of participation in the making of meaning, then the inclusion of children's texts and children's encounters with texts becomes crucial. For a full understanding of the ways in which readers become readers and why they become the kind of readers they do, the interaction between reader and text must be seen 'as occurring between the *culturally activated* text and the *culturally activated* reader' (Bennett 1992: 216). For Bennett, reading interactions can only be understood as 'structured by the material, social, ideological and institutional relationships in which *both* text and readers are inescapably inscribed' (1992: 216).

Surely, the search for this understanding must include a consideration of the processes and mediations through which children encounter books. What is to be discovered has implications which are political in terms of the function of literature to control or liberate. Manfred Naumann, an East German critic, offers a Marxist perspective which indicated the importance of children's early experience of books in these terms:

Acquaintance with literature begins at such an early stage of personal development – with listening to poetically coloured narratives, tales, rhymes, etc. – that the capacities thus acquired for understanding poetical works appear, as it were, a 'natural' characteristic of man. It is a question, however, of sociocultural capacities which the reader has acquired in the course of his life. In so doing, the social capacities, the rules of commerce with literature, are subjectively 'broken' in the individual's appropriation, corresponding to his concrete sociohistorical and individual situation.

(1976: 121)

Not only do these sociohistorical factors influence the 'expectations, demands and attitudes' with which the reader approaches each individual reading event, but also the extent

to which individual readers are able to respond will, in turn, influence literary production, through author and publisher perception of audience response.

Whether it is the extent to which educational discourses disrupt the open response to texts or the choice of stock in a children's book department which excludes the unusual or marginal, the social forces that admit children into 'literature' determine the extent to which invitations of the texts themselves can be taken up. While a perspective that acknowledges process may threaten the primacy of the text on which the literary mainstream depends, theoretical perspectives that recognise the influence of mediations which surround the experience of reading literature demand the inclusion of children's literature. A theoretical mapping that includes children's literature can also be seen to rely on a post-modern consideration of literature; an attempt to erase the distinction between the 'popular' and the 'literary' clearly subverts the value of literary criticism as an elitist concern and attributes more power to the reader (see Hunt 1991).

Whereas an exploration of the origins of literary response may enable us to trace the forces that influence the way we become readers and the effect of social forces which determine what kind of readers we become, mainstream theory continues to ignore books for children and the children-as-readers. It may be that the frequency with which children's books are now marketed for adults as well may transform the theoretical map in the future, but for now the significance of theory goes only one way.

The lack of recognition of the relevance of children's literature to an understanding of the way that we, as adults, make sense of literary language, has an impact on the nature of not only the subject but the function of children's literature in the real world. Anxieties about reading and about the power and powerlessness of contemporary children can be addressed by a more inclusive understanding of the way in which language and power are allowed to operate in the texts we encounter as we grow. Rather than regarding books that children read as 'less than' or 'prior' texts, they should be regarded as those texts from which Rose's configuration of 'participation and entry' into language arise.

If children's literature is given the importance it deserves, the abstract philosophising of theory is transformed into a functional tool – becoming practical and radical, not only in terms of the way we understand the world, but in terms of what we do in it.

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5 Critical tradition and ideological positioning

Charles Sarland

Introduction

There is a problem for this chapter to be noted at the very start, which is that as an English person writing in English for an English-reading audience, and with limited skills in other languages, I do not have access to wider world literatures unless they have been translated into English. Both Penni Cotton and Margaret Meek note the shortage of English translations of foreign children's books, and until recently there has been a similar shortage of commentary in English upon such books, though that is beginning to change (Cotton 2000; Meek 2001; and e.g. Nikolajeva 1996). We are thus at the very start faced with an ideological issue which relates to the political domination by English as a world language; and there is an ideological bias already written into this chapter, a bias that I hope at least to make explicit where it arises.

Discourse on children's fiction sits at the crossroads of a number of other discourses. At the start of the twenty-first century the most important among these, for the purposes of this chapter, are the discourses that surround the subject of 'literature' itself and the discourses that surround the rearing, socialisation and education of the young. Thus discussion of ideology in children's literature requires the consideration of a number of issues (see, for example, Zipes 2001). The very use of the expression 'children's literature', for instance, brings with it a whole set of value judgements which have been variously espoused, attacked, defended and counterattacked over the years. In addition, discussion of children's fiction – my preferred term in this chapter – has always been characterised by arguments about its purposes. These purposes, or in some cases these denials of purpose, stem from the particular characteristics of its intended readership, and are invariably a product of the views held within the adult population about children and young people themselves and about their place in society. Since there is an imbalance of power between the children and young people who read the books, and the adults who write, publish and review the books, or who are otherwise engaged in commentary upon or dissemination of the books, either as parents, or teachers, or librarians, or booksellers, or academics, there is here immediately a question of politics, a politics first and foremost of age differential.

But wider than this, the books themselves and the social practices that surround them will raise ideological issues. These issues will be related to specific debates in adult society, to do for instance with class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity; or they will be instances of more general debate about the role of liberal humanist values in a capitalist democracy; or, particularly at times of increasing international tension, they will be to do with questions of international identity and international roles. In addition, there is a continuing debate

about reader response, which also impacts upon considerations of ideology in children's fiction. Finally, we must consider the fact that children's fiction has become a commodity in a global market, controlled by a relatively small number of international publishers.

Ideology

Ideology is itself a problematic notion. In the general discourse of the electronic media, for instance, it is often considered that ideology and bias are one and the same thing, and that ideology and 'common sense' can be set against each other. This distinction continues into (particularly British) party political debate: 'ideology' is what the other side is motivated by while 'our' side is again merely applying common sense. In the history of Marxist thought there has been a convoluted development of usage of the term, not unrelated to the distinction just outlined. For the purposes of this chapter, however, ideology will be taken to refer to all espousal, assumption, consideration and discussion of social and cultural values, whether overt or covert. In that sense it will include common sense itself, for common sense is always concerned with the values and underlying assumptions of our everyday lives.

Vološinov (1929/1986) encapsulates the position when he argues that all language is ideological. All sign systems, including language, he argues, have not only a simple denotative role, they are also evaluative, and thus ideological: 'The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs' (10). From this perspective it will thus be seen that all writing is ideological since all writing either assumes values even when not overtly espousing them, or is produced and also read within a social and cultural framework which is itself inevitably suffused with values – that is to say, suffused with ideology. In addition, in Marxist terms, considerations of ideology can be divorced neither from considerations of the economic base nor from considerations of power (that is, of politics), and that too is the position taken here.

Moral purpose and didacticism

At the heart of any consideration of ideology will be a consideration of moral purpose and didacticism and it is useful, I think, to recognise the historical nature of the debate. My examples are largely British. In the Preface to *The Governess, or Little Female Academy* in 1749, Sarah Fielding wrote:

Before you begin the following sheets, I beg you will stop a Moment at this Preface, to consider with me, what is the true Use of reading: and if you can once fix this Truth in your Minds, namely that the true Use of Books is to make you wiser and better, you will then have both Profit and Pleasure from what you read.

(Fielding 1749/1968: 91)

Contrary views have almost as long a history; Elizabeth Rigby, for instance, writing in 1844 in *The Quarterly Review*, while admitting that no one would deliberately put what she calls 'offensive' books in the way of children, goes on:

but, should they fall in their way, we firmly believe no risk to exist – if they will read them at one time or another, the earlier, perhaps, the better. Such works are like the viper – they have a wholesome flesh as well as a poisonous sting; and children are

perhaps the only class of readers which can partake of one without suffering from the other.

(Hunt 1990: 21)

The debate was lively in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and has continued on and off ever since. So far as Britain was concerned, at one stage it looked as if it had been settled, Harvey Darton having introduced his 1932 history of *Children's Books in England* with the words: 'By "children's books" I mean printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, not solely to make them good, nor to keep them *profitably* quiet' (Darton 1932/1982: 1; his emphasis).

For some while after that, explicit discussion of values was left in abeyance. There was discussion both about how to write for children in ways that were not condescending – an ideological formulation in itself, of course – and about what the differences might be between fiction written for children and fiction written for adults, but considerations either of moral purpose or of didacticism did not appear to be at issue. In fact the debate had never gone away: it had rather gone underground, as my discussion of the Leavisite paradigm below demonstrates, or recoded itself in educational terms. The debate re-emerged more overtly with Fred Inglis in 1981:

Only a monster would not want to give a child books she will delight in and which will teach her to be good. It is the ancient and proper justification of reading and teaching literature that it helps you to live well.

(Inglis 1981: 4)

Pat Pinsent makes similar claims: 'I would go so far as to claim that sustained experience of literature from an early age can be a means of combining pleasure with the acquisition of tolerance, a combination less readily available from other sources' (Pinsent 1997: 21).

Elsewhere, the picture is mixed. Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (1999) and Cotton (2000) both suggest that the same historical distinction as that described by Darton between writing for moral purpose in the nineteenth century and writing for pleasure in the twentieth can be found in a number of European countries – France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland – and in North America. Large numbers of children's books were published, but in European countries that remained as dictatorships after the Second World War – Cotton quotes Spain as an example – the production of children's books remained very much under state control and did not flourish (Cotton 2000: 16). Similarly, Peter Hunt draws on various sources to note that, in newly emergent children's literatures in newly emergent postcolonial countries, moral purpose and didacticism are also high on the agenda (Hunt 1992b).

In fact, as John Stephens (1992: 3) has observed, writing for children has almost always had a purpose over and beyond that of just giving children pleasure and, as Lesnik-Oberstein points out (1999: 15), a central question has always been and will always be the question of which books are 'best for children' – however one wants to define 'best'.

In the British context the *educational* purposes of literature have also always been an issue, with official reports and curriculum documents from the 1920s to the 1990s emphasising the importance of the role of literature, and by implication children's literature, in the personal and moral development of school students (Board of Education

1921; DES 1975; DFE 1995). In addition, the English National Curriculum has spawned a market for books aimed at particular niches within it: Franklin Watts's Sparks series, aimed at primary schools, is marketed as 'Stories linking with the History National Curriculum Key Stage 2'. In the member states of the European Union, with the dishonourable exception of Britain itself, the dissemination of translated books is seen to have an important educational and hence ideological function, fostering mutual understanding and European unity.

The recognition that the question of values had in fact always been there had actually re-emerged in Britain in the late 1940s (Trease 1949/1964) but the debate grew more intense in the 1970s, and it was at this point that ideological considerations came to be labelled as such.

Representation: gender, minority groups and bias: the debate from the 1970s until the present day

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century didacticism the promotion of values in children's books had often taken the overt form of direct preaching, and the values to be promoted were an issue. By the 1970s the focus of the debate in Britain and the United States had changed to questions of character representation and character role, and analysis consisted in showing how children's fiction represented some groups at the expense of others, or how some groups were negatively represented in stereotypical terms. The argument was that, by representing certain groups in certain ways, children's books were promoting certain values – essentially white, male and middle-class – and that the books were thus class-biased, racist and sexist. The fact that the protagonists of most children's books tended to be white middle-class boys was adduced in evidence. Working-class characters were portrayed either as respectful to their middle-class 'betters', or as stupid – or they had the villain's role in the story. Black characters suffered a similar fate. Girls tended to be represented in traditional female roles.

Trease (1949/1964) had led the way in drawing attention to the politically conservative bias of historical fiction, and had attempted to offer alternative points of view in his own writing. From the United States, Nat Hentoff drew attention to the under-representation of teenagers in children's books, and saw the need to make 'contact with the sizeable number of the young who never read anything for pleasure because they are not in it' (Hentoff 1969: 400). Bob Dixon's work (1974) was characteristic of many attacks on that most prolific of British authors, Enid Blyton. Zimet (1976), from the USA, drew attention to the exclusion or the stereotypical presentation of ethnic minorities and women in children's fiction, and incidentally also in school textbooks, and espoused the use of positive images of girls and of ethnic minorities. Dixon (1977), in a comprehensive survey, demonstrated the almost universally reactionary views on race, gender and class, together with a political conservatism, that informed most British children's books of the time, and Robert Leeson (1977) came up with similar findings. The Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative (1979) drew attention to the racism inherent in a number of children's classics and one or two highly rated more modern books, and examined sex roles and other stereotyping.

In order to promote working-class, anti-racist and anti-sexist values, it was argued that books should be written with working-class, or female, or black protagonists. Thus in 1982 Dixon drew up what was essentially an annotated book list of 'stories which show a positive overall attitude with regard to sex roles, race and social class' (Dixon

1982: 3), although he also insisted that the books should meet 'literary' standards that were essentially Leavisite. Such initiatives have multiplied in the later years of the twentieth century, and the practical outcome was a proliferation of series aimed particularly at the teenage market and the emergence of writers like Petronella Breinburg, Robert Leeson and Jan Needle in Britain, and Rosa Guy, Julius Lester, Louise Fitzhugh and Virginia Hamilton in the USA.

It is worth noting, however, that the current publication life of any given title can be very short and this can result in the fairly rapid silencing of work that challenges prevailing norms and values. Jan Needle's *Albeson and the Germans* (1977), which both challenges British xenophobia and contains a pretty devastating attack upon a benevolently intentioned primary school teacher, is out of print, while much of Needle's other work is still available. More recently Adele Geras's *A Candle in the Dark* (1995), which portrays anti-semitism in its just pre-Second World War primary-school child characters, had a shelf life of only five years (two years in its paperback format).

The debate has been revisited in recent years, particularly by Pinsent (1997), Cedric Cullingford (1998) and Margery Hourihan (1997). Pinsent writes for teachers in an English context in which many of the texts criticised in the 1970s are still enshrined in the English National Curriculum (DFE 1995) and/or are still to be found being taught in English classrooms. She debates the desirability of using such texts and the need to handle them sensitively, and touches on issues of sexuality. Cullingford, in a much bolder foray, seems largely unconcerned by the ideological debate, but offers in passing fascinating insights into the work of popular English authors such as Herbert Strang and Percy F. Westerman from the first half of the twentieth century, noting their chauvinism with regard to the rest of Europe, their wholehearted espousal of the imperialist, essentially racist values of their day, and their assumptions about the natural superiority of 'British gentlemen' over the rest of the English characters who populated their books. When it comes to Blyton's notorious characterisations of travellers and gypsies he sees them as 'so absurdly innocent that they are beside the point' (Cullingford 1998: 100), a worrying observation both in light of the fact that, around the same time as Blyton was writing, over 200,000 gypsies were either being killed or had recently been killed in the Nazi death camps, and in light of the fact that Blyton is still promoted in school and very widely read by children while Strang and Westerman are not.

Finally, Hourihan, in a much more systematically theorised approach, explores the role of the hero in a range of literature including, alongside children's books themselves, those authors such as Homer, Defoe, Dickens and Tolkien whose adult work often gets offered to children in some sort of abbreviated form. She too notes the tradition of the young white male European protagonists and, in the specifically British context, the importance of the notion of the gentleman.

As has been indicated, with the exception of Hourihan's work, the debate has been essentially about representation, and 'literary standards' *per se* have not generally been challenged. Thus more complex considerations of the ways in which ideology is inscribed in texts did not enter into the discussion, nor did considerations of the complexity of reader response. What such a debate has done, however, is to point out that all texts incorporated value positions. It was therefore not long before questions were raised about the grounds for the judgements made on the quality of children's books, and that debate in turn relates to a wider consideration of such questions with regard to literary criticism as a whole.

The development of criticism of children's fiction: the Leavisite paradigm

The criticism of children's fiction has been something of a poor relation in English and American critical studies (see also Chapters 111 and 112). For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century there was little written that addressed the subject, and Felicity Hughes (1978/1990) offers some analysis as to why this was the case. She argues that, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Henry James and others encapsulated the view that, for the novel to fully come of age as an art form, it had to break free of its family audience. Since then the tendency has increased to view writing for children as a 'mere' craft, not worthy of serious critical attention. Reviewing and commentary focused on advising parents, librarians and other interested adults on what to buy for children, or on advising teachers on how to encourage and develop the reading habits of their pupils. While critical judgements were offered about the quality of the books, the criteria for such critical judgements were assumed rather than debated. When surveys of the field were published they also tended to sacrifice discussion of critical criteria to the need for comprehensive coverage.

However, a developing body of work did start to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s which was directly concerned with confronting the problem and trying to establish criteria for judgement. Such work drew on two traditions, the Leavisite tradition in Britain and New Criticism in the USA. Foremost among such initiatives was a collection of papers edited by Egoff *et al.* (1969); Rosenheim (1969) and Travers (1969), both from that collection, look specifically to New Critic Northrop Frye's mythic archetypes, as do Ted Hughes (1976) and Peter Hunt (1980). Wallace Hildick (1970) and Myles McDowell (1973) both address the question of the difference in writing for children and writing for adults, but both resort to Leavisite criteria for evaluating the quality of children's books. The Leavisite tradition perhaps reaches its apogee with Inglis's *The Promise of Happiness*. Inglis's opening sentence directly quotes the opening of Leavis's *The Great Tradition* (1948): 'The great children's novelists are Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, Francis Hodgson Burnett, Arthur Ransome, William Mayne, and Philippa Pearce – to stop for a moment at that comparatively safe point on an uncertain list' (Inglis 1981: 1).

The tradition is not dead. Margery Fisher (1986), for instance, assumes that the definition of a children's classic is still essentially unproblematic. William Moebius (1986/1990) brings similar assumptions to bear upon picture books, and Hunt's book on Arthur Ransome is still largely rooted in Leavisite practice in its judgements of quality and value (Hunt 1992a).

One of the features of the tradition is its refusal to address questions of value at a theoretical level. Here is Townsend exemplifying the point:

We find in fact that the literary critics, both modern and not-so-modern, are reluctant to pin themselves down to theoretical statements. In the introduction to *Determinations* (1934), F. R. Leavis expresses the belief that 'the way to forward true appreciation of literature and art is to examine and discuss it'; and again, 'out of agreement or disagreement with particular judgements of value a sense of relative value in the concrete will define itself, and without this, no amount of talk in the abstract is worth anything'.

(Townsend 1971/1990: 66)

The values in question can be culled from a variety of sources. F. R. Leavis (1955) talks of ‘intelligence’, ‘vitality’, ‘sensitivity’, ‘depth, range and subtlety in the presentment of human experience’, ‘achieved creation’, ‘representative significance’. Inglis (1981) talks of ‘sincerity’, ‘dignity’, ‘integrity’, ‘honesty’, ‘authenticity’, ‘fulfilment’, ‘freedom’, ‘innocence’, ‘nation’, ‘intelligence’, ‘home’, ‘heroism’, ‘friendship’, ‘history’. And Hunt tells us that the virtues of Arthur Ransome are ‘family, honour, skill, good sense, responsibility and mutual respect’, and ‘the idea of place’ (Hunt 1992a: 86). All of these terms and formulations are offered by their various authors as if they are essentially unproblematic, and they are thus rendered as common sense, naturalised and hidden in the discourse, and not raised for examination. We may have little difficulty, however, in recognising a liberal humanist consensus which runs through them, even if one or two of Inglis’s choices are somewhat idiosyncratic. Nowhere, however, are we able to raise the question of the role that this liberal humanist discourse plays ideologically in a late capitalist or postcolonial world, and it is such a challenge that an ideological critique inevitably raises.

However, before moving on to such considerations, it is necessary to add that Inglis’s book also marks a peak in the *educational* debate, which filled the pages of such journals as *English in Education* throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, and which is also a debate between the Leavisites and the exponents of newer developments in structuralism and semiotics. As I have indicated above, the discourses of children’s literature and education continuously overlap. Hughes (1978/1990) highlights Henry James’s concern that the universal literacy that would follow from universal schooling would endanger the future of the novel as an art form, leading to inevitable vulgarisation, as the novel itself catered to popular taste – and children’s literature itself catered to an even lower common denominator. As a result, and in order to try to return some status to children’s literature, it was, and often still is, seen as the training ground of adult literary taste. From such a perspective the distinction conferred by the term ‘literature’ is crucial, since by that means the Jamesian distinctions between the novel as an art form and other fiction as *commercial* entertainment is promoted.

It is perhaps ironic that the criticism of children’s fiction should have come of age at precisely the point when the newer perspectives of structuralism, semiotics and Marxism were beginning to make their mark in literary criticism in Britain, and to undermine those very certainties after which Inglis was searching. In the 1990s things did indeed move on, with Nikolajeva (1996) drawing on structuralism and in particular semiotics to demonstrate the ways in which children’s literature itself has come of age as it takes on board the structures, processes and techniques of the modern adult novel.

The ideological debate in literary studies

Character and action: structuralist insights

As already noted, the work of New Critic Northrop Frye (1957) had been influential in establishing a structuralist tradition in the criticism of children’s fiction in the USA in the early 1970s. From Europe a different tradition began to make its influence felt in Britain in the later 1970s and 1980s, particularly with regard to the treatment of character and action. The Russian formalist Vladimir Propp (1928/1968) suggested in his study of the Russian folk tale that character was not the source of action, rather it was the product of plot. The hero was the hero because of his or her role in the plot. One can go back to Aristotle for similar insistence that it was not character but action that was important in

tragedy (Aristotle 1965: 39) and such views were echoed by the pre-war critic Walter Benjamin (1970) and in Tzvetan Todorov's work (1971/1977).

In Britain the Leavisite tradition had, by contrast, tended to emphasise the importance of psychological insight in characterisation, and had seen characters themselves as the source of the action of the story, and it is easy to see how the work of authors writing in English such as Philippa Pearce, Nina Bawden, William Mayne, Maurice Sendak, Anthony Browne or Aidan Chambers, to take a list not entirely at random, lends itself to such approaches. By contrast the work of popular authors, such as Enid Blyton or Roald Dahl, more easily lends itself to structuralist analysis: their protagonists are heroines and heroes primarily because that is their plot role, not because there is anything in their psychological make-up that makes them inherently 'heroic'.

Such structuralist approaches need not be limited to popular texts, and can be applied with equal usefulness to the work of authors at what is often regarded as the 'quality' end of the market. To take an example, the character of Toad in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) could be seen on the one hand as a rounded psychological creation, by turns blustering and repentant, selfish, self-seeking and replete with hubris. His exploits can then be seen entirely in terms of his personality. Structuralist analysis, on the other hand, might see him as comic hero, archetypal overreacher, functioning as the disruptive element in the social order that is necessary for the book's main plot to develop, and thus acting as a pivotal point for the articulation of the conflict between the uncertainties of the newer machine age and the more settled life of the rural idyll, a conflict which is one of the major themes of the book.

Robert Leeson (1975/1980) led the attack on the application to children's fiction of the then prevailing British tradition of adult literary criticism. He writes: 'these days, turning to adult lit-crit is like asking to be rescued by the *Titanic*' (209). He locates the debate about characterisation in a specifically ideological context, suggesting that enthusiasm for psychological characterisation is a bourgeois trait. The old tales, he argues, echoing Propp, didn't need psychology, they had action and moral. The claims made by traditional 'lit-crit' for such characterisation are elitist, and have little application for the general reader. J. S. Bratton, too, rejected the Leavisite tradition in her study of Victorian children's books: 'the liberal humanist tradition of literary criticism offers no effective approach to the material' (Bratton 1981: 19), although she draws on Frye as well as Propp in her resort to structuralism (see also Sarland 1991: 142).

The critique of the position which sees character as the source of meaning and action comes from a wider and more ideological perspective than that of structuralism alone, and structuralism itself has more to offer than insights about character and action. More widely, structuralism draws on semiotics to explore the whole range of codes that operate in texts and by which they construct their meanings; it also takes a lead from Lévi-Strauss (1963), who related structural elements in myths to structural elements in the society that gave rise to them. This becomes a central tool of ideological critique, allowing parallels to be drawn between ideological structures in the works and those in society at large.

The underlying ground of ideological value

Marxist literary criticism analyses literature in the light of prevailing economic class conflict in capitalist society. This conflict is not slavishly reproduced in the ideological superstructure, of which literature is a part, but it is always possible to trace it in some form in individual work. The liberal humanist tradition, by contrast, is not so much

concerned with class conflict as with materialism itself. The ideological conflict then becomes materialism versus humanism and the paradigm distinction to be made about the work, *pace* Henry James, is that between art and commerce. Terry Eagleton (1976) and Catherine Belsey (1980) are among the major critics of the Leavisite tradition, identifying its liberal humanist roots and analysing its escapist response to the materialism of bourgeois capitalism. Furthermore, they argue, by 'naturalising' its values as common sense, liberal humanism conceals its reactionary political role, although the idealist nature of its position is often clear enough in its claim of transcendent status for those same values and for a universal 'human nature' in which they inhere.

To take an example, a liberal humanist reading of *The Wind in the Willows* might see it as celebrating the values enshrined in notions of home and good fellowship, in opposition to the threatening materialism of the wide world with its dominant symbol of the motor car. A case might be made that the recurrent plots and sub-plots, all of which involve explorations away from and successive returns to warm secure homes, culminating in the retaking of Toad Hall from the marauding weasels and stoats, have a 'universal' appeal, since such explorations and returns are the very condition of childhood itself. An ideological perspective might note, by contrast, the resemblance of those secure warm homes to the Victorian middle-class nursery, and comment upon the escapism of the response to the materialism of the wide world. Such an approach might further recognise the underlying feudalist presuppositions that are hidden within the 'common sense' assumptions of the book, and might identify in the weasels and stoats the emergence of an organised working class challenging the privileges of property and upper-middle-class idleness. Jan Needle's re-working of the book, *Wild Wood* (1981), starts from just such a premise. In addition, the celebration of fellowship is an entirely male affair: the only women in *The Wind in the Willows* – the gaoler's daughter and the barge-woman – have distinctly subservient roles, and claims for universality just in terms of gender alone begin to look decidedly suspect.

Belsey also suggests that from the liberal humanist perspective people are seen as the sole authors of their own actions, and hence of their own history, and meaning is the product of their individual intentions. In fact, she argues, the reverse is true: people are not the authors of their own history, they are rather the products of history itself or, less deterministically, engaged in a dialectical relationship with their history – both product and producer. The grounds for Leeson's argument, above, are now clear, for a criticism that espouses psychological characterisation as a central tenet of 'quality', and that insists that the stories in which those characters find themselves should be rooted in the intentionality of those characters' psyches, is liberal humanist in assumption, and will fail to expose the ideological nature both of the fiction to which it is giving attention, and of the fiction that it is ignoring.

In liberal humanist criticism it is the author who takes centre-stage, and Belsey identifies 'expressive realism' as literature's dominant form over the past 150 years: reality, as experienced by a single gifted individual, is expressed in such a way that the rest of us spontaneously perceive it as being the case. Grahame's intention is assumed to be that readers should see childhood as a time and place of adventure within a secure framework, and readers are to take his word for it. The resort to the author's intention as the source of meaning in the work, known to its critics as the 'intentional fallacy', had already come under attack for circularity from the New Critics, since the primary evidence for the author's intention was usually the work itself. Belsey takes the argument one step further, suggesting that expressive realism operates to support liberal humanism, and thus, effectively, to support capitalism itself. Ideological perspectives insist, in contrast, that texts are

constructions in and of ideology, generally operating unconsciously, and it is the job of the critic to deconstruct the work in order to expose its underlying ideological nature and role. Thus, far from being the unique insight of an individual with a privileged understanding of the world, *The Wind in the Willows* can be seen as resting securely within a continuum of escapist response to developing bourgeois capitalism that stretches all the way from *Hard Times* to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Peter Hollindale (1988) takes on a number of the perspectives outlined above, and applies them to his discussion of ideology in children's books. He distinguishes three levels of ideology. There is first of all an overt, often proselytising or didactic level, as in books like Gene Kemp's *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler* (1977). Then there is a second, more passive level, where views of the world are put into characters' mouths or otherwise incorporated into the narrative with no overt ironic distancing. (There is a famous example of this from Enid Blyton's *Five Run Away Together* (1944), analysed by Ken Watson (1992: 31), in which the reader is implicitly invited to side with the obnoxious middle-class Julian putting down a member of the 'lower orders'.) Finally, there is what Hollindale calls an 'underlying climate of belief' which he identifies as being inscribed in the basic material from which fiction is built. It is possible to detect a hankering after the old transcendent certainties in Hollindale's work; nonetheless, he does substantially shift the ground of the debate in regard to children's fiction, recognising the complexity of the issues.

Postcolonialism and 'othering'

To these debates may be added the perspectives of postcolonial studies. The work of Edward Said (1993) draws our attention to the ways in which the assumptions of imperialism are often buried so deep in the dominant culture as to be invisible to those who live within it. It was only after the successful resistance of the colonised which led to the throwing off of the imperialist yoke that such perspectives began to penetrate the discourses of the dominant culture, leading us to look anew at the ideological assumptions of much of our cultural product.

Within that product a number of things can occur. The first is that imperialist assumptions are built into the text quite overtly, with imperialist and racist sentiments put explicitly into the mouths of the characters (see Cullingford 1998).

Second, the ground of ideological assumption can mean that the evidence is there in the text, but that commentary has not noted it. Said's own expositions of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Austen's *Mansfield Park* are cases in point. In children's fiction a glance at the work of some of the canonical names provides obvious examples. Arthur Ransome's *Secret Water* (1939) comes replete with the language of imperialism: 'natives' and 'savages' abound, 'natives' being adults, and 'savages' being other children with whom the central characters enter into a war game. When 'the savages' embark upon a raid the descriptions are explicit enough: 'Except for their faces all three were shiny and black. All three were in bathing things, but it was hard to see where bathing things ended and mud began. The savages. There was no doubt about it' (Ransome 1939: 220). *Secret Water* operates as an imperialist text at a more structural level, too, since the whole book is about the central family's and in particular John the oldest boy's agenda, given him by his father, to explore the estuary upon which they are camped. As Said suggests: 'The main battle in imperialism is over land' (Said 1993: xiii), and in the course of the book *Secret Water* the central invading family maps and names the land; they even recruit a local boy as a 'native guide'.

The operation of imperialism does not occur just at the material level of physical occupation and subsequent economic annexation. It also, Said suggests, operates at a cultural and ideological level. This is exemplified in *The Story of Dr Dolittle* (Hugh Lofting 1922): in line with the characterisation of the Africans as both primitive and stupid, Lofting's story also offers us an almost prophetic narrative of colonisation, cultural hegemony, decolonisation and postcolonial influence. The arrival of the white man in the form of the good doctor and his animal helpers plays out the initial colonisation of imperialism (his ostensible reason for being there is to cure the monkeys of some mysterious disease which is decimating the population – the eeriest of pre-echoes of the AIDS story of the final years of the twentieth century). The next stage, in which Prince Bumpo wishes to be like the hero of *The Sleeping Beauty*, then demonstrates the operation of European cultural hegemony, as, in order to become such a hero, Bumpo himself has to turn white. Dolittle, with some misgivings it has to be said, for it is to be a painful process, bleaches his face, but does not even attempt to sort out problems that might ensue. Instead he appropriates the natural resources of the country in the form of the pushmi-pullyou and, in a classic trope of de-colonising irresponsibility, sails away leaving Bumpo to his fate, commenting only that the whiteness will probably wear off in time. He does, however, promise to send Bumpo some candy, hence prefiguring precisely the ways in which the former imperial nations have continued to exercise neo-imperialist economic hegemony over their former colonies through the operation of economic aid with all its concomitant controlling mechanisms, and through the direct supply of arms to any of them that looked as if they were on 'our' side, no matter how dubious their governments or how appalling their human rights records.

In both the above examples, imperialism was encapsulated in both the language of the text and the structures of the narratives. In other examples imperialism is silenced. In *The Wind in the Willows*, for instance, the Rat silences the Mole's interest in the Wide World, while later the Mole physically restrains the Rat from going to explore it, re-establishing English domestic order in order to erase the threat of the 'other', the 'out there'.

Finally there are those texts which raise the issues of xenophobia, racism and imperialism and succeed in challenging prevailing ideological assumption. Bradford (2001) suggests that it is in particular those books that are about boundaries that bring out such issues, and offers an analysis of some Australian and New Zealand fiction to make her point. Garry Disher's *The Divine Wind* (1998) and Gaye Hıçılmaz's *The Frozen Waterfall* (1993) do just that, the former looking at relationships between Australians and the immigrant Japanese community during the Second World War, and the latter looking at the contemporary experience of Turkish immigrants in Switzerland. Hıçılmaz's earlier *Against the Storm* (1990) is perhaps even more challenging for English readers since it portrays in uncompromising terms what it is like to be young and living on the streets of Ankara, a far cry from the standard fare of most children's books in English.

Both Said and Hourihan suggest that the discourse of imperialism is structured around a process of 'othering', a process that it shares with the discourses of racism, of xenophobia, of class distinction, of paternalism, of homophobia. Each of these have their particular ideological formulations which can be identified in terms of the particular group that is othered. In current neo-imperialism, terms such as civilisation, freedom, democracy are set against terms such as terrorism and fundamentalism and formulations such as 'the evil empire', all of which are designed to preclude understanding and debate. As postcolonial readings can help us to understand the imperialist ideologies that characterise particular texts, so anti-racist readings, class-conscious readings, feminist readings and

queer readings can help us to understand the racist, paternalist, class-biased and homophobic ideologies that also characterise texts. Such readings, however, also have the ability to penetrate the surface of the text to demonstrate the ambiguity underneath, as I have attempted to do in my readings of popular literature (Sarland 1991).

As a further example and in an area that is continuously re-erased in children's literature, a queer reading of *The Wind in the Willows* might note that the central relationship of the book, that between Mole and Ratty, is very much one of two men living together in domestic bliss. Indeed, Philip Hoare quotes Peter Burton to the effect that the appearance of Pan in the 'Piper at the Gates of Dawn' chapter would have lent itself to just such a queer reading at the time of the book's original publication (Hoare 1997: 80).

Circumstances of production

Within the Marxist tradition it has long been recognised that literature is a product of the particular historical and social formations that prevail at the time of its production (see, for example, Lenin 1908, 1910, 1911/1978; Plekhanov 1913/1957; Trotsky 1924/1974). Children's books have not received such attention until comparatively recently. Bratton (1981) traced the relationship between British Victorian children's fiction and its various markets – stories for girls to teach them the domestic virtues, stories for boys to teach them the virtues of military Christianity, stories for the newly literate poor, to teach them religion and morality. Leeson, in his history of children's fiction (1985), suggests that there has always been a conflict between middle-class literature and popular literature, a distinction which can be traced in the content of the material and related to the market that it found. He draws attention to the roots of popular fiction in folk tale, which had political content which survived (somewhat subdued) into the written forms. Leeson thus raises a question-mark over the perhaps somewhat more determinist analysis offered by Belsey and Eagleton.

More thorough exploration of the issues in contemporary children's fiction has come from feminist perspectives, with a collection of studies from Australia of popular teen romance fiction edited by Linda Christian-Smith (1993a). Christian-Smith herself (1993b) provides a particularly powerful analysis of the economic, political and ideological circumstances of the growth in production of romances for teenagers and/or 'young adults', which is now a global industry, with most of the publishing houses based in the USA. She traces the relationship between the imperatives of 'Reaganomics', the emphasis on family values in the rise of the New Right in the 1980s, and the need to enculturate young women into the gendered roles that serve such interests.

The construction of the reader

The initiatives of the 1970s to redress the balance in the bias of children's fiction took a straightforward view about the relationship between the text and the reader. At its simplest an almost directly didactic relationship was assumed. If you wrote books with positive characterisations of, and roles for, girls, ethnic minorities and the working class, then readers' attitudes would be changed and all would be well with the world. I do not suggest that anyone, even then, thought it would be quite that simple, and since the 1970s there has been something of a revolution in our understandings of how readers are constructed by texts. The insights of reader-response theoreticians like Wolfgang Iser (1978), applied to children's books most notably by Aidan Chambers (1980), had alerted

us to some of the textual devices by which an implied reader is written into the text. Iser had also drawn attention to the fact that texts brought with them a cultural repertoire which had to be matched by the reader. Macherey (1978) brought Freudian perspectives to bear on ways in which ideology operated in hidden ways in the text, and by extension also in the reader, and Belsey drew insights from Althusser, Derrida and Lacan to further explore the ways in which the subjectivity of the reader is ideologically constructed.

It is Jacqueline Rose (1984/1994) who offers the most thoroughgoing exposition of this view with respect to children's fiction. She argues that, by a combination of textual devices, characterisation and assumptions of value position, children's books construct children, both as characters and as readers, as without sexuality, innocent and denied politics, either a politics between themselves or within wider society. As such they are seen as beings with a privileged perception, untainted by culture. John Stephens (1992) engages in a detailed analysis of a number of books to show how they produce ideological constructions of implied child readers. He concentrates particularly on narrative focalisation and the shifts, moves and gaps of narrative viewpoint and attitude, showing how such techniques imply certain ideological assumptions and formulations, and construct implied readers who must be expected to share them.

Implied readers and real readers

When real readers are introduced into the equation, however, the picture becomes more complicated, and it is here that the educational discourse overlaps with the discourse about fiction *per se*, for it is almost always within school that evidence is gathered and intervention is proposed. The introduction of real readers has another effect, for it throws into relief some of the more determinist assumptions of the analysis offered above. The evidence comes under three headings: identification, the polysemous text, and contradictory readings.

Identification

The notion of identification has been a contentious issue for some time. The assumption is that readers 'identify with' the protagonists, and thus take on their particular value positions. Readers are thus ideologically constructed by their identification with the character. D. W. Harding (1977) offered an alternative formulation of the reader as an observer in a more detached and evaluative spectator role, and both Geoff Fox (1979) and Robert Protherough (1983) suggest that such a straightforward notion as identification does not account for the evidence that they collected from children and young people. It is clear from their evidence that readers take up a range of positions of greater or lesser involvement, and of varied focalisation. The ideological initiatives of the 1970s presupposed an identification model of response, and subsequent commentators are still most fearful of what happens should a young person engage in unmediated identification with characters constructed within ideologically undesirable formulations. Such fears underlie Stephens's analysis (1992) and the work of Christian-Smith and her co-contributors (1993a).

The polysemous text

Roland Barthes (1974) alerted us to the notion that texts operated through a plurality of codes that left them open to a plurality of readings, and Umberto Eco (1981) offers the

most extensive analysis of that plurality. Specifically, with regard to ideology, Eco agrees that all texts carry ideological assumptions, whether overt or covert, but readers have three options: they can assume the ideology of the text and subsume it into their own reading; they can miss or ignore the ideology of the text and import their own, thus producing 'aberrant' readings – 'where "aberrant" means only different from the ones envisaged by the sender' (22); or they can question the text in order to reveal the underlying ideology. This third option is the project that ideological critique undertakes, but when real readers, other than critics, are questioned about their readings, it is clear that the second option is often taken up, and that 'aberrant' readings abound (Sarland 1991; Christian-Smith 1993a) though consensual readings also occur. Texts, it seems, are contradictory, and so evidently are readings.

Contradictory readings

Macherey (1977, 1978) and Eagleton (1976) both assume that the world is riven with ideological conflict. To expect texts to resolve that conflict is mistaken, and the ideological contradictions that inform the world will also be found to inform the fictional texts that are part of that world. Some texts, Eagleton argues, are particularly good at revealing ideological conflict, in that they sit athwart the dominant ideology of the times in which they were written. Eagleton looks to examples from the traditional adult canon to make his point.

Jack Zipes (1979) takes the argument one stage further and suggests that popular work too will be found to be contradictory. He links popular literature and film with its precursors in folk tale and romance, and suggests that it offers the hope of autonomy and self-determination, in admittedly utopian forms, while at the same time affirming dominant capitalist ideology. In other words, while the closure of popular texts almost always reinforces dominant ideology, in the unfolding narratives there are always countering moves in which it is challenged. Zipes, then, denies the implications of Eagleton's work that only texts that sit athwart the prevailing ideology can be open to countervailing readings, and he denies too the implications of Belsey's work that popular forms sit within the classic expressive realist tradition and as such demand readings that are congruent with the dominant ideology.

For example, in Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* books, many of the plots are predicated on the refusal of the central female character, George, to accept her role as subservient, domesticated and non-adventurous, despite repeated exhortations to 'behave like a girl'. She even refuses to accept her 'real' name, which is Georgina. Countering this is the fact that Blyton only offers her the alternative of 'tomboy', an alternative that is itself determined by a predominantly male discourse; and the closures of the books re-establish traditional domestic order with the sexes acting according to conventional gender stereotype. (Zipes himself later turned his attention to children's fiction (Zipes 1983), and see also Sarland 1983.)

While this analysis is still essentially theoretical, supporting evidence emerges from studies that have been done of readers themselves. The focus has been on popular fiction and on teenagers. Popular fiction causes liberal educationalists particular concern since it appears to reinforce the more reactionary values in society, particularly so far as girls and young women are concerned. The research evidence, however, uncovers a complex picture of the young seeking ways to take control over their own lives, and using the fiction that they enjoy as one element in that negotiation of cultural meaning and value. Gemma Moss showed how teenage girls and boys were able to turn the popular forms of,

respectively, the romance and the thriller to their own ends. She found unhelpful some of the more determinist ideological analysis that suggested that, by their reading of romance, girls were constructed as passive victims of a patriarchal society. The girls who liked the romances were tough, worldly wise working-class girls who were not subservient to their male counterparts. 'Girls didn't need to be told about male power, they were dealing with it every day of their lives' (Moss 1989: 7). The traditional assessment of 'teen romance' by most teachers as stereotypical drivel was applied to the girls' writing, too, when they chose to write in that form. However, Moss shows how the teenage girls she was working with were able to take the form into their own writing and use it to negotiate and dramatise their concerns with and experience of femininity and oppression. Romance offered them a form for this activity that was not necessarily limiting at all.

In *Young People Reading: Culture and Response* (Sarland 1991) I argued that young people engaged in 'aberrant' readings of pulp violence and horror, readings which ran against the reactionary closure of such material, and they thus were able to explore aspirations of being in control of their own lives, and I further argued that the official school literature as often as not offered them negative perspectives on those same aspirations. Christian-Smith and her colleagues (1993a) explore similar dualities and demonstrate the complexity of the problem. For instance, in her analysis of the Baby-Sitters Club books, Meredith Rogers Cherland shows how the characters are placed securely within feminine roles and functions, being prepared for domestic life and work in lowly paid 'caring' jobs. The eleven-year-old girls who are reading them, however,

saw the baby-sitters making money that they then used to achieve their own ends. They saw the baby-sitters shaping the action around them so that things worked out the way they wanted them to. They saw girls their age acting as agents in their own right.

(Cherland with Edelsky 1993: 32)

By contrast, horror, Cherland argues, which these girls were also beginning to read, casts women in increasingly helpless roles. In its association of sexuality with violence it seemed to offer the girls in Cherland's study a position of increasing powerlessness, living in fear and thus denied agency.

Research into the meanings that young people actually make of the books they are reading demonstrates the plural nature of the texts we are dealing with. While it was often claimed that texts within the canon had complexity and ambiguity, it was always thought that popular texts pandered to the lowest common denominator, and offered no purchase on complex ideological formulations. The evidence does not bear that out. Popular texts too are discovered to be open to more than one reading, and the deconstruction of those texts, and the readings young people bring to them, proves to be a productive tool of analysis for exploring the ideological formulations which constitute them. There is yet to be a large mainstream study of what readers make of the more traditional central canon of children's fiction, though John Stephens and Susan Taylor's exploration of readings of two retellings of the Seal Wife legend (Stephens and Taylor 1992) is a useful start.

Ideology and children's fiction

We have learned from the more international debate in literary studies that ideology is inscribed in texts much more deeply and in much more subtle ways than we thought in

Britain in the 1970s. The initial emphasis in the criticism of children's books was on the characters, and addressed questions of representation. The relationship between reader and text was assumed to be one of simple identification. Literary merit was an unproblematic notion built upon Leavisite assumptions. This was set in question by reconsideration of characterisation itself, and then by the revolution in literary studies. Hollindale (1988) made an initial attempt to explore the complexity of the problem, and Stephens (1992) has taken it further. Stephens brings powerful ideological perspectives to bear upon the themes of children's fiction, the ways in which the stories are shaped, as well as the ways in which implied readers are constructed by the texts. He looks at a range of texts, including picture books written for the youngest readers, and examines specific titles by a number of writers in the central canon – Judy Blume, Anthony Browne, Leon Garfield, Jan Mark, William Mayne, Jan Needle, Rosemary Sutcliff, Maurice Sendak and others. The debate has been informed by a re-recognition of the moral/didactic role of children's fiction, now recoded as its ideological role. Newer perspectives from postcolonial studies are now suggesting further avenues of pursuit, though there is, as yet, no substantial postcolonial study of children's fiction (see McGillis 2000 and Chapter 69).

What the work of Said (1993) also does is re-alert us to the relationship between fiction and the wider world. From such a perspective we may note that in the last ten years we have seen a substantial electoral challenge from extreme right-wing parties across Europe echoed by a major shift to the right of an ostensibly left-wing British Labour government. At an international level, there has been the development of neo-imperialist rhetoric from the USA, supported by Britain, all of which has also been accompanied at the ideological level by what has been described as the total collapse of liberalism (e.g. Hutton 2002).

More parochially, within the English schooling system the anti-racist and anti-sexist initiatives of the 1970s have virtually sunk without trace (Jones 1999; Mac an Ghaill 1994) and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill documents in passing the virtual death of what used to be referred to as liberal educational values. Henry Giroux traces the increasing commercialisation and commodification of children, of education and of culture itself in the USA in recent years, quoting in support of his argument a definition of democracy that came from a poll of the young as 'the freedom to buy and consume whatever they wish without government restriction' (Giroux 2000: 99), a formulation that might make us pause and revisit the underlying ideological consumerist assumptions of series such as *Point Horror*. In England many of the books that were criticised in the 1970s are still being promoted in school in official curriculum documentation and elsewhere. The British response to the growth of cross-fertilisation of European literatures has been one of increasing rather than decreasing isolation and xenophobia. Cotton (2000: 22), for instance, quotes Brennan to the effect that although other European countries publish up to 35 per cent of picture books in translation from fellow European states, Britain translates only about 1 per cent. In the midst of all this, unresolved conflicts remain between those who want to retain or re-negotiate some literary criteria for judging the quality of children's fiction and those who are more sceptical of such judgements. There is clearly, then, plenty of scope for adding the newer theoretical critical perspectives to the proselytising debate of the 1970s in order to re-examine the texts themselves in relation to wider current social, political and cultural change.

The overlap of the discourses of commentary upon children's fiction with the discourse of child rearing, and in particular education, reveals another conflict, that between determinism and agency. One view of fiction is that it constructs readers in specific ideological formations,

and thus enculturates them into the dominant discourses of capitalism – class division, paternalism, racism. Such views are not totally fatalistic, but do require of readers a very conscious effort to read against texts, to deconstruct them in order to reveal their underlying ideology. This then becomes the educational project. The opposing view is that readers are not nearly such victims of fiction as has been assumed, and that the fictions that are responsible for the transmission of such values are more complex than was at first thought. Evidence from the children and young people themselves is beginning to be collected in order to explore this complexity. The argument is that readers are not simply determined by what they read; rather, there is a dialectical relationship between determinism and agency. With reference to her discussions of girls' reading, Cherland quotes J. M. Anyon:

The dialectic of accommodation and resistance is a part of all human beings' response to contradiction and oppression. Most females engage in daily conscious and unconscious attempts to resist the psychological degradation and low self-esteem that would result from the total application of the cultural ideology of femininity: submissiveness, dependency, domesticity and passivity.

(Cherland with Edelsky 1993: 30)

Applied to language itself, this analysis of a dialectic between individual identity and the ideological formulations of the culture within which it finds itself can be traced back to Vološinov. Within children's literature the dialectic will be found within the texts, and between the texts and the reader.

In Christian-Smith's collection *Texts of Desire: Essays on Fiction, Femininity and Schooling* (1993a), ideological criticism of children's fiction came of age. The collection as a whole addresses the complexity of the debate, analysing the ideologies of the texts themselves, the economic and political circumstances of their production, dissemination and distribution, the ideological features of the meanings their young readers make of them, and the political and economic circumstances of those young readers themselves. The focus of attention is the mass-produced material aimed at the female teen and just pre-teen market, but their study offers a paradigm for future exploration of children's fiction generally, if we are to fully understand its ideological construction within society.

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6 History and culture

Tony Watkins

In order to do justice to the important concepts which are implied by the title, this chapter will review developments in thinking about History, Culture and Cultural Geography before considering the relevance of such developments to the study of children's literature.

Until the late 1970s, there was (outside Marxist criticism) a generally accepted view of the nature of history and its place in literary studies. Perkins (1991) points out that, during most of the nineteenth century, literary history was popular and enjoyed prestige because it produced a more complete appreciation of the literary work than was otherwise possible. It functioned, too, as a form of historiography, revealing the ‘“spirit”, mentality or Weltanschauung of a time and place with unrivaled precision and intimacy’ (Perkins 1991: 2). For much of the twentieth century, especially in Renaissance studies, history was seen as outside literature and as guaranteeing the truth of a literary interpretation: ‘History ... was the single, unified, unproblematic, extra-textual, extra-discursive real that guaranteed our readings of the texts which constituted its cultural expression’ (Belsey 1991: 26). In the traditional literary view of history and culture, there was no difficulty in relating text to context: history was singular and operated as a ‘background’ to the reading of a work of literature (‘the foreground’); and culture was something which the work reproduced or expressed, or could be set against. Literary history was ‘a hybrid but recognizable genre that co-ordinated literary criticism, biography, and intellectual/social background within a narrative of development’ (Buell 1993: 216). Until about twenty years ago, such notions also remained the dominant ones behind the histories of children's literature.

In history studies itself, texts by Carr (*What Is History?*) and Elton (*The Practice of History*) would have represented the embodiment of thinking about the nature of history. But, as Keith Jenkins puts it,

over the last twenty to thirty years there has developed around and about this dominant academic discourse a range of theories (hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstructionism, new historicism, feminism and post-feminism, post-Marxism, new pragmatism, postmodernism and so on) as articulated by a range of theorists (for example, Ricoueur, Foucault, Barthes, Althusser, Derrida, Greenblatt, Kristeva, Bennett, Laclau, Fish, Lyotard *et al.*) which have reached levels of reflexive sophistication and intellectual rigour with regard to the question of historical representation, which one could not even hazard a guess at from a reading of Carr and Elton's vintage texts.

(Jenkins 1995: 3)

The contributors to David Cannadine's collection, *What Is History Now?* (2002) explore, in more detail, the various ways in which the discourse of historiography developed during the 1980s and 1990s. One of the most important was the rise of women's history and gender history:

for many people today, both within academe and outside, the most significant development during recent decades has been the rise of women's history and gender history: the recovery of the lives and experiences of one half of the world's population, based on the recognition that gender was not merely a useful, but arguably an essential of historical analysis and comprehension.

(Cannadine 2002: x)

(Gender is discussed more fully below, within the section on cultural studies.)

But perhaps equally important was the influence of postmodernism and what some historiographers call the 'linguistic turn' and 'narrative turn' to 'textualism', associated with the work of such cultural theorists as Hayden White and Tony Bennett. White, says Jenkins, views the historical work as a verbal artefact, a narrative prose discourse, the content of which is as much invented – or as much imagined – as found (Jenkins 1995: 19) To see the past in story form

is to give it an imaginary series of narrative structures and coherences it never had. To see the *content* of the past (i.e. what actually occurred) as if it were a series of stories (of great men, of wars and treaties, of the rise of labour, the emancipation of women, of 'Our Island Story', of the ultimate victory of the proletariat and so forth) is therefore a piece of 'fiction' caused by mistaking the narrative form in which historians construct and communicate their knowledge of the past as actually being the past's own ... the only stories the past has are those conferred on it by historians' interpretative emplotments.

(Jenkins 1995: 20)

Tony Bennett's arguments might be summarised by saying: 'the past as constituted by its existing traces' is always apprehended and appropriated textually through the sedimented layers of previous interpretations and through the reading habits and categories developed by previous/current methodological practices (Jenkins 1995: 18).

What such 'textualism' does is 'to draw attention to the "textual conditions" under which *all* historical work is done and *all* historical knowledge is produced'. None of the methodological approaches in history 'can continue to think that they gain direct access to, or "ground" their textuality in a "reality"' (Jenkins 1995: 32). White and Bennett are now regarded as influential theorists whose work embodies characteristics of the contemporary postmodern approach to history:

History is arguably a verbal artifact, a narrative prose discourse of which ... the content is as much invented as found, and which is constructed by present-minded, ideologically positioned workers (historians and those acting as if they were historians) ... That past appropriated by historians, is never the past itself, but a past evidenced by its remaining and accessible traces and transformed into historiography through a series of theoretically and methodologically disparate procedures (ideological positionings, tropes, emplotments, argumentative modes) ...

Understood in this way, as a rhetorical, metaphorical, textual practice governed by distinctive but never homogeneous procedures through which the maintenance/transformation of the past is regulated ... by the public sphere, historical construction can be seen as taking place entirely in the present ... such that the cogency of historical work can be admitted without the past *per se* ever entering into it – except rhetorically. In this way histories are fabricated without ‘real’ foundations beyond the textual, and in this way one learns to always ask of such discursive and ideological regimes that hold in their orderings suasive intentions – *cui bono* – in whose interests?

(Jenkins 1995: 178)

The blurring of the distinction between history and fiction works the other way too: if history could be regarded as forms of ‘fiction’ about the past, historical fiction could be regarded as proposals for understanding the present. Evans argues that several works of historical fiction (by authors such as Sebastian Faulks, Michael Ondaatje, Matthew Kneale, Zadie Smith)

are not historical novels in the sense that their main purpose is to re-create a past world through the exercise of the fictional imagination; rather, they are novels which find it easiest to address present-day concerns by putting them in a past context.

(Cannadine 2002: 10)

A second development was a shift from sociology to anthropology as the most fruitful subject from which historians could borrow with consequent interest in the work of such anthropologists as Clifford Geertz and his method of ‘thick description’. There was also the concomitant interest in cultural history and cultural studies discussed below:

just as social history seemed poised to sweep all before it in the 1960s, now cultural history seems to be in the ascendant: partly because it has been the most receptive to the insights of anthropology; partly because it makes very large claims about the terrain of the past which it encompasses; and partly because it has benefited most from the shift in interest from explanation to understanding.

(Cannadine 2002: x)

Then there was the increasing ‘democratisation’ of history as a topic of study. Cannadine points to the revolution in information technology which transformed the popular study of history to focus on personal, cultural and national identity:

History as it is written and researched, and above all as it is presented to a popular audience, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is about identity, about who we are and where we came from. At a time when other sources of identity such as class and region have declined, history is stepping in to fill the gap ... Moreover, history is important once more in constructing national identity, and nowhere more so than in England, where the decline of the idea of British unity in the face of resurgent Welsh and Scottish nationalism on the one hand and growing integration into Europe on the other, have left the English wondering who on earth they are.

(Cannadine 2002: 12)

The exploration of national identity obviously ties in with another popular topic – heritage: ‘Alongside so-called “family history”, the sector known as “heritage” is now many people’s main point of contact with history,’ argues Fernández-Arnesto (2002: 158). In turn, these aspects of history are taken up eagerly by media makers. All this is to be welcomed, argues David Cannadine:

The widespread pursuit of family history, the growing concern with defining and preserving the ‘national heritage’ and the unprecedented allure of history on television: all this betokens a burgeoning popular interest in the past as energetic and enthusiastic as that to be found within the walls of academe.

(Cannadine 2002: xi)

In literary studies, the reconceptualisation of history and its relationship to literature had its roots in the work of such theorists and critics as Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, Edward Said and Frank Lentricchia. In the 1980s, new terms associated with literary history (including ‘the New History’, ‘cultural poetics’ and, especially, ‘the new historicism’) entered the critical vocabulary through the work of such critics as Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose and Jerome McGann. The ‘new historicism’ is distinguished from the old by a lack of faith in the objectivity of historical study and replaced by an emphasis on the way the past is constructed or invented in the present. Felperin quotes the opening paragraph of Catherine Belsey’s *The Subject of Tragedy* (1985):

History is always in practice a reading of the past. We make a narrative out of the available ‘documents’, the written texts (and maps and buildings and suits of armour) we interpret in order to produce a knowledge of a world which is no longer present. And yet it is always from the present that we produce this knowledge: from the present in the sense that it is only from what is still extant, still available that we make it; and from the present in the sense that we make it out of an understanding formed by the present. We bring what we know now to bear on what remains from the past to produce an intelligible history.

Felperin comments: “‘history’ is freely acknowledged to be a kind of story-telling towards the present, that is, a textual construct at once itself an interpretation and itself open to interpretation” (Felperin 1991: 89). The idea of a single ‘History’ is rejected in favour of the postmodern concept (Belsey 1991: 27) of ‘histories’, ‘an ongoing series of human constructions, each representing the past at particular present moments for particular present purposes’ (Cox and Reynolds 1993: 4).

The growth of radical alternative histories, such as women’s history, oral history and postcolonial rewriting of Eurocentric and other imperialist viewpoints, together with the more general blurring of disciplinary boundaries between historiography, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies, have all cast doubt on the validity, relevance or accessibility of historical ‘facts’ (Barker *et al.* 1991: 4). Cultural history draws closer to the concerns of the humanities and anthropology: ‘The deciphering of meaning ... is taken to be the central task of cultural history, just as it was posed by Geertz to be the central task of cultural anthropology’ (Hunt 1989: 12). With the emergence of the postmodern concept of ‘histories’ several questions have been put on the agenda of theory: for example, what valid distinctions can be made between the ‘narrative’ of history and the ‘fiction’ of texts? (Montrose (1989: 20) called for the recognition of ‘the historicity of

texts and the textuality of history'; see also White (1973).) What are the implications of our construction of the past from our present situation? What is the relationship between 'histories' and power?

The rise of newer forms of literary historicism is connected, in part, with social change and the effort to recover histories for blacks, women and minority groups within society. In turn, these social aims are linked with the recuperation of forgotten texts, including texts that have never been considered worthy of academic study. Such changes have, of course, benefited the academic study of children's literature.

The major influence in all this is that of Michel Foucault. As David Perkins puts it,

[Foucault] encouraged his readers to reject the traditional Romantic model of literary change as continuous development, to resituate literary texts by relating them to discourses and representations that were not literary, and to explore the ideological aspects of texts in order to intervene in the social struggles of the present, and these remain characteristic practices of present-day historical contextualism – of New Historicism, feminist historiography, and cultural criticism.

(Perkins 1991: 4)

Not everyone, however, would agree with the implied radical political stance of the new historicist movements (see Veaser 1994). Felperin argues that there are two broad schools of new historicism, the American, sometimes called 'cultural poetics', and the British, often referred to as 'cultural materialism': 'Whereas cultural poetics inhabits a discursive field in which Marxism has never really been present, its British counterpart inhabits one from which Marxism has never really been absent' (Felperin 1991: 88).

The radical nature of cultural materialism is made clear in books such as Dollimore and Sinfield's collection of essays, *Political Shakespeare*. In their foreword, the editors define cultural materialism as 'a combination of historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis' (Dollimore and Sinfield 1985: vii). The historical context

undermines the transcendent significance traditionally accorded to the literary text and allows us to recover its histories; theoretical method detaches the text from immanent criticism which seeks only to reproduce it in its own terms; socialist and feminist commitment confronts the conservative categories in which most criticism has hitherto been conducted; textual analysis locates the critique of traditional approaches where it cannot be ignored. We call this 'cultural materialism'.

(Dollimore and Sinfield 1985: vii)

Examples of how some of these new historicist ideas could be applied to children's literature are provided by the work of Mitzi Myers (Myers 1988, 1989, 1992). In a statement which blends something of the American and the British brands, Myers argues that a new historicism of children's literature would

integrate text and socio-historic context, demonstrating on the one hand how extraliterary cultural formations shape literary discourse and on the other how literary practices are actions that make things happen – by shaping the psychic and moral consciousness of young readers but also by performing many more diverse kinds of cultural work, from satisfying authorial fantasies to legitimating or subverting domi-

nant class and gender ideologies ... It would want to know how and why a tale or poem came to say what it does, what the environing circumstances were (including the uses a particular sort of children's literature served for its author, its child and adult readers, and its culture), and what kinds of cultural statements and questions the work was responding to. It would pay particular attention to the conceptual and symbolic fault lines denoting a text's time-, place-, gender-, and class-specific ideological mechanisms ... It would examine ... a book's material production, its publishing history, its audiences and their reading practices, its initial reception, and its critical history, including how it got inscribed in or deleted from the canon.

(Myers 1988: 42)

Myers has also argued that 'Notions of the "child", "childhood" and "children's literature" are contingent, not essentialist; embodying the social construction of a particular historical context; they are useful fictions intended to redress reality as much as to reflect it' (Myers 1989: 52), and that such notions today are bound up with the language and ideology of Romantic literature and criticism (Myers 1992; see also McGann 1983).

These ideas have been applied by Myers to eighteenth-century children's authors such as Maria Edgeworth. The child constructed by Romantic ideology recurs as Wordsworth's 'child of nature' in such figures as Kipling's Mowgli and Frances Hodgson Burnett's Dickon in *The Secret Garden* (Knoepflmacher 1977; Richardson 1992) and, as one critic points out, 'many children's books that feature children obviously wiser than the adults they must deal with – like F. Anstey's *Vice Versa* or E. Nesbit's *Story of the Amulet* – would have been unthinkable without the Romantic revaluation of childhood' (Richardson 1992: 128).

Many of the changes outlined earlier on in this chapter in relation to *historiography* and history studies have appeared in literary *studies of historical fiction for children*. In 1992, as part of his discussion of the intellectual and ideological bases for the writing of historical fiction for children, John Stephens argued that the intellectual and ideological bases of the genre were no longer dominant within Western society because much of the historical fiction for children which had been published up to then had been shaped by humanistic ideas such as

[that] there is an essential human nature which underlies all changing surface appearances; important human qualities, such as Reason, Love, Honour, Loyalty, Courage etc., are transhistorical; human desires are reasonably constant, and what differs are the social mechanisms evolved to express or contain them; individual experiences thus reflect constant, unchanging truths; history imparts 'lessons' because events, in a substantial sense, are repeatable and repeated. These assumptions inform the work of most writers of historical fiction for children, and are overtly articulated in the writings of many, such as Lively and Rosemary Sutcliff.

(Stephens 1992: 203)

But, the postmodern 'challenge to the humanist position comes from cultural relativism', in which

the individual subject is constructed as a point at which cultural systems and structures intersect and so determine the mode of being of the subject; there is no common ground between peoples of different places and times; the cultural assumptions of one

society cannot be applied to another; events are not repeatable, but apparent analogies between different events are constructed from the point of view of a particular social formation in time and space; there is no transcendent truth.

(Stephens 1992: 203)

Although Stephens does not pose the question, we might ask: how far do recent works of children's historical fiction embody these new postmodern values? According to an essay by Danielle Thaler in a recent collection, nothing much has changed. Thaler examined a group of historical novels for young people by French authors published during the last thirty years. She concluded,

Historical fiction for young people therefore follows in the footsteps of the adult historical novel, the only difference being that it often chooses a hero of its readers' age, who has a mentality and psychology close to those of our children and teenagers.

(Thaler 2003: 10)

However, Deborah Stevenson, discussing 'shifting ideas of objective reality in history and fiction', does point to changes in the treatment of 'non-fiction history' for children: 'Non-fiction for children is beginning tentatively to examine the process of history-making itself, to examine historiographic questions of objectivity and subjectivity and to call into question the existence of a completely knowable history' (Stevenson 2003: 23–4).

Referring to the argument of Hayden White that 'histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles' (White 1978 quoted in Stevenson 2003: 25), Stevenson argues that newer histories for children 'overtly place history into the category of narrative, emphasising the story in history.'

These histories are not considering all viewpoints as equal ... they are merely suggesting that none of them possesses complete objective truth ... they offer written history as a metaphor for the past, as a self-aware representation of a kind of understanding of another time.

(Stevenson 2003: 25)

But, complexly and paradoxically, in historical *fiction* for children,

The belief in historical fact *qua* fact is if anything stronger ... Historical fiction for children acts as history improved, a superior replacement for the real but flawed thing ... The genres are starting to trade places. History is offering possibilities, while fiction offers certainty ... history is undercutting the authority of narrative while historical fiction still clings to it, asserting itself as more real than fact because it is a better story ... The change in historical fiction has been the embrace of relativity, the idea that someone else is going to see a different part of the past, but history begins to suggest the possibility of complete subjectivity – that no one is seeing the past quite right and that the stories will not match up.

(Stevenson 2003: 27–8)

Out of the many studies of children's historical fiction, two studies of post-war British novels may serve to illustrate the diversity of critical approaches now being employed and

the way the new historiography feeds into studies of literary texts. Adrienne Gavin's essay (Gavin 2003) examines novels by Lucy M. Boston, Philippa Pearce, Penelope Farmer and Penelope Lively in which 'an ostensibly realist past is introduced into a realist present. Links to the past occur through quirks of fantasy or possible fantasy, by means of the supernatural, time-slips, dreams, or the power of the imagination' (Gavin 2003: 159).

She shows that the past presented in these novels is far from being realistic; rather, it is a metaphor for the imagination and for the creative act: 'The child protagonists, as "writers", re-create through their imaginations a history they have never experienced while in turn their creators ... necessarily rely on textualized narrativizations of history in order to create their own imagined versions of the past' (Gavin 2003: 161).

Valerie Krips's book *The Presence of the Past: Memory, Heritage and Childhood in Postwar Britain* (2000) is an important study which cannot easily be summarised here. It is a book which is grounded in the study of children's literature but moves well beyond the purely literary by the use of cultural theories by such figures as Pierre Nora. From an examination of post-war children's fiction (by writers such as Philippa Pearce, Rosemary Sutcliff, Susan Cooper and Alan Garner), in which she notes that a recurrent plot revolves around 'a child stumbling across an artefact from the past and over the course of the novel, trying to understand the relevance of the artefact to the present', she notes that this motif 'coincided with the appearance of the heritage movement in Britain' (Wojcik-Andrews 2002: 123).

Krips argues that the distinction between history and heritage is not much more than the lost and found of memory realised through objects that surround us: what we see as individuals and as nations is how we imagine ourselves to be. Country houses, books, and/or famous child characters such as Alice who function as representatives of a golden age of childhood are plucked from the past and presented in the present as symbolic reminders of a land of Hope and Glory long gone: the National Trust does it with the conservation of stately homes, children's writers do it with the construction of canonical fictions and ideal images of the child.

(Wojcik-Andrews 2002: 126)

The same crises in the humanities which resulted in radical questioning of the nature of history and the emergence of new historiographies of culture, including literary new historicism, also brought forth *cultural studies*. In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams describes culture as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (Williams 1976: 76). Culture is an ambiguous term: a problem shared, perhaps, by all concepts which are concerned with totality, including history, ideology, society and myth. Disciplines such as cultural geography tend towards a mainly anthropological understanding of culture. But, in a book published in 2000, Don Mitchell argues for a more political understanding of culture: 'culture is politics by another name'. He selects six important ways of understanding the term 'culture':

First, culture is the opposite of nature. It is what makes humans human. Second, 'culture' is the actual, perhaps unexamined, patterns and differentiations of a people (as in 'Aboriginal culture' or 'German culture' – culture is a way of life). Third, it is the processes by which these patterns developed ... Fourth, the term indicates a set of markers that set one people off from another and which indicate to us our membership in a group ... Fifth, culture is the way that all these patterns, processes, and

markers are represented (that is, cultural activity, whether high, low, pop, or folk, that produces *meaning*). Finally, the idea of culture often indicates a hierarchical ordering of all these processes, activities, ways of life, and cultural production (as when people compare cultures or cultural activities against each other.

(Mitchell 2000: 14)

‘Cultural studies’ is an equally ambiguous term, but most commentators would agree that cultural studies is ‘concerned with the generation and circulation of meanings in industrial societies’ (Fiske 1987: 254). It is difficult to define the field of cultural studies very precisely because, as Brantlinger argues, it has ‘emerged from the current crises and contradictions of the humanities and social science disciplines not as a tightly coherent, unified movement with a fixed agenda, but as a loosely coherent group of tendencies, issues and questions’ (1990: ix). An anthology published in 1992 suggests the following major categories of current work in the field:

the history of cultural studies, gender and sexuality, nationhood and national identity, colonialism and post-colonialism, race and ethnicity, popular culture and its audiences, science and ecology, identity politics, pedagogy, the politics of aesthetics, cultural institutions, the politics of disciplinarity, discourse and textuality, history, and global culture in a postmodern age.

(Grossberg *et al.* 1992: 1)

But the problem with trying to define cultural studies is that it is ‘magnetic’. As Toby Miller, editor of a collection of essays published in 2001 entitled *A Companion to Cultural Studies* explains:

It accretes various tendencies that are splintering the human sciences: Marxism, feminism, queer theory, and the postcolonial. The ‘cultural’ has become a ‘master-trope’ in the humanities, blending and blurring textual analysis of popular culture with social theory, and focusing on the margins of power rather than reproducing established lines of force and authority.

(Miller 2001: 1)

Unlike the traditional humanities, cultural studies focuses less on canonical works of art and more on popular media: ‘The humanities’ historic task of criticising entertainment is sidestepped and new commercial trends become part of cultural studies itself’ (Miller 2001: 1). In spite of its diverse agenda of interests and approaches, Miller argues that cultural studies does have shared concerns and commitments:

Cultural studies is animated by subjectivity and power – how human subjects are formed and how they experience cultural and social space. It takes its agenda and mode of analysis from economics, politics, media and communication studies, sociology, literature, education, the law, science and technology studies, anthropology, and history, with a particular focus on gender, race, class, and sexuality in everyday life, commingling textual and social theory under the sign of a commitment to progressive social change.

(2001: 1)

The political commitment of cultural studies has been debated throughout its history, especially since ‘the linguistic turn’ of poststructuralism which has tended to place ‘textualism’, rather than politics at its heart: ‘Certain philosophical perspectives have gained a degree of currency in reading and interpreting cultural forms in a way that often obliterates the social context within which such practices are embedded’ (Carrington 2001: 286), and an important figure in American cultural studies, Lawrence Grossberg, ‘called on cultural studies to provide a dynamic way of “politicizing theory and theorizing politics” that combines abstraction and grounded analysis’ (Miller 2001: 3).

Grossberg *et al.* (1992) stress the shapeless nature of the field and the variety of methodologies in use: ‘[cultural studies] remains a diverse and often contentious enterprise, encompassing different positions and trajectories in specific contexts, addressing many questions, drawing nourishment from multiple roots, and shaping itself within different institutions and locations’ (1992: 2–3). There are, for example, distinctions to be made between the British and American traditions of cultural studies (just as there are between the two schools of ‘new historicism’ in literary studies – see above.) The British tradition, which may be traced back to the pioneering work of F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson in the 1930s (Leavis and Thompson 1933) but, more particularly, arises from the work of Raymond Williams (Williams 1958), believes that the study of culture involves both

symbolic and material domains ... not privileging one domain over the other but interrogating the relation between the two ... Continually engaging with the political, economic, erotic, social, and ideological, cultural studies entails the study of all the relations between all the elements in a whole way of life.

(Grossberg *et al.* 1992: 4, 14)

From the later work of Raymond Williams, from the work of Stuart Hall and others at the University of Birmingham’s (UK) Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and from major bodies of theory such as Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism, the British tradition derived the central theoretical concepts of articulation, conjuncture, hegemony, ideology, identity and representation. (See, for example, Williams 1975, 1976, 1977, 1989.) But even British cultural studies is not a coherent and homogeneous body of work: it is characterised by disagreements, ‘divergencies in direction and concern, by conflict among theoretical commitments and political agendas’ (Grossberg *et al.* 1992: 10) or, as Stuart Hall put it,

Cultural studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. It is a whole set of formations, it has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past. It included many different kinds of work ... It always was a set of unstable formations.

(Hall 1996: 26)

For example, Hall pointed to the revolutionary impact of feminism for the field of cultural studies: gender and sexuality had to be understood as central to the workings of power in society. In 1992, he wrote: ‘It has forced a rethink in every major substantive area of work (Hall 1992: 282 quoted in Mitchell 2000: 54). As Mitchell comments,

No longer was it possible to study the ... base – the workings of the economy – without also and at the same time studying what had been seen as epiphenomenal to that base (relations of family, ideologies of gender, social structures of sexuality, etc.).
(Mitchell 2000: 55)

Although accepting Stuart Hall's words 'about continuities and breaks', Ben Carrington argues that it was 'the huge social, cultural, and economic changes that occurred in Britain during and immediately after the 1939–45 war' which provided the context within which cultural studies was to emerge around 1957:

It is important to restate the fact that the formation of cultural studies was, first and foremost, a political project aimed at popular education for working-class adults. There was always a tension then with the provision of such education becoming incorporated – both ideologically and institutionally – within 'bourgeois' university departments, which, for the most part, is what did happen.
(Carrington 2001: 277–8)

And he warns that 'there is danger of narrativising cultural studies' historical purpose ... into a depoliticised humanities discipline' (Carrington 2001: 279). He is anxious to emphasise that cultural studies is as much concerned with 'practice' as with texts, and he criticises earlier histories of British cultural studies for tending to

highlight the publication of academic *texts* as 'producing' cultural studies as an academic discipline taught within universities, rather than seeing such texts themselves as being the outcome of a wider sociopolitical process of education from the 1930s and 1940s aimed at social transformation, situated within adult and workers' education colleges.
(Carrington 2001: 277)

The radical aspect of British cultural studies has, unsurprisingly, drawn criticism from some quarters. Kenneth Minogue called cultural studies the 'politico-intellectual junkyard of the Western world' (Minogue 1994: 27 quoted in Miller 2001: 10); and Chris Patten, a former Conservative member of the UK Parliament, called it 'Disneyland for the weaker minded' (Minogue 2001: 10).

In the USA, a somewhat different inflection has been given to cultural studies by the 'new ethnography', rooted primarily in anthropological theory and practice (a 'postdisciplinary anthropology') which is, in turn, linked to work by feminists and black and postcolonial theorists concerned with identity, history and social relations (Grossberg *et al.* 1992: 14).

In the work of some cultural studies theorists, one can detect the following characteristics: *first*, a belief that reality can only be made sense of through language or other cultural systems which are embedded within history. *Second*, a focus upon power and struggle. In cultural terms, the struggle is for meaning: dominant groups attempt to render as 'natural' meanings which serve their interests, whereas subordinate groups resist this process in various ways, trying to make meanings that serve *their* interests (Fiske 1987: 255). An obvious example is the cultural struggle between patriarchy and feminism and the impact that feminism had on cultural studies in Britain in the 1980s (Hall 1992: 282); but, of course, divisions into groups in society can be along lines of race, class, age and so on, as

well as gender. However, British cultural studies was criticised for some years because of its relative neglect of race and colonialism. For example, in 1987, Paul Gilroy argued that it was essential to understand that histories of colonialism and Empire are 'central' to 'understanding how Britain's economy' has been constructed and 'its class relations mediated, and subsequently how this affected the formation of its culture more generally, and its sense of national identity' (Gilroy 1987: 12 quoted in Carrington 2001: 282). He deplored 'the invisibility of "race" within the field' of cultural studies in Britain and, most importantly, with the forms of nationalism endorsed by 'a discipline which, in spite of itself, tends towards a morbid celebration of England and Englishness from which blacks are systematically excluded' (Gilroy 1987: 12). *Third*, cultural studies has tried to theorise subjectivity as a socio-cultural construction. Some theorists, under the influence of poststructuralist psychoanalytical thinking and Althusserian notions of ideology, replace the idea of the individual by the concept of the 'subject'. The 'subject' and his or her 'subjectivity' is a social construction: 'Thus a biological female can have a masculine subjectivity (that is, she can make sense of the world and of her self and her place in that world through patriarchal ideology). Similarly, a black can have a white subjectivity' (Fiske 1987: 258).

But because subjectivity is a social construction, it is always open to change. All cultural systems, including language, literature and the products of mass communication, play a part in the construction and reconstruction of the subject. It is in this way, according to the Althusserian wing of cultural studies, that ideology is constantly reproduced in people.

This notion can be seen perhaps more clearly in the *fourth* characteristic of cultural studies – the way it views acts of communication, including the 'reading process'. As one theorist puts it, when talking about the 'reading' of a television programme as cultural text: 'Reading becomes a negotiation between the social sense inscribed in the program and the meanings of social experience made by its wide variety of viewers: this negotiation is a discursive one' (Fiske 1987: 268). The relevance of this notion to children's literature is not difficult to perceive.

The *fifth* characteristic is that cultural studies is not exclusively concerned with popular culture to the exclusion of 'high' culture, or vice versa:

Cultural studies does not require us to repudiate elite cultural forms ... rather cultural studies requires us to identify the operation of specific practices, of how they continuously reinscribe the line between legitimate and popular culture, and of what they accomplish in specific contexts.

(Grossberg *et al.* 1992: 13)

As a result, cultural studies does interest itself in the formation, continuation and changes in literary canons, including those of children's literature. For example, books originally denied inclusion in the canon of children's literature, such as Baum's *Oz* books, have later received recognition and have been included. Other books traditionally included in the canon of children's literature, such as Lewis's *Narnia* series, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Kipling's *Jungle Book*, have been criticised on the grounds that the values they contain are too exclusively male and white.

The *sixth* characteristic is the use of ideology as a central concept, either as a 'critical' concept or as a neutral concept. Materialist, political approaches deriving from Marxism and feminism obviously stress *power* as the major component of cultural text, power which is often hidden or rendered apparently 'natural' through the process of ideology. These approaches use what has been called the 'critical' concept of ideology which is 'essentially

linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power – that is, to the process of maintaining domination’ (Thompson 1984: 4). If ideology is embodied in cultural text, the major task of the cultural critic is not only understanding the meaning of the text but also unmasking what appears as natural as a social construction which favours a particular class or group in society. This process of ‘ideology critique’ or ideological deconstruction is often carried out in literary studies using an approach, derived from Williams, involving a combination of textual analysis, theoretical method, study of historical context, and a political commitment to socialism and feminism.

However, ideology can also be used in a neutral sense (Ricoeur 1986) and this is reflected in the work of Fred Inglis, who has written at length on children’s literature (for example, Inglis 1975, 1981). Inglis favours not cultural materialism but cultural hermeneutics. In *Cultural Studies* (1993), he argues in favour of making cultural studies ‘synonymous with the study of values (and valuing)’ (Inglis 1993: 190). The book is dedicated to the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, with his influential view that ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun’ and that ‘those webs are what we call culture’. For Geertz, the analysis of culture, therefore, will be ‘an interpretive one in search of meaning’, and culture itself is defined as ‘an assemblage of texts’ and ‘a story they tell themselves about themselves’ (Geertz 1975: 5, 448). So the model of cultural analysis Inglis favours is the interpretative one which aims not to *unmask* texts, using such critical concepts as ideology or hegemony which deconstruct and demystify ideologies, but to *understand* intersubjective meanings (Inglis 1993: 148). He argues against the tendency within cultural studies to collapse ‘both aesthetics and morality into politics’ so that ‘the study of culture translates into politics without remainder’ (1993: 175, 181). He quotes Dollimore and Sinfield’s statement (see above) that cultural materialism ‘registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class’ (Dollimore and Sinfield 1985: viii) but asks, using the same phrase which formed the title of his book about children’s literature (Inglis 1981), ‘What about the promise of happiness held out by art? What about art itself?’ (Inglis 1993: 181).

Following Geertz’s concept, Inglis defines culture as ‘an ensemble of *stories* we tell ourselves about ourselves’ (Inglis 1993: 206) and argues that our historically changing identity is formed from experience and the ‘narrative tradition’ of which we are part. It is from this identity that we interpret the world. In a passage strongly relevant to the study of children’s literature, (see, for example, Watkins 1994), he goes on to argue that

the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are not just a help to moral education; they comprise the only moral education which can gain purchase on the modern world. They are not aids to sensitivity nor adjuncts to the cultivated life. They are theories with which to think forwards ... and understand backwards.

(Inglis 1993: 214)

Although there are obviously major debates both within and outside cultural studies, nevertheless most scholars of children’s literature would agree with the following statement.

Cultural studies, at its best, has much of value to say about ... how discourse and imagery are organized in complex and shifting patterns of meaning and how these meanings are reproduced, negotiated, and struggled over in the flow and flux of everyday life.

(Murdoch 1995: 94)

But, because of the variety within the cultural studies paradigm and the dynamic nature of the field, it is difficult to *generalise* about features which underlie such work in the study of children's literature and media. However, important work is being developed by Karín Lesnik-Oberstein on the cultural meanings of the child and childhood in children's literature and media (see Lesnik-Oberstein 1998). (For a collection of essays using different cultural studies approaches but focusing on important aspects of children's literature and media, see *A Necessary Fantasy? The Heroic Figure in Children's Popular Culture* (Jones and Watkins 2000): articles in the collection cover such topics as pony stories, Robin Hood films, comic-book heroes and superheroes, Action Man toys and Dr Who.)

Another area of investigation which could serve as a case study of work using a critical cultural studies perspective in the study of children's literature and media is what could be called 'childhood, media, the culture industries, and consumerism', concentrating on the cultural impact of the Disney Corporation. What Walt Disney discovered in the 1930s was that children will come to perceive themselves as part of a community 'based on their shared consumption of mass media and related merchandise'. Ellen Seiter, in her book *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture*, points out that 'Consumer culture provides children with a shared repository of images, characters, plots and themes: it provides the basis for small talk and play, and it does this on a national, even global scale' (Seiter 1993: 7).

Similarly, Eric Smoodin, editor of *Disney Discourse*, a book critical of Disney's role in American culture, argues that we need to

gain a new sense of Disney's importance, because of the manner in which his work in film and television is connected to other projects in urban planning, ecological politics, product merchandising, United States domestic and global policy formation, technological innovation, and constructions of national character ... Disney constructs childhood so as to make it entirely compatible with consumerism.

(Smoodin 1994: 4–5, 18)

In the editorial to a special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* on 'Children's Media of the Twentieth Century', Anne Morey argues that, while social scientists have paid attention to the media for some years, scholars in children's literature need to 'bring their interest in textual meanings coupled with an increased sense of both historical context and the institutional matrices out of which children's texts are produced' (Morey 1997: 2). In the editorial to another special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, this time on 'Children and Money', Judith Plotz refers to Stephen Kline's argument that, to an extent unprecedented in history, American children are no longer children but what trade professionals call a 'market': consumers with money to spend and the will and authority to spend it. Kline's argument is that in the age of marketing, toys 'serve a new function: they are the templates through which children are being introduced into the attitudes and social relations of consumerism' (Kline 1993: 349). Plotz adds that, according to a 1999 report, children now constitute the fastest growing consumer market in the USA and 'influence half a trillion dollars in consumer spending a year'. Plotz continues:

With children manipulated as never before by a seductive commercial rhetoric of make-believe choice and empowerment, scholars of children's culture are driven to

examine both the systems of control and the possibilities of liberation in all the existing discourses of children's culture.

(Plotz 1999: 111)

The problem of arguing for change in public policy towards television, for example, is, according to Kline, that

as long as no 'harm' to children is proven, public policy makers have acceded to the marketers' view that television should now be governed by the principle of commercial speech ... Surely nobody can feign surprise anymore that commercial television fails to educate, inform or inspire our children ... Children are simply finding their place within consumer culture ... What the issue of proven harm obscures is the fact that we have granted to marketers enormous powers to meddle in the key realms of children's culture – the peer group, fantasy, stories and play.

(Kline 1993: 349–50)

However, Ellen Seiter offers a less pessimistic view when she points out that children are not simply passive consumers of goods and media:

children are creative in their appropriation of consumer goods and media, and the meanings they make of these are not necessarily and completely in line with a materialist ethos ... children create their own meanings from the stories and symbols of consumer culture.

(Seiter 1993: 299)

On the other hand, Henry Giroux argues that it is very important for us to analyse critically the power of the Disney Corporation. He focuses on the Disney films and argues:

these films appear to inspire at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values, and ideals as do the more traditional sites of learning such as the public schools, religious institutions, and the family ... Unlike the often hard-nosed, joyless reality of schooling, children's films provide a high-tech visual space where adventure and pleasure meet in a fantasy world of possibilities and a commercial sphere of consumption and commodification ... Disney's image as an icon of American culture is consistently reinforced through the penetration of the Disney empire into every aspect of social life. Children experience Disney's cultural influence through a maze of representations and products found in home videos, shopping malls, classroom instructional films, box offices, popular television programs and family restaurants ... Disney now produces prototypes for model schools, families, identities, communities, and the way the future is to be understood through a particular construction of the past ... But Disney does more than provide prototypes for upscale communities; it also makes a claim on the future through its nostalgic view of the past and its construction of public memory as a metonym for the magical kingdom.

(Giroux 1998: 53–5)

Nevertheless, Giroux thinks it is important not to be simplistic about Disney. He does not wish either to condemn

Disney as an ideological reactionary deceptively promoting a conservative worldview under the guise of entertainment or celebrate Disney as doing nothing more than providing sources of joy and happiness to children all over the world ... Critically analysing how Disney films work to construct meanings, induce pleasures, and reproduce ideologically loaded fantasies is not meant as an exercise in disparagement. On the contrary, as a \$4.7 billion company, Disney's corporate and cultural influence is so enormous and far-reaching that it should go neither unchecked nor unmediated.

(Giroux 1998: 56–7)

Giroux then proceeds to analyse the portrayal of girls and women in *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast*, and racial stereotyping in *Aladdin* and *Pocahontas*.

In the preface to his book *Sticks and Stones* (2001), Jack Zipes is provocatively critical of the way society regards and treats children:

Everything we do to, with, and for our children is influenced by capitalist market conditions and the hegemonic interests of ruling corporate elites. In simple terms, we calculate what is best for our children by regarding them as investments and turning them into commodities.

(Zipes 2001: xi)

In the past twenty years in America, argues Zipes, many diverse groups have been formed 'to do battle with the culture industry and government on behalf of children, including teenagers'. The first group are activists such as

media watch groups, family associations, religious institutions, and feminist organisations [which] place pressure on the government and mass media to alter shows, images and literature that they feel are destroying the moral health of our children. In their view children are innocent and passive victims and are at the mercy of outside forces.

(Zipes 2001: xi–xii)

The second group is made up largely of theorists 'who argue that children are much more creative and independent than we think' (Zipes 2001: xii). Later in the book, he argues, as others have done, that

The family, schools, and religious organizations have been the nodal points of socialization and acculturation, but their authority ... has yielded and been undercut by the force of the mass-mediated market ... Difference and otherness, rebellion and nonconformity have become commodities that children are encouraged to acquire because they can use them to defy parents and the community while furthering the same profit-oriented interests of corporate America.

(Zipes 2001: 12)

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in theme parks, in particular Disneyland, as examples of postmodern 'texts'. Suzanne Rahn analyses the 'narrative strategies' of some of Disneyland's rides. For example, she argues that Disneyland's 'dark rides' are 'conceived as narratives by the Imagineers'. Such rides resemble theatre:

In a traditional play, however, the audience sits motionless while the sequence of scenes is performed. In a theme park ride, the sequence of scenes is fixed in space – it is the audience that moves physically from scene to scene, literally *drawn into* the story.
(Rahn 2000: 19)

Other rides such as ‘The Haunted Mansion’ reflect the ‘increasing presence of the post-modern in American culture:

Postmodern literature abandons linear narrative for a randomly ordered sequence of events. It makes playful use of traditional elements removed from their original context and drained of meaning, as a way of escaping the burden of the past.
(Rahn 2000: 24)

Louis Marin uses Disneyland as an example of a ‘degenerate utopia’:

a supposedly happy, harmonious and non-conflictual space set aside from the ‘real’ world ‘outside’ in such a way as to soothe and mollify, to entertain, to invent history and to cultivate a nostalgia for some mythical past, to perpetuate the fetish of commodity culture rather than to critique it. Disneyland eliminates the troubles of actual travel by assembling the rest of the world, properly sanitized and mythologized, into one place of pure fantasy containing multiple spatial orders ... it offers no critique of the existing state of affairs on the outside. It merely perpetuates the fetish of commodity culture and technological wizardry in a pure, sanitized and a-historical form.
(Harvey 2000: 167)

Disney theme parks are also connected with successful retailing:

The shopping mall was conceived of as a fantasy world in which commodity reigned supreme ... the whole environment seemed designed to induce nirvana rather than critical awareness. And many other cultural institutions – museums and heritage centers, arenas for spectacle, exhibitions and festivals – seem to have as their aim the cultivation of nostalgia, the production of sanitized collective memories, the nurturing of uncritical aesthetic sensibilities, and the absorption of future possibilities into a non-conflictual arena that is eternally present.
(Harvey 2000: 168)

Although this chapter cannot adequately cover the work of Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994, 1998; and Bradbury 2002), it is an important example of the contemporary postmodern challenge to liberal humanist and essentialist assumptions underlying approaches to the child in children’s literature criticism. Referring to the work of Jacqueline Rose (1984), Lesnik-Oberstein explains that, in the constructivist approach,

Childhood, and children, are seen primarily as being constituted by, and constituting, sets of meanings in language ... Childhood is, as an identity, a mediator and repository of ideas in Western culture about consciousness and experience, morality and values, property and privacy, but perhaps most importantly, it has been assigned a crucial relationship to language itself.
(Lesnik-Oberstein 1998: 2, 6)

Cultural studies has affected many disciplines: for example, ‘the new cultural geography’ has grown considerably since its origins in the late 1980s. Peter Jackson (1989) was perhaps chief spokesperson for the early developments in recent cultural geography: Jackson and other cultural geographers built on British cultural studies but ‘sought also to explicitly “spatialise” these studies’, by showing how space and time are central to the ‘maps of meaning’ that constitute cultural experience (Mitchell 2000: 42). Jackson argued that culture ‘is the level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life’ and hence ‘are *maps of meaning* through which the world is made intelligible’ (Jackson 1989: 2). The ‘new cultural geography’ is now associated with names such as David Harvey, who argues in his important book *The Condition of Postmodernity* that ‘There has been a sea-change in cultural as well as in political–economic practices since around 1972. This sea-change is bound up with the emergence of new dominant ways in which we experience space and time’ (Harvey 1989: vii).

There has been an amazing proliferation of work in cultural geography from the 1990s onwards, exploring ideas of landscape, spatiality, utopia, globalisation, heritage and national identity, and geographies of gender and of race, which could prove vital for the cultural study of children’s literature and media. The field is already too vast to summarise adequately here, but Mitchell explains that the area that gained ‘the earliest sustained criticism and reconstruction by new cultural geography’ was landscape research (Mitchell 2000: 61). The research developed on four fronts. Some cultural geographers

sought to connect the very idea of landscape to its historical development as part of the capitalist and Enlightenment transformation in the early modern period. That is to say, the goal of many studies has been to show how the land was made over in the image of ‘landscape’ – a particular and particularly ideological ‘way of seeing’ the land and people’s relationship to that land. [In particular, see Cosgrove 1984.]

Second, ‘other geographers reinvigorated the notion of “reading” the landscape ... to problematise the whole notion of exactly what constitutes the “text” to be read – and precisely how it is possible ... to read it.’ That is, work began to focus ‘on the interpretation of the *symbolic* aspects of landscapes’ (for example, Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Duncan and Duncan 1988). Third, ‘where much traditional cultural geography had examined rural and past landscapes, some new work interested in landscape and culture focused on urban and contemporary scenes’, and fourth, ‘a sustained feminist critique of landscape studies – and of the very idea of landscape – has been launched’ (for example, Rose 1993). What was new in these emphases was that they were ‘infused with strong evaluations of the politics of class, gender, race, ethnicity ... and sexuality’ and consequently ‘the study of the spatiality of identity itself has become an issue of deep concern within cultural geography’. This, explains, in part, the explosion of research on ‘the cultural–geographic politics of sexuality, gender, race, and national identity’ (Mitchell 2000: 61–2).

For scholars of children’s literature and media, perhaps the most relevant research from cultural geography is that which involves ‘reading the landscape’. For, as Mitchell explains,

The degree to which landscapes are *made* (by hands and minds) and represented (by particular people and classes, and through the accretion of history and myth) indicates that landscapes are in some important senses ‘authored’. Hence landscape can be understood to be a kind of text.

(Mitchell 2000: 122)

But the reading of such texts is always a contested process and, moreover, the reading is linked to race and gender identities:

Meaning is naturalised in the landscape, and only through concerted contestation are those sedimented meanings prised open ... By examining the various metaphors that govern our understanding of landscape (such as seeing the landscape as a text or a stage) and linking them to important axes of cultural differentiation (such as gender), [we can explore] how landscape functions both as a source of meaning and as a form of social regulation ... The production of cultural spaces ... [including landscape] is always the production of what Doreen Massey has identified as *power geometries*: the shape and structure of the space in which our lives are given meaning.

(Mitchell 2000: xix–xxi)

Much of the landscape research, particularly on the representation of landscapes, is clearly of interest to children's literature studies. (Examples are Hunt 1987; Stevenson 1996; Thum 1992; Watkins 1992, 1994; Zitterkopf 1984–5.) It is possible to see such works as Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* and Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* as not only operating as versions of the English and American national myth, with their landscapes representing the 'real' England and the 'real' America, but becoming sites for ideological struggle and appropriation by, for example, the 'culture industries' (Watkins 1992). Another important aspect of landscape is its connection with national identity and the power of some landscapes to be read as a national geography. But

while landscape representation is an important aspect of nationalism, it is not so hegemonic as to preclude alternative readings or other forms of resistance. Instead, landscape representations are sites of contestation, just as are the landscapes they are meant to depict.

(Mitchell 2000: 119)

National identity is obviously another very important topic which is being increasingly explored by scholars of children's literature (see, for example, Meek 2001).

This chapter has ranged very widely over developments in thinking about history, about the place of history in literary studies, about the complex developments in cultural studies and the way in which 'culture' has become 'a master trope' in the analysis of many kinds of text, including children's literature and media. It is appropriate to end by being reminded of the complexity of what is involved in thinking about history, culture and children's literature:

Culture is a way people make sense of the world (the stories they tell themselves about themselves, in Clifford Geertz's formulation) but it is also a system of power and domination. Culture is a means of differentiating the world, but is also global and hegemonic. Culture is open and fluid, a 'text' ... always open to multiple readings and interpretations, but it is something with causative power ... Culture is clearly language – or 'text' or 'discourse' – but it is also the social, material construction of such things as 'race' or 'gender'. Culture is a point of political contact, it *is* politics; but it is also both ordinary and the best that has been thought and known.

(Mitchell 2000: 64)

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7 Linguistics and stylistics

John Stephens

Because the contexts in which children's literature is produced and disseminated are usually dominated by a focus on content and theme, the language of children's literature receives little explicit attention. Yet the *way* things are represented, based on complex codes and conventions of language and presuppositions about language, is an important component of texts, and the study of it allows us access to some of the key processes which shape text production (Scholes 1985: 2–3). The assumption that what is said can be extricated from how it is said, and that language is therefore only a transparent medium, indicates at best a limited grasp of written genres or of the social processes and movements with which genres and styles interrelate.

The most pervasive concern of children's literature is the representation of SELF, a subjectivity which is the site of enunciation, whether as a poetic persona or, in fiction, as a narrator or a represented focalising character. The evocation of subjectivity as significance is a function of language and is effected by the manipulation of structural linguistic elements – stylistic expressivity – in a pragmatic context (that is, within the frameworks of situational implicature or macro-textual structure, for instance). Readers thus trace subjectivity in the text's configuration of more or less familiar stylistic and rhetorical strategies.

The language of fiction written for children readily appears to offer conventionalised discourses by means of which to 'encode' content (both story and message). The ubiquitous 'Once upon a time' of traditional story-telling, for example, not only serves as a formal story onset but also tends to imply that particular narrative forms, with a particular stock of lexical and syntactic forms, will ensue. But the contents and themes of that fiction are representations of social situations and values, and such social processes are inextricable from the linguistic processes which give them expression. In other words, the transactions between writers and readers take place within complex networks of social relations by means of language. Further, within the systems of a language it is possible for young readers to encounter in their reading an extensive range and variety of language uses. Some textual varieties will seem familiar and immediately accessible, consisting of a lexicon and syntax which will seem identifiably everyday, but others will seem much less familiar, either because the lexicon contains forms or uses specific to a different speech community (as in, for example, English literatures written in variants of English in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, South Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere in the world), or because writers may choose to employ linguistic forms whose occurrence is largely or wholly restricted to narrative fiction, or because particular kinds of fiction evolve specific discourses. Books which may be said to have a common theme or topic will differ not just because that theme can be expressed in a different content but because it is expressed through differing linguistic resources. For example, a large number of children's books

express the theme of 'self-awareness', but since that theme can be discerned in texts as diverse as Jefferies' *Bevis* and Dickinson's *Bone from a Dry Sea*, it cannot in itself discriminate effectively between texts of different kinds.

Writers have many options to select from. Thus fiction offers a large range of generic options, such as the choice between fantasy and realism, with more specific differences within them, such as that between time-slip fantasy grounded in the knowable world or fantasy set in an imaginary universe. To make such a choice involves entering into a *discourse*, a complex of story types and structures, social forms and linguistic practices. That discourse can be said to take on a distinctive style in so far as it is distinguished from other actualisations by recurrent patterns or codes. These might include choices in lexis and grammar; use, types and frequency of figurative language; characteristic modes of cohesion; orientation of narrative voice towards the text's existents (that is, events, characters, settings). Aspects of such a style may be shared by several writers working in the same period and with a common genre, as, for example, contemporary realistic adolescent fiction, but it is usually more personal, as when we speak of the style of Kenneth Grahame or William Mayne or Zibby Oneal, and at times we may refer to the distinctive style of a particular text, such as Virginia Hamilton's *Arilla Sun Down* or M. T. Anderson's *Feed*. Because the patterns of a particular style are a selection from a larger linguistic code, however, and exist in a relationship of sameness and difference with a more generalised discourse, a writer remains to some degree subject to the discourse, and the discourse can be said to determine at least part of the meaning of the text. Moreover, a narrative discourse also encodes a reading position which readers will adopt to varying extents, depending on their previous experience of the particular discourse, their similarities to or differences from the writer's language community, their level of linguistic sophistication, and other individual differences. At a more obviously linguistic level, a writer's choices among such options as first/third person narration, single/multiple focalisation and direct/indirect speech representation further define the encoded reading position. Between them, the broader elements of genre and the more precise linguistic processes appear to restrict the possibility of wildly deviant readings, though what might be considered more probable readings depends on an acquired recognition of the particular discourse. If that recognition is not available to readers, the readings they produce may well seem aberrant.

The communication which informs the transactions between writers and readers is a specialised aspect of socio-linguistic communication in general. The forms and meanings of reality are constructed in language: by analysing how language works, we come nearer to knowing how our culture constructs itself, and where we fit into that construction. Language enables individuals to compare their experiences with the experiences of others, a process which has always been a fundamental purpose of children's fiction. The representation of experiences such as growing up, evolving a sense of self, falling in love or into conflict, and so on, occurs in language, and guarantees that the experiences represented are shared with human beings in general. Language can make present the felt experiences of people living in other places and at other times, thus enabling a reader to define his or her own subjectivity in terms of perceived potentialities and differences. Finally, the capacity of language to express things beyond everyday reality, such as abstract thought or possible transcendent experiences, is imparted to written texts with all its potentiality for extending the boundaries of intellectual and emotional experience.

The socio-linguistic contexts of text production and reception are important considerations for any account of reading processes. But beyond satisfying a basic human need for

contact, reading can also give many kinds of pleasure, though the pleasures of reading are not discovered in a social or linguistic vacuum: as we first learn how to read we also start learning what is pleasurable and what not, and even what is good writing and what not. Our socio-linguistic group, and especially its formal educational structures, tends to precondition what constitutes a good story, a good argument, a good joke, and the better our command of socio-linguistic codes the greater is our appreciation. In other words, we learn to enjoy the process as well as the product. Writing and reading are also very individual acts, however, and the pleasure of reading includes some sense of the distinctive style of a writer or a text. One primary function of stylistic description is to contribute to the pleasure in the text by defining the individual qualities of what is vaguely referred to as the 'style' of a writer or text.

Stylistic description can be attempted by means of several methodologies. These range from an impressionistic 'literary stylistics', which is characteristic of most discussions of the language of children's literature, to complex systemic analyses. The latter can offer very precise and delicate descriptions, but have the limitation that non-specialists may find them impenetrable. This article works within the semiotic analysis developed in contemporary critical linguistics (Fairclough 1989; Stephens 1992).

To discuss the textuality of children's fiction one has to begin by considering some assumptions about the nature of language on which it is grounded. Linguists recognise that language is a social semiotic, a culturally patterned system of signs used to communicate about things, ideas or concepts. As a system constructed within culture, it is not founded on any essential bond between a verbal sign and its referent.

(Stephens 1992: 246–7)

This is an important point to grasp, because much children's fiction is written and mediated under the contrary, essentialist assumption, and this has major implications both for writing objectives and for the relationships between writers and readers. Fantasy writing in particular is apt to assert the inextricability of word and thing, but the assumption also underlies realistic writing which purports to minimise the distance between life and fiction, or which pivots on the evolution of a character's essential selfhood, and it often informs critical suspicion of texts which foreground the gap between signs and things.

The following passages throw some light on these contrary assumptions about language:

The glade in the ring of trees was evidently a meeting-place of the wolves ... in the middle of the circle was a great grey wolf. He spoke to them in the dreadful language of the Wargs. Gandalf understood it. Bilbo did not, but it sounded terrible to him, and as if all their talk was about cruel and wicked things, as it was.

(*The Hobbit*, Tolkien 1937/1987: 91)

Charlie did not know much about ice ... The only piece he had known came from a refrigerated boat, and was left on the wharf, cloudy white, not clear, not even very clean. Charlie had waited until the boat went with its load of lamb carcasses, and then gone for it. By then it had melted. There was a puddle, a wisp of lambswool, and nothing more.

He did not even think this was the same stuff. He did not think this place was part of the world. He thought it was the mouth of some other existence coming up

from the ground, being drilled through the rock. The pieces coming away were like the fragments from the bit of the carpentry brace Papa used for setting up shelves. An iron thing would come from the ground, Charlie thought, and another Papa would blow through the hole to make it clear. Last time all the dust had gone into Charlie's eye, because he was still looking through. Papa had thought him such a fool.

(*Low Tide*, Mayne 1992: 163–4)

The Tolkien and Mayne passages represent a principal character at a moment of incomprehension: Bilbo hears a foreign language and has no actual referents for the verbal signs; Charlie perceives a physical phenomenon (the point at which pieces of ice break from a glacier into a river, though *glacier* is not introduced for two more paragraphs) and struggles with the socio-linguistic resources at his disposal to find meaning in it. A significant difference between the two is the implication that the Wargs' language communicates meanings beyond sense. On a simple level, this is to say no more than that it is obvious what the sounds made by a nasty horde of wolves signify. But Tolkien directly raises the question of comprehension – 'Gandalf understood it' – and uses his overt, controlling narrative voice to confirm that Bilbo comprehends something which is a linguistic essential: the language is inherently 'dreadful' (presumably in the fuller sense of 'inspiring dread'); and the 'as it was' confirms the principle that 'the meaning is innate to its sound' suggested by the lexical set 'terrible, wicked and cruel'. Mayne focuses on the other side of the sign/thing relationship, in effect posing a question often posed in his novels: can a phenomenon be understood if it cannot be signified in language? Tolkien's shifts between narration and Bilbo's focalisation are clearly marked; Mayne slips much more ambiguously between these modes, a strategy which serves to emphasise the gap between phenomena and language. The first paragraph is a retrospective narration of Charlie's single relevant empirical experience, but because that ice then differed in colour and form ('cloudy white', 'a puddle') the past experience does not enable him to make sense of the present. Instead, in the second paragraph Charlie produces a fantastic (mis-) interpretation on the premise that what he sees is visually isomorphic with another previous experience. The upshot is that, once again, he seems 'such a fool', though that is only a temporary state induced by linguistic inadequacy and is set aside by the novel's congruence of story and theme. As a story, *Low Tide* is a treasure hunt gone wrong and then marvellously recuperated; a major thematic concern, articulated through the child characters' struggles to make sense of phenomena, language and the relationships between phenomena and language, is a child's struggle towards competence in his or her socio-linguistic context.

The texts thus demonstrate two very different approaches to the semiotic instability of language. A third, and very common, approach is to exploit that instability as a source of humour, and this partly explains why nonsense verse is considered to be almost entirely the province of childhood. A rich vein of narrative humour also runs from the same source. In Terry Pratchett's *Johnny and the Dead*, for example, humour is created by exploiting the arbitrary relationship between signs and things or actions, specifically the instabilities which can result when significations slip, multiply or change. In the following extract, a police station is fielding telephone calls reporting strange incidents. The macro-structural frame for the humour – that these incidents are caused by the dead from the local cemetery who have come out to explore the town in which they once lived – informs readers that both sides of the dialogue are grounded in misconception:

The phone rang again as soon as he put it down, but this time one of the young constables answered it.

'It's someone from the university,' he said, putting his hand over the mouthpiece. 'He says a strange alien force has invaded the radio telescope. You know, that big satellite dish thing over towards Slate?'

Sergeant Comely sighed. 'Can you get a description?' he said.

'I saw a film about this, Sarge,' said another policeman. 'These aliens landed and replaced everyone in the town with giant vegetables.'

'Really? Round here it'd be days before anyone noticed,' said the sergeant.

The constable put the phone down.

'He just said it was like a strange alien force,' he said. 'Very cold, too.'

'Oh, a *cold* strange alien force,' said Sergeant Comely.

'And it was invisible, too.'

'Right. Would he recognize it if he didn't see it again?'

The young policemen looked puzzled. I'm too good for this, the sergeant thought.

'All right,' he said. 'So we know the following. Strange invisible aliens have invaded Blackbury. They dropped in at The Dirty Duck, where they blew up the Space Invaders machine, which makes sense. And then they went to the pictures. Well, that makes sense too. It's probably *years* before new films get as far as Alfred Centuri ...'

The phone rang again. The constable answered it.

(Pratchett 1993: 122–3)

Signification in this extract pivots on the frameworks afforded by genres and the principles of situational implicature, particularly in the linguistic clash between the discourses (properly, 'registers') of police reporting, adhered to by the Sergeant, and of popular science fiction, which his gullible subordinates quickly adopt. The possibility that language does not communicate precisely is flagged by the constable's reformulation of 'radio telescope' as 'that big satellite dish thing'. The exasperated Sergeant then exploits the register clash to mock his subordinates, breaching the conversational principles of relation and clarity, as in his play on the meanings of 'vegetables' or his question, 'Would he recognize it if he didn't see it again?' The clashing of registers offers a succinct example of how context determines meaning. In such an example, 'correct use in context' extends beyond other nearby words and the grammar which combines them into intelligible form to include the situation of utterance and cultural context. The situation of utterance – the police station – clarifies the focus of reference, but at the same time foregrounds how the 'same' utterance can have a very different meaning in different contexts. The shifting of meaning begins to move towards excess in the Sergeant's mock summary interpretation of the information collected so far. It also moves, however, to a point of undecidability in the malapropism 'Alfred Centuri', since a reader cannot determine whether this is the Sergeant's error or a further example of mockery. In such ways, Pratchett's writings for younger readers are richly subversive, playing on meanings to such an extent as to suggest that, if allowed free play, language will tend to be uncontainable by situation. Such a view of language, however, tends to be uncommon in the domain of children's literature.

The issue of sign/referent relationship is of central interest here because it bears directly on linguistic function in children's fiction and the notion of desirable significances. The assumption that the relationship is direct and unproblematic has the initial

effect of producing what might be termed closed meanings. The Tolkien example is especially instructive because it explicitly shows how language which is potentially open, enabling a variety of potential reader responses, is narrowed by paradigmatic recursiveness and essentialism. Writers will, of course, often aim for such specification, but what are the implications if virtually all meaning in a text is implicitly closed? The outcome points to an invisible linguistic control by writer over reader. As Hunt has argued, attempts to exercise such control are much less obvious when conveyed by stylistic features than by lexis or story existents (Hunt 1991: 109).

A related linguistic concept of major importance for the issue of language choice and writerly control is register, the principle which governs the choice among various possible linguistic realisations of the same thing. Register refers to types of language variation which collocate with particular social situations and written genres. Socially, for example, people choose different appropriate language variations for formal and informal occasions, for friendly disputes and angry arguments, and for specialised discourses: science, sport, computing, skipping rope games, role-play, and so on, all have particular registers made up of configurations of lexical and syntactical choices. Narrative fictions will seek to replicate such registers, but also, as with a wide range of writing genres, develop distinctive registers of their own. Genres familiar in children's fiction – such as folk and fairy stories, ghost and terror stories, school stories, teen romance, and a host of others – use some readily identifiable registers. Consider the use of register in the following passage from Anna Fienberg's *Ariel, Zed and the Secret of Life*. It describes three girls watching a horror movie, but one of them (Ariel) is giggling:

When the girls looked back at the screen, the scene had changed. It was dusk, and shadows bled over the ground. A moaning wind had sprung up, and somewhere, amongst the trees, an owl hooted.

'Ooh, *look*,' hissed Lynn, her nails digging into her friend Mandy's arm. 'Is that him there, crouching behind that bush? Tell me what happens. I'm not looking any more.'

'The nurse is saying goodnight,' Mandy whispered, 'she's leaving. She'll have to go right past him.'

The Monster From Out of Town was, indeed, breathing heavily behind a camellia bush. His clawed hands crushed flowers to a perfumed pulp, which made you think of what he would do to necks ...

Ariel grinned. The monster's mask was badly made and his costume looked much too tight.

(Fienberg 1992: 9–10)

The scene from the movie is presented in the conventional register of the Gothic (dusk, shadows, bled, moaning wind, an owl hooted), though the unusual metaphor 'shadows bled' reconfigures the conventional elements with the effect of foregrounding the Gothic trait of overwording (or semantic overload). By then switching the retelling to the audience's perceptions and responses, Fienberg builds in a common Gothic narrative strategy, that of determining emotional response to scene or incident by building it in as a character's response. The switch also enables a version of the suspense so necessary to horror ('him ... behind that bush'; 'the nurse ... leaving'; 'his clawed hands'). These narrative strategies set up the deflation occurring with Ariel's response and the register shift which expresses it: detached and analytic, she epitomises the resistant reader who refuses the

positioning implied by the genre. The deflation has the effect of retrospectively defining how far a genre can depend on its audience's unthinking acceptance of the emotional codes implied by its register.

Fienberg is making an important point about how fiction works (her novel is pervasively metafictional), and it is a point which is well applied to modes of fiction in which register is much less obtrusive. It is easy to assume that realistic fiction is based on a neutral register, though this is not really so, and a stylistic account can help disclose how its registers position readers even more thoroughly than do obvious registers such as that of Gothic. This is readily seen in the tradition of realism in adolescent fiction in the USA, which developed in the 1960s out of a psychology of adolescence based in the work of Erik Erikson re-routed through the textual influence of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Thus a first-person adolescent narrator represents significant issues of adolescent development, such as 'experience of physical sexual maturity, experience of withdrawal from adult benevolent protection, consciousness of self in interaction, re-evaluation of values, [and] experimentation' (Russell 1988: 61). Cultural institutions, genre and style interact with a material effect, not just to code human behaviour but to shape it. A stylistic analysis offers one position from which we can begin to unravel that shaping process. Danziger's *Can You Sue Your Parents for Malpractice?* is thematically focused on the five concepts of adolescent development listed above; most are evident in the following passage:

[Linda] says, 'How can you stop a buffalo from charging?'

'Take away his credit cards,' my mother answers.

My father turns to her. 'You should know that one. Now that you're going back to work, I bet you're going to be spending like mad, living outside my salary.'

'Why don't you just accept it and not feel so threatened?' My mother raises her voice. She hardly ever does that.

I can feel the knot in my stomach and I feel like I'm going to jump out of my skin.

'Who feels threatened?' he yells. 'That's ridiculous. Just because you won't have to depend on me, need me any more, why should I worry?'

So that's why he's acting this way. He thinks it's the money that makes him important. Sometimes I just don't understand his brain.

'Why can't you ever celebrate anything?' she yells again.

I throw my spoon on the table. That's it. I'm leaving. Linda follows me out. It's like a revolution. Nothing like this has ever happened before.

(Danziger 1979/1987: 6)

An important part of the register here is the first person and – as often – present tense narration, particularly in so far as it constructs a precise orientation of narrative voice towards a conventional situation. The function of present tense narration is to convey an illusion of immediacy and instantaneity, suppressing any suggestion that the outcome is knowable in advance. Thus Lauren, the narrator, proceeds through specific moments of recognition and decision – 'I can feel ...'; 'So that's why ...'; 'That's it. I'm leaving'; 'It's like a revolution' – but each of these moments, as with the depiction of the quarrel itself, is expressed by means of a register which consists of the clichés which pertain to it. Linguistically, this has a double function. It is, now at the other end of the creative spectrum, another use of language which assumes an essential link between sign and referent; and in doing that through cliché it constitutes the text as a surface without depth, an effect reinforced by the way present tense narration severely restricts the possibility of any

temporal movement outside the present moment. The outcome, both linguistically and thematically, is a complete closing of meaning: there is no interpretative task for a reader to perform, no inference undrawn. This closure even extends to the joke with which the passage begins.

Another way to describe this is to say that the metonymic mode of writing which characterises realistic fiction, and which enables particular textual moments to relate to a larger signifying structure (Stephens 1992: 148–249), has been directed towards a closing of meaning. Another aspect of the metonymic process is that a narrative may draw upon recognisable schemata repeatable from one text to another and which constitute a ‘register’ of metonyms of family life. This example could be categorised as: situation, the parental quarrel; pretext, money; actual focus, power and authority. With perhaps unintentional irony produced by the present tense verb, the repeatability of the scene is foregrounded by Lauren’s remark that ‘Nothing like this has ever happened before.’ It happens all the time, especially in post-1960s realist adolescent fiction, and its function, paradoxically, is to confirm a model whereby the rational individual progresses to maturity under the ideal of liberal individuality, doing so through the assurance that the experience is metonymic of the experience of everybody in that age group.

The presence of a narrative voice which interprets the scene for the benefit of readers is a characteristic of another linguistic aspect of texts, the presentation of scene and incident through the representation of speech and thought and the strategy of focalisation. These are important aspects of point of view in narrative, the facet of narration through which a writer implicitly, but powerfully, controls how readers understand the text. Because readers are willing to surrender themselves to the flow of the discourse, especially by focusing attention on story or content, they are susceptible to the implicit power of point of view. Linguistically, point of view is established by focalisation strategies and by conversational pragmatics. Early children’s fiction tended to favour narrator focalisation, and hence employed character focalisation only sporadically, so that it is only fleetingly present in, for instance, Richard Jefferies’s *Bevis* (1882) or Ethel Turner’s *Seven Little Australians* (1894), and, more recently, is generally absent from C. S. Lewis’s children’s books. Since around the middle of the twentieth century, however, sustained character focalisation has become the norm in third-person narration, and hence character subjectivity infiltrates the narrative, linguistically evident through lexis and idiom (expressions, phrases, habitual idioms, solecisms, malapropisms) and syntactic features. Hence a narrative has a potential to achieve a double-voiced effect whereby the sociolect, cultural preoccupations and ideological positionings attributed to a focalising character are visible within the language of narration. Most novels which are third-person narrations now include at least one focalising character, and this has important implications for the kind of language used, because in the vast majority of books written for children there is only one such focaliser, who is a child. Further, as with first-person narrators, readers will tend to align themselves with that focalising character’s point of view.

Character focalisation is illustrated below, first in an example from *Bevis*, in which it is discernible as a mere trace, emerging from within narrator focalisation, and then in sequential passages from the end and beginning of the first two chapters of Dickinson’s *Bone from a Dry Sea*, which exemplify quite different ways in which incidents may be narrated as they impact on the mind of focalising characters.

Bevis sat still and tried to think; and while he did so he looked out over the New Sea. The sun was now lower, and all the waves were touched with purple, as if the crests had been sprinkled with wine. The wind blew even harder, as the sun got near the

horizon, and fine particles of sand were every now and then carried over his head from the edge of the precipice.

What would Ulysses have done? He had a way of getting out of everything; but try how he would, Bevis could not think of any plan, especially as he feared to move much, lest the insecure platform under him should give way. He could see his reflection in the pool beneath, as if it were waiting for him to come in reality.

(Jefferies 1882/1995: 143)

The shift from narrator to character focalisation is often signalled by verbs whose semantic node is 'perception', and that is so in this example. The text is shaped by the presence of represented thought and by direct or implied acts of seeing. The narrative representation of thought (marked here by the repeated verb 'think', and the slipping from direct thought to free indirect thought at the beginning of the second paragraph) and the references to acts of seeing ('looked' and 'could see') situate events within the character's mind but also maintain a separate narrating voice. This narration is evident here in aspects of register, as the lexical items 'fine particles' and 'insecure', and by the use of analogies and figurative language in the comparative and hypothetical *as if* clauses. There is no evident attempt at this moment to match linguistic level of narrative discourse to that of the character, though that does often happen. There is, nevertheless, an obvious contrast with the Danziger passage, which, depicting a main character of about the same age (fourteen), has access to a more limited range of registers. Figurative language is likewise less complex. Lauren's 'I can feel the knot in my stomach and I feel like I'm going to jump out of my skin' are cliché analogies, whereas in 'as if it were waiting for him to come in reality' the personifying attribution of a threatening purpose to the pool implies a greater fear than that actually named in the text and, opening out the space between sign and referent, gives readers an opportunity to draw inferences which are not fully determined by the text.

The two incidents presented in the Dickinson extract are placed in the same setting but four million years apart. In the first section, character focalisation again emerges from within narrator focalisation, but the second is predominantly character focalised. The focalisers are female children, the first an early hominid without a language to express her thoughts, and the second a sophisticated modern child:

[A]s she ['Li'] lay among the crowded bodies in one of the caves ... she relived the adventure. She knew what she had done, and why. She understood that it had not been an accident. She realised, too, that the others would not understand.

She had no words for this knowledge. Thought and understanding for her were a kind of seeing. She showed herself things in her mind, the rock-shelf, the shallow water, the need to lure the shark full-tilt onto the slope so that it would force itself out too far, and strand, and die; then her uncle triumphing and her mother scolding and herself cringing while she hugged her knowledge inside her.

Now she seemed to herself to be standing apart in the cave, seeing by the moonlight reflected from the bay one small body curled among the mass of sleepers. A thought which had neither words nor pictures made itself in her mind.

Different.

She's different. Yes, I'm different.

The truck wallowed along the gravelly road, if you could call it a road. Often there was nothing to mark it off from the rest of the brown, enormous plain, but Dad knew

where he was because then there'd be tyre-ruts making the truck wallow worse than ever. Vinny clutched the handgrip on the dash to stop herself being thrown around. They'd done two hours from the airport, though it seemed longer, when Dad stopped by a flat-topped tree with a lot of grassy bundles hanging among the branches. Weaver-birds, Vinny guessed. She'd seen them on TV.

(Dickinson 1992: 12–13)

The opening chapter signals the emergence of subjectivity in an early hominid, and constitutes a creative challenge to the late twentieth-century contention that subjectivity does not exist outside of language. Rather, language is shown to derive from a perceiving subject. In contrast, Vinny's simple recording of scene as the narrative's focalising character at this point is implicitly posited on the assumption of her subjectivity as a 'deictic centre', a *here* and *now* which orients perception. Her status as focaliser is immediately established by suggestions of a particular sociolect and point of view ('if you could call it a road'; 'They'd done two hours'; the identification of her companion by the familiar 'Dad'), and presence of direct thought and then free indirect thought at the end of the paragraph. Unlike Li's 'kind of seeing', Vinny has the authority of information technology to enable her to attach names to things ('She'd seen them on TV'). The identification of the 'grassy bundles' with 'weaver-birds' implies a renaming which conveys the opposite effect from Pratchett's 'radio telescope', as the perception now moves from observation to identification.

What is always implicit in Vinny's subjectivity, a consciousness of identity and self-presence enabled by knowledge and reason, corresponds with the capacity for abstract thought which Li is groping towards as she struggles with proto-language. Thinking with 'neither words nor pictures' enables Li to enter symbolic language through a contrast between the deictics *she* and *I* in relation to notions of difference and alterity, and thereby she begins to access the position of observer of the self. The movement of the passage is thus from a narrator-inflected character focalisation to represented abstract thought.

The second linguistic construction of point of view is by means of represented conversation. Various modes are available to a writer (see Leech and Short 1981), and all appear in children's fiction. These modes range from reported speech acts, which are mainly an aspect of narrative, to direct speech dialogues, which readers must interpret in the light of their knowledge of the principles and conventions of conversation. Because the intermediate forms of indirect and free indirect speech representation allow both for subtle interplay between narratorial and character points of view and for narratorial control, they have tended to receive most attention in discussions of general fiction. With children's fiction, however, more attention needs to be paid to direct speech dialogue, both because it exists in a higher proportion and because of the general principle that the narrator in the text appears to have less control over point of view in dialogue. Leech and Short envisage a cline running between 'bound' and 'free' forms, where 'free' corresponds with closeness to direct speech (1981: 324). But point of view in such conversations is affected by two factors: the presence of narratorial framing, especially speech-reporting tags, that is, the devices for identifying speakers which may in themselves suggest attitudes; and the pragmatic principles which shape conversation. The following passage illustrates these factors.

When they reached [the others] they slipped in behind Rebecca and Sue Stephens, and Juniper saw Ellie standing on the pavement buttoned up in her old red coat, Jake beside her. They waved and smiled.

'Your mum looks like ... a pop star,' said Sue. 'No, someone in a TV series,' said Rebecca.

'It must be strange to have a mother looking like that,' went on Sue, still staring behind her.

'How would I know? I've only had her, haven't I? I don't know any different mother, so I don't know if it's strange or not.'

Sue kept on: 'Is that your dad? That one with the beard?'

'Shut up,' hissed Rebecca, then said very loudly and clearly, 'I liked your reading, Juniper. You were the best.'

'You sounded dead miserable but your arm didn't show. Nobody could tell. I expect Sir picked you because of being sorry for you. He's like that. What did you say?' asked Sue.

'I said Abbledy, Gabbledy Flook,' answered Juniper and then under her breath, Ere the sun begins to sink, May your nasty face all shrink, which came into her head out of nowhere, and wished herself away to a wide, pale beach with the sun shining down and a white horse galloping at the edge of the incoming tide, far, far away from the wind slicing down the pavement blowing up grit and rubbish as they made their way back to school.

(Kemp 1986/1988: 78–9)

This exchange shows very clearly how meaning in conversations arises not from the simple sense of individual utterances but from the tenor of utterances in combination and as shaped by narratorial tagging. It also illustrates how a children's book makes use of the main principles which inform actual or represented conversations: the principle of cooperation, the principle of politeness, and the principle of irony. H. P. Grice (1975) argued that, in order to communicate in an orderly and productive way, speakers accept five conventions which organise what we say to one another: an utterance should be of an appropriate size; it should be correct or truthful; it should relate back to the previous speaker's utterance (a change of subject and a change of register may both be breaches of relation); it should be clear, organised and unambiguous; and each speaker should have a fair share of the conversation, that is, be able to take his or her turn in an orderly way and be able to complete what s/he wants to say (see Leech 1983). These conventions are very readily broken, and much of everyday conversation depends on simultaneously recognising and breaking one or more of them. In particular, many breaches are prompted by the operation of politeness in social exchange. Whenever conversational principles are breached, the product is apt to be humour, irony or conflict.

After a sequence of four utterances which more or less adhere to the principles of coherence and turn-taking but skirt the boundaries of politeness by drawing attention to Ellie's unusual appearance (shabby but beautiful, she doesn't conform to the girls' image of 'mother'), Kemp introduces a sequence built on crucial breaches of relation and politeness, beginning with Sue's 'Is that your dad?' This is flagged contextually because readers know that Juniper's father is missing, and textually because of the cline in the speech-reporting tags from the neutral 'said Sue' to the intrusively persistent 'Sue kept on', and the heavy tagging of Rebecca's interruption and shift of relation ('hissed Rebecca, then said very loudly and clearly'). Finally, of course, Juniper's escapist daydream cliché also serves as a narratorial comment on how painful she has found the exchange: indeed, the blowing 'grit and rubbish' becomes a metonym for the anguish at the heart of her being. Second, Sue's response to Rebecca's intervention is to apparently pursue relation but to

breach politeness by turning attention to Juniper's missing arm. The upshot is Juniper's final spoken utterance – interrupting, impolite and nonsensical, it terminates the exchange and the discourse shifts into represented thought. Such an astute use of conversational principles is one of the most expressive linguistic tools available to a children's writer.

A stylistic examination of children's fiction can show us something very important, namely that a fiction with a high proportion of conversation and a moderately sophisticated use of focalisation has access to textual strategies with the potential to offset the limitations which may be implicit in a disinclination to employ the full range of lexical, syntactic and figurative possibilities of written discourse. But stylistic analysis is also never an end in itself, and is best carried out within a frame which considers the relationship of text to genre and to culture. Obviously enough, stylistics alone cannot determine the relative merits of Sue and Rebecca's preferences for 'a pop star' or 'someone in a TV series', and cannot determine whether a reader treats either category as prestigious or feels that both consign Ellie to a subject position without selfhood. The example illustrates two general principles in language analysis: that significance is influenced by the larger contexts of text and culture within which particular utterances are meaningful; and that particular language features or effects can have more than one function, simultaneously expressing both purposiveness and implicit, often unexamined, social assumptions.

Finally, attention to the language of children's fiction has an important implication for evaluation, adding another dimension to the practices of judging books according to their entertainment value as stories or according to their socio-political correctness. It can be an important tool in distinguishing between 'restrictive texts' which allow little scope for active reader judgements (Hunt 1991: 117) and texts which enable critical and thoughtful responses.

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8 Reader-response criticism

Michael Benton

The importance of reader-response criticism in the area of children's literature lies in what it tells us about two fundamental questions, one about the literature and the other about its young readers:

- Who is the implied child reader inscribed in the text?
- How do actual child readers respond during the process of reading?

The main advocates of reader-response criticism acknowledge the complementary importance of text and reader. They attend both to the form and language of poem or story, and to the putative reader constructed there, acknowledging, as Henry James put it, that the author makes 'his reader very much as he makes his characters ... When he makes him well, that is makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labour' (quoted in Booth 1961: 302). Equally, they attend to the covert activity of the reading process, deducing the elements of response from what readers say or write, and/or developing theoretical models of aesthetic experience.

Whatever the particular orientation of the reader-response critic, one central issue recurs: the mystery of what readers actually do and experience. The subject of the reader's response is the Loch Ness Monster of literary studies: when we set out to capture it, we cannot even be sure that it is there at all; and, if we assume that it is, we have to admit that the most sensitive probing with the most sophisticated instruments has so far succeeded only in producing pictures of dubious authenticity. That the nature and dimensions of this phenomenon are so uncertain is perhaps the reason why the hunters are so many and their approaches so various. Accordingly, it is necessary to map the main historical development of reader-response criticism and, second, to outline the theoretical bases which its advocates share, before going on to consider how this perspective – whose concepts have been formulated largely in the area of adult literary experience – has been taken up by researchers interested in young readers and their books.

A shift of critical perspective

In the 1950s the criticism of literature was in a relatively stable state. In *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), M. H. Abrams was confidently able to describe 'the total situation' of the work of art as one with the text at the centre with the three elements of the author, the reader and the signified world ranged like satellites around it. What has happened since has destabilised this model. In particular, reader-response critics have argued that it is readers who make meaning by the activities they perform on texts; they see the reader in

the centre and thus the privileged position of the work of art is undermined and individual 'readings' become the focus of attention. This is not to say that the emphasis upon reading and response which emerged in the 1960s was entirely new. It had been initiated famously by I. A. Richards forty years earlier; but Richards's (1924, 1929) seminal work, with its twin concerns of pedagogy and criticism, influenced subsequent developments in criticism in two contrary ways. For, in one sense, Richards privileged the text, and the American New Critics, particularly, seized upon the evidence of *Practical Criticism* to insist that close analysis of the words on the page was the principal job of critic and teacher. Yet, in another sense, Richards privileged the reader; and subsequently, modern reader-response criticism has developed to give the reader freedoms that infuriate text-oriented critics. Hence, Stanley Fish writes: 'Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems: they make them' (Fish 1980: 327). Or, even more provocatively: 'It is the structure of the reader's experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description' (152). As Laurence Lerner (1983: 6) has pointed out, perhaps the most important division in contemporary literary studies is between those who see literature as a more or less self-contained system, and those who see it as interacting with real, extra-literary experience (that of the author, or of the reader or the social reality of the author's or the reader's world). Reader-response critics clearly fall within this second category.

Reader-response criticism is difficult to map because of its diversity, especially in two respects: first, there are several important figures whose work stands outside the normal boundaries of the term; and second, there is overlap but not identity in the relationship between German 'reception theory' and Anglo-American reader-response criticism. On the first issue, two highly influential writers, D. W. Harding and Louise Rosenblatt, began publishing work in the 1930s which was ahead of its time (for example, Harding 1937; Rosenblatt 1938/1970) and their explorations of the psychological and affective aspects of literary experience only really began to have an impact upon educational thinking (and hence upon children's experiences of poems and stories in school) when the educational and literary theorists began to rehabilitate the reader in the 1960s and 1970s. Subsequently, Harding's paper on 'Psychological Approaches in the Reading of Fiction' (1962) and Rosenblatt's reissued *Literature as Exploration* (1938/1970) have been widely regarded as two of the basic texts in this area.

It is an indication of the diversity and loose relationships which characterise response-oriented approaches to literature that Harding and Rosenblatt are reduced to complimentary footnotes in the standard introductions to reader-response criticism (Tompkins 1980: xxvi; Suleiman and Crosman 1980: 45; Freund 1987: 158), and that writers in the German and Anglo-American traditions have, with the notable exception of Iser, little contact with or apparent influence upon one another. In a thorough account of German reception theory, Holub (1984) comments upon this divide and provides an excellent analysis of Iser's work to complement that of Freund (1987), whose book summarises the Anglo-American tradition.

The development of reader-response writings since the 1960s has steadily forged a new relationship between the act of reading and the act of teaching literature which, as is illustrated later, has significant consequences for the way the relationship between young readers and their books is conceptualised. Prior to this time, during the 1940s and 1950s, the reader was hidden from view as the critical landscape was dominated by the American New Criticism, whose adherents took a determinedly anti-reader stance to the extent that, despite a concern for 'close reading', the major statement of New Criticism views – Wellek

and Warren's *Theory of Literature* (1949) – makes no mention of the reader and includes only two brief references to 'reading'. Subsequently, the development of reader-response studies has seen the momentum shift periodically from literary theory to educational enquiry and practice almost decade by decade.

The 1960s were dominated by education, with the most influential work published by the National Council of Teachers of English (Squire 1964; Purves and Rippere 1968), culminating in two surveys, one English and the other American (D'Arcy 1973; Purves and Beach 1972). The 1970s saw the full bloom of reader-response theorising by literary critics of whom Holland (1975), Culler (1975), Iser (1978) and Fish (1980) were perhaps the most notable figures, all of whom were well represented in the two compilations of papers that stand as a summary of work in this area at the end of the decade (Suleiman and Crosman 1980; Tompkins 1980). During the 1980s the emphasis moved back to education, where the main concern was to translate what had become known about response – both from literary theory and from classroom enquiry – into principles of good practice. Protherough (1983), Cooper (1985a), Benton and Fox (1985), Scholes (1985), Corcoran and Evans (1987), Benton *et al.* (1988), Dias and Hayhoe (1988), Hayhoe and Parker (1990), Benton (1992a), Many and Cox (1992) have all, in their different ways, considered the implications for practice of a philosophy of literature and learning based upon reader-response principles. In Britain, one of the more heartening results of this development was that the importance of the reader's response to literature was fully acknowledged in the new National Curriculum as embodied in the Cox Report (1989) and in the official documents that ensued. Such has been what one standard book on modern literary theory calls 'the vertiginous rise of reader-response criticism' (Jefferson and Robey 1986: 142) that its authors see it as threatening to engulf all other approaches.

What are the theoretical bases that such writers share? Reader-response criticism is a broad church, as a reading of the various overview books demonstrates (Tompkins 1980; Suleiman and Crosman 1980; Freund 1987). None the less, a number of principles can be said to characterise this critical stance. First is the rejection of the notorious 'affective fallacy'. In describing the 'fallacy' as 'a confusion of the poem and its results', and in dismissing as mere 'impressionism and relativism' any critical judgements based on the psychological effects of literature, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954/1970) had left no space for the reader to inhabit. They ignored the act of reading. New Criticism, it could be said, invented 'the assumed reader'; by contrast, reader-response criticism deals with real and implied readers. Iser, Holland, Bleich and Fish operate from a philosophical basis that displaces the notion of an autonomous text to be examined in and on its own terms from the centre of critical discussion and substitutes the reader's recreation of that text. Reading is not the discovering of meaning (like some sort of archaeological 'dig') but the creation of it. The purpose of rehearsing this familiar history is its importance for children's reading. The central concerns of response-oriented approaches focus upon

- 1 what constitutes the source of literary meaning; and
- 2 the nature of the interpretative process that creates it.

Both issues are fundamental to how young readers read, both in and out of school.

The works of Iser on fiction and Rosenblatt on poetry, despite some criticism that Iser has attracted on theoretical grounds, have none the less had greater influence upon the actual teaching of literature and our understanding of children as readers than those of any other theoretical writers. No doubt this is because they avoid what Frank Kermode calls

'free-floating theory' and concentrate, in Iser's words, on 'an analysis of what actually happens when one is reading' (Iser 1978: 19). Iser's theory of aesthetic response (1978) and Rosenblatt's transactional theory of the literary work (1978, 1985) have helped change the culture of the classroom to one which operates on the principle that the text cannot be said to have a meaningful existence outside the relationship between itself and its reader(s). This transfer of power represents a sea-change in critical emphasis and in pedagogical practice from the assumptions most critics and teachers held even a generation ago. Yet it is evolutionary change, not sudden revolution – a progressive rethinking of the way readers create literary experiences for themselves with poems and stories. In fact, reader-response is the evolutionary successor to Leavisite liberal humanism. It is perceived – within the area of literature teaching – as providing a framework of now familiar ideas which are widely accepted and to which other lines of critical activity often make reference: the plurality of meanings within a literary work; the creative participation of the reader; the acknowledgement that the reader is not a *tabula rasa* but brings idiosyncratic knowledge and personal style to the act of reading; and the awareness that interpretation is socially, historically and culturally formed. All these ideas are ones that have had a sharp impact upon the study of texts and upon research into young readers' reading in the field of children's literature.

Young readers and their books

Reader-response approaches to children's literature which set out to answer the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter all have a direct relationship with pedagogy. Some are concerned with children's responses, mainly to fiction and poetry but latterly also to picture books, with the broad aim of improving our understanding of what constitutes good practice in literature teaching. Others employ reader-response methods in order to explore children's concepts and social attitudes. Others again are text-focused and use concepts and ideas from reader-response criticism of adult literature in order to examine children's books, with the aim of uncovering their implied audience and, thence, something of the singularity of a specifically *children's* literature.

This diversity creates two problems: first, there is bound to be overlap. Many studies cover both textual qualities and children's responses as complementary aspects of a unitary experience which, as the foregoing discussion has argued, follows from the mainstream thinking of reader-response criticism. When considering a study under one or other of the headings below, therefore, its writer's principal orientation has been the guide. Second, there is bound to be anomaly. The nature and complexity of the studies varies greatly. In particular, there are two important collections of papers devoted to theoretical research and empirical enquiries in this area (Cooper 1985a; Many and Cox 1992). These are most conveniently considered between discussion of the first and second themes below to which most of their papers relate.

The discussion deals, in turn, with five themes: the process of responding; development in reading; types of reader behaviour; culturally oriented studies exploring children's attitudes; and text-oriented studies employing reader-response concepts.

The process of responding

The stances of those enquirers who have explored the response processes of young readers vary as much as those of the literary theorists, but the most common one is that of the

teacher–researcher attempting to theorise classroom practice. The range and combinations of the variables in these studies are enormous: texts, contexts, readers and research methods are all divisible into subsets with seemingly infinite permutations. Among texts, short stories, poems, fairy tales and picture books are favoured, with a few studies focusing upon the novel and none on plays. Contexts, in the sense of physical surroundings, also influence response. The ‘classroom’ itself can mean a variety of things and clearly there are crucial differences between, say, monitoring the responses of thirty children within normal lesson time and four or five children who volunteer to work outside lessons. Most studies are small-scale enquiries run by individual researchers, perhaps with a collaborative element; hence, the focus is usually narrow when selecting the number, age-level, social background, gender and literacy level of the readers. Finally, reader-response monitoring procedures are generally devised in the knowledge that the medium is the message. The ways readers are asked to present their responses are fundamental influences upon those responses; they range from undirected invitations to free association or ‘say what comes into your mind as you read’, through various ‘prompts’ or guideline questions to consider, to the explicit questionnaire. Oral, written, or graphic responses and whether the readers are recording individually or in groups all provide further dimensions to the means of monitoring and collecting response data.

Guidance through this diversity is offered by two older books already mentioned (Purves and Beach 1972; D’Arcy 1973); and, more recently, by Galda (1983) in a special issue of the *Journal of Research and Development in Education* on ‘Response to Literature: Empirical and Theoretical Studies’, and by Squire’s chapter ‘Research on Reader Response and the National Literature Initiative’ in Hayhoe and Parker (Squire 1990: 13–24). What follows does not attempt to be exhaustive but briefly to indicate the main lines that process studies have taken.

The process of responding became one of the main objects of enquiry during the 1980s. Studies of children’s responses to poetry began to appear in articles or booklet form: Wade (1981) adapted Squire’s (1964) work on short stories to compare how a supervised and an unsupervised group of middle-school children responded to a poem by Charles Tomlinson. Dixon and Brown (1984) studied the writings of seventeen-year-old students in order to identify what was being assessed in their responses; Atkinson (1985) built upon Purves and Ripperé’s (1968) categories and explored the process of response to poems by children of different ages. Several books also focused exclusively on young readers and poetry and, either wholly or in part, concerned themselves with the response process, notably Benton (1986), Dias and Hayhoe (1988) and Benton *et al.* (1988). The work of Barnes (1976), particularly, lies behind the enquiries of Benton (1986) into small group responses to poetry by thirteen- to fourteen-year-olds. What is characterised as ‘lightly-structured, self-directed discussion’ is seen as the means of optimising group talk about poems and as the most appropriate way for teacher–researchers to explore the process of response. Dias and Hayhoe (1988) build upon Dias’s earlier work (1986) to develop responding-aloud protocols (RAPs) which, essentially, require individual pupils to think aloud as they attempt to make sense of a poem with the help, if needed, of a non-directive interviewer. Preparatory group discussions were used to build up confidence for the individual sessions. The RAP transcripts were then analysed to see how pupils negotiated meaning. Dias and Hayhoe claim that their study is ‘designed to track the process of responding as it occurs’ (1988: 51) and their methodology is a significant contribution to this end.

Similarly, the work of Benton and his co-authors (1988) focuses upon process. It shows three experienced teachers exploring how their students, aged fourteen and above, read

and respond to poetry. Rosenblatt's transactional theory underpins the approach, especially in Teasey's work, which gives the hard evidence for the reader's 'evocation' of a poem through meticulous, descriptive analyses of aesthetic reading. Bell's data shows the emphases of the response process from initial encounter through group discussion, to an eventual written account, in such a way that what in mathematics is called 'the working' can be observed – in this case, the slow evolution over time and in different contexts of how young readers make meaning. Hurst's focus is upon the whole class rather than individuals. From studying the responses of pupils in a variety of classrooms and with different teachers and texts, he develops a model of three frames (story, poet, form), derived from Barnes and Todd's (1977) notion of the 'cycles of utterances' that characterise group talk, as a means of mapping the episodes of a group's engagement with a poem. The three enquiries are set against a critical appraisal of the main theorists in the field from Richards to Rosenblatt and all contribute to the development of a response-centred methodology.

The process of responding to fictional narrative was first examined by Squire (1964) and Purves and Rippere (1968), whose early studies provoked many adaptations of their work with students of different ages and backgrounds. These studies all tended to categorise the elements of response, with Squire's list emerging as the most commonly quoted and replicated in studies of children's responses. Squire's study of adolescents responding to short stories described the six elements of response as literary judgements, interpretational responses, narrational reactions, associational responses, self-involvement and prescriptive judgements (Squire 1964: 17–18). He showed that the greater the involvement of readers, the stronger was their tendency to make literary judgements; and that what he termed 'happiness-binding' (41) was a characteristic of adolescent readers' behaviour. Here, as in many studies of fiction reading, there is a noticeable move towards a broadly psychoanalytical explanation for the gratifications readers seek in fiction (compare Holland 1975). More recent studies include those of Fox (1979), whose phrase 'dark watchers' (32) is a memorable description of the imaginary, spectator role that young readers often adopt during reading; and Jackson (1980), who explored the initial responses of children to fiction which he later developed more fully throughout the secondary-school age range (Jackson 1983). Several books also focused wholly or in part upon young readers' response processes, notably Protherough (1983), Benton and Fox (1985) and Thomson (1986). Drawing upon enquiries he conducted in Hull, Protherough suggests that there are five major ways in which children see the process of reading fiction: projection into a character, projection into the situation, association between book and reader, the distanced viewer, and detached evaluation. There is a developmental dimension, and he argues that maturity in reading is connected with the ability to operate in an increasing number of modes.

Benton and Fox address the question of what happens when we read stories and consider that the process of responding involves the reader in creating a secondary world. This concept is elaborated with reference to children's accounts of their experiences with various stories. The reading experience is then characterised in two ways: first, as a four-phase process of feeling like reading, getting into the story, being lost in the book, and having an increasing sense of an ending; and second, as an activity consisting of four elements – picturing, anticipating and retrospectively, interacting and evaluating. This latter description has been taken up by others, notably Corcoran (Corcoran and Evans 1987: 45–51).

Thomson's work with teenage readers offers a further description of the elements of response to fiction and cross-hatches this with a developmental model. The requirements

for satisfaction at all stages are enjoyment and elementary understanding. Assuming these are met, his six stages are described as: unreflective interest in action; empathising; analogising; reflecting on the significance of events and behaviour; reviewing the whole work as the author's creation; and the consciously considered relationship with the author. Thomson's is a sophisticated and detailed account, firmly rooted in young readers' fiction reading, and drawing effectively upon the theoretical literature summarised earlier in this chapter.

As can be seen from this summary, studies of the process of responding tend towards categorisation of the different psychological activities involved and towards descriptions of what constitutes maturation in reading. Two collections of papers which should contribute more than they do to our understanding of the process of responding are Cooper (1985a) and Many and Cox (1992), although in their defence it has to be said that the former has a focus upon the theories that should guide our study of readers and the research methodologies that derive from them, and the latter is primarily concerned with reader 'stance' (Rosenblatt 1978) as the discussion of types of reader below indicates. Brief comment upon these two collections is appropriate before moving on to consider reading development.

Only some of the seventeen papers in Cooper's compilation bear upon the subject of children and literature. The first of the three parts of the book is helpful in relating theoretical issues of response to practice, especially the chapters by Rosenblatt, Purves and Petrosky. In Part 2, Kintgen's piece stands out, not only because its focus is poetry (a comparative rarity in such company), but because it faces up to the problems of monitoring responses, and attempts to describe the mental activities and processes of the reader. Kintgen's subjects (as with many researchers) are graduate students, but the methodology here could readily transfer to younger readers. The four contributors to the final part of the book on classroom literature, whom one might expect to deal with children and their books, studiously avoid doing so, preferring instead to discuss theoretical and methodological issues such as the need to identify response research with literary pedagogy (Bleich), the use of school surveys (Squire), and the evaluation of the outcomes of literary study (Cooper 1985b).

Many and Cox (1992) take their impetus from Cooper's book and their inspiration from Rosenblatt (1978). The first part gives theoretical perspectives on reader stance and response and includes specific consideration of readings of selected children's books (Benton 1992b) and of young readers' responses (Corcoran). The papers in Part 2 focus upon students' perspectives when reading and responding and tell us more about types of readers than about process; these are dealt with below. Part 3 deals with classroom interactions of teachers, students and literature. Hade explores 'stance' in both silent reading and reading aloud, arguing its transactional and triadic nature in the classroom. Zancella writes engagingly about the use of biography, in the sense of a reader's personal history, in responding to literature and how this influences the teacher's methods. Zarrillo and Cox build upon Rosenblatt's efferent/aesthetic distinction and urge more of the latter in classroom teaching in the light of their empirical findings that 'elementary teachers tend to direct children to adopt efferent stances towards literature' (245). Many and Wiseman take a similar line and report their enquiries into teaching particular books (for example, Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976)) with efferent and aesthetic emphases to different, parallel classes. At various points, all these studies touch upon the issue of the process of responding; but, equally, they also relate to some of the other issues that are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Development in reading

Of these issues, the question of how children develop as readers of literature is one of the most frequently raised. This has been approached in four main ways: personal reminiscences of bookish childhoods (Sampson 1947; Inglis 1981); the growth of the child's sense of story in relation to the Piagetian stages of development (Applebee 1978; Tucker 1981); the development of literacy, with the idea of matching individual and age-group needs to appropriate books (Fisher 1964; Meek 1982); and deductions about development drawn from surveys of children's reading interests and habits (Jenkinson 1940; Whitehead *et al.* 1977). While none of these writers would see their work as necessarily falling strictly under the reader-response heading, all are in fact listening to what children as readers say about their experiences and, in more recent years, are conscious of interpreting their findings against a background of reader-response criticism. This awareness is evident, for example, in the work of Tucker (1980) who, in a paper entitled 'Can We Ever Know the Reader's Response?' argues that children's responses are different from adults' (in, say, the relative emphasis they give to the quality of the writing as opposed to the pace of the plot) before he goes on to relate their responses to intellectual and emotional development as psychologists describe it (the subject of his subsequent book (Tucker 1981)). In the highly influential work of Meek, too, from *The Cool Web* (Meek *et al.* 1977) onwards, reader-response criticism has been one of her perspectives – evident, for example, in her 'Prolegomena for a Study of Children's Literature' (1980: 35) and in her exploration of the relationship between literacy and literature in her account of the reading lessons to be found in picture books (Meek 1988). Or again, in the discussion of their findings of children's reading preferences at ten-plus, twelve-plus and fourteen-plus, Whitehead and his team speculate about the cognitive and affective factors involved in the interaction between children and their books. All are aware that response-oriented criticism should be able to tell us more about this interaction at different ages.

Developmental stages in literary reading are outlined by Jackson (1982), Protherough (1983) and Thomson (1986) on the basis of classroom enquiries with young readers as we have already seen; and there have been some small-scale studies of reading development focused upon responses to specific books. Hickman (1983) studied three classes, totalling ninety primary-school-aged children, and monitored their spontaneous responses, variations in solicited verbal responses, the implications of non-responses, and the role of the teacher in respect of two texts: Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974) and McPhail's *The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch* (1978). She was interested in the age-related patterns of responses and in the influences of the class teacher. Cullinan *et al.* (1983) discuss the relationship between pupils' comprehension and response to literature and report the results of a study, conducted with eighteen readers in grades 4, 6 and 8, which focused on readings of and taped responses to Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) and Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968). Their data confirmed that there are clear developmental levels in children's comprehension and they claim that: 'Reader-response provides a way to look at the multidimensional nature of comprehension' (37). Galda (1992) has subsequently reported on a four-year longitudinal study of eight readers' readings of selected books representing realistic and fantasy fiction in order to explore any differences in responses to these two genres. The 'realistic' texts included Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) and S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1968); the 'fantasy' texts included L'Engle's *A Wind in the Door* (1973) and Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* (1981). She considers reading factors, such as developing analytical ability, and text factors,

arguing that children find it easier to enter the world of realistic fiction than they do of fantasy stories; and concludes by advocating the 'spectator role' (Harding 1937; Britton 1970) as a stance that offers readers access to both genres.

Types of reader behaviour

The third theme concerns different sorts of readers or readings. It would be too much to claim that there is an established typology of readers; there have been few studies that venture beyond generalised discussions such as that between 'interrogative' and 'acquiescent' reading styles (Benton and Fox 1985: 16–17), itself a tentative extension of Holland's (1975) notion of personal style in reading behaviour. One study that does make some clear category decisions is that of Dias and Hayhoe (1988: 52–8) in respect of fourteen- and fifteen-year-old pupils reading and responding to poems. Their 'responding-aloud protocols' (RAPs), described earlier, revealed four patterns of reading: paraphrasing, thematising, allegorising and problem solving. They stress that these are patterns of reading not readers (57) but have difficulty throughout in maintaining this discrimination. None the less, theirs is the most sophisticated account to date of that phenomenon that most teachers and others concerned with children's books have noticed without being able to explain, namely that individual children reveal personal patterns of reading behaviour irrespective of the nature of the book being read. The study of these four reading patterns under the sub-headings of what the reader brings to the text, the reader's moves, closure, the reader's relationship with the text, and other elements is one that needs to be replicated and developed in relation to other types of text.

Fry (1985) explored the novel reading of six young readers (two eight-year-olds, two twelve-year-olds, two fifteen-year-olds) through tape-recorded conversations over a period of eight months. The six case studies give some vivid documentary evidence of individual responses (for example, on the ways readers see themselves in books (99)) and also raise general issues such as re-readings, the appeal of series writers like Blyton, the relation of text fiction and film fiction, and the developmental process. Many and Cox's (1992) collection of papers includes their own development of Rosenblatt's efferent/aesthetic distinction in respect of the stances adopted by a class of ten-year-olds in their responses to Byars's *The Summer of the Swans* (1970) and other stories. Encisco, in the same collection, builds upon Benton's (1983) model of the secondary world and gives an exhaustive case-study of one ten-year-old girl's reading of chapters from three stories in order to observe the strategies she uses to create her story world from these texts. Benton's development of the secondary world concept, after Tolkien (1938) and Auden (1968), is reappraised in Many and Cox (1992: 15–18 and 23–48) and has also been extended by the author to incorporate aspects of the visual arts, notably paintings and picture books (Benton 1992a). The concept as originally formulated appeared in the special issue of the *Journal of Research and Development of Education* (Agee and Galda 1983) along with several other articles that focus upon readers' behaviours. Beach (1983) looks at what the reader brings to the text and reports an enquiry aimed at determining the effects of differences in prior knowledge of literary conventions and attitudes on readers' responses through a comparison between high school and college English education students' responses to a short story by Updike. Pillar (1983) discusses aspects of moral judgement in response to fairy tales and presents the findings from a study of the responses of sixty elementary school children to three fables. The responses are discussed in terms of the

principles of justice that distinguish them. This enquiry edges us towards the fourth theme, where reader-response methods are employed in culturally oriented studies.

Culturally oriented studies

Children's concepts and social attitudes have been the subject of reader-response enquiries in three complementary ways: multicultural and feminist studies, which explore how far literature can be helpful in teaching about issues of race or gender; whole-culture studies, which consider children's responses to literature in the context of the broad range of their interests; and cross-cultural studies, which compare the responses of young readers from different countries to the same texts to identify similarities and cultural differences. An article and a book about each group must suffice to indicate the emphases and the degree to which reader-response theory and practice have been influential.

Evans (1992) contains several studies with explicitly cultural concerns, among which is 'Feminist Approaches to Teaching: John Updike's "A & P"' by Bogdan *et al.*, which sets out to explore gender issues in the classroom via Updike's short story. They quote Kolodny (in Showalter 1985: 158) in support of the shift feminist studies makes from seeing reader-response in a purely experiential dimension to a more philosophical enquiry into how 'aesthetic response is ... invested with epistemological, ethical, and moral concerns'. The feminist position is stated explicitly: 'Reading pleasure can no longer be its own end-point, but rather part of a larger dialectical process which strives for an "altered reading attentiveness" to gender in every reading act' (Evans 1992: 151). This dialectical response model is further elaborated and augmented by specific pedagogical suggestions to help young readers towards this new attentiveness.

Within the broadly, and somewhat uncomfortably, defined field of multicultural education, the most sophisticated use of reader-response criticism and practice is Beverley Naidoo's (1992) enquiry into the role of literature, especially fiction, in educating young people about race. Working with a teacher and his class of all-white thirteen- to fourteen-year-old pupils over a period of one academic year, Naidoo introduced a sequence of four novels to their work with increasingly explicit racial issues: *Buddy* (Hinton 1983), *Friedrich* (Richter 1978), *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor 1976) and *Waiting for the Rain* (Gordon 1987). Influenced by Hollindale's (1988) notion of 'the reader as ideologist', Rosenblatt's (1978; 1985) transactional theory and Benton's ethnographic approach to reader-response enquiries (Benton *et al.* 1988), Naidoo adopted an action-researcher role to develop 'ways of exploring these texts which encouraged empathy with the perspective of characters who were victims of racism but who resisted it' (22). Written and oral responses in journals and discussion were at the centre of the procedures. Many challenging and provocative issues are examined through this enquiry, including overt and institutionalised racism, whether teaching about race challenges or merely reinforces racism, the nature of empathy and the gender differences pupils exhibited. The cultural context, especially the subculture of the particular classroom, emerged as a dominant theme. The subtle interrelatedness of text, context, readers and writers is sensitively explored in a study that shows how reader-response methods can help to illuminate the values and attitudes that readers sometimes hide, even from themselves.

The second group of whole-culture studies tends to focus upon adolescent readers. Stories and poems, especially those encountered in school, are seen as but one aspect of the cultural context in which teenagers live and in which books are low on their agenda after television, computer games, rock music, comics and magazines. Beach and

Freedman's (1992) paper, 'Responding as a Cultural Act: Adolescents' Responses to Magazine Ads and Short Stories' widens the perspective from the individual reader's 'personal' and 'unique' responses to accommodate the notion of response as a cultural practice. They discuss the cultural practices required in adolescent peer groups and note the ways in which these are derived from experiences with the mass media, with examples from adolescents' responses to magazine advertisements and short stories. Particular points of interest in the responses of these 115 eighth- and eleventh-grade pupils are the gender differences, the tendency to blur fiction and reality when talking about the advertising images, and the low incidence of critical responses.

Reader-response criticism also influences Sarland's (1991) study of young people's reading. He takes seriously both Chambers's (1977) account of the implied child reader (discussed below) and Meek's (1987) plea for an academic study of children's literature which situates it within the whole culture of young people. Building on Fry's (1985) work, he considers the popular literature that children read both in relation to a culture dominated by television and video and in relation to the 'official' literature read in school. By eliciting and analysing students' responses to such books as King's *Carrie* (1974) and Herbert's *The Fog* (1975), Sarland draws upon response-oriented theory and practice to discuss the importance of these texts to their readers and to begin to open up a subculture of which, at best, teachers are usually only hazily aware.

Cross-cultural studies are relatively uncommon for the obvious reason that they are more difficult to set up and sustain. Bunbury and Tabbert's article for *Children's Literature in Education* (1989, reprinted Hunt 1992) compared the responses of Australian and German children to an Australian bush-ranger story, Stow's *Midnite* (1967/1982). Using Jauss's notion of 'ironic identification', where the reader is drawn in and willingly submits to the fictional illusion only to have the author subvert this aesthetic experience, the enquiry considered a range of responses; while there are interesting insights into individual readings, it none the less ends inconclusively by stating: 'The best we can say is that the capacity to experience ironic identification extends along a spectrum of reading encounters which vary in intensity' (Hunt 1992: 124). The study is ambitious in tackling two difficult topics whose relationship is complex: children's sense of the tone of a text and the effect of translation upon the readers' responses. To begin to open up such issues is an achievement in itself.

Chapter 6 of Dias and Hayhoe's (1988) book makes explicit the international perspective on the teaching of poetry that permeates the whole of this Anglo-Canadian collaboration. Views from Australia, Britain, Canada and the USA on good practice in poetry teaching all share the same principle of developing pupils' responses. Clearly, cross-cultural influences grow more readily and are more easily monitored in English-speaking countries than elsewhere; yet there is sufficient evidence here of cultural diversity to encourage other researchers to explore the ways in which we can learn from each other about how children's responses to literature are mediated by the cultural contexts in which they occur.

Text-oriented studies

Studies of children's literature which directly parallel the work of, say, Iser (1974) or Fish (1980) in their close examination of particular texts are surprisingly rare. It is as if those who work in this field have been so concerned with pedagogy and children as readers that they have failed to exploit reader-response criticism as a means of understanding the

nature of actual texts. Two concepts, however, which have received some attention are the 'implied reader' and the notion of 'intertextuality'. The first, developed by Iser (1974) after Booth (1961), for a time encouraged the search for the 'implied child reader' in children's books; the second followed from enquiries into how readers make meaning and the realisation of the complex relationships that exist between the readers, the text, other texts, other genres, and the cultural context of any 'reading'.

Although Chambers (1977) and Tabbert (1980) gave the lead, the implied child reader remains a neglected figure in children's book criticism. In 'The Reader in the Book' Chambers takes Iser's concept and advocates its central importance in children's book criticism. He illustrates Roald Dahl's assumptions about the implied adult reader of his story 'The Champion of the World' (1959) in contrast to those about the implied child reader of the rewritten version in the children's book *Danny: The Champion of the World* (1975), and argues that the narrative voice and textual features of the latter create a sense of an intimate, yet adult-controlled, relationship between the implied author and the implied child reader. He generalises from this example to claim that this voice and this relationship are common in children's books, and identifies both with the figure of the 'friendly adult storyteller who knows how to entertain children while at the same time keeping them in their place' (69). Much of the remainder of his article rests upon two further narrative features: 'the adoption of a child point of view' (72) to sustain this adult-author/child-reader relationship; and the deployment within the text of indeterminacy gaps which the reader must fill in order to generate meanings. These three characteristics – the literary relationship, the point of view, and the tell-tale gaps – are then exemplified in a critique of Boston's *The Children of Green Knowe* (1954).

Chambers's article is already regarded as a landmark in the development of criticism (Hunt 1990: 90), not least because it opened up one means of defining the singular character of a form of literature that is designated by its intended audience. That this lead has been followed so infrequently calls into question the seriousness of the whole critical enterprise in this field. Among the few who have exploited these concepts in relation to children's books is Tabbert (1980), who comments usefully on the notion of 'telling gaps' and 'the implied reader' in some classic children's texts and sees a fruitful way forward in psychologically oriented criticism, particularly in the methodology adopted by Holland. Benton (1992a) parallels the historically changing relationship between implied author and implied reader that is found in Iser's (1974) studies of Fielding, Thackeray and Joyce, with a corresponding critique of the openings of three novels by children's authors – Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1856), Day Lewis's *The Otterbury Incident* (1948) and Garner's *Red Shift* (1973). The emphases, however, here are upon the nature of the collaborative relationship and upon narrative technique rather than on the implied child reader. Shavit (1983: 60–7) extends Iser's concept to embrace the notion of childhood as well as the child as implied reader. After a historical perspective on the idea of childhood, the discussion focuses upon various versions of 'Little Red Riding Hood' in order to explore 'how far they were responsible for different implied readers' (61). In particular, she argues that prevailing notions of childhood helped determine the changing character of these texts over several centuries from Perrault's version to those of the present day.

By far the most rigorous account of the implied reader is that of Stephens (1992), given from a position that is sceptical about a mode of reading which locates the reader only within the text and ignores questions of ideology. He argues that in critical practice the being or meaning of the text is best characterised as 'a dialectic between textual discourse (including its construction of an implied reader and a range of potential subject

positions) and a reader's disposition, familiarity with story conventions and experiential knowledge' (59). His account of ideology and the implied reader in two picture books (Cooper and Hutton, *The Selkie Girl*, 1986; Gerstein, *The Seal Mother*, 1986) develops this argument and leads him to take issue with Chambers's view of the implied reader on ideological grounds. He says of Chambers's account that: 'his own ideology of reading demands a reified "implicated" reader, led by textual strategies to discover a determinate meaning' (67). Stephens's conceptualisation of the implied reader is significant both of itself and in helping to explain the paucity of critical effort in this area following Chambers's article. For it tells us that criticism has moved on and, in particular, that such concepts can no longer be regarded as innocent aspects of narrative.

Stephens, too, offers the fullest account to date of intertextuality in the third chapter of his book, 'Not by Words Alone: Language, Intertextuality and Society' (1992: 84–119). He outlines seven kinds of relationship which may exist between a particular text and any other texts and goes on to discuss various manifestations of intertextuality in children's literature, notably in fairy tales. Agee (1983: 55–9) concentrates on the narrower focus of literary allusion and reader-response and begins to explore the intertextual patterning of such books as *Z for Zachariah* (O'Brien 1977), *Jacob I Have Loved* (Paterson 1981) and *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury 1967). Stephens and Agee both approach the topic exclusively through the study of texts.

Meek (1988) keeps young readers constantly in view when she draws upon the intertext of oral and written literature, together with the Iserian concepts of the implied reader and indeterminacy gaps, in her brief but widely acclaimed paper 'How Texts Teach What Readers Learn'. Her main texts are picture books: the telling gaps in *Rosie's Walk* (Hutchins 1969) and *Granpa* (Burningham 1984) and the play of intertexts in *The Jolly Postman* (Ahlberg 1986) and the short story 'William's Version' (Mark 1980) are explored with great subtlety, and display, above all, the quality that distinguishes the best sort of criticism of children's literature: the ability to listen to children's responses to a book and to 'read' these with the same effort of attention that is afforded to the text themselves. Reader-response criticism accommodates both the reader and the text; there is no area of literary activity where this is more necessary than in the literature that defines itself by reference to its young readership.

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9 Psychoanalytical criticism

Hamida Bosmajian

Because the child and childhood hold a privileged position in most psychoanalytical theories, the elective affinity between children's literature and psychological criticism seems even more natural than the affinity between psychology and literature in general. Psychoanalytic theory adds to the literary text a 'second dimension – unfolding what might be called the unconscious content of the work' (Holland 1970: 131), but the condensations and displacements at work in the author–text–reader relation are problematised in children's literature because of the double reader: adult/child.

Children's fiction might be impossible because it rests on the assumption that there is a child who can be addressed when, in actuality, 'children's fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and that aims, unashamedly, to take the child in' (Rose 1984: 2). The implied author, even in first-person narration by a child character, is a displacement of the contexts of personal and collective values and neuroses. Furthermore, while the analyst is supposedly the most reliable reader–interpreter of stories told in a psychoanalytic dialogue by the analysand–author, the reader of adult literature may or may not be a reliable interpreter of the text. In children's literature the implied reader is, moreover, highly unreliable and, therefore, most easily 'taken in'. Thus, the authorial self is in a sense liberated, in that the textual strategies and gaps that constitute the subtext of the work escape the implied reader, the child. The author can experience therapeutic release without anxieties over the scrutiny of an adult's psychoanalytical critique.

The nemesis for the projection of the naive implied reader is the adult reader as psychoanalytic critic of children's literature who exposes the gaps, substitutions and displacements of the author and appropriates the author's text as a symptom of individual or cultural neuroses that underlie and undermine values associated with growth and development. While psychoanalytic critics of adult literature amplify the reader's appreciation of the text, those same critics will, in the case of children's literature, conceal their interpretation from the child and, therewith, both censor and protect the author. The child may be imaged as myth of origin – as father of the man and mother of the woman – but in children's literature the adult is in control.

The correspondences between author–text–reader and analysand–psychoanalytic dialogue–analyst break down, for author–reader are not in a dialogical relation, no matter how intensely the reader *responds*, nor can the critic–interpreter make enquiries of a character in a narrative, as an analyst can in the psychoanalytic situation. While critics act as if one could ask about Alice's relation with her parents as she develops from pawn to queen in *Through the Looking Glass*, they forget that she is a linguistic construct, a trope for the unresolved problems of her author (Greenacre 1955). It is important that psychoanalytic critics are aware of the ambivalences inherent in their method and do not seize one aspect

of a psychoanalytical theory as a tool for interpretation, thereby reducing the text to universals about human development (compare Hogan 1990; Knoepfelmacher 1990; Phillips and Wojcik-Andrews 1990; Steig 1990; Zipes 1990).

The following discussion will focus on defining those psychoanalytic theories that have influenced the criticism of children's literature. Frequently such criticism relies on the informal developmental psychological knowledge of the interpreter without reference to any specific theory. This is especially true of realistic narratives for young adults. The strongest psychoanalytic tradition of criticism can be found in the interpretation of folk tales and *märchen* and, to a lesser extent in fantasy literature. While Freud, Jung and their disciples have been important in interpretations of children's literature, the poststructuralist influence has not been as prevalent. Quite dominant, however, is the influence of psychological criticism that relates the development of the child character to the social context depicted in psychologically realistic narratives. Perhaps because of the deep issues involved in psychoanalytic criticism, critics of children's literature occasionally seem to screen discussions of psychoanalytical issues with analyses of social contexts, even where the topic is announced as being psychoanalytical (Smith and Kerrigan 1985).

Freudian criticism

Classical Freudian criticism interprets the work as an expression of psychopathography, as a symptom whose creation provided therapeutic release for the author. In 'The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming' (1908), Freud saw the crucial relationship between child-play/poet-language:

every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly, he arranges the things of this world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better ... Language has preserved this relationship between children's play and poetic creation.

(1908/1963 9: 144)

Just as it does between dream and text.

Freud assumed that all psychoneurotic symptoms are generated by psychic conflicts between a person's sexual desires and the strictures of society. The conflict is expressed through substitutions and displacements, just as in literature a metaphor's tenor and vehicle condense two disparate ideas into one image that hides and reveals what is not articulated. Similarly, displacement substitutes socially acceptable modes for desires that are forbidden. Substitutions thus function as censors in dreams and daydreams, in play and in texts. Freud's first triad of unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious defines the unconscious as a non-verbal, instinctual and infantile given and as dominated by the pleasure principle. The desires and conflicts (oral, anal, oedipal) of childhood persist throughout the adult's life and can be made conscious only by being first raised to the level of the pre-conscious which facilitates the dynamic of consciousness and repression through condensation and displacement. Freud later modified his first triad with the paradigm of id, ego and superego, in part because he suspected a greater simultaneity in the dynamics of the psyche. The revised triad places the embattled ego between the deterministic forces of the id and the internalised strictures of society. It is here where we find the cause of the pessimism in Freudian psychoanalytic theory: the ego's inevitable discontent.

Crucial for Freudian critics of children's literature is the importance Freud gave to the child in the psychoanalytic process. Though the Oedipus complex has been accepted as part of child development, Freud's insistence on the polymorphous sexuality of the infant (1962/1975: 39–72) is somewhat more troubling for most critics of children's literature, for if such sexuality is displaced in the text but communicates itself sub-textually to the child-reader, then the author has transferred his infantile sexuality and communicates it to the child. Texts such as Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (see Bosmajian 1985) and Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* might fall into this category.

Freud's profound appreciation of the psychological importance of language was bound to lead him not only to interpretations of everyday language phenomena in the processes of repression and substitution, but also to interpretations of major authors of European literature. In 'The Occurrence in Dreams of Materials from Fairy Tales', Freud notes that fairy tales have such an impact on the mental life of the child that the adult will use them later as screen memories for the experiences of childhood (1913/1963: 59).

'The serious study of children's literature may be said to have begun with Freud,' acknowledges Egan in his discussion of *Peter Pan* (1982: 37). Psychoanalysts have indeed been the precursors of the study of children's literature, which explains the powerful but dubious influence of Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), a discussion of familiar tales along infantile and adolescent psychosexual development. Bettelheim sees the child's libido as a threat to both a meaningful life and the social order; therefore, the child needs fairy tales to order his inner house by acquiring a moral education through the tales (5), for, as the stories unfold they 'give conscious credence and body to the id pressures and show ways to satisfy these that are in line with ego and superego' (6). Literary critics have strongly critiqued Bettelheim not only for his a-historicity and reductionism of Freud's theories (Zipes 1979), but also for his punitive pedagogy, for being 'oddly accusatory towards children' (Tatar 1992: xxii) and for displacing his 'own real life fantasies, particularly of the dutiful daughter who takes care of her father's needs' (xxv) into his interpretative work.

Jungian criticism

Jungian criticism discovers archetypes that are the basis for the images in a text. Pre-consciously, or consciously, the author connects with archetypal patterns of which the narrative becomes a variable whose content will somehow relate to the issue of the ego's integration with the self. Jung's concept of the therapeutic process begins with the recognition of the loss of an original wholeness, possessed by every infant, a wholeness lost through self-inflation and/or alienation of the ego. On a mythic level, the ego would experience a dark night of the soul followed by a breakthrough that establishes, not an integration with the self, but a connection with the transpersonal self. The end of Jungian analysis is not a complete individuation of the ego, but rather the analysand's recognition that growth is a life-long process, a quest, during which conscious and unconscious connect primarily through symbols and archetypes.

Jung assumed a personal unconscious consisting of memories and images gathered during a lifetime, for the archetypes, as experienced by the individual, are in and of the world. This personal unconscious is raised to consciousness when the analysand connects the personal with the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is an *a priori* existence of 'organising factors', the archetypes understood as inborn modes of functioning, rather like a grammar that generates and structures the infinite variables of

symbol formations whose recurrence is to be understood again as archetypal (Jung 1964: 67). Archetypes are ‘without known origin; and they reproduce themselves in any time or any part of the world – even where transmission by direct descent or “cross-fertilisation” through migration must be ruled out’ (69). Jung, too, believed that dreams are meaningful and can be understood (102) as their specific images connect with archetypes whose force can suddenly overwhelm the dreamer. Such an experience contrasts with the conscious use of representing archetypes through culturally defined images and motifs. Jung’s own metaphoric use of archetypal images such as shadow, anima or animus and self, blurred the distinction between archetype as a grammar and archetype as symbol.

Jung, whose theory has been criticised for demanding a vast amount of knowledge of myth, did not perceive the unconscious as an instinctual and libidinal battleground, although he posited a ‘primitive psyche’ in the child which functions in dreams and fantasies comparable to the physical evolution of mankind in the embryo (1964: 99). In Jung’s ‘Psychic Conflicts in a Child’ (1946/1954: 8–46), the child-patient, obsessed with the origin of babies, fantasised that she would give birth if she swallowed an orange, similar to women in fairy tales whose eating of fruit leads to pregnancy. The child-patient was eventually enlightened by her father, but Jung concludes that, while false explanations are not advisable, no less inadvisable is the insistence on the right explanation, for that inhibits the freedom of the mind’s development through concretistic explanations which reduce the spontaneity of image-making to a falsehood (34).

Because the essential nature of all art escapes our understanding, Jung did not perceive literature as psychopathography. We can interpret only ‘that aspect of art which consists in the process of artistic creation’ (1931/1966: 65). While he admits that literary works can result from the intentionality of the author, they are also those that ‘force themselves on the author’, reveal his inner nature, and overwhelm the conscious mind with a flood of thoughts and images he never intended to create: ‘Here the artist is not identical with the process of creation; he is aware that he is subordinate to his work or stands outside it, as though he were a second person’ (73). An author may, for a time, be out of fashion when, suddenly, readers rediscover his work, because they perceive in it archetypes that speak to them with renewed immediacy (77). We can, therefore, only discuss the psychological phenomenology in a work of literature.

It is evident how readily children’s literature, especially when it has components of fantasy, connects with Jungian theories. Marie Louise von Franz (1977, 1978) has written comprehensive studies of fairy tales which the Jungian critic tends to see as ‘allegories of the inner life’ that meet ‘the deep-seated psychic and spiritual needs of the individual’ (Cooper 1983: 154). The problem with such criticism is that it reduces images in fairy tales to fixed allegorical meanings without regard for historical and social contexts, as the Jungian critic basically explains metaphor with metaphor. Northrop Frye’s discussion of archetypes in terms of convention and genre is an attempt to avoid such reductionism (1957). What makes the Jungian approach attractive to interpreters of children’s literature is that the theory assumes an original wholeness that can be regained after alienation is overcome. This coincides with the comic resolution of so many narratives for children and young adults.

In Jungian literary criticism children’s literature is often seen as privileged, just as the ‘primitive psyche’ of the child is in Jungian psychoanalysis. ‘Children’s literature initiates us into psychic reality, by telling about the creatures and perils of the soul and the heart’s possibilities of blessing in images of universal intelligibility’ (Hillman 1980: 5). At its best

Jungian criticism is able to integrate the author's and the reader's needs as exemplified in Lynn Rosenthal's interpretation of Lucy Boston's *The Children of Green Knome* (1980).

Ego psychology and object relations theories

The generation of psychoanalysts that was influenced by, reacted against and revised Freud, distinguishes itself by overcoming Freud's pessimism regarding the ego's inevitable discontent. While the new focus does not deny the existence of the unconscious, it emphasises the possibility of healthy growth and development in the ego's self-realisation in relation to its environment. Karen Horney and Abraham Maslow, Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott describe possibilities for growth through constructive management of the id's pressures. Each insists that the developing psyche of the child responds to environmental conditions with a positive urge to self-actualisation that is thwarted only by hostile environments. From the perspective of ego psychology, author and reader participate in a shareable fantasy that constructively breaks down 'for a time the boundaries between self and other, inner and outer, past and future, and ... may neutralise the primal aggressions bound up in those separations' (Holland 1968: 340). Psychoanalytic literary critics have, however, also been concerned that ego psychology tends to be in one direction only, 'namely from the ego as a publicly adjusted identity' (Wright 1984: 57).

Karen Horney and Abraham Maslow

According to Horney, the goal of psychoanalysis is the patient's discovery of the possibility of self-realisation and the recognition that good human relations are an essential part of this, along with the faculty for creative work and the acceptance of personal responsibility (1950: 334). Persistent denial of childhood conflicts and their screening with defensive self-delusions block self-realisation. Irrational expectations or 'neurotic claims' such as self-idealisation obscure not only self-hate, but also 'the unique alive forces' that each self possesses and that are distorted by the self-illusions. The therapeutic process weakens the obstructive forces so that the constructive forces of the real self can emerge (348). The constructive forces in ego psychology become known as the 'Third Force'.

Bernard Paris has applied 'Third Force' psychology to several canonical novels whose self-alienating characters fit Horney's descriptions of neurotic styles, while self-activating characters express their 'Third Force' as defined by Maslow (Paris 1974: 29). For Maslow, the 'Third Force' is our 'essentially biologically based inner nature', unique to the person but also species-wide, whose needs, emotions and capacities are 'either neutral, pre-moral or positively good' (1968: 3). Neuroses result when our hierarchically organised basic needs are not met (21). When one level of needs is satisfied, the needs of another level emerge as persons define themselves existentially. During that process the person has 'peak experiences', epiphanic moments that afford glimpses into the state of being fully actualised and can have the effect of removing symptoms, of changing a person's view of himself and the world, of releasing creativity and generally conveying the idea that life is worth living in spite of its difficulties (101). Maslow admits that not all peak experiences are moments of 'Being recognition' (100), but he insists that people are 'most their identities in peak experiences' (103) where they feel most self-integrated.

The development of the ego as self-reliant and socially accepted is perhaps most evident in the young adult novel whose comic resolution integrates the young person with socially acceptable norms. Frequently such narratives include the figure of the social worker or

therapist who aids the process, or the young protagonist plans to become a therapist so as to ‘help kids in trouble’. Such problem narratives are accessible to young readers through stories that occasionally seem like case studies. The young adult novel that projects the genuine misfit as a worthwhile subject is a rarity. The largely middle-class context of young adult novels generally furthers the optimism implied in ego psychology.

Melanie Klein and D. W. Winnicott

According to Klein, because the ego is not fully integrated at birth, it is subject to splitting and fragmentation as it projects states of feeling and unconscious wishes on objects or absorbs qualities of the object through introjection where they become defined as belonging to the ego.

Like Freud, Klein saw the ‘exploration of the unconscious [as] the main task of psychoanalytic procedure, and that the analysis of transference [was] the means of achieving this’ (1955/1975a: 123). Her analysands were primarily children whose inability to freely associate verbally led Klein to develop the psychoanalytic play technique already begun by Anna Freud (1925/1975b: 146).

The use of simple toys in a simply equipped room brought out ‘a variety of symbolical meanings’ bound up with the child’s fantasies, wishes and experiences. By approaching the child’s play in a manner similar to Freud’s interpretation of dreams, but by always individualising the child’s use of symbols, Klein felt she could gain access to the child’s unconscious (1975a: 137). She discovered that the primary origin of impulses, fantasies and anxieties could be traced back to the child’s original object relation – the mother’s breast – even when the child was not breastfed (138).

In commenting on the influence of Klein on literary theory, Elizabeth Wright regrets that Klein’s demonstration of fantasy as a precondition of any engagement with reality has been neglected by literary critics who have instead focused on the aesthetic of ego psychology (1984: 83–4). It is through the structure of fantasy that the child acts out not only real or imagined damage, but also the desire for reparation. Klein saw the monsters and menacing figures of myths and fairy tales as parent displacements exerting unconscious influences on the child by making it feel threatened and persecuted, but such emotions ‘can clear our feelings to some extent towards our parents of grievances, we can forgive them for the frustrations we had to bear, become at peace with ourselves’ so that ‘we are able to love others in the true sense of the word’ (1975b: 343).

In criticisms of children’s literature, Klein’s approach can reveal how the text enables the actualisation of the ego intentionally or how it falls short of it. For example, an interpretation of Bianco’s *The Velveteen Rabbit* reveals it as a fantasy of unresolved ambivalence between the need to be loved and becoming independent, that is, real. Because ‘the story never acknowledges the Rabbit’s desire to grow away from the object of his attachment, and hence never acknowledges the basis for his entry into the depressive position, it cannot credit him with working through it’ (Daniels 1990: 26). The Kleinian perspective also offers insight into the relation of fantasy to guilt and reparation as exemplified in White’s *Charlotte’s Web* (Rustin and Rustin 1987: 161).

While Klein focused on play as a means to the end of the therapeutic process, D. W. Winnicott saw play as intrinsically facilitating healthy development and group relationships. Even psychoanalysis is an elaborate playing ‘in the service of communication with oneself and others’ (1971: 41). In his studies of babies and children, Winnicott retained the psychoanalytic attention to inner reality along with an emphasis on the child’s cultural

and social context. Crucial in his discovery is the concept of the 'transitional object': 'one must recognise the central position of Winnie-the-Pooh' (xi). By transitional object and transitional space Winnicott designates the intermediate area of experience between the thumb and the teddy bear, between oral eroticism and true object relationships. Identifying the mother's breast as part of itself, the baby must develop the ability of the 'not me' through substitutions which are transitions between the illusion of identification and the acceptance of the 'not me'. The baby's relationship with the transitional object has special qualities: the infant assumes right but not omnipotence over the object which can be loved and changed, even mutilated, by the infant. Gradually, the infant will be able to detach itself from the object which becomes consigned to a limbo, rather than being introjected by the infant (1–5). The object is not a signifier for some hidden unconscious content, but a crucial partner in the game of intersubjectivity as the playing infant tests out the 'me'/'not me'.

Winnicott's concept of the transitional object not only lends itself to the interpretation of content images in narratives, but also to the text itself. Both author and reader can claim the text as transitional object. Small children do indeed appropriate a book as object – loving it, adding to it, mutilating it. An especially Winnicottian book would be Margaret Wise Brown's *Good Night Moon*, which has been cited as an example of the child's having just learned the distinction between animate and inanimate objects. 'Good night, bears' (toys) and 'good night, kittens' is acceptable, but saying good night to chairs and mittens provokes shrieks of laughter in the child (Applebee 1978: 41) who does not yet accept the object 'bear' as inanimate. *Good Night Moon* is, for a certain age, a transitional object containing many transitional objects that assuage bedtime anxieties as the child connects with all of them, thus assuring itself of the 'me' before the lights go out at bedtime.

Jacques Lacan: the return to Freud through language

For Freud the subconscious is the irreducible radical of the psyche, its universal, whose paradox it is that nothing raised from it remains unconscious: we can only be conscious *of something*. Thus the unconscious is replaced by the comprehensible mental acts of the ego, be they dreams, symbolisations or linguistic utterances. As Wright points out, for Jacques Lacan 'the dictum "the unconscious is structured like a language"' is borne out in that

every word indicates the absence of what it stands for, a fact that intensifies the frustration of this child of language, the unconscious, since the absence of satisfaction has not to be accepted. Language imposes a chain of words along which the ego must move while the unconscious remains in search of the object it has lost.

(Wright 1984: 111)

The unconscious as a language allows Lacan to revise Freud's self-sufficiency of the unconscious with social interaction. How this comes about through the development of the infant and how this relates to the perception of the text as psyche – a major shift away from the author's or reader's psyche – has special relevance to interpreters of children's literature.

Lacan distinguishes three stages in the infant's development: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. In the imaginary or mirror stage, which can happen at the age of six months, the infant receives the *imago* of its own body (Lacan 1977: 3). Having seen itself

only as fragmentary, the infant perceives in the mirror a symbolic 'mental permanence of the I', but this perception prefigures alienation, for the mirror stage is a spatial illusion of totality (4), an imaginary identification with reflection. The mirror stage, which is pre-verbal, conveys the illusion that the image will respond to the child's wishes, as did the mother–breast–infant identification. The symbolic stage is the stage of language, a stage that will form the subject henceforth only in and as dialogue. The implied assumption that language may have definitive authority is undermined or deconstructed by Lacan's argument that every utterance is permeated by the unconscious in the sense that wholeness, meaning and gratification of wishes are perpetually deferred. The real, not to be confused with 'external reality', describes what is lacking in the symbolic – 'it is the residue of articulation or the umbilical cord of the symbolic' (ix–x) (translator's note).

The literary text, then, is an image of the unconscious structured like a language. 'The lure of all texts,' comments Wright, 'lies in a revelation, of things veiled coming to be unveiled, of characters who face shock at this unveiling' (1984: 121). When this phenomenon is given utterance in the reader–interpreter's language, meaning is inevitably deferred. In contrast to Freudian interpretation, we have here no unearthing of authorial neuroses. The Lacanian consequence for reader and text is the realisation that

the selves we see ourselves as being are as fictional [made up of language] as the stories of written fiction – limited images like those we see in mirrors when we first became conscious of our separateness – so fiction can be read in terms of the way it echoes our basic human activity of inventing ourselves and becoming conscious of the limitation of our invention. All we usually call reality is in fact fiction, and always less complete than the actual real world outside our consciousness.

(Nodelman 1992: 93–4)

Perry Nodelman discusses how Cinderella becomes a fixed subject at the end of the story rather than the multifaceted one she was. As she completes her stage of becoming, she has actually lost wholeness in her state of being (94). An analysis of *Charlotte's Web* shows how Lacan's imaginary and symbolic stage work through the 'Miracle of the Web' in that Wilbur perceives himself and is perceived as transformed through the ability of words to reorient desire by demonstrating 'that things are desirable because they are signified and, therefore, significant' in and through language (Rushdy 1991: 56). Another Lacanian interpretation applies the concept of the subject being created by disjunction and discontinuity to Russell Hoban's *The Mouse and His Child* where the mouse child, submerged to the bottom of a pond, is jubilant when it sees itself reflected in the labelless Bonzo dog food can: 'He sees himself suddenly whole, apparently co-ordinated and in control' (Krips 1993: 95). The directive 'be happy' is in *The Mouse and His Child* as authoritative as Charlotte's five single-word texts in the web, in that it creates the illusion of desire fulfilled, even as desire is deferred.

Psychoanalytic theory and the feminist critique

The patrimony psychoanalytic criticism received from Freud has exerted a deep 'anxiety of influence' on the feminist critic (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 45–92; Gallop 1982), primarily because of Freud's definition of female sexuality and his centring of the male myth of Oedipus, both of which reduce the female to an addendum. Revisionary readings of Freud, particularly those by French feminists influenced by Lacan, both appropriate and

retain his powerful influence. Feminist readings of Jung underwent less radical revisions (Lauter and Rupprecht 1985). Even without specific reference to ego-relations and object psychology, the feminist critic, by delineating the struggle of the female in a patriarchally constructed world, finds in the concept of self-actualisation an ally in her attempt at social transformation.

While not denying the existence of the subconscious, feminist psychoanalytic criticism, including the feminist criticism of children's literature, privileges the concept of social construction in the development of the female. Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* has been especially influential in its synthesis of psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender where 'the reproduction of mothering occurs through social structurally induced psychological processes' and is 'neither a product of biology nor of intentional role training' (1978: 7). Here the critic of children's literature finds a female focus, especially for the mother–daughter relation (Barzilai 1990; Murphy 1990; Natov 1990). The focus on the body–self relations allows the feminist critic to explore unique female experiences that have been neglected in the study of literature. The focus on the social construction of female and male children, especially since the nineteenth-century middle-class self-definition of gender roles and the family, has guided feminists to valuable contextual insights into the history of children's literature and its readers.

A major issue in feminist criticism is the problematics of the female writer's precursors which has led Gilbert and Gubar to revise Bloom's 'anxiety of influence' (Bloom 1973) with 'anxiety of authorship' by which the female writer questions her claim to be a writer (Gilbert and Gubar 1979: 48–9). It remains to be seen whether the important role of female writers in children's literature and the status of children's literature as a field of study might be understood as defences against the pressures of the male-dominated literary and critical tradition.

Conclusion

The revisions and transformations by which psychoanalytical theories and criticisms continue to construct themselves have retained so far the concept of the unconscious and its powerful influence on the ego's development and struggle in the world. Children's literature, whose language signifies the substitutions and displacements necessitated in that struggle, intimates and makes acceptable the dream of desire. It is a great irony of our psychoanalytic age that the psychological self-help narratives for young readers abandon consideration of the powers of the id in favour of the social adjustment of the young ego and that they do so, usually, in the language of low mimetic accessibility where the mode of romance and poetry is gone. That phenomenon is itself worthy of psychoanalytical interpretations of authors, texts and readers.

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10 Feminism revisited

Lissa Paul

At the end of the original version of this essay on feminism and children's literature, in the first edition of this Encyclopedia, I wondered what feminist theory would look like in the new millennium. Now I know. It's over. It's not that criticism of children's books influenced by feminism is no longer being written. There is a lot of very good feminist-inspired criticism about – and it has changed the landscape of children's literature studies. What's over is the feminist movement that supported the development of feminist criticism in the 1970s and 1980s. Feminism is over in the same way that Romanticism is over, and rationalism is over and existentialism is over and Marxism is over. We've been changed by those critical movements and they all continue to influence our readings of texts. But the movements themselves have been relegated to their particular historical periods. Although feminism as a critical movement is over, its influence is alive and well and exerting itself on what we read, and on how we interpret and value what we read.

The end of feminism in the late 1990s seems to have been precipitated by women (white, middle-class women) who felt that the feminist campaign promises of the early 1970s hadn't quite been kept: that gender equity still wasn't possible, that there was still a glass ceiling preventing them from reaching the tops of their professions, and that it was still all but impossible to have, simultaneously, a successful career, a good marriage, a happy family – and perfect beauty. Several books by jaded feminists told this story – but two turned out to be most influential: *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (1991) by Naomi Wolf, and *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (1992) by Susan Faludi. 'Backlash', in fact, became the word to describe the end of feminism – and the rise of various kinds of men's movements and concerns about the failure of boys to do as well as girls on standardised tests. Despite the end of feminism, the basic tenets of feminist theory I outlined in the earlier essay are still very much with us (and available in a wonderful collection of essays, *Feminisms*, edited by Robyn Warhol and Diane Herndl) including attention to: distinctive patterns of women's writing (*écriture féminine*); to the 'resisting' feminine reader who recognises that 'good' literature had been implicitly defined as masculine; to the historical reclamation of a feminine literary tradition; and to the inclusion of voices other than white male ones. These critical ways of seeing continue to influence the ways in which literature, including children's literature, is written, read and understood. Portions of the original essay that traced the history of feminist scholarship in children's literature have been left intact. This new essay is not so much rewritten as over-written – to reflect the ways in which feminist criticism has become an integral part of the landscape of children's book criticism in the twenty-first century.

In the original essay, I named 'the destabilisation of hierarchical orders' as one of the mobilising features of feminist theory – and then pointed out, ironically, that people

working as children's literature scholars still set up an implicit hierarchical system that put literary critics at the top and put librarians, teachers – and children – lower down. The heartening news is that the boundaries have been breached. In 2002, for example, *The Journal of Children's Literature*, a refereed journal published by the National Council of Teachers of English (so primarily a journal for people working in education faculties rather than literature faculties) published a special issue, 'Feminist Approaches to Children's Literature'. Essays by literary scholars Lynne Vallone and Wolfgang Iser appear in the same issue as education scholars Ruth McKoy Lowery and Patricia Austin. There is a shared critical ground, visible in the works cited in both kinds of essays: literary scholars attending to the work of education scholars – and vice versa. That's encouraging in the twenty-first century, especially as the future of children's literature studies will probably demand more interdisciplinary co-operation and attention. But not all the updated news is so good.

Issues of gender equity remain unresolved, despite the body of work pointing towards ways of addressing discriminatory practices. In 'Sexism and Children's Literature: A Perspective for Librarians' (1981), Christine Nicholls recognises that 'sexism is a type of colonialism', but she then goes on to suggest that solutions to the problem include the use of 'white out' and the abandonment of books no longer in accord with contemporary definitions of gender equity. Hugh Crago (a psychotherapist and a fine children's literature critic) offers a sensitively worked-out corrective. In 'Sexism, Literature and Reader-Response: A Reply to Christine Nicholls', he reminds Nicholls (and the rest of us) that responses to texts are subject to large fluctuations, especially in fluid forms like fairy tales where versions, translations and illustrations all contribute to shaping the interpretative possibilities of texts. He also foregrounds the idea that there is really no such thing as 'the one-way cause and effect relationship' (Crago 1981: 161) between reader and text – something implicit in the Nicholls article and in a great many like it.

There are two points worth highlighting here. One is that the emphasis on sex-role stereotyping and sexism, still found most often in education and library science journals, is connected with an honest front-line attempt to create a more female-friendly climate, especially in schools. That's good. The other point worth keeping in mind is that post-structuralist discussions, especially those on semiotics, deconstruction, ideology and subjectivity, make it possible to develop language and strategies that speak – to borrow a phrase from Carol Gilligan – 'in a different voice'. For an academic feminist children's literature critic, feminist admonitions to remember our histories and value members of our communities continue to sound.

Children's literature offers to children the promise of inclusion in a literate community (something regarded as culturally valuable, at least nominally). The critical apparatus surrounding children's books offers an intellectual understanding of what inclusion means and how it might be achieved. What feminist theory has done for children's literature studies – and for all fields of literary study – is to insist on the right to be included, not just as honorary white men. Beverly Lyon Clark, in 'Fairy Godmothers or Wicked Stepmothers', makes the issue explicit when she encourages children's literature scholars to talk back and 'recognise whom we are stepping on, whom we are putting down, and why' (1993: 174). Clark's questioning of the relations between children's literature critics and feminist critics continued to resonate through the 1990s.

In the original essay I cited two special feminist issues of two children's literature journals. The *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* ran a special section, edited by Anita Moss, in the Winter 1982 edition: 'Feminist Criticism and the Study of Children's Literature'. In that early collection of essays there were several reviews of books of feminist

literary criticism, each sketching possible critical lines children's literature critics might find worth exploring. Virginia Wolf, for instance, writes about alternatives to the heroic quest in science fiction; and Lois Kuznets about texts that value communities rather than kingdoms. In December 1991, *The Lion and the Unicorn* published an issue called 'Beyond Sexism: Gender Issues in Children's Literature'. By that time the lessons of feminist theory had been internalised, and critics were actively constructing a feminist tradition in children's literature. There was a switch from 'feminist criticism' to 'gender' studies, marking the subtle inclusion of gay and lesbian studies into the fray. 'Gender', even in the early 1990s, was being used as a code to prevent feminist studies from becoming a pink-collar ghetto. The broadening of the items on an initially feminist agenda progressed apace through the 1990s. In 1993, the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* published a special section, 'Mothers and Daughters in Children's Literature', edited by Mitzi Myers. And in September 1999, Kenneth Kidd was the guest editor for an issue of *The Lion and the Unicorn* (24, 3) on sexuality and children's literature.

In keeping with emphasis in this essay on tracking the historical record of feminist influence on children's literature studies – and taking to heart critic Jane Gallop's cryptic caution to remember that 'history is like a mother' (1992: 206–39) – I'm going to focus on three broad areas of academic children's literature criticism influenced (unanxiously) by feminist theory: the rereading of texts for previously unrevealed interpretations; the reclaiming of texts that had been devalued or dismissed; and the redirection of feminist theory into providing a welcoming climate for texts by people marginalised by patriarchal colonial societies. The titles in each of my three sections in this essay, 'Rereading', 'Reclaiming' and 'Redirection', take their cue from Adrienne Rich's ideas that feminist poetics are about 'revision' (Rich 1976).

Rereading

The desire for feminist rereading comes from an understanding of the ways ideological assumptions about the constitution of good literature (or criticism for that matter) work. By the early 1970s, feminist critics like Kate Millett (1977) had made it common knowledge that assumptions about good literature had been predicated on the belief that the adult white male was normal, while virtually everyone else was deviant or marginal. And so was born a critical desire to see if a feminine literary tradition, and feminine culture, could be made visible. By using techniques from deconstruction (derived largely from Derrida) and from contemporary discussions of ideology (from Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu) and subjectivity (largely derived from Lacan), feminist critics began to look at the ways ideological assumptions are played out in the text. They searched for a feminine tradition of 'other' stories: mother, daughter, sister stories (Chodorow (1978), Hirsch (1989)); a preference for survival tactics over honour (Gilligan (1982)); a search for a 'both/and' feminine plot rather than an 'either/or' oedipal plot (Hirsch); a preference for multiplicity, plurality, jouissance and a valuing of pro-creations, recreations and new beginnings (Cixous (1991), Gallop, Rich); a questioning of rigid male/female gender distinctions (Butler); and an insistence women not white or Anglophone have a voice too (hooks (1992), Spivak). Feminist children's literature critics also participate in this recovery of a female literary tradition (Clark, Kidd (2000), Myers (1986, 1987, 1991), Pace, Paul (1997/1990, 1998), Trites, Vallone (1990, 1991) and Zipes among others). The following small sketches of reinterpretation, rehabilitation and re-creation demonstrate the range of ways in which that tradition is being revealed.

Reinterpretation

Feminist reinterpretations of familiar classics like *The Secret Garden* and *Little Women* turn stories we thought were about struggles to conform to the social order into stories about women's healing and successful communities of women (Bixler (1991), Nelson, Auerbach). *Little Women* – as read by Edward Salmon (a nineteenth-century authority on children's literature) in his 1888 obituary of Alcott in *Atalanta* – is a story about instructing girls to be 'the proper guardians of their brothers' and to be 'all-powerful for good in their relations with men' (449). But for Nina Auerbach, in *Communities of Women* (1978), it is the story of 'the formation of a reigning feminist sisterhood whose exemplary unity will heal a fractured society' (37). The critical rereading turns it from a story about women learning how to serve men into a story of women supporting each other.

The turn to the new millennium raised Louisa Alcott's status in the literary canon of children's books – in much the same that Virginia Woolf's status as a modernist was raised by feminist scholarship. As Rita Felski argues in *Literature after Feminism* (2003), Woolf wasn't considered in the same league as Joyce or Eliot until feminist critics argued for her aesthetic as well as her political contributions. Alcott, too, had always been popular, but it wasn't until considerations of her literary merit became a feminist project that the status of *Little Women* as an American classic came to be understood in the same way as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain is understood as an American classic. The brilliance of Alcott's most famous book is made visible in an enlightening collection of twenty essays, assembled by editors Janice M. Alberghene and Beverly Lyon Clark, *'Little Women' and the Feminist Imagination: Criticism, Controversy, Personal Essays* (1999). What is immediately clear in the collection is the way in which feminist theory has widened out to include discussions beyond the obvious mother/daughter or father/daughter relations. Victoria Roberts offers a comic strip *Little Women*, Roberta Seelinger Trites considers lesbian politics in the story, and Jan Susina writes about (resisting) male readers. Susan Laird writes about teaching, Susan Gannon about film versions of the book, and Aiko Moro-oka provides a bibliography that offers a glimpse of the way Alcott's work is received in Japan. Those are just a few of the essays in the collection – but the range speaks eloquently to what feminist theory has become in the twenty-first century. Gender relations, gender politics, reception, translations (into other languages and other media) all seem perfectly at home under the collective umbrella of the 'feminist imagination'.

Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation of works by Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth and other 'lady moralists' of the Georgian and Romantic periods is one of the major success stories of academic feminist children's literature criticism. Although I am going to focus on criticism by Mitzi Myers, credit also goes to Anita Moss (1988, 1993–4) and Lynne Vallone.

As Mitzi Myers pointedly states, texts by Georgian 'lady' moralists as rendered in standard overviews of children's literature, suffer from 'something like the critical equivalent of urban blight' (Myers 1986: 31). John Rowe Townsend dismisses these women as ranging 'from the mildly pious to the sternly moralistic' (1974: 39). Harvey Darton refers to 'the truculent dogmatic leanings of Mrs Sherwood and Mrs Trimmer' and the 'completely dogmatic' Mary Godwin (1982: 156, 196).

Myers offers different readings. She participates in what feminist critic Elaine Showalter calls 'gynocriticism', that is, criticism that attends to 'the woman as producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres, and structures of literature by women' (Showalter 1985: 128). What Myers asks is how those Georgian women found autonomy and influence in a world where those freedoms were denied. Her answers transform lady moralists scorned for their conformity into the founding mothers of a feminist pedagogical tradition.

These and other late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women, including Dorothy and Mary Ann Kilner and Eliza Fenwick, for example, all knew how to convey the sounds of real children fighting and playing and learning. *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing and Childhood 1600–1900* (Hilton *et al.* 1997) is a collection of essays about women as teachers, inspired by Jane Johnson (1706–59), wife of a Buckinghamshire vicar, and a mother. Her homemade domestic teaching materials – poems, stories and alphabet mobiles – survive in the archive in the Lilly Library of Indiana University. Her story provided the impetus for other stories in the collection about maternal pedagogies.

In Georgian England, where there were few roles for (upper-class) women except as wives, mothers and governesses, Mary Wollstonecraft, Maria Edgeworth and other women like Mrs Trimmer and Mrs Sherwood transformed their roles. They constructed 'an almost unrecognised literary tradition', one that 'accepts and emphasizes the instructive and intellectual potential of narrative' (Myers 1986: 33). Maria Edgeworth, for example, creates female protagonists as 'desiring' subjects, not just objects of desire. And Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *Mrs Mason* stories, redefines power in unpatriarchal terms 'as pedagogic and philanthropic power' (43). For a full-length portrait of the relationship between maternal pedagogy and power, *Becoming Victoria* (2001) by Lynne Vallone offers a brilliant analysis of the educational influences that shaped the young Princess Victoria into a queen.

Re-creation

Although I've focused so far on the way academic critics construct feminist traditions in children's literature, I'm mindful of the ways authors who published while under the influence of late twentieth-century feminism changed the way we read. Author Ursula Le Guin has chronicled the change most dramatically. In *Earthsea Revisioned* (1993), the published version of a lecture she gave in Oxford in 1992, Le Guin records the influence of gender politics on her *Earthsea* quartet. The first three *Earthsea* novels, published between 1968 and 1972, are in the genre of the traditional heroic fantasy, something Le Guin defines as 'a male preserve: a sort of great game-park where Beowulf feasts with Teddy Roosevelt, and Robin Hood goes hunting with Mowgli, and the cowboy rides off into the sunset alone' (Le Guin 1993: 5).

Le Guin does not apologise for the male-order, hierarchical world in the first three novels. But twenty years after their publication she recognises things about that world that she didn't understand when she made it. With the insights of contemporary feminist theory, she understands that, at the time, she was 'writing partly by the rules, as an artificial man, and partly against the rules, as an inadvertent revolutionary' (7). In her revolutionary mode, in a partly conscious attempt to create a hero from a visible minority, Le Guin made Ged and all the good guys in the *Earthsea* books black, and the bad guys white. Nevertheless, the good guys were standard male-order heroes anyway. They lived

lives of 'contenance; abstinence; denial of relationship' (16). And they worked in a world predicated on 'power as domination over others, unassailable strength, and the generosity of the rich' (14).

But in *Tehannu*, the fourth and final *Earthsea* book, published seventeen years after the third, Le Guin scraps male-order heroism. She creates Tenar, a feminist pro-creative, recreative hero: 'All her former selves are alive in her: the child Tenar, the girl priestess Arha ... and Goha, the farmwife, mother of two children. Tenar is whole but not single. She is not pure' (Le Guin 1993: 18). The traditional male hero, the dragonslayer and dragonlord, marked by his capacity to defeat evil, to win, and to receive public adoration and power, is nowhere in sight. In the new mythology Le Guin creates, the dragon is transformed into a familiar, a guide for a new female hero: 'The child who is our care, the child we have betrayed, is our guide. She leads us to the dragon. She is the dragon.' Le Guin moves out of the hierarchical ordering of the heroic world, and into a new world where the search is for wildness, a 'new order of freedom' (26).

At the turn of the millennium, Le Guin's fantasy novels seem touchingly well behaved in the context of the fantasy novels produced by younger women who never experienced a pre-feminist world. The fantasies of Francesca Lia Block belong here: urban, closer to wish-fulfilment dream than medieval romance, her stories, particularly those in the *Girl Goddess #9: Nine Stories* (1996) collection open out into a more overtly sexual world than the world of *Earthsea*.

Reclaiming

One of the most significant feminist projects of the feminist movement was the reissuing of long out-of-print books by women authors. Many had been gathering dust on library shelves for dozens, sometimes hundreds, of years. Most had long since ceased to make any money for anyone. But the feminist press Virago, particularly, put many of these authors into circulation, including Vera Brittain, Miles Franklin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Now easily available in good-quality paperback editions, they are read for pleasure, not just among scholars, though scholars were often the first to create the demand for these books by finding them, writing about them and bringing them to university course lists and to public attention.

Though there is no exactly comparable resurrection of authored fiction in children's literature (Angela Brazil is as unlikely to be reissued as Talbot Baines Reed), there is interest in rethinking the genre of the school story, as Beverly Lyon Clark demonstrates in *Regendering the School Story: Sassy Sissies and Tattling Tomboys* (1996).

There is, however, one class of texts enjoying a new lease on life as a direct result of the second wave of feminism: fairy tales. In fact, the shift in fairy-tale fashions provides a virtual paradigm for shifts in feminist poetics. In the 1970s, with the rise of the second wave of feminist theory, there was increasing discomfort with the gender dynamics in popular Grimm, Andersen and Perrault fairy tales (though Simone de Beauvoir had already drawn attention to passive Grimm heroines twenty years earlier in *The Second Sex* (1953)). Girls and women play dead or doormats (as in 'Snow White', 'Cinderella', and 'Sleeping Beauty') or are severely mutilated (as in 'The Little Mermaid'). The move was on for female heroes (I'll use the term in preference to 'heroines' – who tend to wait around a lot). Unfortunately, the female heroes of the early 1970s tended not to be of a different order, as is Tenar in Le Guin's *Tehannu*. They tended to be more like men tricked out in drag. The stories were the same as those with male heroes in them. But instead of

the stories being about boys seeking adventure, profit and someone to rescue, girls were in the starring roles. They rescued instead of being rescued. Like television situation comedies that colour middle-class families black, most of those tales died natural deaths. *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch is a dubious exception. It is still in print, and the princess uses the feminist tactic of deceit to defeat the dragon and rescue the prince. But as the prince suffers from the traditionally feminine vice of vanity, s/he is essentially rejected for a lack of machismo.

When revisionist tales virtually disappeared in the late 1970s, reclaimed tales looked like a more viable alternative. But in the first collections of reclaimed tales, the preference for male characteristics in female heroes was still much in evidence. In the introduction to *Tatterhood and Other Tales*, for example, Ethel Johnston Phelps states a preference for stories with 'active and courageous girls and women in the leading roles', ones who are 'distinguished by extraordinary courage and achievements' (1978: vx). In other words, she prefers the same old male type, who, as Valerie Walkerdine suggests, is 'gender-neutral, self-disciplined, and active' (1990: 120). That is, the preferred hero is still a man. The post-feminist age seems to have produced a thriving genre of fairy-tale fantasies. Revisionist tales in this tradition include *Deerskin* (1993) by Robin McKinley and *White as Snow* (2000) by Tanith Lee – both of whom are very prolific and successful. And critics such as Roberta Seelinger Trites, in *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* (1997) and Jack Zipes in *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children and the Culture Industry* (1997) track the quickly shifting contours of feminist readings.

Two collections of reclaimed fairy tales for Virago by Angela Carter (1991, 1992) speak in a different voice, enabling modern readers to hear the voices of women from other times and other cultures. They are so good they are difficult to put down. She doesn't just present tales about the unrelieved glory of women – a male-order project anyway. Instead, she tries 'to demonstrate the extraordinary richness and diversity of responses to the same common predicament – being alive – and the richness and diversity with which femininity, in practice is represented in "unofficial" culture: its strategies, its plots, its hard work' (Carter 1991: xiv). One of her favourite stories from this collection was apparently 'Tongue Meat', a Swahili story that tells of a languishing queen who only revives when fed 'tongue meat', something that turns out to be a metaphor for stories. The tales of girls and women that Angela Carter revives are exactly that kind of 'tongue meat'. They establish an alternative feminist tradition – one that hadn't been visible before. Angela Carter's death in 1992 at the age of just fifty-two was deeply felt in literary circles. She had been a gifted story-teller and a visionary interpreter of fairy-tale and fantasy traditions. British novelist and scholar Marina Warner (who wrote the introduction to Carter's second volume of tales) has taken up Carter's legacy. In fact Warner defines herself as a 'mythographer'. Her feminist study of fairy tales, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairytales and Their Tellers* (1994) moves sinuously, making connections between scholarly study and contemporary culture. *No Go the Bogyman: Scaring, Lulling and Making Mock* (Warner 1999) about threatening lullabies and comic ogres, constitutes a revisionist companion volume.

While it is true that fairy tales seem to have enjoyed the most dramatic revival as a result of twinned interests in women's studies and children's literature studies, other reclamation projects are also taking place. The texts being rediscovered by feminist critics are important because they provide a historical context for our own ideological assumptions about gender, about what constitutes good literature, and about what is worth remembering, circulating and retaining for study. The boundaries between male and female, child

and adult, increasingly blurred as the twentieth century drew to a close. Critic Judith Butler, especially in *Gender Trouble* (1990), put forward the idea that gender was a kind of disguise anyway, that it was a kind of performance. Her work opened up the world of trans-gendered possibilities. For children's literature authors and critics, it became possible to breach child/adult boundaries too. The most visible examples are in books that crossed over into films. *Freaky Friday* (1972), by Mary Rodgers, about a mother and daughter who change bodies, has twice been made into films (suggesting the resonance of the idea). Steven Spielberg's *Hook* (1991) played with cross-age boundaries as Pan, the boy who never grows up, does, then – within the bounds of the film – has a second chance at childhood. There is an excellent discussion of this cross-age phenomenon by Patricia Pace in 'Robert Bly Does Peter Pan' (1996).

Although my discussion of the reclamation projects undertaken by feminist critics focuses on prose fiction and fairy tales, the reclamation of women poets is probably more dramatic. One of the most compelling studies of women's texts lost and found is 'Lost from the Nursery: Women Writing Poetry for Children 1800–1850', by Morag Styles (1990). Styles came to write the article because she casually noticed how few women were represented in poetry anthologies for children, especially poets who published before 1900. As she began to explore, she discovered consistent patterns working to obliterate women poets from the record.

In early anthologies, Styles found that poems which had quickly become popular in their own time, like 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' or 'Mary Had a Little Lamb', rapidly became separated from their authors as they entered anthologies. They were usually attributed to the anonymous authors of oral tradition. So while generations of children learned to say 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star', few knew it was by Jane Taylor, or that Sarah Hale wrote 'Mary Had a Little Lamb', or that 'The Months of the Year' was by Sara Coleridge.

The systematic exclusion of these women from the children's literature canon accords precisely with the ideological reasons for their exclusion from the literary canon – and from positions of power and influence. Styles explains that 'the colloquial domestic writing of some women whose concern in literature for children (and often for adults) is with relationships, affection, friendship, family life often located in the small-scale site of the home' (Styles 1990: 203) was devalued, lost and forgotten in a world where large-scale adventures and public rhetoric were valued. So the voices of Jane and Anne Taylor 'talking lovingly and naturally' in their poetry collections were lost. And Dorothy Wordsworth, with her 'private, colloquial and domestic' poetry (202), was relegated to a footnote in her brother's life.

By bringing the domestic cadences of women 'lost from the nursery' to our eyes and ears again, Styles provides a climate that warms to the domestic scene and to the softer, more direct colloquial cadences of the female voice. She teaches us to listen with different ears to the different voice of women's poetry for children. In a broader literary context, there has also been a re-evaluation of Christina Rossetti's poetry. Where once she was relegated to the 'B' list of nineteenth-century poets, she seems to have moved up as critics listen more carefully to her poetry and recognise how finely tuned her ear was to poetic cadences. Poet Tom Paulin writes a wonderful tribute to Rossetti's 'subtly stringent ear' in a *Times Literary Supplement* review (18 January 2002) of a collection of her poems edited by Betty Flowers.

I don't want to leave this section without mentioning other ways in which children's literature critics are gradually recovering a female literary tradition. By revealing the constructions of gendered patterns of childhood reading, academic feminist critics are

beginning to locate the origins of ideological constructions of gender. Two studies of nineteenth-century girls' books and boys' books were published within a year of one another: *Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880–1910*, by Kimberley Reynolds in 1990, and *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminist Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857–1917*, by Claudia Nelson in 1991. The sudden focus on that late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century time period is more than coincidental. It marks a critical recognition of that period as the time when colonial and patriarchal values were being actively inscribed in the culture. In widely circulating periodicals like the *Girl's Own Paper* (published initially by the Religious Tract Society) girls were encouraged to accept simultaneously characteristics gendered feminine – 'purity, obedience, dependence, self-sacrifice and service' – and an 'image of feminine womanhood ... expanded to incorporate intelligence, self-respect, and ... the potential to become financially dependent'. The result was a set of 'contradictory tendencies characteristic of femininity: reason and desire, autonomy and dependent activity, psychic and social identity' (Nelson 1991: 141). Those contradictions still haunt women today.

Other critics participate in the recovery of more recent histories of the relations between gender and reading. A collection of essays, *Girls, Boys, Books and Toys: Gender in Children's Literature and Culture* (1999), edited by Beverly Lyon Clark and Margaret Higonnet, demonstrates the range of topics that seem to have been prompted by feminism but then engage a joyous, large critical grasp. There is a postcolonial essay by Claudia Marquis, an essay on contemporary Indian stories by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, an essay on dolls' houses by Lois R. Kuznets and an essay by Lynne Vallone on 'Riot Grrr' zines (magazines linked to a punk-inspired movement of fourteen- to twenty-five-year-olds, called 'Riot Grrrls').

Relations between public success and childhood reading were recounted in several reading memoirs published in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The women writing them at the height of, or late in, their professional careers seem to be offering clues that might be of use to librarians and teachers interested in creating a more supportive academic environment for girls. In 'My Book House as *Bildung*', Nancy Huse reconstructs her childhood reading of Olive Miller's *My Book House* as a way of establishing a maternal pedagogical line that influenced her choice of an academic career. And in the children's literature journal *Signal*, Nancy Chambers has published several reading memoirs by well-known women who are active in a range of children's literature fields. Among them are ones by children's book editor Margaret Clark (1991); author Jane Gardam (1991); and Susan Viguers (1988) writing about her children's-literature-expert mother. In *The Child That Books Built: A Life in Reading* (2002), Francis Spufford (a man) eloquently explains how the books of his childhood in the late 1960s and 1970s formed his literary and ideological tastes. All reveal how childhood reading enabled them to enter public worlds of letters on bridges built from private, domestic literate environments.

The tunes – to borrow a phrase from Margaret Meek (1992) – of women's texts are different from the ones established in the canon as being of value. What feminist theory has revealed, especially in reconstructions of a female literary tradition, is that the disproportionate emphasis placed on adventure, power, honour and public success squeezed out feminine valuing of maternal, domestic voices, ideas of sisterhood and stories about the lives of women. While only the feminist fairy tales may have found popular readership, scholarship teaches us to value domestic scenes and colloquial voices, and to remember our histories. It enables us to make familiar the new texts that come our way. The scholarship enables us to appreciate their difference.

Redirection

The second wave of feminism began in the late 1960s when a whole generation of white, well-educated ‘baby-boomer’ women found that they were still relegated to making the coffee and stuffing envelopes. They were still excluded from the dominant discourses. The consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s began as a means of mobilising collective voices in order to gain inclusion. The right to be included: that became a basic tenet of feminist theory. So feminist theory changed to become increasingly inclusive: the feminist studies of the 1970s grew into gender studies in the 1980s. In the 1990s another change happened as feminist criticism evolved into gender studies – and ultimately become aligned with post-colonial and cultural studies. Feminist critics relocated into the emerging disciplines. Critics such as Gayatri Spivak, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989), and bell hooks (1992), recognising the similarities between political power plays and gender power plays, have helped feminist criticism shed its Eurocentric, middle-class look. English critics are also tentatively moving outside their own linguistic and cultural borders, listening to other critics and scholars. For Anglophone scholars, access to the work being done in non-English-speaking countries is still limited. But there are signs that attempts are being made to gain access to both other literatures and other critics – and their views on the influence of feminism. In Germany, the International Youth Library in Munich is significant. It was founded after the Second World War by Jella Lepman – who was also responsible for the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). There are essays on feminist theory and children’s literature in *Jugendkultur im Adoleszenzroman*, edited by Hans-Heino Ewers (1994). And there are publications (of various cross-cultural stripes) coming out of children’s literature research institutes in several countries, including the Centre for Children’s Literature in Denmark and the International Charles Perrault Research Institute in Paris. The International Research Society in Children’s Literature brings scholars from all over the world together. Scandinavian scholars, such as Maria Nikolajeva, Mia Österlund and Riita Oittinen, teach and write in Anglophone contexts. And Emer O’Sullivan, originally from Ireland, works and writes in both English and German. Essay collections, published particularly in Europe, are beginning to reflect a much more global, multi-lingual perspective. For access to some of these critics see, for example, *Children’s Literature as Communication* (2002), edited by Roger Sell, *Female/Male: Gender in Children’s Literature* (1999), a collection published by the Baltic Centre for Writers and Translators, and *Children’s Literature and National Identity* (2001), edited by Margaret Meek.

For children’s literature critics in the twenty-first century, there is an increased awareness of the way primitives and children are frequently (t)roped together. In keeping with feminist agendas, this new theoretical line is changing both the readings and the text. It is true that there is nothing in children’s literature or children’s literature criticism as yet that is as dramatic as the acknowledgement in Marina Warner’s novel *Indigo* that it was a work of postcolonial theory, *Colonial Encounters* by Peter Hulme, that spurred her to write the novel. But there are changes, as children’s literature increasingly includes the images and voices of people of colour. I’m thinking especially of writers for children like John Agard, Grace Nichols, James Berry, Valerie Bloom and Joy Kogawa, who probe at the ways patriarchal powers have screwed up, how they’ve ruined the environment in favour of profit, and how they locked up people designated as ‘other’ on the grounds that if they were foreign they were dangerous.

The unpicking of the child/primitive trope is also the subject of academic study. Stephen Slemon and Jo-Ann Wallace, professors at the University of Alberta in Canada,

taught a graduate course together called, 'Literatures of the Child and the Colonial Subject: 1850–1914'. In an article they wrote together about their experience 'Into the Heart of Darkness? Teaching Children's Literature as a Problem in Theory' (1991), they discuss their struggle with the construction of the child in pedagogical and institutional terms. They write about the child who, like the 'primitive', is treated 'as a subject-information, an individual who often does not have full legal status and who therefore acts or who is acted against in ways that are not perceived to be fully consequential' (20). Postcolonial discourse illuminates ways in which authority over the 'other' is achieved in the name of protecting innocence. The ideological assumption is that primitives and children are too naive (or stupid) to look after themselves, so need protecting – like rainforests.

The critical lessons in feminist/postcolonial theory increasingly have to do with ideology and with constructions of the subject. That's quite different from what used to be the common feature of children's literature and children's literature criticism – the notion of the identity quest, with its attendant assumption that there was such a thing as a stable identity. Instead, contemporary critical emphasis is on the ways we are constructed by the socialising forces pressuring us in all aspects of our lives: relationships with parents and families, class, gender and cultural patterns and expectations.

The implications for the unpicking of the child/primitive trope are part of something provoking a new crisis of definition in children's literature and children's literature criticism and teaching. While children's literature is predicated on the notion that children are essentially blank or naive and in need of protection and instruction, then issues of suitability or unsuitability are important. But as children become differently constructed in the light of feminist and postcolonial theory, so does children's literature. Distinctions between them and us no longer become categorising features and suitability recedes as an issue.

The effects of this ideological shift begin to become apparent in criticism and in texts. Critics who work in feminist theory, postcolonial studies and children's literature all find themselves interested in common grounds: in the dynamics of power, in ideology, in the construction of the subject. And authors produce texts in which child/adult categories are no longer the significant ones. Jane Gardam's books, for example, appear in Abacus editions that don't make adult/child distinctions. And Angela Carter's *Virago* fairy tales are catalogued in the library not with children's literature or women's literature – but as anthropology.

The second wave of feminist theory has profoundly changed what we read and how we read. New texts and reclaimed texts have changed the canon so that more people are included and the 'dead white male' is less dominant. There is an increased awareness and valuing of maternal pedagogies and traditions of women's writing. Tastes have developed for colloquial, domestic voices pitched in higher registers and speaking in other cadences. Even when I came to the end of this essay the first time, I predicted that the second wave of feminist theory was coming to an end. But I didn't know how many of the innovations that had been put in place would become normalised. I didn't know that there would be political moves towards more liberal attitudes: that lesbians, gays and people with a range of religious and cultural beliefs might be encouraged, at least nominally, to live openly. The end of feminism has not meant a plunge into the dark ages. It has opened up a kind of criticism that, in its best forms, is informed by the insights of feminist theory – and the joy.

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II Picture books and illustration

Perry Nodelman



This is Mr Gumpy.

Figure 1 From *Mr Gumpy's Outing* by John Burningham. Copyright © 1971 John Burningham. Reprinted by permission of Jonathan Cape and Henry Holt and Co. Inc.

I open a book. I see a picture of a man, standing on a path in front of a house. Under the picture, printed words appear: 'This,' they tell me, 'is Mr Gumpy.'

What could be more straightforward, more easily understood? And for good reason: the book, John Burningham's *Mr Gumpy's Outing* (1970), is intended for the least experienced of audiences – young children; and therefore it is a 'picture book', a combination of

verbal texts and visual images. We provide children with books like this on the assumption that pictures communicate more naturally and more directly than words, and thus help young readers make sense of the texts they accompany.

But are pictures so readily understood? And are picture books really so straightforward? If I try for a moment to look at the picture of Mr Gumpy without engaging my usual assumptions, I realise that I'm taking much about it for granted.

Burningham's image does in some way actually resemble a man, as the words 'man' or 'Mr Gumpy' do not; it is what linguists identify as an 'iconic' representation, whereas the words are 'symbolic', arbitrary sounds or written marks which stand for something they do not resemble. Nevertheless, if I didn't know that what I'm actually looking at – marks on a page – represented something else, I would see nothing in the picture but meaningless patches of colour. I need some general understanding of what pictures are before I can read these patches as a person, apparently named Mr Gumpy, living in a real or fictional world which exists somewhere else, outside the picture.

Even so, my previous knowledge of pictures leads me to assume that this man is different from his image. He is not four inches tall. He is not flat and two-dimensional. His eyes are not small black dots, his mouth not a thin black crescent. His skin is not paper-white, nor scored with thin orange lines. I translate these qualities of the image into the objects they represent, and assume that the four-inch figure 'is' a man of normal height, the orange lines on white merely normal skin.

But before I can translate the lines into skin, I must know what skin is, and what it looks like. I must have a pre-existing knowledge of actual objects to understand which qualities of representations, like the orange colour here, do resemble those of the represented objects, and which, like the lines here, are merely features of the medium or style of representation, and therefore to be ignored.

For the same reason, I must assume that the sky I see above the man does not end a few inches above his head – that this is a border, an edge to the depiction, but not a representation of an edge in the world depicted. And I must realise that the house is not smaller than the man and attached to his arm, but merely at some distance behind him in the imaginary space the picture implies.

But now, perhaps I'm exaggerating the degree to which the picture requires my previous knowledge of pictorial conventions? After all, more distant real objects do appear to us to be smaller than closer ones. But while that's true, it's also true that artists have been interested in trying to record that fact – what we call perspective – only since the Renaissance, and then mostly in Europe and European-influenced cultures. Not all pictures try to represent perspective, and it takes a culture-bound prejudice to look at visual images expecting to find perspective and, therefore, knowing how to interpret it.

Children must learn these prejudices before they can make sense of this picture. Those who can accurately interpret the relative size of Mr Gumpy and the house do so on the expectation that the picture represents the way things do actually appear to a viewer. Applying that expectation might lead a viewer to be confused by Burningham's depiction of Mr Gumpy's eyes. These small black dots evoke a different style of representation, caricature, which conveys visual information by means of simplified exaggeration rather than resemblance. In order to make sense of this apparently straightforward picture, then, I must have knowledge of differing styles and their differing purposes, and perform the complex operation of interpreting different parts of the pictures in different ways.

So far I've dealt with my understanding of this image, and ignored the fact that I enjoy looking at it. I do; and my pleasure seems to be emotional rather than intellectual – a

sensuous engagement with the colours, shapes and textures that leads me to agree with Brian Alderson (1990: 114), when he names *Mr Gumpy's Outing* as one of 'those picture books which have no ambitions beyond conveying simple delight'. But Alderson forgets the extent to which experiencing that simple delight depends on still further complex and highly sophisticated assumptions about what pictures do and how viewers should respond to them.

These particular assumptions are especially relevant in considering art intended for children. Ruskin famously suggested in 1857 that taking sensuous pleasure in pictures requires adults to regain an 'innocence of the eye' he described as 'childish' (quoted in Herbert 1964: 2). The implication is that children themselves, not having yet learned the supposedly counterproductive sophistication that leads adults to view pictures only in terms of their potential to convey information, are automatically in possession of innocent eyes, automatically capable of taking spontaneous delight in the colours and textures of pictures.

But according to W. J. T. Mitchell (1986: 118),

This sort of 'pure' visual perception, freed from concerns with function, use, and labels, is perhaps the most highly sophisticated sort of seeing that we do; it is not the 'natural' thing that the eye does (whatever that would be). The 'innocent eye' is a metaphor for a highly experienced and cultivated sort of vision.

Indeed, I suspect my own pleasure in the way Burningham captures effects of light falling on grass and bricks relates strongly to the impressionist tradition the picture evokes for me – a tradition that built a whole morality upon the pleasure viewers could and should take in just such effects.

Could I have the pleasure innocently, without the knowledge of impressionism? I suspect not; as Arthur Danto asserts (1992: 431), 'To see something as art requires something the eye cannot descry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.' The 'simple delight' sophisticated adults like Brian Alderson and me take in this picture is not likely to be shared by children unaware of the ethical value of an 'innocent eye', untutored in the 'artworld'.

Nor is the picture the only thing I've read in the context of previous assumptions. There are also the words. 'This is Mr Gumpy,' they say. But *what* is, exactly? The paper page I'm looking at? The entire image I see on it? Of course not – but I must know conventions of picture captioning to realise that these words are pointing me towards a perusal of the contents of the image, in order to find somewhere within it a depiction of the specific object named.

And besides, just *who* is telling me that this is Mr Gumpy? It's possible, even logical, that the speaker is the person in the picture – as it is, for instance, when we watch TV news broadcasts; and then perhaps he's telling us that Mr Gumpy is the name of the watering can he's holding? It's my prior knowledge of the narrative conventions of picture books that leads me to assume that the speaker is not the figure depicted but someone else, a narrator rather than a character in the story, and that the human being depicted is the important object in the picture, and therefore the most likely candidate to be 'Mr Gumpy'.

As does in fact turn out to be the case – but only for those who know the most elementary conventions of reading books: that the front of the book is the cover with the bound edge on the left, and that the pages must be looked at in a certain order, across each

double-page spread from left to right and then a turn to the page on the other side of the right-hand sheet. And, of course, these conventions do not operate for books printed in Israel or Japan, even if those books contain only pictures, and no Hebrew or Japanese words.

In other words: picture books like *Mr Gumpy's Outing* convey 'simple delight' by surprisingly complex means, and communicate only within a network of conventions and assumptions, about visual and verbal representations and about the real objects they represent. Picture books in general, and all their various components, are what semioticians call 'signs' – in Umberto Eco's words (1985: 176), 'something [which] stands to somebody for something else in some respect or capacity'.

The most significant fact about such representations is the degree to which we take them for granted. Both adults and children do see books like *Mr Gumpy* as simple, even obvious, and, as I discovered myself in the exercise I report above, it takes effort to become aware of the arbitrary conventions and distinctions we unconsciously take for granted, to see the degree to which that which seems simply natural is complex and artificial.

It's for that reason that such exercises are so important, and that thinking of picture books in semiotic terms is our most valuable tool in coming to understand them. According to Marshall Blonsky, 'The semiotic "head", or eye, sees the world as an immense message, replete with signs that can and do deceive us and lie about the world's condition' (1985: vii). Because we assume that pictures, as iconic signs, do in some significant way actually resemble what they depict, they invite us to see objects *as* the pictures depict them – to see the actual in terms of the fictional visualisation of it.

Indeed, this dynamic is the essence of picture books. The pictures 'illustrate' the texts – that is, they purport to show us what is meant by the words, so that we come to understand the objects and actions the words refer to in terms of the qualities of the images that accompany them – the world outside the book in terms of the images within it. And the world as they show it is not necessarily the world all viewers would agree to seeing. Speaking of what he identifies as 'visual culture,' Nicholas Mirzoeff sets all visual information firmly in the context of the specific culture that produces and receives it, and describes it as 'a constantly challenging place of social interaction and definition in terms of class, gender, sexual and racial identities' (1999: 4). Picture books, with their intended purpose of showing viewers what the world implied by the words looks like, and thus means, are particularly powerful milieus for these sorts of interactions.

Furthermore, the intended audience of picture books is by definition inexperienced – in need of learning how to think about their world, how to see and understand themselves and others. Consequently, picture books are a significant means by which we integrate young children into the ideology of our culture.

As John Stephens suggests, 'Ideologies ... are not necessarily undesirable, and in the sense of a system of beliefs by which we make sense of the world, social life would be impossible without them' (1992: 8). But that does not mean that all aspects of social life are equally desirable, nor that all the ideology conveyed by picture books is equally acceptable. Picture books can and do often encourage children to take for granted views of reality that many adults find objectionable. It is for this reason above all that we need to make ourselves aware of the complex significations of the apparently simple and obvious words and pictures of a book like *Mr Gumpy's Outing*. As Gillian Rose says, 'Looking carefully at images ... entails, among other things, thinking about how they offer very particular visions of social categories such as class, gender, race, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and so on' (2001: 11).

What, then, do John Burningham's picture and text mean? What have I been led to assume is 'natural' in agreeing that this *is*, in fact, Mr Gumpy?

Most obviously, I've accepted that what matters most about the picture is the human being in it: it encourages a not particularly surprising species-centricity. But it does so by establishing a hierarchic relationship among the objects depicted: only one of them is important enough to be named by the text, and so require more attention from the viewer. Intriguingly, young children tend to scan a picture with equal attention to all parts; the ability to pick out and focus on the human at the centre is therefore a learned activity, and one that reinforces important cultural assumptions, not just about the relative value of particular objects but also about the general assumption that objects do indeed have different values and do therefore require different degrees of attention.

Not surprisingly, both the text and the picture place the human depicted within a social context. He is *Mr Gumpy*, male and adult, his authority signalled by the fact that he is known only by his title and last name and that he wears the sort of jacket which represents business-like adult behaviour. The jacket disappears in the central portions of the book, as visual evidence that Mr Gumpy's boat trip is a vacation from business as usual, during which the normal conventions are relaxed. Then, at the end, Mr Gumpy wears an even fancier jacket as host at a tea party which, like the meals provided to children by adults at the end of children's stories from 'Little Red Riding Hood' through Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902) and Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), confirms the benefits for children of an adult's authority.

But despite the absence of this visual sign of his authority in many of the pictures, Mr Gumpy always remains *Mr Gumpy* in the text – and he is always undeniably in charge of the children and animals who ask to accompany him on his ride, always entitled to make the rules for them. Apparently, then, his authority transcends the symbolism of the jacket, which might be donned by anybody and therefore represents the status resident in a position rather than the power attached to an individual person. Mr Gumpy's authority must then emerge from the only other things we know about him: that he is male and adult, and that, as the text makes a point of telling us, he 'owned' the boat.

Apparently it is more important for us to know this than anything about Mr Gumpy's marital status or past history or occupation – about all of which the text is silent. Both by making ownership significant and by taking it for granted that adult male owners have the right to make rules for children and animals, who don't and presumably can't own boats, the book clearly implies a social hierarchy.

Nor is this the only way in which it supports conventional values. A later picture shows us that one of the children, the one with long hair, wears a pink dress, while the other has short hair and wears shorts and a top. In terms of the behaviour of actual children, both might be girls; but a repertoire of conventional visual codes would lead most viewers to assume that the child in shorts is male – just as we assume that trouser-wearing figures on signs signal men's washrooms, skirt-wearing figures women's washrooms. But whether male or not, the wearer of shorts behaves differently from the wearer of the dress. A later picture of the aftermath of a boating accident shows the one wet child in shorts sensibly topless, the other equally wet child still modestly sodden in her dress. This picture takes for granted and so confirms that traditionally female attire requires traditionally constraining feminine behaviour.

I suggested earlier that the text is silent about Mr Gumpy's marital status. That silence might itself speak loudly, for it mirrors and might be seen to represent the silences created by the closeting of homosexuality in the world outside the book – the need of many

people *not* to speak about it. I might then follow Melynda Huskey's advice, view the book as might queer theorists (those interested in becoming aware of the attitudes to homosexuality lurking in literary texts), and try to 'make visible the ways in which queerness inheres in a variety of picture books' (2002: 69). If I do that, I find myself focusing on the fact that Mr Gumpy seems to be living on his own, surrounded by a traditionally feminine aura of domesticity and with no apparent female connections – the kind of bachelor often assumed to be secretly gay. I have, in other words, presumed to 'out' Mr Gumpy. Mr Gumpy's outing might reveal the degree to which picture books, indeed children's books generally, replicate counter-productive cultural prejudices about sexual diversity by their forms of silence about it.

More obviously, the story of *Mr Gumpy's Outing* revolves around Mr Gumpy eliciting promises that the children not squabble, the cat not chase the rabbit, and so on, before he allows them on to his boat; the creatures break their promises, and the boat tips. My knowledge of the didactic impulse behind most picture-book stories leads me to expect that an ethical judgement is about to be made: either Mr Gumpy was wrong to demand these promises, or the children and animals were wrong to make them.

Curiously, however, the book implies no such judgement. The pictures, which show Mr Gumpy as a soft, round man with a pleasant, bland face, suggest that he is anything but the sort of unreasonable disciplinarian we ought to despise; and even though the breaking of promises leads to a spill, nothing is said or shown to insist that we should make a negative judgement of the children and animals. After all, exactly such outbreaks of anarchy are the main source of pleasure in most stories for young children, and therefore to be enjoyed at least as much as condemned. Mr Gumpy himself is so little bothered that he rewards the miscreants with a meal, and even an invitation to come for another ride.

Not accidentally, furthermore, the promises all relate to behaviour so stereotypical as to seem inevitable: in the world as we most often represent it to children in books, on TV and elsewhere, cats always chase rabbits – and children always squabble. In centring on their inability to act differently, and the fun of the confusion that ensues when they don't, this story reinforces both the validity of the stereotypes and the more general (and again, conservative) conviction that variation from type is unlikely.

But why, then, would Mr Gumpy elicit promises which, it seems, could not be kept? This too the text is silent on; but the silence allows us to become aware that his asking the children and animals to do what they are not sensible enough to do reinforces the story's unspoken but firm insistence on his right to have authority over them. If they ever did mature enough to keep their word, then we couldn't so blindly assume they were unwise enough to need his leadership. Someone else might be wearing that jacket at the final tea party.

Mr Gumpy's Outing thus reinforces for its implied young readers a not uncommon set of ideas about the similarity of children to animals, the inevitability of child-like irresponsibility in both, and the resultant need for adult authority. In accepting all this as natural, readers of *Mr Gumpy's Outing* and many other apparently 'simple' picture books gain complex knowledge, not just of the world they live in but also of the place they occupy as individual beings within it – their sense of who they are.

This latter is important enough to deserve further exploration. Like most narrative, picture-book stories most forcefully guide readers into culturally acceptable ideas about who they are through the privileging of the point of view from which they report on the events they describe. Knowing only what can be known from that perspective, we readers

tend to assume it ourselves – to see and understand events and people as the narrative invites us to see them. Ideological theorists call such narrative perspectives ‘subject positions’: in occupying them, readers are provided with ways of understanding their own subjectivity – their selfhood or individuality. But, as John Stephens suggests, ‘in taking up a position from which the text is most readily intelligible, [readers] are apt to be situated within the frame of the text’s ideology; that is, they are subjected to and by that ideology’ (1992: 67).

All stories imply subject positions for readers to occupy. Because picture books do so with pictures as well as words, their subject positions have much in common with what Christian Metz (1982) outlines as the one films offer their viewers. The pictures in both offer viewers a position of power. They exist only so that we can look at them: they invite us to observe – and to observe what, in its very nature as a representation, cannot observe us back.

In *Mr Gumpy’s Outing*, Burningham makes the authority of our viewing position clear in the same way most picture-book artists do: by almost always depicting all the characters with their faces turned towards us, even when that makes little sense in terms of the activities depicted. Indeed, the picture in which Mr Gumpy stands with his back to his house while smiling out at us makes sense only in terms of the conventions of photography or portrait painting; as in family snapshots, he is arranged so as to be most meaningfully observable by a (to him) unseen viewer who will be looking at the picture some time after it was made. In confirmation of the relationship between this image and such snapshots, the caption tells us, ‘This *is* Mr Gumpy’, in the same present tense we use to describe photographic images of events past (for example, ‘This *is* me when I *was* a child’). The story that follows switches to the more conventional past tense of narratives.

In making their faces available to an unseen observer, the characters in *Mr Gumpy’s Outing* imply not just the observer’s right to gaze, but also their somewhat veiled consciousness of an observer – and therefore their own passive willingness, even desire, to be gazed at. Like the actors in a play or movie, and like characters in most picture books, they share in a somewhat less aggressive form the invitation to voyeurism that John Berger (1972) discovers in both pin-up photographs and traditional European paintings of nudes. Their implied viewer is a peeping Tom with the right to peep, to linger over details, to enjoy and interpret and make judgements.

But meanwhile, of course, the power such pictures offer is illusory. In allowing us to observe and to interpret, they encourage us to absorb all the codes and conventions, the signs that make them meaningful; they give us the freedom of uninvolved, egocentric observation only in order to enmesh us in a net of cultural constraints that work to control egocentricity. For that reason, they encourage a form of subjectivity that is inherently paradoxical. They demand that their implied viewers see themselves as both free and with their freedom constrained, and both enjoy their illusory egocentric separation from others and yet, in the process, learn to feel guilty about it.

Interestingly, *Mr Gumpy* confirms the central importance of such paradoxes by expressing them, not just in the position of its implied viewer, but also in the ambivalence of its story’s resolution. Are we asked to admire or to condemn the children and animals for being triumphantly themselves and not giving in to Mr Gumpy’s attempts to constrain them? In either case, does their triumphantly being themselves represent a celebration of individuality, or an anti-individualist conviction that all cats always act alike? And if all cats must always act in a cat-like way, what are we to make of the final scene, in which the animals all sit on chairs like humans and eat and drink out of the kinds of containers

humans eat and drink from? Does this last image of animals and children successfully behaving according to adult human standards contradict the apparent message about their inability to do so earlier, or merely reinforce the unquestionable authority of the adult society Mr Gumpy represents throughout?

These unanswerable questions arise from the fact that the story deals with animals who both talk like humans and yet cannot resist bleating like sheep – who act sometimes like humans, sometimes like animals. While such creatures do not exist in reality, they appear frequently in picture books, and the stories about them almost always raise questions like the ones *Mr Gumpy* does. In the conventional world of children's picture books, the state of animals who talk like humans is a metaphor for the state of human childhood, in which children must learn to negotiate between the animal-like urges of their bodily desires and the demands of adults that they repress desire and behave in socially acceptable ways – that is, as adult humans do. The strange world in which those who bleat as sheep naturally do, or squabble as children naturally do, must also sit on chairs and drink from teacups, is merely a version of the confusing world children actually live in. *Mr Gumpy* makes that obvious by treating the children as exactly equivalent to the other animals who go on the outing.

The attitude a picture book implies about whether children should act like the animals they naturally are or the civilised social beings adults want them to be is a key marker in identifying it either as a didactic book intended to teach children or as a pleasurable one intended to please them. Stories we identify as didactic encourage children towards acceptable adult behaviour, whereas pleasurable ones encourage their indulgence in what we see as natural behaviour. But of course, both types are didactic.

The first is more obviously so because it invites children to stop being 'child-like'. In the same way as much traditional adult literature assumes that normal behaviour is that typical of white middle-class males like those who authored it, this sort of children's story defines essentially human values and acceptably human behaviour as that of adults like those who produce it.

But books in the second category teach children *how* to be child-like, through what commentators like Jacqueline Rose (1984) and myself (1992) have identified as a process of colonisation: adults write books for children to persuade them of conceptions of themselves as children that suit adult needs and purposes. One such image is the intractable, anti-social self-indulgence that Mr Gumpy so assertively forbids and so passively accepts from his passengers. It affirms the inevitability and desirability of a sort of animal-likeness – and child-likeness – that both allows adults to indulge in nostalgia for the not-yet-civilised and keeps children other than, less sensible than, and therefore deserving of less power than, adults.

That picture books like *Mr Gumpy* play a part in the educative processes I've outlined here is merely inevitable. Like all human productions, they are enmeshed in the ideology of the culture that produced them, and the childlikeness they teach is merely what our culture views as natural in children. But as a form of representation which conveys information by means of both words and pictures, picture books evoke (and teach) a complex set of intersecting sign systems. For that reason, understanding of them can be enriched by knowledge from a variety of intellectual disciplines.

Psychological research into picture perception can help us understand the ways in which human beings – and particularly children – see and make sense of pictures; Evelyn Goldsmith (1984) provides a fine summary of much of the relevant research in this area. The *gestalt* psychologist Rudolph Arnheim (1974: 11) provides a particularly useful

outline of ways in which the composition of pictures influences our understanding of what they depict, especially in terms of what he calls 'the interplay of directed tensions' among the objects depicted. Arnheim argues (11) that 'these tensions are as inherent in any precept as size, shape, location, or colour', but it can be argued that they might just as logically be viewed as signs – culturally engendered codes rather than forces inherent in nature.

In either case, the relationships among the objects in a picture create variations in 'visual weight': weightier objects attract our attention more than others. In the picture of Mr Gumpy in front of his house, for instance, the figure of Mr Gumpy has great weight because of its position in the middle of the picture, its relatively large size, and its mostly white colour, which makes it stand out from the darker surfaces surrounding it. If we think of the picture in terms of the three-dimensional space it implies, the figure of Mr Gumpy gains more weight through its frontal position, which causes it to overlap less important objects like the house, and because it stands over the focal point of the perspective. Meanwhile, however, the bright red colour of the house, and the arrow shape created by the path leading towards it, focus some attention on the house; and there is an interplay of tensions among the similarly blue sky, blue flowers and blue trousers, the similarly arched doorway and round-shouldered Mr Gumpy. Analysis of such compositional features can reveal much about how pictures cause us to interpret the relationships among the objects they represent.

Visual objects can have other kinds of meanings also: for a knowledgeable viewer, for instance, an object shaped like a cross can evoke Christian sentiments. Because picture books have the purpose of conveying complex information by visual means, they tend to refer to a wide range of visual symbolisms, and can sometimes be illuminated by knowledge of everything from the iconography of classical art to the semiotics of contemporary advertising. Consider, for instance, how the specific house Burningham provides Mr Gumpy conveys, to those familiar with the implications of architectural style, both an atmosphere of rural peacefulness and a sense of middle-class respectability.

Furthermore, anyone familiar with Freudian or Jungian psychoanalytical theory and their focus on the unconscious meanings of visual images will find ample material for analysis in picture books. There may be Freudian implications of phallic power in Mr Gumpy's punt pole, carefully placed in the first picture of him on his boat so that it almost appears to emerge from his crotch; in the later picture of the aftermath of the disastrous accident, there is nothing in front of Mr Gumpy's crotch but a length of limp rope. Meanwhile, Jungians might focus on the archetypal resonances of the watering can Mr Gumpy holds in the first few pictures, its spout positioned at the same angle as the punt pole in the picture that follows, and the teapot he holds in the last picture, its spout also at the same angle. The fact that this story of a voyage over and into water begins and ends with Mr Gumpy holding objects that carry liquid, and thus takes him from providing sustenance for plants to providing sustenance for other humans and animals, might well suggest a complex tale of psychic and/or social integration.

Nor is it only the individual objects in pictures that have meaning: pictures as a whole can also express moods and meanings, through their use of already existing visual styles which convey information to viewers who know art history. Styles identified with specific individuals, or with whole periods or cultures, can evoke not just what they might have meant for their original viewers, but also what those individuals or periods or cultures have come to mean to us. Thus, Burningham's pictures of Mr Gumpy suggest both the style of impressionism and the bucolic peacefulness that it now tends to signify.

In addition to disciplines which focus on pictures, there has been an extensive theoretical discussion of the relationships between pictures and words which is especially important in the study of picture books. Most studies in this area still focus on the differences Lessing (1766/1969) pointed out centuries ago in *Laocoön*: visual representations are better suited to depicting the appearance of objects in spaces, words to depicting the action of objects in time. In a picture book like *Mr Gumpy*, therefore, the text sensibly says nothing about the appearance of Mr Gumpy or his boat, and the pictures are incapable of actually moving as a boat or an animal does.

But pictures can and do provide information about sequential activity. In carefully choosing the best moment of stopped time to depict, and the most communicative compositional tensions among the objects depicted, Burningham can clearly convey the action of a boat tipping, what actions led the characters to take the fixed positions they are shown to occupy, and what further actions will result. Furthermore, the sequential pictures of a picture book imply all the actions that would take the character from the fixed position depicted in one picture to the fixed position in the next – from not quite having fallen into the water in one picture to already drying on the bank in the next. Indeed, it is this ability to imply unseen actions and the passage of time that allows the pictures in picture books to play the important part they do in the telling of stories.

Nevertheless, the actions implied by pictures are never the same as those named in words. The bland statement of Burningham's text, 'and into the water they fell', hardly begins to cover the rich array of actions and responses the picture of the boat tipping lays out for us. W. J. T. Mitchell (1986: 44) concludes that the relationship between pictures and accompanying texts is 'a complex one of mutual translation, interpretation, illustration, and enlightenment'. Once more, *Mr Gumpy's Outing* reveals just how complex.

Burningham's text on its own without these pictures would describe actions by characters with no character: it takes the pictures and a knowledge of visual codes to read meaning into these simple actions. Without a text, meanwhile, the pictures of animals that make up most of the book would seem only a set of portraits, perhaps illustrations for an informational guide to animals. Only the text reveals that the animals can talk, and that it is their desire to get on the boat. Indeed, the exact same pictures could easily support a different text, one about Mr Gumpy choosing to bring speechless animals on board until the boat sinks from their weight and he learns a lesson about greed. So the pictures provide information about the actions described in the words; and at the same time, the words provide information about the appearances shown in the pictures.

If we look carefully, in fact, the words in picture books always tell us that things are not merely as they appear in the pictures, and the pictures always show us that events are not exactly as the words describe them. Picture books are inherently ironic, therefore: a key pleasure they offer is a perception of the differences in the information offered by pictures and texts.

Such differences both make the information richer and cast doubt on the truthfulness of each of the means which convey it. The latter is particularly significant: in their very nature, picture books work to make their audiences aware of the limitations and distortions in their representations of the world. Close attention to picture books automatically turns readers into semioticians. For young children as well as for adult theorists, realising that, and learning to become more aware of the distortions in picture-book representations, can have two important results.

The first is that it encourages consciousness and appreciation of the cleverness and subtlety of both visual and verbal artists. The more readers and viewers of any age know

about the codes of representation, the more they can enjoy the ways in which writers and illustrators use those codes in interesting and involving ways. They might, for instance, notice a variety of visual puns in *Mr Gumpy's Outing*: how the flowers in Burningham's picture of the rabbit are made up of repetitions of the same shapes as the rabbit's eyes, eyelashes and ears, or how his pig's snout is echoed by the snout-shaped tree branch behind it.

The second result of an awareness of signs is even more important: the more both adults and children realise the degree to which all representations misrepresent the world, the less likely they will be to confuse any particular representation with reality, or to be unconsciously influenced by ideologies they have not considered. Making ourselves and our children more conscious of the semiotics of the picture books through which we show them their world and themselves will allow us to give them the power to negotiate their own subjectivities – surely a more desirable goal than repressing them into conformity to our own views.

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12 Narrative theory and children's literature

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Narrative theory is perhaps the area of critical enquiry least explored by children's literature scholars. This is especially true if we take into consideration the widespread misunderstanding about the subject area of narrative theory in the strict sense, which is not narratives as such, but narrativity: that is, the set of formal traits constituting a narrative (Prince 1987: 64). These formal traits include composition (plot, temporal structure), characterisation (the palette of narrative devices used by writers to reveal a character), and narrative perspective (voice and point of view). Many of these elements are manifested in a different – and occasionally profoundly different – manner in children's literature as compared to general literature, and therefore children's literature scholars have repeatedly pointed out that, while we may borrow analytical tools from narratology for a systematic investigation of the various levels of narrative, we should be particularly interested in a 'children's-literature-specific theory' (Hunt 1984: 192).

The central question of narrative theory is thus 'How ...?' as opposed to the 'What ...?' of many other approaches dominant in children's literature research because of its close connection with pedagogy. The prevailing question in a pedagogical approach is: 'What is a good children's book?' The issues of form have been neglected mainly because they were considered secondary as compared to ideology, social or moral values, and educational objectives. Narratology is expressly *not* concerned with the major objects of investigation in children's literature research: social context, the author's intentions or the reader.

Yet narrative theory is highly relevant to the study of children's literature. One of the profound characteristics of children's literature is the discrepancy between the cognitive level of the sender (adult) and the implied addressee (child). Barbara Wall examines the consequences of this asymmetry, discerning three possibilities: single address, when the adult addresses the child from a superior position; double address, when the author pretends to address the child, in fact addressing the adult behind the child; and dual address, when child and adult are addressed on different, but equal premises (Wall 1991). While many recent theories have pinpointed 'the impossibility of children's literature' either due to the authors' nostalgic self-indulgence (Rose 1984) or to the uncritical construction of a fictive child (Lesnik-Oberstein 1994; Zornado 2000), narrative theory facilitates an investigation of strategies that enable children's writers to circumvent the inevitable cognitive gap. Children's literature critics have emphasised the importance of 'embrace' (McGillis 1991) or 'engagement' (Wyle 1999) of the narrative voice in children's literature, 'a voice that ... seeks to draw the child reader in by gaining her trust' (McGillis 1991: 24). Thus narrative theory adds a new dimension to the ongoing debate about the nature of children's literature and its difference from literature for adults.

On the other hand, because they seem to be unaware of children's literature, general narratologists fail to acknowledge that many supposedly unique narrative devices are a rule rather than an exception in children's books. For instance, studies of narrative perspective in children's literature reveal how writers manage to achieve something that narratologists have judged as nearly impossible: a rendering of a naive perspective without losing psychological depth or verbal richness. Most narratologists make use of the same example: Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury* (e.g. Booth 1961: 152; Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 200; Cohn 1978: 250ff; Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 100). Children's novels provide a variety of examples (Nikolajeva 1997, 2002b; Wyile 1999; Cadden 2000). Similarly, the temporal pattern of the iterative, telling once about events taking place regularly, that Gérard Genette views as unique to Marcel Proust (Genette 1980: 113–60), appears to be a common device in children's fiction, most probably since the iterative reflects a child's perception of time as cyclical, non-linear, where recurrent events and routines emphasise the eternal cycle rather than the linear flow of time (Nikolajeva 2000: 31–5).

A common prejudice about children's literature is that it is a 'simple' literary form. In terms of narrativity, simplicity conceivably includes one clearly delineated plot without digressions or secondary plots; chronological order of events; a limited number of easy-to-remember characters – 'flat' characters with one typical feature, either 'good' or 'evil', or with simplistic external characterisation. It also includes a distinct narrative voice, a fixed point of view, preferably an authoritarian, didactic, omniscient narrator who can supply readers with comments, explanations and exhortations, without leaving anything unuttered or ambiguous; a narrator possessing greater knowledge and experience than both characters and readers. The idea of a 'simple' narrative excludes complex temporal and spatial constructions. The fictionality of the story, the reliability of the narrator or the sufficiency of language as the artistic expressive means cannot be interrogated. Obviously, the spectrum of children's literature is significantly broader than suggested by these features. The scope of questions that narrative theory deals with incorporates all these elements and enables critics to uncover the degrees and kinds of complexity of children's literature.

Not least, narratology helps us to acknowledge the wide diversity of children's texts. Children's literature is not a fixed body of texts – which is how some children's literature experts try to present it. Narratology can help us to discern new ways of constructing plots, especially in novels employing multiple narratives (see McCallum 1999). It provides us with adequate tools to investigate the various ways of constructing and revealing characters (Nikolajeva 2001a, 2001b, 2002a). It can also explore some preconceived opinions about suitable narrative perspective, such as the predominance of impersonal narration over personal. In short, narratology can contribute both to determining some basic premises for a poetics of children's literature and to pinning down its dynamic nature.

Comparatively, narrative theory is still taking its very first steps within children's literature criticism (Hunt 1984, 1985, 1991: 119–37; Otten and Smith 1989; Golden 1990; McGillis 1991; Wall 1991; Goodenough *et al.* 1994; Nikolajeva 1997, 2001a, 2002a; Wyile 1999; Cadden 2000). This is especially true if we exclude the vast and well-developed area of reader-response studies – even though it is closely connected with narratology, especially in the examination of the implied reader (as Peter Hunt remarks, 'Narrative theory cannot escape the problem of audience' (Hunt 1985: 107)). This essay will explore some applications of narrative theory to children's literature – narrative: plot, character and perspective – to show what tools narratology offers, and how these tools have to be adapted to the specific needs of children's literature criticism.

Plot-oriented and character-oriented narratives

The juxtaposition between action-oriented and character-oriented texts (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 233–9; Todorov 1977: 66) is frequently used in children's literature research. In classical poetics, characters are subordinate to actions and events; plot is regarded as the essential part of the narrative, while the characters' function is to perform actions; therefore only those elements directly concerned with action are seen as important (Aristotle 1965). Today we place more emphasis on the literary characters' psychological and ethical dimensions. A majority of children's books are undoubtedly action-oriented; until the last twenty or thirty years, there was a clear tendency in children's books to avoid portraying characters with any personality traits other than good or evil, which, it can be argued, reflects the writers' preconceived opinions about what good children's literature should be and do. Certain children's literature scholars go so far as to maintain that action-orientation is one of the foremost aesthetic characteristics of children's literature and the main source of the pleasure in reading children's books (e.g. Nodelman 1992: 190; 2000). This may be true about some children's texts, but certainly not all of them. Yet, since children's literature, at least as a separate literary system, is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of literature, interest in the psychological aspect of literary character did not emerge in children's texts until the 1970s in Western countries; in many countries it has not appeared yet. Although this shift of emphasis is tangible, far from all children's writers subscribe to the dominance of character over plot.

Furthermore, since children's literature has throughout history been extensively used as an educational implement, characters in children's stories have been used as mouthpieces for certain ideas and opinions, as examples to follow or cautionary figures to learn from, rather than as independent subjectivities. This inevitable educational aspect of children's fiction has seriously impeded a development towards complex psychological characters. If Harold Bloom ascribes the invention of a psychological literary character to Shakespeare (Bloom 1998), in children's literature this 'invention' appears considerably later. The main consequence for narrative studies is that different tools can be used for analysing plot-oriented and character-oriented narratives.

The question of what exactly constitutes a narrative is still being debated. Most scholars agree about the distinction between the content of the narrative, or story, 'what is being told', and its form, discourse, 'how it is told' (Chatman 1978: 31–4; applied to children's literature Stephens 1992: 8–46). In most of the pre-Second World War children's literature, and in many texts of formulaic children's fiction, the discrepancy between story and discourse is minimal. This is perhaps why children's literature is frequently considered 'simple'. Yet in many modern children's texts (and in some classics) we see complex narrative structures, including multilevel plots, intricate spatiality and temporality, subtle characterisation, complex subjectivity, and multiple and ambiguous narrative perspective. Among contemporary authors employing such structures we find Aidan Chambers (UK), Sharon Creech (USA), Gary Crew (Australia), Lesley Beake (South Africa), Peter Pohl (Sweden), Tormod Haugen (Norway), Lois Jensen (Denmark), and many more. In interpreting such texts, distinguishing between story and discourse is crucial.

Composition

Those scholars who believe that children's fiction is 'simple' have often studied formulaic and genre-bound stories with their recurrent plot patterns and stock characters, thus

ascribing to children's fiction at large the features inherent in only a fraction of it (e.g. Nodelman 1985). Formalist and Structuralist theories, that can be viewed as forerunners to contemporary narratology, have also mostly focused on plot-oriented narratives, such as folk tales (Propp 1968; Greimas 1983; Todorov 1977), fantasy and horror (Todorov 1973) and adventure and romance (Cawelty 1976; Eco 1979). These models are well suited for certain types of texts, but when Seymour Chatman claims that Formalist theory is 'inadequate' (Chatman 1978: 131), he presumably means that it is inadequate for analysing complex character-oriented narratives. It can, on the other hand, be fully adequate to analyse some aspects of a children's narrative that closely follows the structure of folk tale, such as *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Neumeyer 1977) or a *Harry Potter* novel (Zipes 2001: 176f). When Peter Hunt quite correctly questions the value of applying Propp's model to *The Outsiders* (Hunt 1984: 193), it is not the matter of deficient theory as such, but of choosing the wrong implement for the task. The fallacy is often the consequence, once again, of uncritically viewing children's literature as a single, homogeneous genre, rather than a form that embraces many genres. Thus Formalism and Structuralism may prove sufficient for certain 'simple' genres of children's literature; for complex narratives, we need the more subtle tools that narratology provides us with.

A much-debated question in narratology is the minimal demand for a narrative, as distinct from a reflection, a description or an argument. Most critics agree that causality and temporality are the indispensable elements. Causality is usually stronger in children's literature, since authors apparently believe that young readers need clear relations between cause and effect, although there is no empirical research to prove this. The same is true of the idea that children prefer stories told in chronological order. In actual texts, there are always deviations from this strict chronological order in the form of temporal switches, interplay of different temporal levels, and so on. In contemporary children's novels, temporal patterns can be extremely complicated; it has almost become a convention in itself, the paradigm set by such works as *Dance on My Grave* by Aidan Chambers, *Johnny My Friend* by Peter Pohl, or *Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech. Narrative theory not only helps critics to unravel the intricate temporal structures, but to put questions about their purpose and effect. A frequent temporal device is a flashback, or analepsis, a temporal switch to a time preceding the primary narrative. In children's literature, there are certain limitations to the use of this device. For instance, with a first-person child narrator, that can be attractive for the author as it occasionally allows more self-reflection, the flashback cannot reach beyond the character's age if the illusion of first-hand access to information is to be maintained. The temporal switch to the time following the primary narrative, flashforward, or prolepsis, is considered by narratologists to be less frequent (Genette 1980: 67). In children's literature, didactic prolepses are on the contrary quite common, both in impersonal narration ('She would remember for the rest of her life ...') and in personal narration ('As I realised many years later ...'), emphasising the distance between the narrator's time and the narrative time. Fantasy novels for children presuppose another temporal pattern either ignored by narratologists or presented as exceptional: paralepsis, implying that time in the primary plot freezes while characters are transported into secondary worlds. The various patterns of narrative order, described by narratologists (Genette 1980: 33–85; Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 43–58; Bal 1997: 80–98), thus function rather differently in children's texts.

Authors also make a selection of events and the ways they are rendered in a narrative: some may be narrated in detail, so that it takes as long to narrate an event as it takes for the event to happen (scene) or the events of several weeks or even years are rendered in a

few sentences (summary). The various patterns of narrative duration, or rhythm, discussed in general narrative studies (Genette 1980: 86–112; Bal 1997: 99–110), often work differently in children's literature. It is often assumed to be less appropriate to include long descriptive pauses in children's books, since these slow down the plot, and it is true that ellipses, or temporal gaps, that in adult fiction can cover several years, are used rarely in children's novels. In early children's fiction, it was more common to have summaries, especially in domestic novels that often cover a large time span. Modern children's novels tend to have a relatively short time span, concentrating on a dramatic turning point rather than a whole life story; therefore there are fewer summaries and more detailed scenes. Studies of duration point to the changing aesthetics of children's literature.

Debate surrounds what kind of events and plots are typical of and suitable for children's literature. A distinct feature of children's literature is the disproportionately common use of episodic plots, for instance Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Langstrump* or Beverly Cleary's *Ramona* books. Presumably, episodic plot is geared towards younger children with a short attention span (again, there is no empirical research to confirm this). Another children's-literature-specific plot is the cumulative, in which a new character is added in each episode. This can allegedly help young readers to keep track of characters; it may also reflect the child's gradually growing network of relationships. *Winnie-the-Pooh* is possibly the best-known example.

The construction of plots is in many ways different in children's literature. Some narratologists suggest that human life provides the impeccable plot: 'What more perfect beginning than birth or more perfect ending than death?' (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 211). For obvious reasons, such a plot would not work in a children's book, where a character supposedly cannot even enter adulthood without the novel ceasing to be children's literature (cf. the much-quoted ending of *Tom Sawyer*). Even though it is not uncommon, especially in sequels, to follow the protagonist into adulthood, contemporary writers, presumably on the basis of modern child psychology, avoid biographical plots, instead focusing either on a turning point in the protagonist's life or on the most formative years. Ostensibly, not even the whole life span of a seven- or ten-year-old protagonist is easily grasped by a young reader and therefore is of little interest. Yet most plots in children's fiction are indeed constructed in the traditional manner, with a beginning, middle and end, following either the romantic pattern, 'desire to consummation' (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 212), or occasionally the moral one, 'redemption and atonement' (216), even though contemporary children's fiction seems to be gradually abandoning this convention as well. The specific feature of children's literature plots is that they are usually more quickly paced and dynamic, more causally dependent, and commonly relatively compact, avoiding auxiliary and parallel plots. However, all these features are changing considerably in contemporary children's fiction, which in this respect is moving closer to the mainstream.

In Aristotelian poetics, a distinction is made between comic and tragic plots, or plots with upwards or downwards movement. In a comic plot (implying an upwards movement, not that the events described are funny), a character disempowered and oppressed in the beginning gains power and riches in the end, as in many fairy tales. In a tragic plot, a character with power is brought down, either by fate or his own actions (for instance Oedipus or King Lear). Traditionally, children's literature favours comic plots, which, paradoxically, can include death that allows child protagonists to stay innocent for ever (for instance, George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871)). In contemporary children's fiction, tragic plots with downward movement have started to be employed, for instance

Katherine Paterson's *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1978) or many of Peter Pohl's novels, featuring a child who is self-confident in the beginning and lost in the end.

This also brings us to a question much discussed in connection with the intrinsic features of children's literature: that is, the happy ending. Narrative analysis can help us to distinguish between structural closure (a satisfactory round-up of the plot) and psychological closure, bringing the protagonist's personal conflicts into balance (cf. Kermode 1968; Stephens 1992: 42ff). In a children's story these often coincide, apparently because it is considered appropriate for young readers. However, there may be a discrepancy between the structural and psychological closure. For instance, the arrival in their grandmother's house is a natural way to finish the journey in Cynthia Voight's *Homecoming* (1981); yet it does not resolve the main conflict of the story, or bring back the children's mother, and it does not necessarily promise an easy and happy future for the characters. Similarly, the reconciliation with the father in Dianna Hofmeyr's *Boikie You Better Believe It* (1994) may be a temporary solution, but not a permanent one.

The consonant closure, or the conventional happy ending, is something that many adults immediately associate with children's literature, and that many scholars put forward as an essential requirement in a good children's book ('optimistic, with happy endings' (Nodelman 1992: 192; see also Inglis 1981)). Many early children's books and most formulaic stories indeed have a happy ending, or some resolution (cf. Hunt 1984: 194; 1991: 127), but in some contemporary novels there is a break from the 'typical' children's literature plot defined as circular, home-away-home (Nodelman 1992: 192-3) on both psychological and structural levels – a move towards the linear or unresolved, more common in adult literature. A further development is a total disintegration of the conventional Aristotelian plot structure (exposition-complication-climax-resolution). Certain modernist and postmodernist mainstream novels are described as 'a slice of life,' a middle narrative, without a natural beginning or end. So far, children's literature with its strong focus on action has not produced many examples of this.

Characterisation as a narrative issue

To claim that characterisation is a neglected area of scholarship may seem a paradox. The characters of children's literature have been in the focus of scholarly attention from a variety of viewpoints: socio-historical, psychological and psychoanalytical, gender-related and biographical. Yet the narratological aspects of character, that is a set of artistic devices employed by authors in order to reveal characters to readers, have been basically neglected by children's literature scholars, with the exception of one recent publication (Nikolajeva 2002a), that takes up both ontological and epistemological questions around literary character.

A distinctive feature of character construction in children's literature is the conspicuous use of collective or multiple protagonists, something that in adult literature is seen as one of the foremost achievements of modernism: elaborate examples are *As I Lay Dying*, *The Waves* or *The Sound and the Fury* (Docherty 1983: 116ff). Naturally, such depictions of multiple consciousness are more complex than the use of collective protagonists in *Mary Poppins* or *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; yet the difference is in degree and not in nature. The concept of a collective protagonist follows naturally from the Structuralist approach to character: all characters ('actors') who have the same role in a narrative constitute the same *actant* (Greimas 1983). There are several reasons for using collective protagonists in children's literature. They supply subject positions for readers of both

genders and of different ages. They may be used to represent more palpably different aspects of human nature: for instance, if one child in a group is presented as greedy and selfish, another as carefree and irresponsible, and so on. Collective protagonists have thus a pedagogical as well as an aesthetic function (Nikolajeva 2002a: 67–87).

Another common assumption about children's books is that they must not contain too many secondary characters, since young readers, it is assumed, cannot remember them and distinguish between them. As compared to many mainstream novels, such as *Mansfield Park* or *Bleak House*, children's books tend to contain relatively few secondary characters. One could argue that the limited number of characters is a deliberate aesthetic device, reflecting a young person's limited experience. On the other hand, unlike adult novels, children's literature almost never features a solitary protagonist, for several reasons. First, a child living completely on her own is not plausible, unless there are some special circumstances, for instance, in a Robinsonnade. Second, there are pedagogical reasons: young readers must, it is assumed, be socialised, trained to handle human relations. There is usually at least one adult figure in the child character's vicinity, acting as a guide and teacher. Finally, an isolated character does not allow much variety in terms of actions and interactions. The models for analysing character constellations are thus specific in children's literature (Nikolajeva 2002a: 110–27).

Narrative theory also offers some workable tools for character analysis, such as the binaries of flat–round and static–dynamic characters, commonly used in children's literature criticism (Lukens 1990: 43–9; Golden 1990: 41–53). While not radically different from their use in general narratology, these terms have their specifics in children's literature, especially since the notions of 'flat' and 'static' are much too often inaccurately used in a pejorative sense. Flat and static orientation can be a deliberate pedagogical and aesthetic feature in certain genres, such as adventure, where each character normally possesses one typical, and often slightly exaggerated trait: for instance, courage, wit, hot temper or rationalism. Enid Blyton's characters are a good example: they are not necessarily inferior to round and dynamic characters in other genres: their function is different. For child characters, the distinction between chronological (growing older) and ethical dynamism (spiritual growth and maturation) is crucial (Nikolajeva 2002a: 128–51).

One of the most profound problems in dealing with literary characters is their ontological status: are we to treat them as real people, with psychologically credible traits, or merely as textual constructions? In narratology, a distinction is made between two radically different approaches, described as mimetic versus semiotic. With a mimetic approach, we view characters as real people and ascribe them a background that may not have any support in the text. The semiotic approach treats characters, as all other textual elements, merely as a number of words, without any substance. I would suggest that a reasonable attitude lies somewhere in between these extreme views (Chatman 1978: 119ff; Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 35f; Bal 1997: 115–19).

The ontological question is highly relevant for children's literature research, because critics and educators in the field tend to judge characters in children's books as if they were real people; this reflects a general mimetic approach to children's literature – that is, viewing it primarily as a direct reflection of reality. Empirical research shows that children often fail to acknowledge fictionality as a literary convention, including the fictional status of characters. However, literary characters do not exist outside their texts and, from a narratological point of view, discussing characters' psychological credibility is not an issue (Nikolajeva 2002a: 3–25). Instead, narratology offers a number of epistemological questions: that is, questions about how readers can understand characters they meet in books.

For many critics, the appeal of literature is exactly the fact that we can understand literary figures more easily than we can ever understand real people (Forster 1927/1985: 55f). Characters are transparent in a way real people can never be, or, as Dorrit Cohn puts it: 'Narrative fiction is the only literary genre, as well as the only kind of narrative, in which the unspoken thoughts, feelings, perceptions of a person other than the speaker can be portrayed' (Cohn 1978: 7). However, far from all means of characterisation allow this transparency.

The main characterisation devices in children's fiction are not in themselves different from those in general fiction; however, they all have their own specifics due to the nature of children's literature (Nikolajeva 2002a: 182–267). The crucial question is the interaction of authorial and figural discourse (or, in Aristotelian terms, of 'telling' and 'showing'). There is a tendency in children's literature towards external characterisation (description, comments, actions, direct speech), closely connected with several literary factors. First, it occurs in earlier rather than in contemporary texts, especially block description, such as we find in the beginning of *Little Women* or *What Katy Did*. Second, for obvious reasons, external characterisation is more common in plot-oriented narratives focused on what characters do rather than on how they feel about what they do. Third, it is more frequent in formulaic fiction than in psychological narratives. Fourth, it is more likely to be used in texts addressed to younger children. Last but not least, external orientation more or less presupposes an omniscient perspective.

External orientation does not imply deficient characterisation. While today higher aesthetic quality is attributed to psychological portrayal, it is merely a different device. Moreover, external characterisation is part of the overall didactic adaptation of children's literature to the cognitive level of its implied readers. Young readers can allegedly more easily understand and judge characters' actions, external descriptions or the narrator's direct statements than subtle psychological motivations. Since literature depends on language to describe internal life, it demands a rich and multi-faceted vocabulary to convey the nuances of meaning, which young readers may not master yet. There is a clear tendency in books for younger children towards external characterisation, while young adult novels frequently employ internal means.

Yet descriptions can also be figural, if a character's looks are presented through another character's perception, either by means of focalisation or in a first-person narrative. Such a description obviously characterises the viewer rather than the viewed person and is highly subjective. Narrators' statements ('telling') can contradict the characters' actions ('showing'), which is frequently the case, for example, in *Heidi* or *The Secret Garden*. The readers are encouraged to choose between what the text says explicitly and the inferences they can make for themselves. The balance between the authorial and figural discourse can reveal covert didacticism, or help us to discover the subversive levels of texts (Nikolajeva 2002a: 182–97).

Devices such as direct and reported speech and thought are frequently used in children's fiction more to carry the plot than as a characterisation device. Here, too, the interplay of authorial and figural speech is decisive, as a narrator's comments are likely to manipulate the reader to interpret the characters' utterances and thoughts in a certain way. Although direct speech and thought may seem to present characters in the most immediate manner, they are ambivalent as a characterisation device. Even when a child character is given a voice through direct speech or thought, there is often an adult voice accompanying it and adjusting it to guide the reader towards 'correct' understanding. The narrator of C. S. Lewis's Narnia books, for example, constantly comments on the characters' thoughts as if he does not trust the readers to draw their own conclusions.

Mental representation is the most sophisticated characterisation device, allowing readers to penetrate the characters' mind. It is therefore essential to distinguish between figural discourse as a plot vehicle and as a means of characterisation. Narratology discerns a number of artistic devices to depict inner life or consciousness, in personal as well as impersonal narration (Hamburger 1973; Pratt 1977; Cohn 1978; Banfield 1982; Fludernik 1993; for children's literature Nikolajeva 2001a, 2002a: 241–67). This direction has used as its sources linguistics and particularly speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). The incentive to depict inner life is a relatively recent development in literature, often associated with Henry James; in Western children's literature it becomes prominent in the second half of the twentieth century, even though occasional examples can be found earlier (see Kuznets 1989). The reason is once again the adult writers' prejudices about the implied readers. Supposedly, readers need certain life experience to be able to interpret characters' thoughts, and still more their unarticulated emotions, such as fear, anxiety, longing or joy. The transition from telling (for instance, stating 'He was anxious' or 'She was scared') towards showing, that is conveying complex and contradictory mental states, is perhaps the foremost achievement in contemporary psychological children's literature: for instance, when a child's response to death in *Bridge to Terabithia* is never directly articulated but depicted in a subtle and challenging manner. Telling is an authorial and thus authoritative narrative form, allowing adult authors to impose their judgements and opinions on child readers. Early children's fiction and especially popular fiction tends to employ telling rather than showing based on the oversimplified assumption of the readers' needs. Showing, that demands the readers' active involvement in interpretation, presupposes the writers' greater trust in the reader. We need the precision of narratological tools to examine the artistic devices for mental representation (Nikolajeva 1997, 2002b).

One superior device to convey complex mental states, which for obvious reasons has been neglected by general scholars, is the illustration. When words are no longer sufficient, images can take over, often affecting our senses in a stronger and more immediate way. The wordless doublespreads in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) or Anthony Browne's *The Tunnel* (1989) are good examples (see Nikolajeva and Scott 2001).

Characterisation and its evolution in children's literature are closely connected to the movement from hero to character, from vehicles of certain actions necessary for the plot toward fully developed psychological portraits (see Nikolajeva 2001b, 2002a: 26–48). The use of characterisation devices is also genre-dependent: when children's literature at large is accused of poor characterisation, critics often gather their examples from Enid Blyton or Roald Dahl, where characters by definition cannot be anything else than flat and static. For analysing characters in psychological novels, we need to be aware of a wide scope of complex characterisation devices, which narrative theory of character provides us with.

Narrative perspective

Of all narratological questions, narrative perspective has been discussed most (Booth 1961; Genette 1980; Chatman 1978; Rimmon-Kenan 1983; Bal 1997). Narratology goes beyond the simple question: 'Who is telling the story?' examining instead how the narrative is manipulated through an interaction of the author's, the narrator's, the character's, the narratee's and the reader's perspective and subjectivity. For children's literature, the key question is what strategies adult writers can use for conveying a child's perception of the world. A children's novel is by definition constructed in a dialogical tension between two unequal subjectivities, an adult author and a child character. The concept of heteroglossia, developed in the works

by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1990) – the ‘hetero-’ element emphasising the diversity of voices – is extremely helpful in indicating the specific aesthetics of children's literature (see the examination of the dialogic construction of subjectivity in McCallum 1999).

Narratology distinguishes between the narrative voice and the point of view. These do not necessarily coincide, and in children's literature they seldom coincide, not even in first-person narratives using a child narrator. The voice usually belongs to an adult (in first-person narratives, sometimes the protagonist is an adult), while the perspective lies with a child. The many successful attempts to circumvent this dilemma – from E. Nesbit's *The Treasure Seekers* and Astrid Lindgren's *The Children of the Noisy Village* to Beverley Cleary's *Dear Mr Henshaw* and Peter Pohl's *Johnny My Friend* – by using a simultaneous first-person child narrator, do not avoid the dilemma (see Wyile 1999). Narratology forces us to differentiate who speaks (the narrator), who sees (the focalising character, focaliser) and who is seen (the focalised character, focalisee). In children's literature, the fact that a character may stand in the focus of the narrative yet not necessarily serve as a focaliser is decisive for the creation of subjectivity. Readers may find it problematic to liberate themselves from the subject position imposed on them by the text; therefore the choice of narrative perspective in children's fiction is in many respects more important than in general fiction (see Stephens 1992: 47–83; McCallum 1999).

An essential question for the discussion of the narrative voice is the distance between the narrator and the narrative (Genette 1980: 161–211). Irrespective of whether narrators are covert or refer to themselves in the first person, they can tell the story either in retrospect or more or less as the events unfold. Even adult personal narrators telling about their own childhood (for instance, *Treasure Island* or *Jacob Have I Loved*) are distant from the narrated events and can restructure them and comment on their own actions from a wider life experience (as is often the case in adult novels describing the protagonist's childhood, such as *Jane Eyre*), even though the illusion of a naive perspective can be maintained. The difference between personal and impersonal narration is in this case less important than the distance between the narrator and the story. Andrea Schwenke Wyile refers to the various narrative patterns in terms of immediate-engaging, distant-engaging and distancing narration (Wyile 1999). Although the terminology may be arguable, the emphasis on the wide spectrum of the narrator's involvement with the narrative is essential. Sometimes narrators are characters, even main characters in their own stories, which in itself may present a dilemma, bringing forward the much-discussed question of reliability. The complexity of the issue of narrative voice goes far beyond the simple division between personal and impersonal narration. There is a broad continuum between a detached witness-narrator and a self-reflective – and in children's literature often solipsistic – personal child narrator, and an equally broad variety of impersonal narrators, from omniscient to introspective (see Golden 1990: 60–73).

Barbara Wall examines various types of narrators in children's literature: didactic, authoritative, detached and empathic (Wall 1991). Yet she overlooks the fact that all these voices can be combined with a variety of points of view, external and internal, literal and transferred (Chatman 1978: 151–2). Sharing a child character's so-called literal point of view, readers see what the child sees, which may contradict what the narrative agency states explicitly. The ‘transferred’ point of view – that is, the child's understanding of what she sees, the child's thoughts and opinions – can be still more problematic. Narratologists often use *What Maisie Knew* as a unique example of a description of a child's naive and innocent perception (e.g. Cohn 1978: 46ff). In this novel, readers share both Maisie's literal and her transferred point of view. Adult readers can perhaps liberate themselves from the imposed point of view of the text and understand that things are not really as Maisie sees them.

Young readers are mostly just as naive and inexperienced as the child protagonists are supposed to be, and thus may fail to recognise the irony of narration. Since more and more contemporary writers employ internal focalisation of their child characters, it is a challenge for critics to investigate which strategies might work and why. If writers want to create an illusion of an authentic child perspective, they must pretend that the narrator does not know or understand more than the focalising character. The various forms of dual-voice (or heteroglot, or dialogical) narration, including the first-person child narrator, show how this can be employed through a blend of authorial and figural discourse.

Conclusion

Every theoretical direction is only legitimate if it allows us to disclose dimensions in literary texts that we would not be able to discover with other methods. Narrative theory has given us tools to analyse in detail how texts are constructed, on both macro- and microlevels, and to come closer to understanding why certain devices work more or less successfully in children's books while others fail. It also facilitates a historical comparison, which pinpoints not only changes in themes and values, but also the profound changes in the aesthetic form of children's literature. Further, by combining purely narratological studies with other theories and methods (for instance, narratology and psychoanalysis in Brooks 1984, or narratology and feminist criticism in Hohne and Wussow 1994) we may disclose the mutual dependence of form and content, which Structuralism and narratology traditionally neglect. From the examination of structural elements we can proceed to asking how exactly narrative features work as bearers of psychological elements, social values, and ideology.

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I3 Intertextuality and the child reader

Christine Wilkie-Stibbs

The term ‘intertextuality’ is now common in literary discourse. It is used most often and most simply to refer to literary allusions and to direct quotation from literary and non-literary texts. But this is only one small part of the theory, which has its origins in the work of Julia Kristeva (1969) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1973). Since poststructuralist thinking has extended the idea of the text beyond the boundaries of its being merely a written discourse, the possibilities for theories and theorisations of intertextuality are now legion. Intertextuality embraces discourse *per se*, in its uttered, illustrated, written, mimed or gestured manifestations; it includes images and moving images, the social and cultural context, subjectivities – which are the reading/seeing/speaking/writing/painting/thinking subjects – and, indeed, language itself. Theorists and teachers of literature alike are recognising the place of intertextual understandings in literary studies for readers’ reception and production of texts, as an adjunct to reader-response theory. Teachers are engaging with the concept of intertextuality in their use of literature with young children as a means by which to build up ‘interpretive communities’ (Fish 1980) among young readers, to give a window on the processes of meaning-making during a reading, and for engaging in text creation and production (see, for example, Bloome and Egan-Robertson 1993; Bromley 1996; Cairney 1990, 1992; Lemke 1992; Many and Anderson 1992; Short 1996; Sipe 2000). Intertextual considerations and understandings are also important in the translation of texts where a source text from one language and culture is translated for a culturally and linguistically different target audience (see Desmet 2001; O’Sullivan 1998).

Kristeva (1969: 146) coined the term ‘intertextuality’, recognising that texts can only have meaning because they depend on other texts, both written and spoken, and on what she calls the ‘intersubjective’ knowledge of their interlocutors, by which she meant their total knowledge – from other books, from language-in-use, and the context and conditions of the signifying practices which make meanings possible in groups and communities (Kristeva 1974/1984: 59–60). The literary text, then, is just one of the many sites where several different discourses converge, are absorbed, are transformed and assume a meaning because they are situated in this circular network of interdependence which is called the intertextual space.

Kristeva was keen to point out that intertextuality is not simply a process of recognising sources and influences. She built on the work of Bakhtin, who had identified the word as the smallest textual unit, situated in relation to three coordinates: of the writer, the text and exterior texts. For the first time in literary history, the literary text (the word) took on a spatial dimension when Bakhtin made it a fluid function between the writer/text (on the horizontal axis) and the text/context (on the vertical axis). This idea replaced the previous, Formalist notion that the literary text was a fixed point with a fixed meaning.

Bakhtin described this process as a dialogue between several writings, and as the intersection of textual surfaces: ‘any text is a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another’ (in Kristeva 1980/1981: 66).

The theory of intertextuality was refined and extended by Jonathan Culler (1981), and by Roland Barthes (1970/1975), who included the reader as a constituent component of intertextuality. Culler described intertextuality as the general discursive space in which meaning is made intelligible and possible (1981: 103), and Barthes invented the term ‘infinite intertextuality’ to refer to the intertextual codes by which readers make sense of a literary work, which he calls a ‘mirage of citations’. They dwell equally in readers and in texts but the conventions and presuppositions cannot be traced to an original source or sources. ‘The “I” which approaches the text is already a plurality of other texts, of infinite, or more precisely, lost codes (whose origins are lost)’ (Barthes 1975/1976: 16).

The idea that texts are produced and readers/viewers make sense of them only in relation to the already embedded codes which dwell in texts and readers (and in authors too, since they are readers of texts before they are authors) has ramifications which challenge any claim to textual originality or discrete readings. In this sense, then, all texts and all readings are intertextual. This brings us close to Genette’s use of the term ‘transtextuality’ (1979: 85–90), by which he is referring to *everything* that influences a text either explicitly or implicitly.

This dynamic and spatial model of intertextuality has peculiar implications for an intertextuality of children’s literature because the writer/reader axis is uniquely positioned in an imbalanced power relationship. Adults write for each other, but it is not usual for children to write literature for each other. This phenomenon would effectively make children the powerless recipients of what adults choose to write for them and children’s literature an intertextual sub-genre of adult literature. But we now know through the empirical studies involving young children in the ‘game of intertextuality’ that the intertextual processes through which children take ownership of a particular text preclude the imperialism of the text and the author. Inevitably, the phenomenon of intertextuality sets up a curious kind of hegemony in children’s books, in which adults who write for children (who by definition are no longer themselves children) consciously or unconsciously operate in and are influenced by the intertextual space which is the literature they read as children. That books read in childhood and childhood experiences have a profound bearing on adult perceptions is borne out by the numerous adults, many of whom are themselves writers of children’s books, who refer to the influences on them of their childhood reading matter. Examples can be found in Francis Spufford’s *The Child That Books Built: A Memoir of Childhood and Reading* (2002); in the short author biographies in Eccleshare’s *Beatrix Potter to Harry Potter: Portraits of Children’s Writers* (2002) of Malorie Blackman (122), Anne Fine (112), Shirley Hughes (114), Dick King-Smith (108), J. K. Rowling (101–3) Philip Pullman (124) and Jacqueline Wilson (120); and the sections in James Carter’s *Talking Books* (1999), ‘How the Reader Became a Writer’, relating to the numerous author/illustrator interviews. Nevertheless, and despite children’s demonstrable ability to take textual ownership through their own intertextual references, the writer/reader relationship is asymmetric because children’s intersubjective knowledge cannot be assured. A theory of intertextuality of children’s literature is, therefore, unusually preoccupied with questions about what a piece of writing (for children) presupposes. What does it assume, what *must* it assume to take on significance? (See Culler 1981: 101–2.)

For these reasons the interrelationship between the components of intertextuality, of writer/text/reader-text/reader/context, are quite special when we are addressing a

theory of intertextuality of children's literature. For example, we might legitimately ask what sense and meanings young readers make in their readings of Philip Pullman's award-winning *His Dark Materials* trilogy which, as Millicent Lenz points out, draws overtly and implicitly on intertextual references to particle physics and quantum mechanics, on deeply existential questions on the nature of sin and Fall, and is influenced by Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the poetry of William Blake and the complex theory of natural grace in Henrich von Kleist's essay, 'On the Marionette Theatre' (Hunt and Lenz 2001: 42–82).

By now it should be clear that the theory of intertextuality is dynamic and dialogic, located in theories of writing, reader-response theory, the social production of meaning, and inter-subjectivity (the 'I' who is reading is a network of citations). It is also a theory of language because the reading subject, the text and the world are not only situated in language, they are also constructed by it. So, not only do we have a notion of all texts being intertextual, they become so because they are dialectically related to, and are themselves the products of, linguistic, cultural and literary codes and practices; and so too are readers, writers, illustrators and viewers.

In the process of making meaning with a particular text, we know that children (and adults, see Hartman 1995) have recourse to a battery of intertextual phenomena, calling upon, for example, their knowledge of previously read fictions, visual texts – film, illustration and TV programmes, texts of popular culture – cartoon, video, comic books, advertisements and songs (see Many and Anderson 1992; Bloome and Egan-Robertson 1993; Sipe 2000), and that they do so at many levels of textual engagement such as plot structures, character and character motivation, language and language patterns, themes and illustrations.

Culler (1975: 139), described the urge towards integrating one discourse with another, or several others, as a process of *vraisemblance*. It is the basis of intertextuality. Through this process of *vraisemblance* readers are able to identify, for example, the set of literary norms and the salient features of a work by which to locate genre, and also to anticipate what they might expect to find in fictional worlds. Through *vraisemblance* the child reader has unconsciously to learn that the fictional worlds in literature are representations and constructions which refer to other texts that have been normalised: that is, those texts that have been absorbed into the culture and are now regarded as 'natural'.

At the level of literary texts (the intertext), it is possible to identify three main categories of intertextuality: (1) texts of quotation which quote or allude to other literary or non-literary works; (2) texts of imitation which seek to parody, pastiche, paraphrase, 'translate' or supplant the original, which seek to liberate their readers from an over-invested admiration in great writers of the past, and which often function as the pre-text of the original for later readers (Worton and Still 1990: 7); and (3) genre texts where identifiable shared clusters of codes and literary conventions are grouped together in recognisable patterns which allow readers to expect and locate them, and to cause them to seek out similar texts. At the level of literary response, young readers' intertextual responses might usefully be classified in terms of the links they make overtly with other texts, their personal experiences which bear upon their relationship with the focus text, and their inclination to manipulate the focus text in the pull towards reinvention, recreation, rewriting.

Texts of quotation are probably the simplest level at which child readers can recognise intertextuality. Examples are Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *The Jolly Postman* series (1986/1997), John Prater's *Once Upon a Time* (1993), Jon Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheese Man* (1992) and his *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* (1989), Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* (1987). All these fictions quote from or allude to a variety of fairy tales. They

make explicit assumptions about their readers' knowledge of previously read fairy tales: 'Everyone knows the story of the Three Little Pigs. Or at least they think they do' (Scieszka 1989: first opening), and 'I guess you think you know this story/You don't, the real one's much more gory' (Dahl 1987: 5). So, as well as assuming familiarity with an 'already read' intertext, the 'focused texts' are at the same time foregrounding their own authenticity; that is, they purport to be more authoritative than the texts they are quoting and are thereby undermining the 'truth' of their pre-texts. They cleverly destabilise the security of their readers by positioning them ambivalently in relation to (1) what they think they know already about the fairy tales and (2) the story they are now reading. At the discursive level, then, these particular examples of texts of quotation are doing much more than simply alluding to other texts; they are supplanting the pre-texts and challenging their readers' 'already read' notions of the reliable narrator by an act of referring back which tells the reader that what they knew previously about these tales was all lies. And The Jolly Postman series is, at the very least, breaking readers' 'already read' boundary of fictionality by presenting them with a clutch of touchable, usable, readable written artefacts – letters, postcards, cards, invitations, board games, posters, etc. – from, to and about characters in fiction, which are facsimile versions of their real-life counterparts.

Every text of quotation which relocates the so-called primary text in a new cultural and linguistic context must be by definition a parody and a distortion. All the examples I have given parody the telling of traditional tales: *Once Upon a Time* (Prater 1993), 'Once upon a time' (Scieszka 1992: *passim*), and 'Once upon a bicycle' (Ahlberg 1986/1997: first opening). But the challenge to authority and problems of authenticity for these quotation texts of fairy tales lies in the fact that the tales themselves are a collage of quotations, each of which has assumed a spurious 'first version' authenticity but for which the ur-text does not exist, or at least cannot be located. The situation of fairy tales in contemporary culture is analogous to Barthes's notion of 'lost codes'. The tales are intelligible because they build on already embedded discourses which happened elsewhere and at another time; they are part of the sedimented folk memory of discourse and they function now by the simple fact that other tales like them have already existed. Children's intertextual experience is peculiarly achronological, so the question about what sense children make of a given text when the intertextual experience cannot be assumed, is important.

What happens, though, in readings where such intertextual knowledge cannot be assumed or assured, such as in cases of cultural transfer or readerly inexperience, where the intertextual references are unknown and unavailable to the target audience? What sense do children make, can children make, of a textual encounter in these circumstances? A student teacher explains how her class of four- and five-year-olds, who were only just beginning to build a foundation knowledge of books, failed to understand *The Jolly Postman*

because it has quite a difficult formula with the original story and additional texts as an additional layer to the story in the form of letters, cards, advertisements, etc. As well as attempting to make sense of the story, they also needed knowledge of these other genres, familiarity with other fairy stories and nursery rhymes and perhaps even an understanding of puns, jokes and play on words.

She goes on to describe how one child attempts to take control of the text in his retelling of the story of 'The Three Little Pigs':

When the child reached the part of the tale where the wolf falls into the pot of boiling water, he explained that the wolf ‘splashed and bashed and kicked his legs’. This was not in the original text that we had read, but the child had played with what he knew, had immersed himself in the text and had come up with a playful comment that expressed an understanding of the story. The children compare and contrast the stories they are reading with those they already have knowledge of to make up a schema for a particular genre. It is therefore obvious that the more stories the children know the more they can understand/interpret richly any given story.

(Stapleton 2002)

The question of readers’ meaning-making is raised also in the process of translating a source text into another language where it is a matter of cultural and linguistic specificity. Desmet relates how the Ahlbergs’ Jolly Postman series has been translated into Dutch by the use of such translation strategies as: ‘*literal translation* of shared intertexts, *substitution* for intertexts likely to be unknown to the intended target audience, and *addition* or *compensation*’ (Desmet 2001: 31, my italics). The end result of the text which has been the subject of translation may be, as Desmet suggests, ‘a new differently intertextual text’ (31). Translation between languages (and indeed between different media) is a catalyst for questions about the authority of one text over another and about the possible loss of some of the source text’s cultural authority in the process of translation; it also returns us to the question already raised of the role and authority of the reader in the intertextual space as the *producer* rather than the *decoder* of embedded textual meanings. In instances where a source text is written in English, but requires the transfer of a different cultural knowledge to its target readership, the narrative itself often attempts to compensate for any assumed shortfall in knowledge between it and its intended young readership by filling in any potential gaps with embedded explanations.

Adeline Yen Mah’s *Chinese Cinderella: The Secret Story of an Unwanted Daughter* (1999) is a very good example. It apparently alludes overtly to the Westernised version of the Cinderella folk tale in its title, but in fact it alludes to the story of ‘Ye Xian, the original Chinese Cinderella’. The autobiographical narrative is set against a background of Chinese history spanning the period 1937–52, and focuses on the cruelties inflicted on Adeline as an unwanted girl-child in one of China’s elite families in the shadow of first the Japanese and then the Communist takeovers of mainland China. She describes her struggle for an education and her family’s attempts to avoid the impact on their wealth and lifestyle of the invasions, by their continuous and restless moving between Tianjin and Shanghai and, eventually, to Hong Kong. A knowledge of cultural and historical facts, and of her family’s pre-revolutionary status, are important to the reader’s understanding of her family’s motivations and behaviour; consequently, explanations of the historical background are slipped into the narrative between accounts of the everyday cruelties her family inflict on Adeline’s family- and school-life. For example, in letting her young reader know the significant status of her family home in the ‘French Concession’ of Tianjin, she explains:

China had lost a war (known as the Opium War) against England and France. As a result, many coastal cities in China (such as Tianjin and Shanghai) came to be occupied by foreign soldiers. The conquerors parceled out the best areas of these treaty ports for themselves, claiming them as their own ‘territories’ or ‘concessions’.

Tianjin's French Concession was like a little piece of Paris transplanted into the centre of this big Chinese city ... We were ruled by French citizens under French law.

(1999: 5–6, 231)

A knowledge of Chinese custom and language is also integrally important for Western readers' understanding of this narrative; so they are given a lesson in the protocol of naming in Chinese families in the two-page 'Author's Note' to the start of book; chapter headings are written bilingually in English and Chinese with Chinese characters, and Chinese characters with their phonetic transliterations are repeated throughout to name names. Especially enlightening for the reader's understanding of the richness and beauty of the Chinese language and significance of the characters, is a three-page explanation posed as a dialogue between Adeline and her grandfather ('Ye Ye'), focusing on just one character in the Chinese script: ('bei') (172–4).

Mirjam Pressler's *Shylock's Daughter* (2000) has been translated into English from the original German by Brian Murdoch. The story is set within the framework of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, in the Ghetto of sixteenth-century Venice. Clearly the reader's previous knowledge of the original play as an intertext enhances the reading of this text, but the absence of it does not close it down altogether. More importantly for the reader's understanding is a knowledge, which cannot be assumed, of Jewish sects and culture, customs and Law, to explain and enlighten the mores and behaviours of the key characters – Shylock, his daughter Jessica and her Christian lover, Antonio. Similarly to the Adeline Yen Mah's book, the narrative takes care of the 'gaps' through a battery of discreet, *en passant* explanations: for example:

'You know he doesn't like it when you spend all your time with the Sephardim – with those Spanish Jews!

(2000: 15)

These Jews were mostly Marranos – that is, they had been forced to accept baptism.

(25)

Levi Meshullam was a Sephardic Jew, and the laws that applied to him were different from those for Ashkenazi Jews like her father.

(52)

The lords had simply cancelled the *condotta*, the settlement treaty for Jews.

(26)

The regulations, which the *cattaveri*, the controllers, enforced with such strict attention.

(68)

What a splendid *zimara* he had been wearing this evening, that full well-cut coat with the broad sleeves.

(52)

'Acts of Charity like that, *mitzvoth*, are supposed to be done secretly and not in public.'

(65)

However, the book alludes to the original play in a number of subtle ways that are not explained, for which first-hand knowledge of the play would provoke a richer kind of reading. Some of the dialogue, especially Shylock's, is quoted directly from *The Merchant of Venice*; the book adopts the much-used Shakespearian device of having girls disguised as boys and women as men (as with Jessica and Portia). There is an allusion to a wider intertext of Shakespeare, with an emphasis in the book on the idea of characters play-acting, of their playing a part in their own lives, and the book uses the Shakespearean device of 'plays within plays'.

These examples of texts which allude overtly to previous intertexts again raise the wider questions of the status of the so-called 'ur-text', and the effect of the intertexts on the reader's knowledge, perception and reception of any one, or all, of them. Children's exposure to other media such as film, television animations, and video, means increasingly that they are likely to encounter the media adaptations of a children's fiction before they encounter the written text and to come to regard it as the 'original' from which to approach and on which to base and 'make sense' of their (later) reading of the written version. This raises further questions about whether the nature of the later reading is qualitatively and experientially different if the ur-text (source text) happens to have been a Disney cartoon version of, say, 'Snow White'.

Disney adaptations of fairy tales are particularly interesting to an intertextuality of children's literature because, as touchstones of popular culture, they reflect the way in which each generation's retellings have assumed and foregrounded the dominant socio-linguistic and cultural codes and values at a particular moment in history: for example, Disney's foregrounding Snow White's good looks alongside qualities of moral rectitude and goodness claimed for her by earlier, written versions.

But it is not only the stories which change in the repeated intertextual quotations – the intertextual context of the reading and their reception also changes. For example, contemporary feminist post-Freudian readings of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), or Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), make them different kinds of texts from what was previously possible. Similarly, a contemporary child reader's readings of, say, a modern reprint of the original tales of Beatrix Potter will be quite different from those of the readers for whom they were originally intended. In their reading of *Jemima Puddle-Duck* (1908), for example, today's child readers are less likely than child readers from the earlier part of the century to recognise the ingredients of duck stuffing for what they are. This is not because, like Jemima, they are simpletons, but because their stuffing today is more likely to be from a packet. Their probable inability to recognise the ingredients of duck stuffing removes an opportunity to anticipate Jemima's fate well in advance of narration. And not only do contemporary child-readers have an intertextual familiarity with Beatrix Potter's character, Jemima Puddle-Duck, and her Potter co-star, Peter Rabbit, from a proliferation of non-literary artefacts, including video adaptations: they can also now read about them in series adaptations in Ladybird books (1992 on). Ladybird has developed a very powerful position in Britain as a publisher of low-priced hardback formula books – especially retellings of traditional tales – with simplified language and sentence constructions. They are a good example of the texts of imitation I described earlier. For some children in Britain they will be the only written version of traditional tales they have encountered. Comparison between the Ladybird and original versions of *Jemima Puddle-Duck* reveals linguistic and syntactic differences that make assumptions about their respective implied readers; and there are other syntactic, micro-discursive and linguistic differences which encode different socio-linguistic climates and – by extension – imply

different language-in-use on the parts of their respective readerships. What we see in operation in these two texts is the tension and interplay between two idiolects and two sociolects: the uses of language in each text and their situation in, and reception by, their respective socio-historic contexts and readers. Each is operating as a textual and intertextual paradigm of its time, but the first-version text can only be 'read' through a network of late twentieth-century intertexts.

Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* series (1965–77) and Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* (1984) rely for their fullest reading on the young reader's knowledge of Arthurian and Celtic myth, especially of the *Mabinogion*. Together these texts are examples of the type of two-world fantasy genre where child readers can come to recognise, and to expect, such generic conventions as character archetype, stereotype and the archetypal plot structures of quest and journeys. The novels allude only obliquely to their mythical sources, even though myth is integral to their stories. Thus, even in readings that do not rely on knowledge of the myth, readers might intuit the echoes of myth as they read and absorb the novels' more subtle messages and connections.

Similarly, Robert Cormier's *After the First Death* (1979) and Jill Paton Walsh's novels *Goldengrove* (1972) and *Unleaving* (1976) allude, respectively, to lines from Dylan Thomas's poem 'A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London' ('After the first death, there is no other') and Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'Spring and Fall' ('Márgaré, áre you grieving/Over Goldengrove unleaving?'). In each case, a perfectly coherent reading of the text is possible without the reader's knowledge of the intertextual poetic allusions; but the potential for a metaphoric reading is enhanced by the reader's previous knowledge of them. In the case of Paton Walsh's *Goldengrove*, for example, the metaphor for metaphysical transience first mooted by Hopkins in his 'Spring and Fall' image of the Goldengrove unleaving, is employed again by Paton Walsh as the name of the fictional house, 'Goldengrove', from which the book takes its title. This is the place of symbolic and literal change where the two teenage characters spend their (significantly) late-summer vacation of maturation and realisation. The image is extended in numerous other references: changing body-shapes, changed sleeping arrangements, changed attitudes to each other, and not least, in repeated references to the falling leaves of late summer. It also invokes and parodies the style and content of Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927), with a polyphony which moves effortlessly between several viewpoints, and positions its readers accordingly. This polyphonic, multilayered structure, which is also a feature of the Cormier novel, is particularly interesting to an intertextuality of children's literature because it breaks the intertextual discursive codes and conventions of the single viewpoint and linear narrative that are typical of the form.

Young readers who come to these novels by Cooper, Garner, Cormier and Paton Walsh with an explicit knowledge of their intertexts will have a markedly different experience of reading. They will experience what Barthes has described as the 'circular memory of reading' (Barthes 1975/76: 36). This describes a reading process where the need consciously to recall and to refer back to specific obligatory intertexts, now being quoted as metaphor and/or metonymy in the focused texts, restricts the reader's opportunity for free intertextual interplay at the point of reading. The reading experience in such cases moves away from a textually focused reading that is a more usual kind of narrative engagement to one that is simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal as the reader seeks to refer to the 'borrowing' and at the same time to integrate it into a new context. It is the essence of this kind of reading to deny readers an opportunity for linear reading as they move in and out of the text to make connections between it and the intertext(s).

Jamila Gavin's award-winning *Coram Boy* (2000) draws on the historical fact of Thomas Coram's establishing in 1741 the first children's hospital 'For the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Children', children who were otherwise brutalised, and eventually died, in the charity orphanages of the period. In her Foreword to the book, Gavin describes how the Coram Foundation still exists today, and that it continues to work on behalf of children; that the performance of Handel's *Messiah*, which is a key event in the book, actually took place at the Hospital. The 'Coram man' is pivotal to the events of the story. He collects abandoned children, ostensibly to deliver them up to the Hospital for safe keeping, but disposes of them instead before they could ever have reached it. Such a man, Gavin explains, never actually existed. The 'Coram boys' were real enough as inmates of the eighteenth-century Hospital, but the characters and events of the story are otherwise all imaginary. As in *The Chinese Cinderella* and *Shylock's Daughter*, the Foreword situates the historical events but, unlike those books, there are no explanatory pauses in the narrative itself to 'educate' the reader's lack of factual knowledge en route. *Coram Boy* weaves a path through actual and imaginary events which assume equal status in the mind of the reader, who is then unable to differentiate between fact or fiction in what *de facto* has become a linear rather than centripetal experience of reading. Another Paton Walsh novel, *A Parcel of Patterns* (1983), is also a fictionalised historical account, of the bubonic plague's destruction of the inhabitants of the Derbyshire village of Eyam. It uses many secondary signals to ground the events in their historic context and to ensure that readers locate the events in these pre-textual happenings by, for example, the use of paratextual devices such as the words of the publisher's introduction: 'Eyam (pronounced Eem) is a real village in Derbyshire and many of the events in this evocative novel are based on what actually happened there in the year of the Plague' (Paton Walsh 1983).

Another example is the use of direct quotation from historic artefacts, not least from the inscription of the great bell of Eyam 'SWEET JESU BE MY SPEDE' (54). The book reinforces the historic authenticity of its subject matter by a consistent capitalisation throughout of the word Plague, and by use of an invented dialect which pastiches what we know about the dialect of seventeenth-century Derbyshire.

In contrast, Robert Westall's novel *Gulf* (1992) is embedded in the events of the 1991 so-called 'Gulf War' in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. *Gulf*, unlike *A Parcel of Patterns*, could have assumed a shared, contemporary readership. Equally, it clearly assumes that its readership has a shared intertextual experience, and this makes recovery of the pre-text more likely and therefore calls for little explanation and contextualisation. But the novel's foregrounded meaning centres on the need for its readers to see the connection between the out-of-body experiences of the narrator's younger brother, Figgis, and the experiences of a young Iraqi boy soldier whose life he shares. The detail of the geography and history of Iraq is an intertextual experience that cannot be assumed, at least not for its target Western readership; consequently, as in so many of the narratives already mentioned, they are dealt with by way of explanation, 'I looked up Tikrit in our atlas; it was north of Baghdad. Then I read in the paper it was where Saddam Hussein himself came from' (Westall 1992: 47). This is another example of the way in which texts written for children sometimes have a felt need to be overreferential; the need to fill intertextual gaps to mobilise a positive reading experience in their young readers which, incidentally, may be one of the single distinguishing characteristics of children's literature *per se*.

Literature for children has to tread a careful path between a need to be sufficiently overreferential in its intertextual gap-filling so as not to lose its readers, and the need to leave enough intertextual space and to be sufficiently stylistically challenging to allow

readers free intertextual interplay. It is on the one hand formally conservative, yet it is charged with the awesome responsibility of initiating young readers into the dominant literary, linguistic and cultural codes of the home culture. On the other hand, it has seen the emergence of what we now confidently call the 'new picture books' and the 'new young adult novel', some of which have featured in this essay. Picture-book writers and illustrators are challenging conventional literary forms of children's literature and breaking the codes. In so doing they amass a wide-ranging repertoire of generic possibilities which effectively extends the horizons of young people's literary competences and encourages them to ever-increasingly participate in Barthes's 'circular memory of reading'.

A theory of intertextuality of children's literature challenges readers and writers of children's literature to acknowledge the lost codes and practices and underlying discursive conventions by which it functions and has been defined historically. It shows why theoretical practice is so important to reading practice. It urges a different poetics of literary engagement in which the young reader's part in the process of meaning-making is legitimised by the theory itself because it endorses and valorises their propensity for intertextual interplay. The texts mentioned here act only as illustrative paradigms of the theory of intertextuality of children's literature in a cornucopia of other possible texts. Some of these texts, like so many others in the field, have a metafictional dimension which causes readers to pay attention to their fabric, to the devices of artifice in literature and to the textuality, as well as the actuality, of the world to which they allude. The theory of intertextuality of children's literature is a rich field in which to engage young people's awareness of the importance of the activity of making intertextual links in the interpretive process. It brings them to a gradual understanding of how they are being (and have been) textually constructed in and by this intertextual playground. The texts of children's literature are exciting sites on which to mobilise a child-reader subjectivity that is intertextually aware and literarily competent.

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14 Comparative children's literature

Emer O'Sullivan

Children's literature has transcended linguistic and cultural borders since books and magazines specifically intended for young readers were produced on any kind of scale in eighteenth-century Europe. As it has evolved from international rather than national paradigms, it can be argued that the subject of children's literature research cannot be limited to 'geographically internal texts and ... those responsible for their production' (Bouckaert-Ghesquière 1992: 93). But children's literature, not traditionally regarded as meriting serious scholarship, has hitherto flown under the radar of comparative literature, the discipline generally responsible for researching cross-cultural phenomena, and comparative issues have not been widely addressed in children's literature studies which, in the past, was a little too fond of assuming its international corpus to have almost mystically transcended cultural and linguistic borders. Even today, there is a lack of awareness of cross-cultural matters, especially in the English-speaking context where children's literature is usually taken to mean (only) children's literature in English.

Comparative literature is concerned with the study of literature and literary theory and criticism in an international context and with literary texts in relation to other media and disciplines; it is dedicated to 'the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of literature and culture' (Tötösy de Zepetnek 1999). Transcending the limits of a single literature, it explores what different literatures, theories or cultural products have in common as well as their peculiarities and individual features which come to light only when they are seen in relation to others. Its subject traditionally derives from several languages, thus distinguishing it from the study of single literatures, but cultural differences between literatures in the same language – for instance the comparison of Spanish and Latin American literature, or the literatures of the various German-speaking countries – are now also a genuine subject of comparative studies. A predominantly literary tendency in investigating the connections between individual texts, authors, genres, periods and national literatures in the past has been replaced by an interdisciplinary cultural studies approach; comparative literature today is considered 'to be less a set of practices ... and more a shared perspective that sees literary activity as involved in a complex web of cultural relations' (Koelb and Noakes 1988: 11).

Development of comparative children's literature

The founding father of comparative children's literature is Paul Hazard, the leading French comparatist, who with *Les Livres, les enfants et les hommes* published a study of children's literature in 1932, a time when children's literature hardly existed for mainstream academic criticism. He writes about children's literature's role in the construction of a

cultural or national identity and how it forms the 'soul' of a nation. Although his approach is often questionable, Hazard was none the less the first to address relevant comparative issues such as differing concepts of childhood, traditions of children's literature specific to certain nations, and mentalities. However, his work does deviate in some surprising ways from serious comparative study; it takes little notice of the processes of cultural exchange, translation and adaptation, rather assuming that children's literature effortlessly crosses all borders. The aspect of his book which has proved most durable is his vision of the universal republic of childhood.

An approach which emphasises the internationalism of children's literature tends to be characteristic of important monographs published in the 1950s and early 1960s such as Bettina Hürlimann's major survey of European children's literature, *Europäische Kinderbücher aus drei Jahrhunderten* (1959), Luigi Santucci's study *Letteratura Infantile* (1958) or Mary Thwaite's *From Primer to Pleasure in Reading* (1963). In 1968 Anne Pellowski, founder of the Information Centre on Children's Cultures, published a ground-breaking work in the form of an extensive annotated bibliography, *The World of Children's Literature*. Its aim was to provide 'the information (or the means to it) which would lead to an accurate picture of the development of children's literature in every country where it presently exists, even in the most formative stages' (Pellowski 1968: 1). She intended this work to be the basis for comparative study of the subject.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the beginning of an interest in translations, and with translation questions of adaptation and reception emerge for the first time. The most fruitful extension of the discussion of children's literature in comparative terms came in the 1980s, particularly with the adoption of systems theory and through links with translation studies (see Tabbert 2002 for a survey of approaches to translation of children's literature since 1960).

The growing interest in comparative aspects of children's literature is illustrated by a series of publications since the 1990s, many of them deriving from international conferences on the subject – they include Perrot and Bruno 1993, Ewers *et al.* 1994, Webb 2000 and Neubauer 2002. A number of established journals have also dedicated special issues to comparative aspects of children's literature in the last two decades: issue 13, 1 of *Poetics Today* (1992), *Compar(a)ison* II and 1995, and *New Comparison* 20 (1995). The most recent addition was a special double issue in 2003 of *META* 48, 1–2 on translating children's literature. *Kinderliterarische Komparatistik* (O'Sullivan 2000) represents a first attempt to lay the foundations of the discipline, examining the relevance of basic concepts of comparative literature for children's literature and developing them further to encompass its specifics.

The cultural turn in literary studies has generally led to an interdisciplinary opening in children's literature which takes account of historical, social and ideological factors and applies psychoanalytical theory, gender-studies approaches and poststructuralist criticism. Postcolonial theoretical approaches especially have flourished in countries such as Australia (see Bradford 2001), the USA and Canada, through a growing awareness of the cultural and territorial rights of their first-nation inhabitants but also through addressing contemporary multiethnicity. In Europe topics such as migration and cultural minorities are receiving increased attention (see Müller 2001).

Despite the progress in the discussion of comparative issues in children's literature studies, the prevailing concept of children's literature is still predominantly internationalistic. Foreign texts are often read in translation and discussed as if they had originally been written in those languages. The lack of awareness of the nature of literary translation leads,

in academic practice, to interpretations difficult to imagine in the study of general literature. For instance, Charles Frey and John Griffith, in their interpretation of the *Geschichte vom Suppenkasper* [The Story of Augustus] from Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, dwell on an aspect to be found only in the English translation. They quote that it was "a sin To make himself so pale and thin", says Hoffmann' (1987: 57, emphasis added). But the mention of sin, which introduces an important religious element, is not present at all in Hoffmann's original, which contains neither the idea of a transcendental judge nor any reproof: 'O weh und ach! and wie ist der Kaspar dünn und schwach!' [literally: 'Oh woe, alas! How thin and weak Kaspar is!']. The interpretation of a text on the basis of the unthinking use of a translation can lead to statements that will not survive a glance at the original.

Areas of comparative children's literature studies

Comparative children's literature concerns itself with general theoretical issues in children's literature, especially questions pertaining to the system itself, its particular structure of communication, and the social, economic and cultural conditions which have to prevail in order for a children's literature to develop. A central preoccupation is with what is characteristic, distinctive and exclusive to individual children's literatures which emerge, as do their commonalities, only when different traditions are confronted with each other. It deals with forms of children's literature in the different cultural areas, and with their respective functions in those areas. Furthermore, comparative children's literature addresses all relevant intercultural phenomena, such as contact and transfer between literatures, and the representation of self-images and images of other cultures in the literature of a given language. Comparative children's literature thus, like mainstream comparative literature, must consider those phenomena that cross the borders of a particular literature in order to see them in their respective linguistic, cultural, social and literary contexts.

I would like to give a very brief outline of the developing field of comparative children's literature by sketching nine key areas of the discipline and naming important questions. Not all of these areas have received the same amount of scholarly attention, indeed some of them have the character of a desideratum. But they should serve to illustrate just how rich a seam comparative children's literature is for future work. I will conclude the outline by giving a brief example of a comparative transfer study, the translation and reception of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* in Germany.

Areas of comparative children's literature studies are: general theory of children's literature; contact and transfer studies; comparative poetics; intertextuality studies; intermediality studies; image studies; comparative genre studies; comparative historiography of children's literature; and comparative history of children's literature studies.

General theory of children's literature

Because the differences between children's literature and literature for adults dictate key differences between comparative literature and comparative children's literature studies, an important area is general theory of children's literature. The two defining characteristics which distinguish children's literature from other branches are first that it is a body of literature which belongs simultaneously to two systems, the literary and the pedagogical; it is a literature into which the dominant social, cultural and educational norms are inscribed: 'Children's fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which

exist for the purpose of socialising their target audience' (Stephens 1992: 8). This aspect is particularly relevant when studying forms of transfer of children's literature: To what degree do norms of the source text prohibit translation? How are they adapted to conform to those of the target culture? and so on.

The second defining characteristic is that the communication in children's literature is fundamentally asymmetrical. Production, publication and marketing by authors and publishing houses, the part played by critics, librarians, booksellers and teachers, as intermediaries – at every stage of literary communication we find adults acting for children. Within the texts themselves the asymmetry of communication usually manifests itself as an implied (adult) author addressing an implied (child) reader, but it also accounts for other forms of address – single address (to the child reader alone), dual or even multiple address which can include implicit adult readers and child readers at different stages. The consequences of the asymmetrical communication – forms of thematic, linguistic and literary accommodation employed by authors to bridge the distance between adult and child, for instance – must be considered in a general theory of children's literature which forms the basis of comparative children's literature.

Contact and transfer studies

Every form of cultural exchange between children's literatures from different countries, languages and cultures is of interest here: such as contact, transfer (by translation, adaptation or otherwise), reception, multilateral influences. An important aspect of investigation is the trade balance of translations and factors determining the international transfer of children's literature: how is it that translations account for 80 per cent of children's books published in Finland as against 1–2 per cent in Britain and the USA? The culture-specific attitude towards foreign literature is only one of many determining factors. This area addresses such questions as: Which countries export children's literature while failing to import any? How are translations accepted, evaluated and integrated into a target literature? Who is responsible for introducing books and literatures into different cultural contexts? Why are certain works not translated at all, and why are others discovered only decades after their first publication? How has the development of literary traditions in a given cultural area been influenced by translations?

The asymmetry of communication in children's literature together with its pedagogical links are defining elements of the difference between the theory and practice of translating literature for adults and for children, as children's literature generally passes through social and educational filters not normally activated when adult literature is translated.

Comparative poetics

The poetics of children's literature studies the aesthetic elements and literary forms of this branch of literature. Comparative poetics addresses, for instance, the aesthetic development of children's literature and changes in its form and function in different cultures. One example is the comparative development of the new, complex, 'literary' children's literature, which embraces techniques common to the psychological novel and whose beginnings can be traced back to the end of the 1950s in England, the 1960s in Sweden and around 1970 in Germany (Nikolajeva 1996). It also examines narrative methods, structural features (motifs and themes) – for instance, the treatment of death in children's literature across time and cultures – and aesthetic categories like humour, asking such

questions as: Are there any universal aspects of humour for children? Do children everywhere laugh at the same things? Do the genres regarded as particularly amusing differ from one culture to another? Do some literatures contain more humour than others? What comic devices and means, from slapstick to satire, are most prevalent in (which) children's literature? When and where did it become permissible for adults in positions of authority to become objects of comedy in children's literature? When did the grotesque carnivalesque humour of bodily functions and excess as identified by Bakhtin become acceptable in children's literature? Is humour an obstacle to translation? How is humour translated, and how is it adapted in translation to the norms of the target culture?

Intertextuality studies

Some of the earliest children's books were adaptations of existing ones for adults, such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*. Children's literature has from its inception been a thoroughly intertextual literature of adaptations and retellings (McCallum and Stephens 1998). These retellings, parodies, cross-cultural references, simple, subtle and complex forms of interaction between literatures from different languages and cultures are among the subjects of intertextuality studies. They include analyses of instances of marked intertextuality, in which the links between pre-text and intertext are explicit, such as Kirsten Boie's collection of episodic tales in *Wir Kinder aus dem Möwenweg* (2000), a homage to Astrid Lindgren's *Alla vi barn i Bullerbyn* (1947) which echoes its German title *Wir Kinder aus Bullerbü* and aims to capture the spirit, style and structure of Lindgren's original while transposing the environment and social conditions of rural Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century to those of urban Germany at the beginning of the twenty-first. Unmarked intertextuality is not as easily detectable; an interesting example is a novel published in the German Democratic Republic in 1984, about toys that come to life in tales shared by man and boy in a framework story. The boy Jakob and his toy companions meet up in the woods, go on picnics or on a treasure hunt, even though they aren't entirely sure what it is that they are looking for or where exactly they may find it. Someone's birthday is forgotten, the wood is flooded after days of rain, balloons are used as a means of transport and two of their party hunt a fearsome animal. But it's not the Heffalump who frightens this cast of characters, it's a wild horse, a '*Wildpferd*'. Christoph Hein's *Das Wildpferd unterm Kachelofen. Ein schönes dickes Buch von Jakob Borg und seinen Freunden* echoes Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* on the structural level, in elements of the plot, in characterisation and in the themes of friendship and imagination. But these resonances serve to underline the differences: where Milne's utopian vision, an amalgam of a pre-industrial Golden Age and the lost paradise of childhood, is only clouded at the very end by Christopher Robin starting school and thus having to leave the enchanted Hundred Acre Wood, Jakob's difficulties in school and with the adult world generally are excluded neither from the fantasy stories he tells nor from the frame; these experiences are, rather, the negative motor for the power of his imagination. The most significant divergence is the reversal of the fictitious narrator–narratee roles. Milne's adult narrator not only has access to the world of imaginary childhood, it is he who presents it in story form to the child. The story-teller in Hein's novel is the boy. Imagination, the child's gift, is shown to be lacking in the adult world: only the adult who has the capacity to listen to and understand the stories he is told as the privileged narratee of a child narrator, may regain access. Through his reference to and reinterpretation of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Hein signals his admiration for Milne's book as a model of children's literature. At the same

time, by realigning the relationship between child and adult, he underscores his demand for more respect for and admiration of the child. Once the intertextual dialogue between Hein and Milne has been identified, questions such as the following have to be asked: Was *Winnie-the-Pooh* known and read in the GDR? Could Hein's readers – child or adult – recognise the allusions to Milne? What are the consequences of recognition or non-recognition for the reception of the work?

Intermediality studies

Study of different cultural codes (in the visual arts, dance, music, cinema, the theatre) has always, under a variety of names, been a subject area of comparative literature. Children's literature and children's culture are more markedly distinguished by their intermediality than adult literature. The reciprocal relations between the media, for instance between stories and characters that originally appeared in text form and have been adapted into a large number of different media, make an interesting subject; such forms may include versions on film, video, DVD, in audio adaptations, as text-based toys and commodities (china and clothing showing characters from favourite books, etc.), as computer programmes or as companions or (electronic) playmates in 'experience parks'.

Conversely, the subject also covers books-of-the-film or television series. Intermediality in children's literature studies goes beyond concern with the forms and consequences of changes between media in order to observe and criticise the way the new media are handled in texts for children, both thematically and on the formal and aesthetic plane. The multimedia phenomenon represents a new challenge to children's literature studies (Mackey 2002).

Image studies

Image studies, or imagology, is traditionally concerned with intercultural relations in terms of mutual perceptions, images and self-images and their representation in literature; it investigates 'the complex links between literary discourse, on the one hand, and national identity constructs, on the other' (Leersen 2000: 270). This can involve analysing culture-specific topographies (the forest in German, the garden in English, the Alps in Swiss or the outback in Australian children's literature (Tabbert 1995)), images of home and how cultural, national or regional identity is linked with landscape (Rutschmann 1994 or Stephens 1995) or the influence of images on the translation process – how the selection, translation and marketing of children's literature from a particular country is determined by the images of that country in the target literature (Seifert 2004). It also entails examining poetological aspects of the representation of 'foreigners' (O'Sullivan 1989) to see how authors can bring stereotypes into play in order to confirm or contradict readers' expectations, how they deliberately omit using them in places where they would have been expected or how they can subvert them in a playful manner. The extratextual function of national stereotypes and the consistency and change in representations of specific groups are further objects of image studies. O'Sullivan 1990 is a diachronic study of some 250 British children's books published between 1870 and 1990 which traces the interdependence of political and cultural relations and the valorisation of stereotypes of the German. It reveals how the portrayals of Germans in texts with a specific time setting – for example, the Second World War – vary greatly depending on the date of publication, how negative images traded in texts of the 1940s are used reflectively in more ambivalent texts of the

1970s, or how, for instance, in Jan Needle's *Albeson and the Germans* (1977), the common Nazi stereotypes are actually functionalised to become an intrinsic part of the narrative. Image studies can also examine such aspects as how different nations are gendered or how national stereotypes can be used in books for girls and boys to impart the currently appropriate gender-specific modes of thought and behaviour.

Comparative genre studies

This can encompass the development of genres in the context of national and international traditions and examine connections and discrepancies in the development of genres in different cultures. Taking Germany and children's fantasy as the focal point for a thumbnail sketch, it could be said that this genre, which was subsequently to become one of the key genres of children's literature, was founded in Germany with E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Nußknacker und Mäusekönig* (1816) but its further development took place in other countries. Hans Christian Andersen initially carried on the heritage of German Romanticism in the field of children's literature in Denmark in the early nineteenth century, and the tradition of fantasy reached new heights in mid nineteenth-century England with the works of George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll and, somewhat later, E. Nesbit. Via the Swedish reception of the golden age of English fantasy – specifically by Astrid Lindgren – this genre finally re-entered Germany, its country of origin, with a revolution in children's literature called *Pippi Långstrump*, in German translation in 1949, leading, for the first time again since the Romantic era, to a favourable climate for the reception and creation of fantasy for children in Germany, and later to a boom in fantasy for children by German authors such as Michael Ende.

Comparative historiography of children's literature

Comparative historiography studies the writing of the history of children's literature. It is interested in the criteria according to which histories and accounts of various children's literatures are produced and calls for a fundamental discussion of the cultural, social, economic and educational conditions in which literature for children developed. Some recent semiotic models of children's literature postulate identical phases of development for children's literature following similar patterns in all cultures (Shavit 1986), a universal progression from didacticism to diversity (Nikolajeva 1996). A comparative history of children's literature, however, would have to examine the conditions which have to prevail in order for a children's literature to develop, to register how the unique histories of post-colonial children's literatures differ from the postulated 'standard' model based on north-western European countries (Britain, Germany, France). There is still no comparative history of children's literatures from different cultures which takes account of the conditions in which they arose and developed.

Problems of the comparative historiography of children's literature arise partly from the different state of its documentation in individual countries or linguistic areas, which in turn is connected with the state of research. It asks: How are the historical accounts of different countries organised? According to genres, themes, authors, historical periods? What is the basis of the periodisation? Are they written from the disciplinary perspective of literary history, educational history, history of the book or librarianship? Which is the dominant disciplinary context of the study and teaching of children literature in any particular country?

Comparative history of children's literature studies

This metacritical dimension of comparative children's literature involves looking at culture-specific aspects of the study of children's literature, which in turn are influenced by how the subject is institutionally established in different cultures.

One of the first university chairs for children's literature in France (at the Sorbonne in Paris) was devoted to 'Littérature populaire et enfantine'. The study of children's literature was thus placed in the context of popular or para-literature, a field hardly accepted as part of the academic system in other European countries in the 1950s. In Germany until the 1960s, discussion of children's literature was almost entirely confined to the pedagogical context, in relation to teacher training. In England, on the other hand, there was no professorial chair for children's literature studies until the end of the 1990s; for a long time, children's literature as an academic subject featured there mainly in the training of librarians.

A comparative history of children's literature studies must describe the relation between the institutional situation, the focus and level of research and international influence as well as the connection between the theory and actual production of literature for young people.

Contact and transfer studies: *Alice in Germany*

This chapter is to be concluded with a brief example of a subject of comparative contact and transfer studies, the translation and reception of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. The French translations have been analysed by Nières 1988, the Finnish by Oittinen 1997.

Antonie Zimmermann, a German teacher living in England at the time, produced the first German translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, published in 1869. Since then over thirty different German translations have been issued (not counting abridged versions and translations into other media). How can Carroll's novel be successfully translated into German or, for that matter, into any other language? Word play on the highest level, poems, parodies; the English language not only provides the context for much of the humour, it is frequently its very object. *Alice in Wonderland* is full of explicit and implicit references to historical or cultural figures, regional and social accents and names, many of which are figures from English nursery rhymes or personifications of sayings – the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, the Cheshire Cat, the Queen of Hearts and her court – all of which challenge the talent of any translator.

In the initial stages of its reception at least, this was a book which, with its dream-like quality, its perverted logic, its incomprehensibility, was totally unlike anything produced by German authors for children. Was this book suitable for children, was it acceptable for German children? Each translation can be read as the translator's answer to the questions, influenced by predominant concepts of childhood and attitudes towards what constituted children's literature in Germany at the time of that particular translation.

The translations range from those which infantilise the novel to others which offer an exclusively adult reading of it. Five main approaches towards the translation of Lewis Carroll's novel can be identified: the fairy-tale approach; the explanatory approach; the moralising approach; the literary approach; and an approach which is both literary and accessible to children.

The fairy-tale mood is frequently introduced in paratexts about the author Lewis Carroll who, according to the translator Karl Köstlin in 1949, told the Liddell sisters the

story of Alice's adventures in his room '*an den langen Winterabenden* [during the long winter evenings]'. In Franz Sester's 1949 translation the point of the 'dry story' is missed entirely as it is replaced by the story of Little Red Riding Hood. An obvious adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* to the fairy-tale model can be seen in R. G. L. Barrett's 1922 translation. In it, the 'Mad Tea Party' is transformed into a German coffee circle with figures which look as if they have just emerged from the German fairy-tale forest. Instead of the Mad Hatter and the March Hare we find a cobbler, 'Meister Pechfaden', and the 'Osterhase', the Easter Bunny.

Many German translations try to turn *Alice in Wonderland* into a comprehensible book; they try to explain away the inexplicable. In them, language as a means of meaningful communication is no longer questioned or undermined: the disturbing, grotesque, threatening dimension of Lewis Carroll's book is eliminated. An extreme example of extensive explanation occurs in Franz Sester's translation in the passage in which the Mock Turtle is first mentioned. He is introduced as follows in the original:

Then the Queen left off, quite out of breath, and said to Alice, 'Have you seen the Mock Turtle yet?'

'No,' said Alice. 'I don't even know what a Mock Turtle is.'

'It's the thing Mock Turtle Soup is made from,' said the Queen.

'I never saw one, or heard of one.'

'Come on, then,' said the Queen, 'and he shall tell you his history.'

Franz Sester obviously found this somewhat unsatisfactory. What were his young readers supposed to think a Mock Turtle was? He therefore added, directly after the Queen tells Alice to follow her, a lengthy passage which has no equivalent in the English original, in which we find Alice culturally adapted as a well-behaved German schoolgirl. In the course of the explanation of what a Mock Turtle is, the reader is introduced to Alice's English teacher and Alice's aunt and is given a recipe for Mock Turtle soup.

A watershed in the history of the German reception of *Alice in Wonderland* occurred in 1963, when both *Alice* books were translated by Christian Enzensberger. Thanks to this intelligent and creative translation almost a hundred years after publication of the original, German readers could finally get an inkling of the complexity and brilliance of Carroll's original. To underline the apparently universal applicability of Carroll's vision, Enzensberger, while recognising the specifically English origin of the books, elected not to literally translate references to England, preferring instead to substitute Napoleon for William the Conqueror, Goethe for Shakespeare and so on. On the other hand, instead of parodying German poems he gives a literal rendering of Carroll's, in other words, perfect German parodies of English poems. Only a reader familiar with the originals (Isaacs Watt's 'Against Idleness and Mischief', for instance) can fully get the point. Enzensberger elects to retain the temporal distance between the novel of 1865 and readers of the 1960s and produces a text which has a distinct nineteenth-century feel to it. With its odd archaic turns of phrase in German and its opaque references, this translation is that of the classical text which *Alice in Wonderland* has become, complete with the patina lent by time and acclaim. It is a translation for adults, for intellectuals even, which, in contrast to Lewis Carroll's original, loses sight of the child reader. Enzensberger's 'literary' translation revealed to German speakers the complexity and quality of a book hitherto dumbed down by most of the translations which, with a clear child reader in mind (and one who couldn't cope with a challenge), held no attraction for the adult reader. This changed in the 1980s,

thanks partly to Enzensberger and partly due to changes in German children's literature, which, for various reasons, was becoming more open to hitherto unknown or unaccepted forms of humour and nonsense.

A small number of translations published in the late 1980s and early 1990s aim to be enjoyed and understood by children but are not prepared to compromise the quality and the spirit of the original. They achieve this goal through creative use of language and by neutralising (but not falsifying) the historical and, in some cases, the cultural context. The language is contemporary but not faddish, Carroll's parodies are replaced by parodies of well-known German poems. One of the most successful of these translations is by Siv Bublitz. A sample of her work is her translation of 'How Doth the Little Crocodile'. It is a parody of Goethe's famous poem '*Der Fischer*' [The Fisherman], dynamic and cheeky in its diction but which nonetheless manages to retain Carroll's smiling and murderous crocodile:

*Das Wasser rauscht, das Wasser tost,
ein Krokodil sitzt drin,
sieht nach dem kleinen Fischerboot
und grinst so vor sich hin.
Dann schnappt es zu, das geht ruck, zuck,
da ist der Fischer weg;
das Krokodil hat Magendruck,
das Boot, es hat ein Leck.*

[The waters sweep, the waters swell,
A crocodile therein
Looks at the little fishing boat
And to himself does grin
Then jaws snap shut all in a flash
O fisherman, adieu!
The crocodile has tummy ache
The boat is leaking, too.]

(Carroll 1993: 23)

The translations which are both literary and accessible can also be read with enjoyment by adults, thus reproducing perhaps most faithfully the dual address of the original.

A comparative study of the German translations of *Alice in Wonderland* reveals that books with the title *Alice im Wunderland* cannot, for the most part, be equated with Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Most Germans today know *Alice in Wonderland* mainly thanks to Walt Disney. Compared to its reception in England and in other countries, Lewis Carroll's book simply wasn't a success in Germany, for which the poor quality of many of the thirty-one translations issued in the course of 130 years is partially responsible. The translations themselves are clear indicators of how translators and publishers felt such an excitingly innovative but also puzzling book should be presented to young German readers.

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15 Bibliography

Matthew Grenby

Bibliography can mean many things. Simple enumerative bibliography lists precisely what was published in a given period or genre, or by a particular author. Analytical bibliography can go much further, exploring the often complicated progress from author's manuscript to published book, the processes of book manufacture and marketing, and the nature of readers' and other writers' responses (an admirable précis, 'Descriptive Bibliography', is provided by Terry Belanger in *Book Collecting: A Modern Guide*: Peters 1977: 97–101). Few would doubt that good bibliographical work of any of these varieties can be hugely useful in understanding the origins and development of children's literature. Most would also agree that the bibliographical groundwork has yet to be adequately laid for the study of children's books. Brian Alderson, for instance, is sure that it has not. In 1975 he told the Bibliographical Society that 'there is much elementary bibliographical work still to be done' in the field of children's literature (Alderson 1977: 206). Twenty years later, his opinion was unchanged, and he added the charge that the energy that might usefully have been spent undertaking this work had been wasted on solipsistic critical analyses of the same old texts: 'Oh dear,' he wrote, 'so much bibliographical groundwork to be done, and all we get is floss' (Alderson 1995a: 17). It is from a statement like this that we can begin to see why children's literature bibliography – ostensibly such an uncomplicated part of scholarship – has recently become the subject of some contention.

What Alderson was suggesting was that a deep division exists between bibliography and literary criticism, and especially any criticism based on literary theory: what he called 'floss'. For Alderson, it was imperative that good bibliographical work should form the basis for all scholarly enquiry into children's literature, and any time spent on critical exegesis was wasted while there was still so much basic scholarship to be done. Peter Hunt, among other children's literature scholars, rose to the bait. 'Critical' and 'theoretical' approaches were every bit as valuable as bibliography, Hunt wrote in a response to Alderson, and their practitioners should not be inhibited by any lack of bibliographical work, however regrettable that lack might be (Hunt 1995). Both had valid points. Hunt's contention that it was unwarranted to attack critics who neglected to check publication dates, or dared not expound the conflicting evidence of different editions, impressions, issues and corrected and uncorrected states (to say nothing of colophons and watermarks), was surely only reasonable. For his part, Alderson was correct to point out that children's books, far more than books for adults, were created in the publishing process, by publishers, illustrators, marketers, teachers and so on, rather than only by authors whose texts transferred smoothly from manuscript to printed page to readers' minds. It is a convincing argument that this long process, with its various mediating factors, is best analysed by descriptive and textual bibliography (Alderson 1995a and 1995b).

Alderson was also surely correct to argue that children's literature does still lack a firm bibliographical base. The history of children's literature in some periods and some places has simply not been written in any detail. Hardly anything is known about which books children read in medieval or early modern Europe, for instance. Likewise (though Alderson was less concerned about this), bibliographies of the children's literature of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, when they exist at all, seldom stretch back much beyond the middle of the twentieth century. Partly this is because there are so many different competing approaches to children's books which draw scholars away from bibliographic research. Scholars come at children's literature as historians of education, as library scientists, as cultural historians, as well as from literary backgrounds, and there is consequently less insistence on the virtues of bibliography. Partly, the lack of bibliography is also due to the relatively recent arrival of children's literature as a recognised field of academic enquiry. Having been taken seriously only for decades rather than for centuries, children's literature studies have simply not accumulated the scholarly infrastructure, including bibliography, which has accreted around other more established areas of literary research. That recent scholars have leapfrogged the description-based 'bibliographic stage', and that analytical literary criticism has now become the dominant mode of academic enquiry into children's literature, is difficult to deny. A glance at Irving P. Leif's *Children's Literature: A Historical and Contemporary Bibliography*, published in 1977, confirms this, with articles like 'Wittgenstein, Nonsense and Lewis Carroll' (Pitcher 1965) beginning to oust the likes of 'Carroll's withdrawal of the 1865 *Alice*' (Ayes 1934) from the 1960s onwards. That Leif's remains one of the only two full-scale print-format bibliographies of children's literature studies is also testament to the decline of this approach (the other is Haviland 1966 *et seq.*).

Does this mean that children's literature bibliography is dying? The answer, surely, is no. The dichotomy exposed by the brief spat between Alderson and Hunt was rather artificial. Critics and bibliographers are actually not always at each others' throats. (Can it have been coincidence that the issue of the *Children's Books History Society Newsletter* which contained the Alderson–Hunt exchange bore on its front cover John Tenniel's image of Tweedledum and Tweedledee preparing to fight?) They have, it must be admitted, tended to congregate in different locales. The bibliographers have usually been self-funded individuals, often book collectors or dealers. The critics have tended to thrive in the relatively well-resourced and perhaps rather artificial environment of university literature departments. But there was actually much more common ground between these two groups than at first meets the eye. Hunt did nothing to dispute the importance of bibliography as *one* approach to children's books. Similarly, Alderson argued against any attempt at 'driving a wedge' between those who are interested in the 'physical and historical aspects of documents' and 'those who care about what the documents say'. There should be no separation between these two approaches, 'but a continuum of critical activity' (Alderson 1995b: 23). Both Hunt and Alderson tacitly accepted, then, that bibliography and literary criticism could work in tandem. This is precisely what happens in practice. The very lack of bibliographical work has necessitated the incorporation of historical, and for that matter enumerative, bibliography into even the most theoretical of children's literature studies. Thus, to take one example, if we wish to know about the history of Norwegian children's books, we can turn to Kari Skjøsberg's 'Nationalism as an Aspect of the History of Norwegian Children's Literature, 1814–1905' (Nikolajeva 1995: 105–14). Although it appears in a volume remarkable for its rigorously theoretical approach to children's books, the essay provides an instructive survey of Norwegian chil-

dren's books alongside its exploration of the role of children's literature in nation-building in the nineteenth century. Likewise, books like *The Black American in Books for Children: Readings in Racism* (MacCann and Woodard 1985), or Jack Zipes's *The Brothers Grimm. From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (Zipes 1988: especially 183–4), perform bibliographic as well as analytical and ideological tasks.

The crossover between these two supposedly inimical approaches is also evident in the most orthodox bibliographical works. Bibliography, after all, is never neutral. Alongside their checklists of titles and editions, even the most dependable and putatively 'objective' bibliographies almost always include literary analysis, artistic and ideological judgements, and attempts to arrange texts according to certain predetermined criteria. F. J. Harvey Darton's path-breaking bibliographical survey of *Children's Books in England* (Darton, revised Alderson 1932/1982), for example, set an astonishingly durable ideological agenda. Darton divided British children's literature into categories which were broadly chronological but which also demarcated children's books according to whether they were godly or imaginative, fairy tales or moral tales, based on strict pedagogic principles or aiming to inspire levity. Those histories of British children's literature which have followed have almost always stuck to these categories, even if the particular titles they have included have been slightly different from those chosen by Darton as milestones to modernity (Muir 1954; Townsend 1965/1995; Thwaite 1963/1972; and Quayle 1971 and 1983). Indeed, the most recent attempts to survey the history of British children's books have tended to schematise the story even further. For Geoffrey Summerfield, children's books can most usefully be understood as either didactic or entertaining, and the tension between these two tendencies was what has powered the development of the genre (Summerfield 1984). Straying further from Darton's paradigm, Mary Jackson attempted to situate her history of early children's books in the context of contemporary politics and economics (Jackson 1989). From the point of view of bibliography, though, her book is more useful for its willingness to draw on a larger corpus of cheap and popular texts than Darton, and for her inclusion of research on authors and publishers which had been published since Alderson last revised Darton's book in 1982. Also important as supplements to Darton, who only really got into his stride in the mid-eighteenth century, are the attempts to chart the murky origins of British children's literature. In this field, William Sloane's *Children's Books in England and America in the Seventeenth Century* (Sloane 1955) and Ruth K. MacDonald's *Literature for Children in England and America from 1646 to 1774* (MacDonald 1982) will soon be joined by a bibliography of all books published for children in Britain before 1800 by Ruth B. Bottigheimer (Bottigheimer, forthcoming; for a summary of the key texts of British children's 'incunabula' see Alderson 1999).

All these books deal almost exclusively with English literature, into which the Scottish, Irish and Welsh traditions have generally been silently subsumed. Little effort has so far been made to reclaim them. Although a substantial amount of critical analysis has now been carried out into particular Scottish children's books, for instance, no full-scale bibliography of books for children published in Scotland, or about Scottish subjects, exists. The most useful source remains a short essay on *The Scottish Contribution to Children's Literature* published in the mid-1960s (Douglas 1966) and whatever can be gleaned from Colin Manlove's admirable critical survey of Scottish fantasy literature (Manlove 1996). There is a similar paucity of bibliographic work on the children's literature of Ireland (Madden 1955 remains useful). In fact, it is only the history of Welsh children's literature which has received any sustained attention, and there is still much work to be done (S. Jones 1990; M. and G. Jones 1983, in Welsh).

Even if the bibliography of British children's literature is itself in need of revision (and Darton's final chapter is entitled 'The Eighties and Today', meaning the 1880s, not the 1980s!), it is far further forward than that in most other parts of the world. The major exception to this is Germany. The *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, with (to date) four huge volumes dealing with discrete chronological periods from the very first children's books to 1850, is now probably the most authoritative bibliography of children's literature in existence (Brüggermann and Ewers 1982; Brüggermann and Brunken 1987, 1991; and Brunken *et al.* 1998; all in German). With astonishingly thorough entries on individual children's books, arranged chronologically within broad generic categories, it functions both as an immensely detailed encyclopedia and an in-depth narrative history of children's literature in German. Members of the same team which produced the *Handbuch* have also produced a shorter history of Austrian children's literature (Ewers and Seibert 1997, in German) and a bibliography of German-Jewish children's literature from the eighteenth century to 1945 (Shavit and Ewers 1994, in German). The only comparably thorough listing of a nation's children's books is probably Marcie Muir and Kerry White's survey of Australian books for children (Muir 1992; White 1992). Muir's volume, covering the period 1774 to 1972, contains over 8,000 children's books either published in or dealing with Australia, and a further 700 items dealing with the southwest Pacific area. The second volume, by White, takes the bibliography up to 1988.

When we consider the achievement of the *Handbuch zur Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* in particular, and the lack of any comparable volumes for other regions, complaints about the scantiness of existing bibliographical work seem more justified. The only substantial general survey of western European children's books remains Brian Alderson's translation of Bettina Hürlimann's *Three Centuries of Children's Books in Europe* (Hürlimann 1967), an absorbing if rather miscellaneous overview. For more detail, almost all western European nations have their own 'Darton' – that is to say, a mid twentieth-century surveyor of the nation's children's literature (mostly available only in the language of that nation, but sometimes in English). For a cursory survey of French children's literature, for instance, one might turn to J. G. Deschamps's *History of French Children's Books*, in English, or François Caradec's *Histoire de la littérature enfantine en France*, in French (Deschamps 1934; Caradec 1977). For Italy there is the work of Louise Hawkes and Vincenzina Battistelli; for the Netherlands there is Leonard de Vries; for Denmark there is Helgo Mollerup; for the Czech and Slovak republics there is Helga Mach; for Portugal there is Henrique Marques; and for Spain there is Carolina Toral y Peñaranda and, perhaps best of all, Carmen Bravo-Villasante, who has mapped Spanish children's literature from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries (Hawkes 1933; Battistelli 1962; de Vries 1964; Mollerup 1951; Mach, 'Czech and Slovak Children's Literature' in Haviland 1973: 365–73; Marques 1928; Toral y Peñaranda 1958; Bravo-Villasante 1963). This is just a sample of the now somewhat ageing national histories available. Others can be found in the 'Further Reading' sections in the nation-by-nation chapters at the end of this Encyclopedia (and others still by consulting Leif 1977, and the excellent Pellowski 1968). One or two national traditions have received more recent treatments, such as the survey of eighteenth-century Dutch children's literature by Piet Buijnsters with Leontine Buijnsters-Smets, and of pre-twentieth-century Swiss children's books by Claudia Weilenmann (Buijnsters and Buijnsters-Smets 1997; Weilenmann 1993). One will search in vain, however, for satisfactory bibliographies of certain nations. To date, for example, there is no substantial survey of Russian or Soviet children's literature. Once again, though, research which is not primarily bibliographic in nature can be of great use. Evgeny

Steiner's *Stories for Little Comrades*, though concentrating mostly on the illustration of children's books in the 1920s and 1930s, provides useful information on what was published for children in the early years of the Soviet Union (Steiner 1999; see also McGill University 1999). Similarly, recent explorations of the interactions between different national traditions of writing for children, though they may be grounded in intertextual theory, have been valuable in reminding us that good bibliographical work, even if it purports to survey only the literature of one country, must always acknowledge the trans-national context. Mariella Colin's 'Children's Literature in France and Italy in the Nineteenth Century: Influences and Exchanges' makes this point well (Nikolajeva 1995: 77–87).

Beyond Europe, the availability of good bibliographies of children's books becomes even more patchy. As one might expect, American children's literature has been relatively well surveyed, the best assessments having been provided by d'Alte Welch's massive *Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821* and Gillian Avery's *Behold the Child* (Welch 1972, which originally appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 1963–67; Avery 1994. The rather more venerable Blanck 1956 is also still useful). A good example of the way in which well-focused critical bibliography can make excellent analytical cultural history is Sarah Kennerly's exploration of the children's books published by the Confederacy during the American Civil War (Kennerly 1957). Canadian children's literature in English is well served by Sheila Egoff and Judith Saltman's *The New Republic of Childhood* (Egoff and Saltman 1990), though its generic rather than chronological organisation makes it difficult to handle as a bibliography. The scholarly journal *Canadian Children's Literature* has carried a number of useful bibliographic articles, such as those on Canadian children's poetry (Stanbridge 1986) and on British Columbian children's literature (Kealy 1994). For its part, the Mexican tradition has been traced by Beatriz Donet and Guillermo Murria Prisant's *Palabra de juguete*, a two-volume bibliography and anthology which seeks to place Mexican children's literature from the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods to the twentieth century in its international contexts (Donet and Prisant 1999, in Spanish). The children's literature of each Central and South American nation is thoroughly described in the separate sections of Manuel Peña Muñoz's recent *Había una vez – en América. Literatura Infantil de América Latina* (Muñoz 1997, in Spanish). A number of other checklists cover children's books about Hispanic culture. Although they were originally intended to aid parents and teachers to locate appropriate books for young Hispanic-American readers, they have now become useful bibliographic tools for those carrying out research into the children's books of the second half of the twentieth century (see for example Schon 1980). The same might be said of several American-published bibliographies of children's books about, rather than from, the Soviet Union (Povsic 1991), Eastern Europe (Povsic 1986), the Indian subcontinent (Khorana 1991) and Africa (Schmidt 1975–9; Khorana 1994). Designed to make 'books about other countries available to American youth' so as to deepen their 'understanding of the international community', these contain only books published in English, since 1900, most of which were published in the USA (Povsic 1991: xi). They may not actually represent the children's literature of these different regions, but they do open up new fields of enquiry to the researcher.

Bibliographies of books for children actually published in Africa, the Middle East and Asia are rare. Useful information on the former can be found in the recent *Companion to African Literatures* (Killam and Rowe 2000: 63–7) and J. O. U. Odiase's *African Books for Children and Young Adults*, a basic checklist of books for children published in Africa

from the 1960s to the 1980s (Odiase 1986). Naturally, no bibliography on a continental scale exists for Asia, and only one or two bibliographies exist on the national scale (for the Philippines, for example, see Serina and Yap 1980). An excellent review of the way in which Confucian primers gave way to more ideologically invested and Western-influenced children's books in China is to be found in Mary Ann Farquhar's *Children's Literature in China*. Even if the book is not a bibliography as such, its analysis of the artistic and political content of inter-war, Revolutionary and Maoist children's books rests upon a solid survey of twentieth-century Chinese books for children (Farquhar 1999; see also Cohn 2000). No such work exists as yet for other regions of Asia, although there is much to be gleaned from those works cited in the relevant sections in this Encyclopedia. Even Japan lacks a national children's literature bibliography (but Kitano 1967, Shimi 1987 and Herring 2000 are useful). Bibliographic and historical work has been undertaken on Indian children's literature, although, because of the ethnic diversity of the country, these have been faced with the almost impossible task of summarising the history of fourteen separate traditions, one for each main linguistic grouping. From Provash Ronjan Dey's *Children's Literature of India*, for instance, we learn that Urdu and Telegu children's literature began in the mid-nineteenth century, while the first children's books written in Tamil or Punjabi, say, did not appear until the 1930s (Dey 1977; see also Manorama Jafa's 'Children's Literature in India' in Dasgupta 1995: 33–42).

In fact, children's literature can often be most profitably surveyed and investigated on the basis of language rather than nation. The more than 300 children's books published in Hebrew listed in Uriel Ofek's *Hebrew Children's Literature*, for instance, extend over the period 1506 to 1905, but, perhaps more strikingly, they also span several continents (Ofek 1979, in Hebrew). Bibliography, which can follow the flight of texts across political boundaries, has a significant role to play in illuminating the full extent and complexity of the web of influences which have lain behind the development of children's literature. In a sense, national bibliographies, though the reasons for constructing them have been extremely cogent, have prevented us from seeing this web of connections. Most national bibliographers worth their salt know full well that one cannot map the history of children's literature in one country without reference to others. The story of British and French children's literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for instance, is, in miniature, the history of political and social ideas and their transmission, of the French Enlightenment and the commercial revolution in Britain, of the French Revolution and the pious and loyal conservative reaction to it in Britain. A comparative approach, exploring the points of contact and of discrepancy between these two literary traditions, rather than concentrating just on one nation or the other, would be a fascinating task. A bibliographical survey tracing the congruities and disruptions in the interchange of ideas on children's books across the English Channel would be the necessary starting point. So far no such work has been undertaken.

Regrettably, even the bibliography of particular genres of children's books, which could be the perfect vehicle for tracing international connections, seldom manages to overcome national borders. Children's fantasy stories, for example, were widely traded between countries. Yet in recent bibliographies of the genre as it developed in the Anglo-American tradition, very few references are made to translations or alterations of the texts once exported, nor to the foreign books which either inspired the Anglo-American texts or were themselves inspired by them (on fantasy literature see Pflieger 1984; Lynn 1995; Manlove 1996; and Barron 1999). The same is true of the one, otherwise excellent, bibliography of boys' stories by Eric Quayle, which only gives the merest hint that children's literature was

developing along similar trajectories in nations besides Britain and America (Quayle 1973; on a similar theme see James and Smith 1998). The lack of comparative work is particularly striking when Quayle discusses the militaristic narratives which flourished in Britain in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Were such stories also being written and read in Germany or France or Russia, one cannot help wondering? Likewise, recent encyclopaedias of girls' and boys' school stories provide valuable guides to the genres, arranged alphabetically by author with many entries including a diligently researched bibliography, but they do not attempt to leap over political borders. The *Encyclopaedia of Girls' School Stories* refers only to books from Britain, Australia and New Zealand, along with a few works by North American authors 'who consciously wrote in the British tradition' (Sims and Clare 2000: 38). The *Encyclopaedia of Boys' School Stories*, though it expands the chronological range of books covered, includes only British books (Kirkpatrick 2000; see also Kirkpatrick 2001). Other regions of the world produced a different kind of school story, we are told, but the connections and discrepancies, though they are surely one of the most interesting aspects of this kind of project, are not investigated.

The reason for this is clear: bibliographical work requires a huge amount of toil, which must somehow be circumscribed. The *Encyclopaedia of Girls' School Stories* has six pages of bibliographic detail on the books of Elinor M. Brent-Dyer's Chalet School series alone, for instance, while Robert Kirkpatrick devotes five closely packed pages to the books of Charles Hamilton (alias Frank Richards) – original, re-written, re-printed, serialised and pseudonymous (Sims and Clare 2000: 75–81; Kirkpatrick 2000: 153–8). When an international approach is undertaken, however, the rewards are obvious. Ruth B. Bottigheimer's survey of children's Bibles covers five centuries but also several countries, most especially the German and the Anglo-American traditions (Bottigheimer 1996). Both Bottigheimer's analysis of the texts and the bibliographical work upon which her study is founded enable the reader to assess not only change over time, but also, by comparisons across geographical boundaries, the specific characteristics of each nation's understanding of the way the scriptures should be presented to children. (For a survey of post-war religious writing for children, almost entirely American, see Pearl 1988.) Similarly, the best of the several bibliographies of the writing of Mark Twain stands out because it traces the dissemination of his writing around the world. Bibliography is at its most provocative when it tells us, for instance, that a new edition of *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* has been put out in Argentina almost every year since the 1930s, that *Extracts from the Diary of Adam and Eve*, first published by Twain in 1906, had appeared in Yiddish in Warsaw by 1913, or that a Marathi *Prince and the Pauper* was the first of Twain's works to be published in India, in 1908 (Rodney 1982: 220–4, 190, 240. For a more standard Twain bibliography see Johnson 1935).

Other generically based bibliographies have examined an eclectic range of subjects: movable and toy books (Haining 1979), pop-up books (Montanaro 2000), British ABCs (Garrett 1994), American etiquette books (Bobbitt 1947), 'Cries of London' books (Shesgreen and Bywaters 1998), children's miniature libraries (Alderson 1983), plays published for toy theatres (Speaight 1999), fairy tales (Opie and Opie 1974), historical fiction for children (Moffat 2000) and British children's periodicals (Drotner 1988, and see also Grey 1970 on the very first *The Lilliputian Magazine*). Recent generic bibliographies designed to enable teachers and parents to find books to educate their children according to specific agendas may be of little help to historians of children's literature today, but in time they will provide a valuable resource for scholars researching the culture of childhood in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Bibliographies are now

available, to take one or two examples, of children's books with gay and lesbian themes (Day 2000), of children's books about war and peace (Eiss 1989), and of books dealing with World War II (Holsinger 1995). The more bibliographers concentrate on these narrow areas, however, the more the existence of wide tracts of uncharted territory becomes manifest. We have, say, a sturdy bibliography of children's books dealing with Ancient Greece and Rome, from 1834 to 1994 (Brazouski and Klatt 1994), but we have no catalogues of some of the major, long-standing genres such as animal stories, or the legends of the Seven Champions of Christendom, or Sinbad. There are also few bibliographies of those under-appreciated books which kept the children's book trade alive: religious works and textbooks. So long as these fields go unsurveyed, we will not be able to understand how children's publishing established itself as a sustainable commercial enterprise, nor what was the whole reading experience of the average child. With regard to textbooks, at least, the situation is starting to improve. Numerous articles exploring neglected aspects of textbook history have been published in *Paradigm*, the journal of the new Textbook Colloquium (see <http://w4.ed.uiuc.edu/faculty/westbury/Paradigm/index.htm>) and one or two print and on-line bibliographies have begun to appear (Price 1992 for textbooks used in New Zealand before 1960; Woodward *et al.* 1988, which lists mostly post-1975 textbooks; Palmer 2002 for science textbooks).

The contrast between the excellent bibliographical work which *has* been undertaken, and the huge areas of children's literature which have not been explored, is also obvious when we consider how bibliographers have treated individual authors. A favoured few have been the subject of exhaustive bibliographic work. Lewis Carroll's output, for instance, had been thoroughly catalogued by the 1920s ('the age of bibliographies', as Carroll's bibliographer put it: Williams 1924: vii). By the 1980s, a checklist of works about Carroll's writing could fill a substantial volume on its own (Guiliano 1981). With little left to catalogue, the minutiae of Carroll's letters to the press have now become the subject of their own annotated bibliography (Lovett 1999). The works of Beatrix Potter and Lucy Maud Montgomery have also been exhaustively explored (Linder 1971, and Hobbes and Whalley 1985 on Potter; Russell *et al.* 1986, and Garner and Hawker 1989 on Montgomery's books, Izawa 2002 on her Japanese editions – there have been 123 Japanese editions of *Anne of Green Gables* in the last fifty years – and Elizabeth Rollings Epperly on her manuscripts, in Rubio 1994: 74–83). Also well served, to varying extents, have been J. M. Barrie (Cutler 1931; Markgraf 1989), A. A. Milne (Haring-Smith 1982), Robert Louis Stevenson (Slater 1914; Prideaux 1917), Louisa May Alcott (Ullom 1969), Arthur Ransome (Hammond 2000; Wardale 1995), Richmal Crompton (Schutte 1993; and see also Cadogan with Schutte 1990) and Maurice Sendak (Hanrahan 2001). In recent years, other children's writers, mostly British, have begun to have their work explored in detail, and not only squarely canonical authors either. Mary Martha Sherwood (Cutt 1974), George MacDonald (Shaberman 1990) and Barbara Hofland (Butts 1992) have become the subjects of full-length studies, for example.

Many other eminent children's authors have not been so fortunate. Can it really be, one wonders, that the only bibliography of C. S. Lewis's work is a privately printed pamphlet by Aidan Mackey (Mackey 1991)? In one or two cases authors who have not so far been honoured with single volume-length bibliography have had their output logged by periodical articles. Maria Edgeworth's very confusing publishing history, for example, has occupied many pages of that august bibliographic journal, *The Book Collector* (Colvin and Morgenstern 1977; Pollard 1971; Renier 1972; Schiller 1974a. For a summary see the essay on Edgeworth at the Hockliffe Project website: Grenby 2001). Other authors

have benefited from having a dedicated admirer research their work and publish the results wherever the opportunity has been offered. The newsletter of the Children's Books History Society has made many such offers, and almost every issue includes an intriguing bibliography of a minor children's author. Morna Daniels has lovingly listed and discussed the Josephine books by Mrs H. C. Cradock, for instance, while Mary Shakeshaft and Betty Gilderdale have done the same for two prolific late nineteenth-century authors, Charlotte Yonge and Lady Barker (Daniels 2002; Shakeshaft 2001; Gilderdale 2001). From time to time – and especially in the heyday of the early 1970s – the more prestigious bibliographical periodicals have also carried articles about children's authors or individual children's books. Usually these concern only well-known authors and titles. Thus, for instance, the work of A. A. Milne has been mapped in *Studies in Bibliography* (1970), and *Little Black Sambo* in *The Book Collector* (Schiller 1974b). A few key texts have been privileged by having specialist work conducted into detailed aspects of their history. The fate of Hans Christian Andersen's *Eventyr* in Britain has been delineated by Brian Alderson, for example, and Nina Demourova has provided a summary of the career of Peter Pan in Russia (Alderson 1982; Routh and Demourova 1995: 19–27). Some of the important foundational texts of British children's literature have also been the subject of minute investigation, such as Thomas Boreman's *Gigantick Histories* (Stone 1933) and John Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* (Roberts 1965). Overall, though, only a small fraction of British children's authors have been charted, let alone those from other parts of the world.

The single bibliography which perhaps best illuminates when and how children's literature became established as a proliferating and profitable genre is not a catalogue of the works of an individual author, but of a single work: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (Lovett 1991). In the 1750s, we find, a new edition of this (admittedly exceptional) children's book appeared every year or two. By 1800, the British and American markets could bear four or five editions annually. By the end of the nineteenth century there were likely to be at least eight or nine British and American printings each year (see also Stach 1991 for a bibliography of German-language Robinsonnades). No similarly complete bibliography has been completed for Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (although see Teerink and Scouten 1963), but a number of other single works have been honoured with their own bibliographies, notably *Struwwelpeter*, whose complete publishing history has been traced several times (most recently by Chester 1987, and Rühle in 1999, in German). It is also worth noting that bibliographies of authors who wrote mostly for adults can be useful to those studying children's reading. Sir Walter Scott, for example, wrote only one work specifically for children (*Tales of a Grandfather*), but as well as listing the many editions of this, a recent bibliography of Scott's work suggests that many chapbook and dramatic versions of his works quickly appeared, probably directed largely at the children's market (Todd and Bowden 1998).

As has already been mentioned, one of the factors inhibiting bibliographic work on children's books has been the fact that, for so much of its history, particularly in Britain, the production and character of children's literature have been governed by the operations of publishers rather than the talent of writers (Alderson 1977: 206). This being the case, there are limits to what bibliographies of individual authors can achieve, especially when dealing with the books of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Consequently, bibliographers have adapted, and some of the best surveys of children's literature to appear recently have examined the output of individual publishing houses. The first of these ground-breaking works was Sydney Roscoe's bibliography of the production of John Newbery and his successors (Roscoe 1973; see also Townsend 1994). Peter Opie, the

doyen of children's book collection, thought Roscoe's work enabled the study and collection of children's books to 'come of age' (Opie 1975: 259). Even before Roscoe, M. J. P. Weedon had already examined the business dealings of John Marshall, one of the generation of booksellers to follow John Newbery (Weedon 1949). It has been the annotated checklists compiled by Marjorie Moon which have done most to open up the study of early nineteenth-century British children's books. Her bibliographies of the children's books published by Benjamin Tabart and by John Harris have set new standards (Moon 1990, 1992). Even more so than Roscoe, Moon produced not merely lists of books, but succeeded in focusing interest on particular approaches to children's books adopted in the early 1800s, the extent and importance of which had previously been neither explored nor explained. This kind of work continues with Lawrence Darton's checklist of the children's books, games and educational aids published by his ancestors' famous Quaker publishing house (Darton 2003; see also David 1992).

Alongside the major publishing houses like Harris and Darton, many much smaller operations were also producing children's books in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These are beginning to be investigated, the firm run by the Godwins receiving particular attention – perhaps because of the notoriety of William Godwin, its co-proprietor and leading author, as much as for its contribution to children's literature (Kinnell 1988; Alderson 1998; William St Clair, 'William Godwin as Children's Bookseller' in Avery and Briggs 1989: 165–79). The publishing activities of Joseph Cundall (McLean 1976), James Burns (Alderson 1994) Thomas Tegg (Barnes and Barnes 2000), the Religious Tract Society (Alderson and Garrett 1999) and, somewhat later, Blackie and Son (Daniels 1999) have also begun to receive attention. Much of the activity in the British children's book trade in the period was located in the provinces rather than London. Much of what was produced there is now generally considered under the heading of 'chapbooks', that is to say, fairy tales, fables and popular stories and verses, generally only eight or sixteen pages long. Few copies of these delicate books have survived, which has made the bibliographers' task difficult. A few studies have been attempted, however. The output of Lumsden of Glasgow, Kendrew of York and Davison of Alnwick has been catalogued as far as has been possible (Roscoe and Brimmell 1981; Davis 1988; Isaac 1968 and 1996). Other books celebrating the chapbook literature of various local enterprises are less scholarly but still give a flavour of what was produced by small, provincial presses, Edward Pearson's compendium of woodcuts from the firm of Rusher of Banbury for instance (Pearson 1890). A number of websites, often showing images of the holdings of research libraries and with searchable catalogues, are also useful in pinning down the history of this ephemeral literature (Lilly Library: Elizabeth W. Ball Collection).

Often chapbooks lack even a publisher's imprint, so that would-be bibliographers are denied such basic tools of their trade as a publisher's name and location, let alone a date of publication. When this happens it has sometimes proved possible to trace the use and re-use of the wood-blocks from which the illustrations were printed, and thereby to deduce roughly from when a particular edition dates. In fact, the development of children's book illustration has raised its own bibliography. Several outlines have been produced, notably Whalley and Chester's *History of Children's Book Illustration* (1988; see also Muir 1971/1985; Whalley 1974; Gottlieb 1975; Ray 1976; Martin 1989), while *The Dictionary of 20th Century British Book Illustrators* (Horne 1994) remains a standard reference work. There are useful volumes on American (Mahoney *et al.* 1947 *et seq.*) and Australian art (Muir 1982). More specialised studies have been produced of individual

illustrators, including, among others, C. E. and H. M. Brock (Kelly 1975), Heath Robinson (Lewis 1973), William Nicholson (Campbell 1992) and Thomas Bewick, whose output has been exhaustively catalogued by Sidney Roscoe (Roscoe 1953). Remarkably, Roscoe's work on Thomas Bewick has now been eclipsed by Nigel Tattersfield's outstanding biography and bibliography of the younger and less celebrated of the Bewick brothers, John (Tattersfield 2001). Because John Bewick specialised in illustrating children's books, and because Tattersfield's study draws upon Bewick's own ledger of commissions, this is a bibliography which provides a unique insight into the mechanics of children's book publishing at the turn of the nineteenth century. Another bibliographic approach sometimes adopted has been to review the changing illustrations to a single text. Ségolène Le Men, for example, has surveyed the history of illustrations for the Mother Goose stories from their first publication in 1697 to the editions interpreted by Gustave Doré in the later nineteenth century (Le Men 1992). Chris Routh has given an account of the illustrated editions of *Peter Pan* (Routh and Demourova 1995: 2–19).

It is clear, then, that there is a long way to go before bibliographical foundations are fully laid. The children's literatures of many parts of the world have not been charted in any detail and there has been little attempt to survey children's literature across national boundaries. Indeed, it is still the case that many important library holdings of children's books have not been catalogued (for a list of special collections see Jones 1995). Even some of the most notable collections in the UK and North America have been only partially indexed. The catalogues for the Renier Collection at the National Art Library in London (the largest in Britain), the Opie Collection in Oxford University's Bodleian Library and the Cotsen Collection at Princeton University (the largest American holding) are all only now under construction, the former two on-line, the latter in print form (Cotsen Collection 2000). When completed, they will join the on-line catalogue of the Lilly Library at Indiana University (for a description see Johnson 1987) and what remains the best available printed catalogue, that of the Osborne Collection in Toronto (St John 1975; still only partly on-line), as tremendously useful bibliographic resources, especially for Anglo-American material. The libraries of private collectors generally remain a much more firmly closed book (but see Alderson and Moon 1994, and Clive Hurst's examination of Peter Opie's accession diaries in Avery and Briggs 1989: 19–44).

On the other hand, it must also be obvious that reports of the death of children's literature bibliography have been exaggerated. This essay, though it has listed almost 200 books, articles and websites, does not pretend to be an exhaustive list of the bibliographical sources currently available, and – hopefully – it will soon be out of date. Bibliographical works are still appearing. Progress is being made in cataloguing public collections. Both catalogues and bibliographies can now reach unprecedentedly large audiences, can be updated far more easily, and can be produced far more cheaply, because of the advent of the internet. Literary criticism has not killed off bibliography. Those who say that arrival of children's books in university literature departments, and the consequent ascendancy of literary criticism, is undermining bibliography might do well to remember that, in its own time, even Sydney Roscoe's magisterial bibliography of the Newberys' children's books, and other such 'new tools being provided for the study of children's literature', caused some 'disquiet' to Peter Opie, the doyen of early children's book collecting (Opie 1975: 263–4). Opie feared that Roscoe's too-useful study would deny collectors like himself the pleasure of making their own discoveries and perhaps open up the field to new, less personally erudite, and less amateur, buyers. In fact, Roscoe's work was in itself a great contribution to children's book scholarship, and inspired many more.

So too will the university-led study of children's books – in its turn a new 'professionalisation' of the field – enable us to understand more about children's literature. Critical, theoretical and historical approaches to children's books, as well as pedagogical and library-orientated studies, have all contributed to what we know about which books were published for children and when – the goals of bibliography. They have also made good bibliographic work more necessary than ever. If the study of children's literature is to continue and mature, it will surely be necessary for all these approaches to children's literature to advance together.

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Part II

Forms and genres

16 Ancient and medieval children's texts

Gillian Adams

Introduction

Texts for children before the advent of printing and the subsequent promotion of children's literature as a pleasurable commodity may seem alien to those familiar with children's literature today, which tends to conceal its agendas. Nevertheless, from their earliest manifestations such texts share two salient characteristics of today's texts: the persistence of genres familiar to us today – poetry, advice, proverbs, fables, animal, adventure and school stories – and their employment, covert or overt, as an avenue to commercial and social success. In the absence of promotional efforts by publishers, however, the criteria for establishing that a text was either used or intended to be used for children are somewhat different.

In terms of internal evidence, we need to ask whether there is a dedication to a named child or introductory material indicating that the work is intended for children or younger students. Is the language simpler and more direct than that in other works by the same author clearly directed at adults, particularly in the preface or dedication? Is the child directly addressed or portrayed as a major character? How is the child presented? What is the appearance of the text itself? Is there explanatory material directed at the inexpert reader? Does the calligraphy indicate inexpert copyists? Are there illustrations and of what nature? Is the text inexpensively or lavishly produced?

In terms of external evidence, we must ask about the nature of the scriptoria that have produced the text. Where were the texts found, particularly the earliest examples? Are they associated with schools? What do we know about the author, whether actual or ascribed (Aesop, for example)? How popular is the text and how fluid – was it often copied? Does it exist in multiple versions or languages? With what other works is it associated or bound? What is the historical or cultural context of the work, its location, and its period (particularly the view of what children deserved literacy)? Do excerpts from it appear in works used in the schools? Is it referred to in other texts as connected with children or education? Clearly no text will meet all these criteria, and some only one or two. But they can help to establish the degree to which a child or children were associated with any given text.

Mesopotamia

The answer to the question of which children's texts are the oldest depends on which civilisations achieved literacy first. The origins of literacy have long been the subject of debate, but the earliest attempts at writing that have been discovered so far, the marks on

items intended for trade in the protoliterate period *c.* 4500 BC, followed by cylinder seals that bear owners' marks and other identifiers, come from ancient Sumer, now the southern half of Iraq. Between 3000 and 2600 BC, the Sumerians began writing on clay tablets. Given the tie of literacy and commerce, the need to develop what we might call commercial literacy quickly followed, along with the need for a literate priesthood. Difficult as it is for children to learn to read and write, particularly syllabaries such as cuneiform, pictograms, such as hieroglyphics, and Chinese characters, it is far more difficult for adults to do so (see Adams 1986: 8–9) and thus schools for a limited number of male children, usually aged about six or seven, were early established. These children came primarily from the powerful scribal class. Some women in Sumer were literate, however, and the goddess of scribes and wisdom was Nidaba.

We are fortunate, given the present situation in the Middle East, that a large number of clay tablets from Iraq are now in collections in Europe and the USA; they are the subject of ongoing research. The ones that have been deciphered so far demonstrate not only how children were taught but what they were taught: reading, writing, mathematics, astronomy, ethical behaviour and *humanitas* (*nam-lú-ulú*). With the exception of a lullaby addressed to a preschool child (Adams 1986: 2–3), many of these texts are didactic, but some are imaginative as well.

The earliest extant literary documents from Sumer date from around 2400 BC. In 2334 BC Sumer was conquered by Sargon of Akkad, and Sumerian (an agglutinative language) was gradually replaced by Akkadian, a Semitic language. Sumerian language and literature continued to be taught in the schools, where it was the mark of an educated person and of social status. We have some children's texts from the Sumerian and Akkadian periods (the latter sometimes in both languages), but the majority of children's texts are from the Sumerian Renaissance, ushered in by the Third Dynasty of Ur in 2112 BC. We know that these texts are for children for a number of reasons. First, they are on unbaked clay tablets, a cheap material that could be smoothed clean or simply discarded, and a large number of practice exercises have survived. They have been excavated from Sumerian *edubba* (tablet houses) and elementary school rooms where children went to learn the scribal arts. Because the children learned to write by copying literary texts of progressive difficulty, researchers are able to specify what texts formed part of a student's literary universe at any given level.

Examples of genres that exist on the most elementary level include a sixty-three-line patriotic hymn, 'Lipit-estar, King of Justice, Wisdom and Learning', and proverbs. The hymn is a beginner's text that covers Sumerian cuneiform signs, different sentence patterns, stylistic features and phraseology. A third of the text glorifies scribal activity and equates it with the functions of royalty (see Vanstiphout 1979). The Sumerian proverb collections range from complete collections in adult script to large, often clumsily written school exercises containing one proverb or a line or two from a longer one. The collections consist not only of precepts, maxims, truisms, adages and bywords, but taunts, compliments, wishes, short fables (primarily of the Aesopic type) and anecdotes. According to Bendt Alster (1997), they represent a living tradition dating back to the beginning of Sumerian writing, although they were written down *c.* 1900–1800 BC. While some of the proverbs must stem from an oral tradition, some seem to have been composed by schoolmasters. They cover a variety of subjects, providing the student with a large vocabulary drawn from the household, the family and further afield. Animals feature strongly, and their characteristics, as well as the stories about them, are familiar: most often found is the sly fox, but also the greedy wolf, the enormous elephant, the insignifi-

cant insect or bird, the stubborn donkey, the predatory and powerful lion. The major difference is in the portrayal of the dog as faithless and greedy.

We are fortunate to have three literary catalogues from Ur called the 'Ur curriculum,' which list the works used at the second educational stage, the school compositions and the mythological debates. These works are of greater length, contain more sophisticated language, and the cuneiform is of higher quality. The seven surviving debates, five of which appear in the Ur curriculum, may originally have been written as court entertainment for the Third Dynasty of Ur. They were perhaps adapted for school use because of their emphasis on hard work, intelligence and verbal ability. They begin with a mythological introduction that sets the scene, explains the creation of the participants, such as Summer and Winter, Cattle and Grain, and Pickaxe and Plough, and set up the argument, which always concerns which contestant is the most useful to man. The verdict is delivered by a god, usually Enlil the air god.

Of the school compositions, six listed in the Ur curriculum have survived; four are debates between a younger and older student, his 'big brother'. More interesting are 'School Days' and 'A Scribe and His Perverse Son'. 'School Days' begins with a boy's successful day at school. But the next day is a disaster: the boy oversleeps, loiters in the street, arrives late and sloppily dressed, hasn't finished his homework, talks without permission, fails to speak Sumerian, and tries to leave without permission. The headmaster canes him. The boy complains to his father that he hates school, and suggests that the father talk to the headmaster. The headmaster is invited to dinner and the father treats him well and offers him gifts. The headmaster's attitude becomes more positive and he praises the boy and wishes a better future for him in school.

The second text, 'A Scribe and His Perverse Son', was even more popular, judging from the fifty-seven extant copies and fragments. This is an amusing diatribe by a father complaining that his son is not living up to parental expectations. Given the nature of the complaints (grumbling, pleasure-loving, imperiousness, laziness, wandering around on the streets, missing school and being generally ungrateful for all that the father has sacrificed for him), the son appears to be older than the subject of 'School Days'. The piece ends with the fervent wish that the son will succeed in following his father's profession, achieve *humanitas* – an inner worth reflected by outer conduct – and win the favour of the gods.

Thus the ancient Mesopotamians had a literature used for educating children, whether taken from the oral culture (proverbs and fables), borrowed from adult literature (the literary debates) or created particularly for their edification (the school stories). Most scholars classify this literature within the genre of 'wisdom literature' because of its didactic content. It reflects a competitive society in which hard work, perseverance, prudence, initiative, a certain aggressive, self-aggrandising foxiness, and above all verbal skills are requisites for gaining earthly rewards and the favour of the gods and king. The emphasis of this children's literature on hard work and intellectual achievement must have had much to do with the high civilisation, artistic, legal, political, scientific and technological, achieved so early by the Sumerians and their successors in Mesopotamia. While the Sumero-Babylonian state ended in 1800 BC, its culture was absorbed by the Assyrians and successor states, and much of its children's literature, at least in terms of genre and didactic content, would reappear in later civilisations.

Egypt

Like the Sumerians, the Egyptians put images on objects of trade and common use in the late Prehistoric period, but it was not until c. 3200 BC, shortly before the Pharaoh

Menes, the founder of the First Dynasty, that these pictographs began to be connected with the sounds of language as hieroglyphs. Cylinder seals began to appear along with other features of Sumerian culture, probably under the influence of Sumerian immigrants, and by the end of the Second Dynasty, 2650 BC, one finds continuous text with recognisable sentences (James 1984: 154). An abbreviated hieroglyphic developed into hieratic, which was used for less formal writing by scribes and was written with a reed brush on papyrus or other surfaces, although formal hieroglyphic was also used into the Roman period (see Emery 1961: 193–202; James 1984: ch. 6). Whereas papyrus was usually reserved for more important documents, ephemera were written on papyrus scraps and ostraca (limestone flakes in areas where excavations were going on or pottery shards elsewhere). Practice exercises were also written on sycamore boards covered with gesso (a layer of fine, hard plaster). These were easy to wipe clean and to replaster (James 1984: 145–7). Like the Mesopotamians, children learned to write by copying texts, and just as Sumerian texts copied by children and beginning scribes are found on discarded mud bricks, so Egyptian texts worked on by beginners are evident on the ostraca and writing boards that have survived thanks to the Egyptian climate. Indeed, as Adolf Erman comments, ‘we in great measure owe our knowledge of the old and later literature to the papyri, writing-boards, and ostraca upon which the schoolboys of the New Kingdom copied out extracts from standard or didactic compositions’ (1923: 185).

Towards the end of the Middle Kingdom, with the Twelfth Dynasty (2000–1780 BC) and again in the New Kingdom (1546–1085 BC), Egypt became an imperial power that at its height stretched from Nubia to Palestine and Syria and even beyond the Euphrates. The country was prosperous, and literature and the arts flourished. The need for an educated bureaucracy was filled by scribes, and their education and training was expanded and systematised. While education for most was an apprenticeship, essentially vocational (although it may have included some reading and writing), education for the privileged classes, those destined to become scribes, began early. It was devoted to reading, writing (particularly letter writing), and the arithmetic necessary for surveying and keeping accounts. There were two stages, school proper for younger children, and a post-graduate stage in which the young were enrolled as ‘scribes’ in an administrative department or temple, where they continued their schooling in writing model compositions, copying older texts and developing the calligraphy required for hieroglyphics (Erman 1923: 186). Two key sites for school-related artefacts are a large collection of ostraca and writing boards found at the village for workers on the tombs of the Kings at Deir-el-Medina (modern Luxor/Karnak), from the Eighteenth Dynasty (1546–1319 BC), and the rubbish mound of a Nineteenth Dynasty school attached to a temple built for Ramesses II (1299–1232 BC). Several important papyri have also survived: for example the school-book comprising *Papyrus Lansing*; others are a medley of school and other texts, such as *Papyrus Chester Beatty IV*, *Papyrus Anastasi V* and *Sallier Papyrus IV*, grouped as the *Miscellanies* (see James 1984: 146–52).

According to T. G. H. James, the most elementary text was the Kemyt, cast in the form of a model letter, which exists in hundreds of copies and is characteristic of the late Eleventh Dynasty (c. 2000 BC). A long introduction consisting of ‘elaborate greetings’ is followed by ‘a series of statements, aphorisms and injunctions aimed ... at exalting the scribe’s profession’ (147). James demonstrates how the simplicity, even banality of the text, the formulaic expressions, and the way it is set up on the page make it an ideal primer (148–9). Another important school text dating from the Middle Kingdom but turning up repeatedly in texts on New Kingdom papyri and ostraca is the beautiful *Hymn to Hapy*,

the personification of the flooding Nile. It is the equivalent of the Sumerian hymn to Lipit-estar discussed above, but in the Egyptian hymn children and youths are specifically mentioned as celebrants in Hapy's festival (see Lichtheim 1973: I, 205–10). Other school texts were prayers and hymns to the gods Amun and Thoth (see Lichtheim 1973: 110–14).

The Egyptian equivalent of the proverb texts used by Mesopotamian elementary school children are the 'Instructions', a uniquely Egyptian literary form. A father instructs his son by means of a series of maxims strung together in more or less logical order, some Instructions more likely to be a part of the schoolboy curriculum than others. The oldest extant is the *Instruction of Hardjedef*, according to Miriam Lichtheim a work of the Fifth Dynasty, c. 2450–2300 BC (1973: 5–7). It is a tribute to the essential conservatism of Egyptian education that it was still being copied by children in the schools over a thousand years later in the New Kingdom.

The best known and most popular of the Old Kingdom Instructions is the *Instruction of Ptah-Hotep* (c. 2200 BC), still used as a schoolbook in the Eighteenth Dynasty, 1546–1085 BC (Erman 1923: 55). This is an attractive work that urges teaching of self-control, moderation, kindness, generosity, justice and truthfulness towards all, regardless of social class, although the tone is aristocratic. 'No martial virtues are mentioned. The ideal man is a man of peace' (Lichtheim 1973: 62). A variant on the Instruction is the *speculum regum* or Mirror for Princes. While the descendants of the Instructions are medieval and Renaissance courtesy books, the Mirror for Princes was a genre that also became popular in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The earliest one now extant is *The Instruction Addressed to King Merikare* by his father, probably Nebkaure Khety (c. 2050 BC), but Merikare, on the basis of the text, appears to be an adult. A variant on the genre comes from the Middle Kingdom, c. 1990 BC, *The Instruction of King Amenemhet I for His Son Seostris I*. The speaker is the dead king (1991–1962 BC), who appears to his son, Seostris, in a dream. Although the topic is regicide, it was a popular school text in the New Kingdom (c. 1300 BC) and survives on a number of ostraca and writing boards.

The most important of the Instructions for children's literature, because, unlike the Instructions above, there is internal evidence that it was specifically written for children, is the Middle Kingdom *Instruction for Khety*, usually called *The Satire of the Trades*. It is the Egyptian equivalent of the Sumerian 'School Days' and 'A Scribe and His Perverse Son' but written about 500 years later. A father takes his young son Pepi to 'place him in the school for scribes, among the sons of the magistrates' (Lichtheim 1973: 184–92). He urges Pepi to 'set your heart on books', that this journey to the school is all for the love of him, that table manners, truth-telling, following orders, and good companions are crucial, and he warns Pepi not to leave the school at midday and wander in the streets. The body of the work is a description of all the trades, with their disadvantages – only the scribal profession is 'the greatest of all callings/ there is none like it in the land'. This is one of the three most popular New Kingdom school texts and found on over a hundred ostraca, as well as in other sources.

The last, and perhaps the greatest of the Instructions, given its literary quality and influence, is *The Instruction of Amenemope* from the Ramesside period (Lichtheim 1976: 146–63). Written for 'the youngest of his children/ the smallest of his family' by a scribe and overseer, this work marks a shift from coveting worldly success to modestly working to keep the peace, giving to the poor and surviving the reversals of fortune. Honesty is the primary virtue. Scholars agree that the author of the biblical Proverbs must have known the work and borrowed from it (Lichtheim 1976: 147). From the New Kingdom also

comes the schoolbook *Papyrus Lansing*, which consists of the satirical and sometimes amusing praise of writing and the scribal profession (Lichtheim 1976: 168–75), numerous model letters (Erman 1923: 198–214) and a long, interesting poem on the immortality of writers and the word (Lichtheim 1976: 175–8).

Not all the texts that Egyptian children used and read, whether written for them or adopted, were only didactic or pragmatic. They also were exposed to a new genre: prose narrative. Justly famous is the Middle Kingdom short story ‘The Eloquent Peasant’, ‘a school product’ (Erman 1923: 85). An unlearned peasant is robbed and speaks so eloquently before the magistrate that he is sent to plead in successively more elaborate speeches before the king, who ultimately rewards him. Perhaps the reason the work fell out of favour in the New Kingdom is that scribes did not appreciate the idea that book learning was not essential to success. Also from the Middle Kingdom we have two prose tales that initiate two further genres: the (probably) true-life adventure story and the tale of wonders and magic. The first is the popular *Story of Sinuhe*, which, like the *Hymn to Hapy*, is found on numerous New Kingdom papyrus fragments and ostraca in children’s handwriting as well as two Middle Kingdom papyri. Sinhue, a royal servant, flees Egypt and after a series of adventures ends up in Syria, where he marries the king’s daughter and has further adventures. When he grows old, he returns to Egypt, where the king’s family welcomes him and builds him a tomb. The other story from the Middle Kingdom, the appealing *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, is in much simpler language than ‘Sinuhe’, and exists only in one papyrus. We have no direct evidence that it was used by children, although Lichtheim thinks it was a scribal product, and William K. Simpson notes that ‘it is just possible that there is an indirect allusion to it in a Ramesside school text’ (1966: xxiv). A sailor reassures his despondent master that incredible things can happen for good and tells how he was shipwrecked on the magic island of the ka and confronted by an immense snake, the Lord of Punt; the snake turns out to be friendly, foretells the sailor’s rescue by Egyptians, and he returns to Egypt laden with the snake’s gifts. There are other Egyptian tales of wonder and magic, as well as interesting myths, such as that of Isis and Osiris and Set, but I have found no evidence to date of religious myths in children’s texts; perhaps they were too sacred to entrust to children. It is not until late, in the Greco-Roman period, that we find animal fables; one is a version of the Aesopic fable of the lion rescued by the mouse he has scorned (Lichtheim 1980: 156–9).

The children’s literature genres developed in Mesopotamia and in Egypt over a roughly 1,500-year period – proverbs, fables, animal stories, debates, myths, instructions (wisdom literature), adventure and magic tales, school stories, hymns and poems – pass down to the Hebrews and the Greeks. The Old Testament owes much to both Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature (see Pritchard 1969). How that biblical literature, both for children and for adults, became stories that were refashioned for children beginning in the medieval period has been brilliantly described by Ruth Bottigheimer (1996).

The Greeks

The genres and some narrative themes from the children’s texts of Mesopotamia and Egypt also became a part of the Ancient Greek educational enterprise. To date I have discovered only two Greek writers who explicitly addressed works to children, Sappho of Lesbos (born c. 612 BC) and Theogenis of Megara (fl. 520 BC); these works were often erotic. Exactly what Sappho’s function as an educator of prepubescent girls was is a subject of debate, and her works did not become a standard part of the curriculum until late.

Theogenis, however, became a standard school text and was used for children learning to read, in part because the Greek is simple and in part because those poems that are not erotic are primarily didactic. The collection of poems and gnomic maxims attributed to him consists of material by others as well as his own, but the core of his work belongs to the tradition of Mesopotamian and Egyptian wisdom literature.

We know a good deal about Greek educational theory and practice because education, and the texts connected with it, were subjects of prime importance to such Greek thinkers as Socrates, Plato, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Aristotle and later Plutarch. This account is largely limited to Athens, about which we have the most information. There, education was initially limited to free male citizens of 100 per cent Athenian descent, and girls were taught only the rudiments at home until the Hellenistic period. There is evidence that in Ionia and Sparta the women of the upper classes, at least, had more educational opportunities and greater freedom (Pomeroy 1975: 56). In Athens, music (which included choral recitation and dance) and gymnastics were initially more important than reading, writing and arithmetic, but Solon in the early sixth century required everyone by law to teach his son letters. At the end of the battles with Persia (c. 450 BC), and the beginning of what Henri Marrou (1956) calls a 'scribal' culture, the emphasis shifted to what we think of as a more standard curriculum. But Greek culture was essentially oral and conservative, and recitation and memorisation remained major elements (see Small 1997: passim).

Boys did not go to school before the age of seven and spent their early childhoods playing games and listening to lullabies and stories: fables, myths, legends, and tales about talking animals, witches and wizards. Such stories were part of the many religious rites, particularly choral performances of the Homeric poems (in which children of both sexes participated), and became the material, particularly fables, out of which writing exercises were created later in the curriculum. Children were taken at a young age to puppet shows as well, and to the adult theatre where they sat with their mothers in the women's section. Thus when students came to the myths and legends in written form in the poetry, above all of Homer, but also of Alcman, Callinus, Pindar, Solon, Theogenis and Tyrtaeus, they were already familiar with the plots and characters and had much of Homer and the lyric poetry memorised. Once students had learned the alphabet and words, familiar passages were read aloud by the teacher, written down on wax tablets by the student, who in the higher grades was sometimes asked to summarise or expand them in his own words, checked by the teacher, recited aloud by the class, and finally read aloud by the individual student. There was no silent reading.

Much has survived from the Hellenistic period, including school anthologies, that reaffirms the observations of Aristotle and others on classical educational practice. In particular we have a third-century BC nine-foot scroll that served as a teacher's manual (see Marrou 1956: 151–3). At the age of fourteen, unless they were too poor, boys went on to study science (music, astronomy, arithmetic, and geometry) and literature: Xenophon's *Anabasis and Cyropaidea* (an appealing romance about the boyhood of Cyrus, King of Persia). Later the historians Herodotus and Thucydides were added. Of the tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripedes, only those plays have survived that were part of the educational canon; the same is true of Aristophanes and what fragments remain of the early lyric poets such as Sappho. At eighteen, boys were considered men and entered the army for two years' compulsory military service. Few went on to study advanced literature, rhetoric, public speaking and philosophy. When we speak, then, of earlier Greek children's literature, with the exception of those two poets who wrote poems dedicated to children, Sappho and Theogenis, and perhaps certain fables, we are speaking

of literature first adapted for children before they were literate, and then later adopted for them for use in the schools.

Hellenism

In the Hellenistic period, between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and the death of Cleopatra and the establishment of the Roman Empire by Augustus in 30 BC, citizens of the Mediterranean basin and beyond enjoyed a cosmopolitan community of culture. Greek became the language of learning, diplomacy and the arts; it was not race but the mind that made one Greek. Attic Greek took on the status of a learned language, and the ability to speak and read it was a mark of social status, as had been true with Sumerian and ancient Egyptian in earlier periods. There were few changes in terms of the curriculum and the schools, which girls could now attend, but there is a shift in the aim of Greek education. In the earlier period, it was to become 'beautiful and good' (Plato), both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds, based on models such as the Homeric heroes and administrators and lawgivers such as Solon. But in the fifth century under the influence of the Sophists, this aim shifted to being able to speak effectively. By the time of Isocrates in the fourth century, education had become professionalised and the emphasis was on logos, the word; its effective use was necessary for right thinking, right speaking, and right action. Thus the study of rhetoric, both oratory and theory, became all-important. The increasing educational opportunities for women, and their growing legal, financial and sometimes political power, led to an increased interest in romantic love and heterosexual passion, and the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes (c. 260 BC), an epic about Jason and Medea, entered the curriculum (see Pomeroy 1975: 120–48), as well as Menander's *New Comedies* (321–289 BC), which largely concerned adolescents, slaves and prostitutes.

For the earlier periods it is difficult to guess what children might choose to read on their own, against what they were asked to read by adults. But there is a popular genre that began in the Hellenistic period and was certainly enjoyed by children from the Middle Ages on, and that is Romance. It has been argued that Greek romances are 'Egyptian in origin and character' (Heiserman 1977: 114 n. 7), and striking characteristics of them are the youth of the protagonists, who are in early adolescence, and the equality of their love. At least one if not both protagonists are initially under the supervision of a parent or guardian and both are chaste, unlike Menander's older adolescent characters. After a series of exciting and often improbable adventures that involve magic, travel, captivity, shipwreck, and so on, the protagonists are allowed by their parents to marry. The language is straightforward. Only parts of three from the first century BC survive; the longest is the romance of Ninus and Semiramis (Heiserman 1977: 41–4). Others exist in epitomes. Of the four complete Greek romances from a later period, the best known is Longus' *Daphnis and Chloë* (c. AD 160).

Perhaps the most important romance for children's literature is the Greek *Alexander Romance* or *The Life and Deeds of Alexander*, usually referred to as Pseudo-Callisthenes. Although reasonably accurate factual accounts of Alexander the Great's life and exploits were available in the classical and medieval periods, what eventually became part of the curriculum was a fusion of biography that skirted historical fact with the fantastic travel tale and the Romance; it arguably marks the beginning of fantasy. Extremely popular and translated into thirty-five languages, the *Alexander Romance* is a fluid text, with tales early added to it from Hebrew, Egyptian and Eastern sources (Kratz 1991: x). In simple

language in the medieval version that reached the West *c.* AD 1000, it must have delighted children with stories of camels and elephants in faraway India and with Alexander's trip under the sea in a bathysphere, not to mention his wooing of the princess Roxanne.

Two other important texts for children first appeared in the Hellenistic period, the Indian *Fables of Bidpai*, stemming from the *Panchatantra*, and a part of the canon of Confucianism, the Chinese *The Classic of Filial Piety* and its later supplement *The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety* (see Mo and Shen 1999). Both are still in current use in China and India respectively. The *Panchatantra*, belonging to the Mirror for Princes genre, and its derivatives, have a complex history. Perhaps a product of the Vedic period (after 1500 BC), its actual age is unknown because the original Sanskrit version has been lost. There is evidence that one of its offshoots used by children, *The Fables of Bidpai*, existed in some form before 300 BC. Joseph Jacobs lists 112 versions of *The Fables* translated into thirty-eight languages, among them Persian and Arabic (1888: xii); the illustrations were regarded as an integral part of the text (ix). It was the Arabic version in Greek translation that was widely circulated in the Middle Ages (Perry 1965: xix), and it was one of the two books to survive the burning of the library at Alexandria (Hobbs 1986: 18). The relationship between the early Mesopotamian fables, Greek Aesopic fables, and Indian stories and fables is complex and hotly debated (see, for example, Perry 1965: xix–xxxiv; Thompson 1977: 367–90). The earliest collection of Aesopic fables that we know of, from late in the fourth century BC, the Aesopia of Demetrius of Phalerum, has not survived, but it was a principal source for fable in antiquity (Perry 1965: xiii); some of the Aesopica that has come down to us have Mesopotamian analogues. About the actual Aesop, an early sixth-century contemporary of Sappho, little is known, but the fictional first-century AD *Life of Aesop* is an interesting story and should have been popular with children.

Rome

The traditional date for the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus is 753 BC, and for about 450 years it was little more than an agrarian city state squabbling with its more sophisticated neighbours the Etruscans and the Greek city states of southern Italy and Sicily. Education consisted of the rudiments and was carried on in the home; it included girls as well as boys until puberty. We know a good deal about education and children's reading in the later periods because it was a matter of concern to such authors as Cicero, Pliny the Younger, Plutarch, Seneca, Statius and Quintilian, who provided witness in letters and published works to their own education and childhood reading, and who discussed educational theory and practice (see Bonner 1977 for a full account, with complete references to primary sources).

As the Romans expanded their political power, they came into contact with Hellenistic civilisation, through both the conquest and the plunder of the Greek city states in Italy (275 BC), then Carthage, and finally Greece (197 BC) and Syria (190 BC), when many Greek slaves became tutors in Roman families. The beginning of Roman culture is dated from the presentation of two plays translated into Latin by an emancipated slave from Greek-speaking Tarentum, Livius Andronicus, in 240 BC. His translation of the *Odyssey* into Latin, although rough, was a standard textbook in Roman schools even in Horace's day. Andronicus, like many later authors, also served as a tutor in wealthy families, and increasingly from his time on, Roman children including girls learned a dual curriculum, the Greek/Hellenistic one described above, and one in Latin (see Pomeroy 1975: 170–6). Aside from household tutors, there may have been primary schools as early as the mid-fifth

century, but the first record of a fee-paying school is late third-century BC (Bonner 1977: 34–5). Many of these schools were funded by municipalities or by private donations and seem to have been available to the middle and even lower classes, but the Romans never established a nation-wide system of public education, nor were even the basics compulsory. An important change occurred in writing materials, however; ostraca and wax tablets were still used for ephemera, but the codex began to replace papyrus.

For several centuries, the major beginning text in Latin was the earliest Roman legal code, *The Twelve Tables* (c. 450 BC), which children were forced to memorise and recite. Part of the Latin and Greek curriculum were collections of maxims, drawn from Greek and Latin sources and apparently put together especially for children; the best known is that of Publilius Syrus (Bonner 1977: 172–6). A third-century AD example of these maxims, the so-called *Distichs of Cato*, was to endure as a curricular staple throughout the medieval period and into the age of print; it is mentioned by Chaucer and one of the first books printed by Caxton (see Adams 1998b: 10). Another collection of anecdotes and vignettes primarily from Greek and Roman history and written under Tiberius (AD 14–37), Valerius Maximus's, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, entered the Latin curriculum and became an educational staple in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. A major part of the primary curriculum were books of prose fables illustrated in colour in both Greek and in Latin (Bonner 1977: 178). The fables that have survived are the early first-century AD Latin verse fables of Phaedrus, a freedman of Augustus (see Perry 1965: lxxiii), although there is no evidence that these fables were originally intended for children – they may have been political satires. They became, however, in a version known as the prose *Romulus*, an important part of the later Latin and medieval curriculum. On the other hand, a first-century AD collection of Aesopic fables in Greek verse, by Babrius, a Hellenised Italian living in Syria (see Perry 1965: xlvi–lxii), is dedicated in the first book to 'my boy Branchus' (Perry 1965: 3) and the second book is addressed to the son of King Alexander, a minor Cilician ruler (Perry 1965: 139). There survives a copy of thirteen of the fables written on wax tablets by a third-century schoolboy (Perry 1965: lxxviii–lxxix). Babrius's fables survived in the East and re-entered the European fable tradition with the Byzantine scholars who came to Italy beginning in the twelfth century. The fables of Avianus (c. AD 400), primarily Latin expansions of Babrius, also became part of the medieval curriculum. Fables are among the most fluid of texts and in the later periods are found in vernacular versions throughout Europe and the Near East as well as in the classical languages.

The Latin curriculum was more flexible than the Greek, and by the time of the Emperor Augustus, Virgil, Horace and other contemporary poets and prose writers were introduced. Thus, besides the Roman historians, from the first century AD on, children studied the *Aeneid*, particularly the first six books, along with Homer; Horace, along with Pindar; Terence, along with Menander; Ovid's *Medea*, along with that of Euripedes; and Cicero along with Demosthenes. Although these were adult works adopted (and sometimes adapted) for children, one does bear special mention, although addressed to an adult: Horace's popular version of the town mouse and country mice fable in *Satires* 2.6 (also in Babrius, as fable 108).

Both Bonner and Jérôme Carcopino (1940: 100–21) see a decline in family structure and education in the second century AD as the latter became more focused on sterile rhetorical exercises, with a concentration on public declamation, and neglected the study of literature. As time went on, the political and social situation in the Roman Empire deteriorated; the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed in AD 476 by the Ostrogoth Theodoric, but incursions by the Germanic tribes had begun about seventy-five

years earlier. A Christianised version of Hellenic civilisation continued in Constantinople, and texts for children there included important fable collections. Christianity had already gained official recognition in AD 313, and with its rise in the West a parallel system of Christian education carried on in monasteries and episcopal schools gradually supplanted the secular Roman system. The Greek texts, and many of the Latin ones, dropped out of the curriculum, some to disappear for ever, others to be preserved by the Byzantines and Arabs and reappear in the twelfth century and later (see Veyne 1987: 292–5). Nevertheless, much in the classical Latin curriculum remained unchanged for centuries.

The medieval period

In the last twenty-five years or so there has been an increasing interest in medieval children and their literature, particularly literature that is not primarily pedagogical but consists of the poems, fables and stories adapted or specially written for them (see Adams 1998b: *passim*). Nicholas Orme's authoritative and beautifully illustrated *Medieval Children* (2001) devotes four chapters to children's reading and exposure to texts in and out of school (see Adams 2003). Most recently, Daniel T. Kline has put together a collection of sixteen medieval texts for children, including a mixed child–adult audience, edited and introduced by different authorities (2003).

In the Middle Ages the literacy rate, which had been fairly high during the height of the Roman Empire, declined, but to what extent, at what time and in what locations varied greatly and is the subject of debate. Nevertheless, some children did learn to read, whether taught at home by parents or tutors or in schools run by clergy. The methodology remained roughly the same as in earlier periods, but instead of a Sumerian hymn, an Egyptian model letter, Greek passages from Homer or the Roman *Twelve Tables*, children memorised the Paternoster, the Creed and part of the Psalter. They then went on to the *Distichs of Cato*, the *Fables of Aelianus*, a scaled-down Latin version of the *Iliad*, and a version of Donatus, a grammar book in question-and-answer format (see Adams 1998b: 9–10). In Britain, students used the *Elucidariums*, books of general information presented as dialogue, and Latin, bilingual or vernacular texts by churchmen such as Bede (673?–735), Aelfric (955?–1020?), Aelfric Bata (early eleventh century), Alexander Neckham (1157–1217), John of Garland (*c.* 1195–*c.* 1272), Bartholomaeus Anglicus (*c.* 1241–51) and Walter de Bibbesworth (*c.* 1275).

Before students went on to what remained of the old Latin curricular canon (Boethius, Cicero, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Terence, Virgil and others), they read shorter, transitional works in easy Latin. As well as fables, in Britain these could include saints' lives, the stories in Asser's *Life of Alfred the Great*, in Bede's *De Natura Rerum*, and about King Arthur from Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1155); and riddles, such as those by Symphosius and Aldhelm and in Anglo-Saxon in the *Exeter Book* (comp. 1046). Europe added poems using speaking animals, such as Alcuin's poem 'The Cock and the Wolf' (the earliest known analogue of Chaucer's 'Nun's Priest's Tale'), and the eleventh-century *Ecbasis Captivi*, a story about a calf caught by a wolf, rescued by a fox and taken to the court of the Lion King; it was meant as a warning to young novices not to run away. The twelfth-century *Ysengrimus*, the first fully worked version of the Reynard the Fox stories, was more likely written as a satire, but a bowdlerised version of it and selections from it appeared early in *Florilegia* bound together with teaching texts (see Adams 1998b: 12–13).

Children have long been recognised as participants in medieval dramas, including dramatised animal stories, but there is one dramatic corpus specifically written for them by

the late tenth-century Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, a teacher in an aristocratic German nunnery (see Adams 1998a). She wrote these plays because she felt that the plays by Terence found in the curriculum were lacking in moral content and unsuitable for girls. In the later periods, added to the collections of moral precepts stemming from the Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions, were fictional narratives meant to illustrate those precepts. For example, the first known version of 'Little Red Riding Hood', complete with moral, appears in Egbert of Liège's *Facunda Ratis*, an eleventh-century hodgepodge for students of proverbs, fables, fairy tales and anecdotes (see Adams 1998b: 13). With more dubious moral content is a medieval bestseller for children translated into many languages, Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina Clericalis*, a twelfth-century collection of stories from primarily Arabic and Semitic sources (see Adams 1998c). A similar story collection is the *Dolopathos* or *Seven Wise Men*. These collections may be the forerunners of the later courtesy books, which often contain substantial narrative material. Allied to them are the Mirrors for Princes, such as the manual that Dhuoda wrote for her sixteen-year-old son in the Carolingian period (see Adams 1998b: 14). It has been argued that *Beowulf* and *Gawain and the Green Knight* belong to this genre (see Vitto 1998).

Religious texts constitute another important genre that has yet to be fully investigated as children's literature. There is Claudius Marius Victor's fifth-century paraphrase of Genesis, *Alethia*, which was written for the training of the young, and the narratives taken from the Vulgate by Peter Comestor in his best-selling *Historia Scholastica* (see Bottigheimer 1996: 14–23). There is the mysterious *Holkham Bible Picture Book* (c. 1325), a graphic novel with apocryphal material about the childhood of Christ. There are the stories in John the Monk's *Liber de Miraculis* and those in the *Gesta Romanorum* and *Golden Legend*. Yet to be investigated are the stories of child saints and martyrs such as Chaucer's 'Little Hugh of Lincoln'. Some of this material and the Latin stories mentioned above found their way into the vernacular early. Other vernacular works connected with children are the singspiel *Aucassin and Nicolette*, Marie of France's *Fables*, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* (see Adams 1998b: 15). Evidence is surfacing of manuscripts on which children have put marginal illustrations, glosses and commentary. I suspect that much more about medieval children's literature is yet to be discovered.

I would like to end this survey with arguably the most beautiful children's book to appear as a manuscript. Harking back to the ancient tradition of illustrated fables for children is the *Medici Aesop*, an illuminated collection of fables probably commissioned by the tutor of the eight-year-old Piero de Medici, Angelo Poliziano, about 1480 (Aesop 1989). What is remarkable about this work is not only the unusual choice of fables for a young boy and his siblings, but the way in which the miniatures of Florentine life are designed to facilitate understanding the Greek of the fables (see Adams 1999). It is an anachronism, as printed fable collections with wood block illustrations had already appeared in Italy and Caxton was at work translating and printing two illustrated works that belong to the realm of children's literature, *The Distichs of Cato* (1477, 1481) and *The Fables of Aesop* (1484) as well as the courtesy book *The Knight of the Tower* (1484). In addition there were Caxton's books for a dual audience: *Jason* (1477), *Reynard the Fox* (1481, 1489), *Golden Legend* (1484), *The History of King Arthur* (1485), and an *Eneydos* (1490) presented to the four-year-old Prince Arthur (Childs 1976). The *Medici Aesop* was intended for a limited audience while Caxton's choice of works was aimed at the widest possible one. But his early printed books also demonstrate the essential conservatism of texts for children; some stem from the Hellenistic, Roman and medieval periods, while the fables reflect back on the very beginnings of those texts over 4,000 years ago.

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17 Texts in English used by children, 1550–1800

Margaret Evans

Origins: from Caxton to Puritanism

It has been said that children's book publishing in English began in earnest in 1744, when John Newbery issued *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, 'intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly' and offered for sale on its own at 6d or with ball or pincushion at 8d (Darton 1982: 1–5). However, this is to assume that early children's literature encompassed only books aimed mainly at pleasing the reader. The span was very much wider and a literature read by children therefore began much earlier. Many of the texts used by children in the centuries between the introduction of printing and the development of the serious business of children's book publishing in the mid-eighteenth century were far from light-hearted; they were a mixture of courtesy books, schoolbooks and religious texts. Children also took what they could from the diverse range of cheap paper pamphlets, the chapbooks. These began circulating in earnest in the seventeenth century after the Star Chamber was abolished in 1641 and political and religious ideas could be expressed in relative freedom. Along with the sermons and tracts were published the 'small merry books' which Samuel Pepys collected (Spufford 1981: *passim*).

Many of these were enjoyed by children and young adults; there were no distinctions between readership ages in the popular literature circulating in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The young John Bunyan read avidly of *George on Horseback* or *Bevis of Southampton* and later repented of his laxity: 'for the Holy Scriptures, I cared not' (Spufford 1981: 7). The story of Bevis predates the invention of printing – manuscript versions were known as early as the thirteenth century – and his famous battle with the giant Ascart was depicted in a graphic woodcut in William Copland's edition, published around 1565. Certainly, Shakespeare knew the tale. Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, first published in 1596, *Tom Hickathrift*, *Old Mother Shipton* and *The King and the Cobbler* are further examples of similarly popular tales which sprang from an earlier, largely oral, culture and were taken around the country by the travelling peddlars. This literature survived well into the nineteenth century in better-produced formats, and was remarked upon by Wordsworth among others as of continuing significance for children. The early, rough, uncut paper books with their crude woodcut illustrations provided much of the reading matter for the mass of the population in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, adults and children alike. John Clare, born in 1793, noted how his father was 'very fond of the superstitious tales that are hawked about the streets for a penny' (Spufford 1981: 3): tales which included *Guy of Warwick*, *History of Gotham*, *Robin Hood's Garland* and *Old Mother Bunch*. These became the province of

children as adult reading tastes shifted and, like the nursery rhymes which evolved from an adult-oriented oral literature, provided the basis for a specifically children's literature.

The chapbooks and ballads which so appealed to Bunyan, and which he acknowledged were also read by his fellows, were commonly available even to the yeoman class. However, despite this widespread availability, literacy levels were low; by the mid-seventeenth century only around 30 per cent of men could read fluently, and even fewer women (Cressy 1980: *passim*). Nevertheless, that more and more children were learning to read in Britain can be seen from the increasing numbers of schools in towns and the larger villages. By the end of the seventeenth century even poorer children in these areas had access to some rudimentary schooling, although pupils would usually be removed from school as soon as they were old enough to earn for their families, perhaps as early as seven or eight. Social class differentiated those children who received little more than the barest introduction to reading – using a basic primer or horn book – from those who were taught to write and learn further from the better-produced schoolbooks, bound in sheepskin or calf. Horn books, which provided the earliest exposure to reading for many children, have been dated from the fifteenth century; several are shown in contemporary portraits, hanging by a ribbon from the waists of young children. This type of 'book' was usually made from a bat-shaped piece of wood, to which was pasted the alphabet and sometimes the Lord's Prayer, and covered with a transparent piece of horn. Versions in lead, alloy, bone and even silver have also been found and the horn book frequently served as a battledore for play between lessons. Primers – small booklets which contained the alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, catechism and collects – were also commonly available: Thomas Tryon, born in Oxfordshire in 1634, learned to read by using one and then sold one of his sheep to learn writing from a master 'who taught some poor people's children to read and write'.

More substantial, real books for the education of well-to-do children included the books of courtesy like *Stans Puer ad Mensam* (c. 1479) and Hugh Rhodes's *Boke of Nurture* (c. 1545), which were intended as much for the instruction of parents and tutors as for their charges, and schoolbooks – Latin and Greek grammars, spelling books, arithmetic books and so forth – provided the mainstay of reading for older schoolchildren. More boys than girls attended school during this period, and boys' reading and writing skills were generally further advanced. While most of what was offered would have seemed hard labour to a child, as few books were illustrated by more than a crude woodcut frontispiece, some writers did attempt to provide a little lighter material. John Hart's *A Methode, or Comfortable Beginning for all Unlearned* (1570) contains the first known printed picture alphabet, and Francis Clement's *Petie Schole* (1576), one of the earliest English spelling books, offered some verses written for 'the litle [*sic*] children'. However, until the late seventeenth century, most schoolchildren had little by way of diversion through their schoolbooks. One of the most significant changes to this can be seen in the publication in English of Johann Amos Comenius's *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1659). Although not a children's picture book by modern standards, this was the first lavishly illustrated picture encyclopedia for children and is evidence of a new acceptance that children learn best through books designed to stimulate them. Towards the end of the seventeenth century writers were beginning to write more sympathetically for children; Thomas Lye's *The Child's Delight* (1671), a spelling book, is one example.

Not all of the schoolbooks used by children in this early period were therefore lacking in imaginative stimulus. The old fables, especially the compilation known as *Aesop's Fables* which was first printed in English by Caxton in 1484, were also much used in schools.

One of the earliest English translators was Robert Henryson, whose version has survived in an edition published in 1570; John Brinsley produced another translation in 1624 and in 1692 Roger L'Estrange provided one of the most comprehensive renditions in a magnificent collection of 500 tales from Phaedrus, Avian and La Fontaine, as well as 'Aesop'. While the older animal fables were not Christian in origin, the morals preached in them were approved by all religious persuasions, and editions of Aesop were used widely in schools and in the home. The need to illustrate the fables to make them more accessible to a child had, however, not been fully realised; John Locke, writing in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), argued that 'if his *Aesop* has pictures in it, it will entertain him much the better, and encourage him to read when it carries the increase of knowledge with it' (Axtell 1968: 259). Locke's treatise contained a range of advice on the teaching of reading and the kind of books best suited to young children; his remarks on the importance of presenting it in as attractive a format as possible reflected the changing mood of the times. Samuel Croxall's illustrated edition of *Fables of Aesop and Others*, published in 1722, was the product of this intention that children's reading books should be both morally profitable and also pleasurable; John Newbery later borrowed heavily from Croxall in his preface to *Fables in Verse for the Improvement of the Young and the Old* (1757). The evolution of Aesop from a collection of somewhat florid moral fables to the neat tales published by Newbery exemplifies the paradox that the history of children's literature has always been characterised by continuity mixed with far-reaching change.

This paradox is especially evident in the tenacious hold on children's books of morality, especially the Puritan morality which pervaded much of seventeenth-century writing. In Thomas White's *A Little Book for Little Children* (c. 1660), readers are warned to 'read no ballads and foolish books, but a Bible, and the Plainmans pathway to Heaven'. Children were exhorted not only to read scripture; they were also directed to adult devotional books. Arthur Dent's *The Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven; wherein every man may clearly see whether he shall be saved or damned* (1610) was an important Puritan text and was used by children beside other classics such as John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563), usually known as the *Book of Martyrs*.

An even more significant book, designed specifically for children and which continued in publication into the nineteenth century, was James Janeway's *A Token for Children: Being an Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children*. Published in two parts between 1671 and 1672, the book contains moral tales of young children who died young of unspecified illness, or the plague, and who lecture their families and companions for their lax religious observance. The preface to Part 1 asks the reader: 'How art thou now affected, poor Child, in the reading of this Book? Have you ever shed a tear since you begun reading?' Children were given Janeway to improve their souls as much as their reading. Books such as this were not intended for amusement, although by the time John Harris was publishing Janeway in 1804 along with other 'pious little works' in a gift box, its original impact had degenerated somewhat, largely because other lighter material served as an antidote. To the seventeenth-century child, there was little choice. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) remains as the best-loved classic of the Puritan period, and Bunyan's allegory was recognised by him as having a special appeal to children, but this too was a work of devotion rather than imagination. Children's delight at Christian's adventures on his journey to the Celestial City was not intended to obscure the moral meaning.

Abraham Chear, one of the most popular of the Puritan writers, whose work was used in many others' books, had his verse published in *A Looking Glass for the Mind* (1672), a

book of poems and elegies which went into four editions by 1708. This book is remarkable only for its popularity; like many others of its kind it was bought by parents seeking to educate their children for a good life and a holy death. Publishers, though, were realising the worth of the market for these ‘good godly books’ and by the 1670s many more were being published. Benjamin Keach was one of the most prolific of the Puritan authors; his *War with the Devil* (1673), which describes the fight for a young man’s soul between Conscience, Truth, the Devil and Christ, was still being published in the mid-eighteenth century, when it was advertised as ‘necessary to be read by all Christian families’. Another much-read author was Nathaniel Crouch, editor and publisher as well as writer; his pseudonym was ‘R.B.’ – Richard Burton. *The Young Man’s Calling* (1678), *Youth’s Divine Pastime* (3rd edn, 1691) and *Winter Evening Entertainments* (1687) were conventional in tone and contained much that was repackaged from other works: riddles, stories, morals.

There were those in addition to Bunyan who stood above the mediocrity of Puritan religious tracts. William Ronksley’s work, for example, displayed considerable interest in the child as reader. His *The Child’s Weeks-Work: or, A Little Book so nicely suited to the Genius and Capacity of a Little Child ... that it will infallibly Allure and Lead him on into a Way of Reading* (1712) was moral in its intention but so well composed with neat rhymes for every day of the week that the child would have undoubtedly been charmed by it. Isaac Watts also wrote at the turn of the century, at the point when Puritanism was losing some of its ferocity in dealing with children. Like Ronksley, Watts wrote gentle verse; his *Divine Songs attempted in Easie Language for the Use of Children* (1715) continued as a staple of the nursery through to the Victorian period and was lovingly parodied by Carroll in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). The duty children owed to parents was his particular theme, but the lesson is easily read and could be lightheartedly spoken:

How doth the little busy bee
 Improve each shining hour,
 And gather honey all the day
 From every opening flower ...
 In works of labour, or of skill,
 I would be busy too;
 For Satan finds some mischief still
 For idle hands to do ...

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, therefore, books for children were becoming more child-oriented: in the tone, the language and the subject matter. While death and damnation were still important concerns, so too were the more prosaic concerns of family life. Watts was writing in the Puritan tradition, but his verse was accessible to everyone, and remained a staple of schoolroom and nursery for two centuries.

Publishing for children: the early eighteenth century

There was growing commercial interest in publishing books for children that not only taught them but also provided some amusement, as the numbers of children in the British population increased during the eighteenth century. The child population was to reach its peak in the early nineteenth century, but the intense commitment to educating the chil-

dren of the middle classes, which was evident during this period as academies and small private schools sprang up across the country, stimulated the market for schoolbooks and lighter reading. Nathaniel Crouch's *Winter Evening Entertainments* was an early example of the transition to more child-centred material as publishers identified the potential for selling books to parents and schools. The chapbook publishers – John Marshall and William and Cluer Dicey were two of the earliest London publishers to specialise in small books for children, many of them religious or moral tracts – produced material at the cheaper end of the market to satisfy this demand. Children also borrowed from adult books. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719 and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726. Chapbook versions which were written for children appeared later and adaptations became a genre in their own right, with the Robinsonnade evolving into a European-wide phenomenon through numerous versions of the story. One of the earliest examples to appear was Peter Longueville's *The Hermit: or, the Unparalleled Sufferings and Surprising Adventures of Mr Philip Quarri* (1727). Joachim Campe's *Robinson the Younger* appeared in 1781, and a superior version – *The New Robinson Crusoe* – was issued by John Stockdale in four volumes with twenty-two woodcuts in 1788.

Of the books being published specifically for children, Mary Cooper's *The Child's New Plaything* (1742) and *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book Voll II [sic]* (1744) are two of the most interesting. Several of the traditional nursery rhymes which were intended simply to amuse children appeared for the first time in print in this latter volume, a tiny book printed in red and black with neat copper engravings. The verses are an odd mixture of ribald drinking songs and old favourites. 'Lady Bird, Lady Bird, Fly Away Home', for example, sits somewhat uncomfortably beside 'Fidlers Wife':

We are all a dry/With drinking ont
 We are all a dry/With drinking ont
 The piper kist/The Fidlers wife
 And I cant sleep/For thinking ont.

Thomas Boreman, who published a set of ten miniature books, the *Gigantick Histories*, between 1740 and 1743, also considered a new venture of books for amusement as well as instruction worthy of some investment, and there are isolated examples of other publishers issuing significant items for children.

One of the more important was the first English translation of Charles Perrault's fairy tales: Robert Samber's *Histories, or Tales of Past Times. Told by Mother Goose* (1729). Fairy tales became established not only in the productions of the mainstream publishers; the chapbook publishers took them up and distributed them widely beside the moral and religious tracts. The *Contes de Fées* of the Countess d'Aulnoy, translated as her *Diverting Works* (1707), became popular in chapbooks, and included 'The Yellow Dwarf', 'Goldyllocks' and 'The White Cat'. Madame de Beaumont's *Le Cabinet des Fées* (1785–9) was also published in English versions and her adaptation of 'Beauty and the Beast' became a staple of chapbook literature.

John Newbery: 1744–67

However, what all of these endeavours lacked was a coherent approach to the development of a specifically children's literature. Before the mid-eighteenth century, book publishing for children lacked seriousness of purpose. John Newbery's publishing activities

changed this; he developed the children's side of his business through a sustained and forceful exploitation of the market. Newbery began as a provincial bookseller and newspaper proprietor and also dealt in patent medicines, activities which continued to be significant elements in his complex business empire. However, soon after his move to London from Reading he produced *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744). Verses with wood blocks of children at play comprise most of this slight but significant offering, which became one of the best known of all the early children's books. His *Lilliputian Magazine* (1751–2) was more substantial, although less successful, and continued the Newbery mixture of light-hearted material – jests, songs, riddles – and more moral tales. There followed *A Pretty Book of Pictures for Little Masters and Misses* (c. 1752), and *Nurse Truelove's New Year's Gift* (c. 1753), similarly light-hearted in tone and content. Binding in Dutch floral boards was also his trademark, and the overall quality of their production marked his books out from the cruder reading materials of the previous century.

Perhaps his most famous book – and certainly the one which drew the admiration of Charles Lamb – was *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765). This tale of the 'trotting tutoress', Margery Meanwell, encapsulated all of Newbery's emphasis in his books on the mercantile class, a group in society to whom trade and good sense meant everything. Margery progresses from penury to a good marriage through hard work, thrift and the use of her talents: a tale with true moral sense for the middle-class children at whom it was directed.

Newbery also contributed to the burgeoning schoolbook market with a series of lesson books, *The Circle of the Sciences* (1745–8), and books like Oliver Goldsmith's *An History of England, in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to His Son* (1764). (Goldsmith probably also wrote *Goody Two-Shoes*.) Indeed, most of Newbery's output for the youth market was intended for schools or for home tutoring; only sixteen or so were mainly for entertainment. His schoolbooks were generally weightier and more expensive: the *Account of the Constitution and Present State of Great Britain* (1759) cost 2 shillings. The more light-hearted items cost less and were usually printed in several editions: 'Abraham Aesop's' *Fables in Verse* was priced at 6d and was in its sixth edition by 1768. However, at a time when chapbooks were being sold for 1d, even these were expensive by the standards of the day. Newbery was intent on selling to the middle classes and aspiring artisans, not the mass of the labouring population.

Newbery's great talent was his understanding of the new market for children's books and schoolbooks: exploiting that market required tenacity of purpose and the development of a class of books which appealed to both parents and children. Advertising and distribution was also essential to ensure a good volume of sales. By marketing his books through the important provincial newspapers of the day, and using the newspaper distribution outlets, Newbery maximised the penetration of his books into rural areas from his famous shop at the Bible and Sun in St Paul's Churchyard, London, which was the focus for his activities. Newbery's later years were his busiest period; between 1755 and 1767, when he died, he published around 390 adult and children's books, although his contribution to the development of a children's publishing trade has tended to obscure his many other business activities. He probably made more as a purveyor of quack medicines than from the children's books, and his newspaper interests and magazine publishing were also of considerable value.

Educational theorists and children's books

John Newbery's output was largely dependent on the school and home tutoring market, with his educational items selling to the proprietors of the increasing numbers of

academies and private schools springing up throughout the country and to parents eager to enhance their children's education. The education of the young was becoming of increasing significance as social expectations developed, and the middle classes – including women – had more time for the leisurely pursuit of reading. Good schooling was becoming a necessity. The hallmark of a gentleman, and increasingly a gentlewoman, was not only a thorough grounding in basic reading and writing skills but also a knowledge of the classical or modern languages, arithmetic, geography – even a little science such as astronomy or mechanics. John Locke was not offering new ideas in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* when he recommended a carefully judged curriculum designed to meet the needs of pupils on the basis that knowledge should be impressed on young and untouched minds: the *tabula rasa* or blank sheet principle. His argument, which he had begun in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), was, however, hugely influential. At least fourteen editions of his educational treatise were published between 1693 and 1772 and provided a focus for writers and publishers in their provision of a literature to feed the demand from schools and parents (Pickering 1981: passim).

His emphasis on a carefully judged and rational approach to writing for children was echoed in one of the first books to expound upon schooling for girls: Sarah Fielding's *The Governess: or Little Female Academy* (1749), in which her aim was 'to endeavour to cultivate an early inclination to benevolence and a love of virtue in the minds of young women'. Ellenor Fenn, writing towards the end of the century, was also intent on controlling and containing the natural behaviour of children and impressing virtues upon them, although a lightness of touch was also evident in her work. In *Cobwebs to Catch Flies* (c. 1783) she appealed to parents as much as to children: 'if the human mind be a *tabula rasa* – you to whom it is entrusted should be cautious what is written upon it'. Lady Fenn also produced books and 'schemes for teaching under the idea of amusement'. One of these, *The Infant's Delight*, was sold with 'a specimen of cuts in a superior stile for children: with a book containing their names, as easy reading lessons [*sic*]'.

Sarah Trimmer, hugely influential as a critic as well as a writer of children's books and who credited Locke with inspiring the increase in books published for children at the end of the eighteenth century, was especially concerned with the moral impact of writing for children. Her *Fabulous Histories. Designed for the Instruction of Children, respecting their Treatment of Animals* (1786), later better known as *The History of the Robins*, aimed to teach children their duty towards brute creation. In *Prints of Scripture History* (1786) and numerous other pious works, she provided children with a grounding in sound religious teaching. Her *Little Spelling Book for Young Children* (2nd edn, 1786) and *Easy Lessons for Young Children* (1787) were also popular and went into several editions.

The relationship between religious principles, morality and a child-centred literature, which had begun with the Puritan writers, continued in the eighteenth century through the impact of a number of female authors. Like Sarah Trimmer, they considered that reading matter should improve young minds while making the reading light and easy: another of Locke's dictums. Anna Barbauld, whose *Lessons for Children from Two to Three Years Old* (1778) and *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781) expressed a sensitivity for her readers which was quite remarkable, nevertheless aimed mainly to 'inspire devotional feeling early in life'. *Evenings at Home* (1792–6), a collection of amusing tales, moral pieces and verse, compiled in collaboration with her brother, John Aikin, similarly mixed morality with amusement. In common with many of the writers of this period she was herself deeply involved in educating children; following her husband's untimely death she ran a small school.

Mary Pilkington, who worked as a governess and wrote around fifty books for children, also combined a firm didactic line in her work with more amusing and adventurous material. Her *Biography for Girls* and *Biography for Boys*, both published in 1799, contained cautionary tales of children whose later lives were fixed through their youthful misdeeds, while *New Tales of the Castle* (1800), modelled on Madame de Genlis's *Tales of the Castle* (1785), featured a French noble family fleeing the Revolution – altogether a more thrilling storyline.

Mary Wollstonecraft had also worked as a governess before turning to writing as a career; her publisher, Joseph Johnson, made something of a specialism out of didactic literature for children. In *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788) she used the setting of a girls' school for her series of moral tales, but was rather less inspiring than Sarah Fielding. Her contemporary Dorothy Kilner's *Anecdotes of a Boarding School; or an Antidote to the Vices of those Useful Seminaries* (c. 1783) set out the dangers of boarding schools even more explicitly, but only served to make them exciting places for her readers: 'we all get out of bed, and play blindman's buff, or dance about in the dark: then if we hear any noise, and think anybody is coming, away we all run helter-skelter, to get into our beds'. Dorothy Kilner also wrote about less privileged education in *The Village School* (c. 1795) and produced simple lesson books for children which included *Short Conversations* (c. 1785). Her most entertaining story was *The Life and Perambulation of a Mouse* (c. 1783–4), where play again featured: 'After the more serious employment of reading each morning was concluded, we danced, we sung, we played at blind-man's buff, battledore and shuttlecock, and many other games equally diverting and innocent.'

Her sister-in-law, Mary Ann Kilner, was also a popular writer, although less prolific. *The Adventures of a Pincushion* (c. 1780) and *The Memoirs of a Peg-Top* (c. 1781) went into many editions; the combination of sound common sense, amusing detail and imaginative writing seems to have appealed to parents.

Locke was not the only influential theorist; his emphasis on the impression of virtue on young minds and the need to treat children as rational creatures was only one strand of thought. Following the translation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* into English in 1763, in which it was judged that children's (or rather boys') education should be related to their status as reflective creatures of the natural world, writers adopted new methods of imparting morality. Children had to learn rationality through experience. Maria Edgeworth, whose best-known story – 'The Purple Jar' – first appeared in *The Parent's Assistant* (1796), was one of Rousseau's most faithful disciples in imparting this ideology. Rosamund is offered a gift by her mother, and instead of choosing the sensible pair of new shoes opts for a purple jar in the apothecary's shop. Her old shoes let her down and she finally has to acknowledge that mother knows best and to 'hope, I shall be wiser another time'. The idea that children learn best through acting out a lesson was one which many writers adopted from Rousseau. French writers from this school were imported and achieved a wide readership, including Rousseau's friend the Marquise D'Épinay whose *Conversations of Emily* was published in English in 1787.

Another English Rousseauist was Thomas Day; his *Sandford and Merton* (1783–9) became one of the most popular sets of tales for boys during this period and was widely adapted and reissued well into the nineteenth century. Harry Sandford and Tommy Merton have a series of largely unconnected adventures in the original version, unexciting material by later standards, but one of the first attempts to depict recognisably real boys exploring a friendship through active incident. Day's *Little Jack* (1788) was equally firm in

its Rousseauism, with its depiction of the hero's natural upbringing in his 'little hut of clay' and allusions to the Crusoe tale of survival through ingenuity and tenacity.

Fun and frivolity

It might appear that an emphasis on earnest moral teaching and the influence of the educational theorists had driven all that was frivolous from children's reading. Newbery's greatest contribution to children's publishing had been his introduction of lighter-hearted literature. *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book Voll II* had also stood as an early example of sheer amusement for children, together with a few other items which have survived. *The Famous Tommy Thumb's Little Story Book* was issued by Stanley Crowder and Benjamin Collins (c. 1760), and, like *The Top Book of All* (c. 1760), contained verse and light material, including the game of 'The Wide Mouth Waddling Frog'. Riddles were especially popular with adults in the seventeenth century and owed their survival to their continuation in innovative children's books such as these.

Despite the prevalence of moral tales and didacticism, there were, therefore, items to amuse and divert children towards the end of the century in addition to the chapbook literature of the period. *Mother Goose's Melody* was probably published c. 1780: at about the same time as *Nancy Cock's Pretty Song Book* was published by John Marshall. *Mother Goose's Melody*, a 96-page Newbery book in two parts – with fifty-one songs and lullabies in Part One – is particularly important because of the number of times it was to be reprinted in Britain and America (Opie and Opie 1951/1980: 33). Issued by John Newbery's successors (a 1791 edition was issued by Francis Power, John Newbery's grandson) this was, at 3d, a cheap little book by Newbery standards and hence likely to be widely bought. *Gammer Gurton's Garland*, published in Stockport in 1784, was a further important example of an early published collection of nursery rhymes.

Books containing moral material in a light-hearted guise were also becoming commonplace. For example, adaptations of the *Goody Two-Shoes* tale were published: *The Entertaining History of Little Goody Goosecap* (1780) was John Marshall's version, with *The Renowned History of Primrose Pretty Face* (1785) following a similar theme – a profitable marriage is the reward for virtue and probity. Children's publishers also dealt in the production of maps and games; books were not the only educational materials to provide amusement. John Wallis was one of the most successful of these; his *Chronological Tables of English History for the Instruction of Youth* (1788) and *The New Game of Life*, which he issued in collaboration with Elizabeth Newbery in 1790, were instructional games with counters and dice – and a set of neatly printed instructions.

By the late eighteenth century, publishing for children had become a sufficiently profitable undertaking for several major London publishers and many provincial chapbook publishers to be issuing a range of children's items: for instruction *and* amusement. The firm of William Darton began business in 1787, when William Darton set up as an engraver and printer. The firm was to specialise in neatly engraved books for children and to produce some of the finest coloured books in the early nineteenth century. The Newbery tradition was carried on by Elizabeth Newbery, who took over one arm of the business when her husband (nephew to John) died in 1780. She specialised particularly in the education market, but also continued with many of the earlier Newbery items, and also collaborated with other publishers. Her Catalogue of 1800 indicates the range that was available to parents and schools – and children – by the end of the eighteenth century. In addition to the 400 or so more substantial items, including schoolbooks and moral

tales, she offered thirteen one-penny and fourteen two-penny chapbooks as makeweights. Vernor and Hood, Joseph Johnson, John Nourse, who specialised in French books for school and home, and John Marshall were some of the other firms engaged in the London trade. Children's books were also being produced in provincial publishing centres: Newcastle was one of the earliest chapbook centres to specialise in children's works, but there were also small provincial presses across the country, from Wrexham to York and from Alnwick to Wellington.

The quality and variety of production had also improved immeasurably. Much of the credit for this is due to the development of illustration techniques, through the work of John and Thomas Bewick who perfected the art of wood engraving, and the increasing use of copper engravings in the more expensively priced children's books (Whalley and Chester 1988: 27–8). William Blake was a major illustrator, but his own children's book, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) was only widely known much later.

By 1800, the children's book trade was well established and children had a wide-ranging literature at their disposal. Not all of it was just for entertainment, but increasingly it was being written with their developmental needs in mind. From their origins in the formal writing of the early schoolbooks, Puritan texts, popular literature and fables, children's books had emerged as a class of literature. The book trade was poised to develop this even further and to exploit the technical innovations of the next century.

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18 Myth and legend

Maurice Saxby

Speaking about his collaboration with Leon Garfield when they were reframing some of the ancient Greek myths as *The God Beneath the Sea*, Edward Blishen said, 'It was like working with a sort of radium of story' (Blishen 1979: 33). It is this 'original tremendous *concentrate* of story' (33) embedded in myth and legend that, as Sir Philip Sidney expressed it, 'holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner'. The very impulse that gave birth to myth and legend makes them the right and proper fare for all children, especially for those growing up in a technological and rational society.

At the heart of mythology – *mythos*, a story – is imagination, creativity, the urge to understand, to explain and to embellish. Throughout the ages all cultures have developed a body of myth and legend, at first as an oral tradition, then ultimately fixed in clay, stone, papyrus, vellum or paper and elevated to literature – if not always to sacred lore and belief. While folk and fairy tale, myth, legend and epic hero tales are all threads of one vast story, it would seem that myth, a universal phenomenon, is the progenitor. The folk tale 'Little Red Riding Hood', for example, in the version where Red Riding Hood is released from the stomach of the wolf to be reborn could well be a remnant of a nature myth explaining the setting and the rising of the sun.

For myth grows out of the need to form hypotheses and create explanations for natural phenomena: how the world came into being; the formation of rivers, lakes, mountains and other geographical features; why spring always follows winter just as the dawn always rises to herald the new day that will end with sunset. More than that, it seeks to explain what lies beyond the dawn and the sunset, beyond the edge of vision, beyond the immediately observable and knowable: what worlds, celestial kingdoms or nether regions exist beyond the horizon, above the sky or beneath the earth. Myth deals with imponderables: where, how and why did life as we know it originate; what supernatural being/s pre-existed human life; from whence did mortals come and whither are they bound? Just as imperative are questions about human nature and behaviour. What is the nature of 'good' and 'evil'? When does folly slide over into sin? What fearful consequences follow disobedience of the 'Law'? Are the wages of sin always the death of the spirit?

So myth postulates life before birth and an after life. It fashions a pantheon of deities, demigods, nymphs, satyrs and a multitude of other supernatural creatures. It seeks to explain the ways of the gods, the relationship of those gods with humanity and the consequences of divine anger. It chronicles the human longing for immortality, the passionate search for the water of everlasting life and eternal youth, the hope of bliss beyond the sufferings and trials of earthly life and the fear of eternal damnation.

The form and tone of the *mythos*, the environmental details, the characteristics and attributes of the local deities, spirits and the human participants in the drama vary with the

culture that gave the stories birth. The myths of ancient Greece, which have most influenced the Western world, reflect the pure light, the blue skies, the lofty mountains, the plains and olive groves that shaped the lives of its people. Those of the Vikings are starker, harsher, grimmer and icier, as befits a landscape of forests, passes and ravines, bordered by sometimes perilous seas. The myths of India and the East are more exotic, colourful and flamboyant; those of the Australian Aborigines express a spirituality embedded in the land itself. Myth and legend, being truly multicultural, introduce children to a diversity of national temperaments and to different ways of confronting universal and ongoing questions about life and human nature.

But because all races throughout time have been awed by the unknown and the unknowable, that wonder, when expressed through myth, is elevated to religion. Gods not only demand obedience, reverence and worship but at times they require propitiation and appeasement. Here again the ancient Greeks were more light-hearted and less reverent than, say, the Egyptians or Sumerians. Because the Greek immortals frequently trafficked with mortals (Zeus fathered heroes such as Perseus and Heracles, who were thus demigods) they were not always treated with the respect demanded by the gods of other nations. And Hera, the wife of Zeus, was often driven by jealousy and rage to shrewishness. So by exposure to a rich array of mythology young readers gain an insight into human nature and are confronted with the essence of the divine and the supernatural.

Because of this, mythology gives rise to ceremony and ritual, an ongoing necessity in human behaviour. Even when ritual is minimalised, as it is in some religious groups or sects, it tends to be replaced by even more rigid rules and regulations, often more stringently enforced than what was abandoned.

Moreover, myth is rich in symbols, and human existence is governed largely by metaphor. Even vehicles are controlled by road signs and highway symbols. So the odyssey in myth, legend and epic is often dangerous and demanding, even with its detours and resting places, but leads ultimately to home and fulfilment. It is an image of a universal life experience, but on a vast scale. In all cultures the heroic journey involves rivers that must be breasted, bridges to cross, mountains to climb: all symbols of life's progress. The monsters – be they dragons, trolls or demons – are local expressions of a universal fear and uncertainty. On life's journey each mortal, like the superheroes of myth and legend, often encounters a tutelary figure or receives unexpected aid from the Immortals, often in human guise. The powers of darkness that lurk by the wayside can be vanquished only if the traveller does not faint, is of unshakeable faith and wields the sword of understanding and action fashioned long ages ago and passed on from generation to generation. The slain dragon yields its gold to the victor and, if the conqueror has the resolution of a Sigurd and plucks out the heart of a Fafnir and tastes its blood upon the tongue, that individual will then understand the call of the birds, comprehend what the beasts are saying and grow wise in the ways of nature.

At some crisis point or points all humanity, like Cuchulain (hero of the great Irish saga, known as the Ulster Cycle, collected between about 100 BC and AD 100), will be confronted by a dark and brooding shadow whose menace chills the soul. It is the same shadow, the black side of his nature, that Ged is forced to face in Ursula Le Guin's mythic novel *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Cuchulain leaps his salmon leap at the monster shadow and disperses it with his sword. Ged stares down his shadow through the power of the mind. Both stories carry an urgent message for today's readers.

The border between myth and legend is ill defined. Traditionally, legend is story passed down by word of mouth from former times and popularly accepted as historical. However,

in the passage of time, detail is added, the protagonist glorified and raised in heroic status. The superheroes, often of semi-divine origin, create their own legend within the myth of their race: Theseus, Perseus, Jason, Heracles, Odysseus and their company from Greece; Gilgamesh from Sumeria; Sigurd and Vainamoinen from old Scandinavia; Moses and Samson of the Old Testament; Beowulf, Arthur and Cuchulain from ancient Britain; Roland of France; El Cid of Spain and Maui of the Pacific are but a few. All have elements of the supernatural woven into their mythic life stories.

So, too, have many of the saints, prophets, seers and holy ones. Miracles of healing are attributed to saints such as Catherine of Siena and Guanyin, the Chinese Goddess of Mercy. Siddharta, a prince from north India and the future Buddha, is conceived after musical instruments play celestial music without the aid of human hands, trees have burst spontaneously into flower, and rivers have ceased to flow in order to witness the miracle that is taking place. The death of the wise and charitable Countess Cathleen of Ireland drives away the pestilence that has scourged her country, and she joins the hosts of heaven, sanctified by love. Joan of Arc of France is elevated to sainthood because she implicitly obeys her heavenly voices. The German saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) was a visionary whose music is still played today and whose poems are now believed to be prophetic warnings against the pollution and contamination of a selfish world:

There issues forth an unreality
 An overpowering, dark cloud of menace,
 That withers the earth's green shoots,
 And shrivels fruit upon the bough
 Fruit that was meant to give the people food.

(Saxby 1990: 118)

Both Catherine and Hildegard are examples of practical, strong-minded women who challenged evil and corruption as they saw it, even in the Church, to the Pope himself.

Stories of the saints, martyrs, wise and holy men and women have long been passed down by word of mouth and then enshrined in written literature because of their inspirational quality: holiness backed up by steadfastness of purpose, resolute action and nobility of spirit. They still have a much-needed place in the literature for the children of a cynical and materialistic age. They are the prototypes for the plethora of tales of the supernatural, the fighting fantasies and those spurious stories of apocalyptic battles between the powers of light and the demons of doom that currently pervade children's literature. From these archetypes have evolved the swaggering celluloid supermen of Hollywood, the witches, wizards and warlocks of pulp fiction. Only rarely does the synthetic hero have the enduring quality of those who were given literary permanence in heroic literature.

The ongoing quest for 'stars' in the contemporary media, be they sportspersons, entertainers or even humanitarians is also indicative of the same urge to worship that has given lasting life to the legendary folk heroes from around the world: Robin Hood, William Tell, Boadicea, Pochahontas, Davy Crockett or Lady Godiva. They are all larger-than-life characters whose exploits have perhaps been romanticised but who for that very reason stir the popular imagination and fulfil an ongoing human need to reverence the spark of nobility within ordinary people. Such heroes, because they belong to a specific family, society, tribe or region, provide a sense of identity for those whose roots are in that culture as well as a cross-cultural reference in a world where internationalism is seen as desirable; but not at the cost of losing pride in one's country.

Myth and legend perhaps provide the most potent form of literature that can be offered to children – for a variety of reasons. Not only are they archetypes, but they generate linguistic power, stir the imagination, ease anxiety and help bring about inner harmony and much-needed emotional and spiritual wholeness.

So-called ‘high’ fantasy such as that of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*, and especially his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, sometimes described as ‘mythological epic’, creatively synthesises elements from myth and legend (the journey, battle and pursuit) with medieval romance and boys’ adventure literature. The Australian Patricia Wrightson in her *Book of Wirru* takes her Aboriginal hero on an epic journey across Australia. The creatures he encounters, such as the water spirit, the Yunggamurra, although derived from Aboriginal mythology, are universally recurring images.

From the epic hero tale comes adventure and survival literature – from *Robinson Crusoe* to Ann Holm’s *I am David*, Ian Serrailier’s *The Silver Sword*, Ivan Southall’s *Ash Road* or Cynthia Voigt’s *Homecoming*. Each involves a journey of sorts, a disaster and survival through grit, determination and moral integrity. In all such novels there is a moral dilemma and a social problem just as there is in heroic literature. So the seeds of the contemporary problem novel are to be found in traditional literature. Children immersed in that literature absorb not only the structure and pattern of story, which thus enables them to appreciate the most demanding contemporary writing, but are empowered linguistically.

Apart from the ringing tone and heightened language of the better retellings – to which we will return later in the chapter – our vocabulary and usage are enriched, unconsciously, by references to myth and legend: a jovial chap; a mercurial disposition; the Midas touch; even brand names such as Cyclops or Excalibur.

Even more importantly, the ancient tales demonstrate the universality and ongoing nature of the human condition. The televised cry of the distraught mother of an abducted child, ‘Please give me back my daughter!’ echoes the story of Demeter’s search for Persephone, carried off by Hades, the black monarch of the Underworld to his nether kingdom, so swiftly that only Hecate, the queen of black magic and evil ghosts, saw her go.

When night fell and Persephone failed to return home, her mother sent out a search party; and Demeter joined the searchers, lighting torches from the fires of the volcano, Etna, so as to search through nine long, grief-filled days and nights. She ate no food, she didn’t wash, and she took no rest. On the tenth night, when no moon shone, Hecate came out of the cave and appeared before the bereft mother.

(Saxby 1990: 26)

Medea’s slaying of her children because Jason has cast her aside for another woman who would advance his fortunes in the ancient city of Corinth is an archetypal story of what is happening all too frequently in our own culture. Perseus leaves home and goes forth to slay the Medusa because an evil Polydectes lusts after his mother and sends Perseus on a dangerous errand. Perseus, like any jealous but protective son, uses his grisly trophy to render Polydectes impotent by turning him into stone.

The ancient Greeks knew all about catharsis – the purging of the emotions by being party to true tragedy, which evokes both pity and terror. Such potent stories reflect an ongoing temper of mind and are products not just of a particular period or a specific culture. No other stories offer children the same imaginative or emotional depth, the same insight into the human condition and the essential truth of universal experience. They

provide children with something of the same kind of experience that adults find in *King Lear* or *Crime and Punishment*. Whereas the protagonists of the fairy tale live ‘happily ever after’, the heroes (male or female) of myth and legend don’t necessarily triumph in the end. They have harder choices to make than Jack climbing his beanstalk. For they are often dogged by misfortune or traits of character. Pride – or hubris – always leads to nemesis, the downfall of the hero, as it does with Roland of France. But as with Roland his ultimate triumph is not as important as his persistence, courage and integrity. Without being overtly didactic, the stories of myth and legend have an inherent moral. Icarus flies too close to the sun and plummets to the sea. Orpheus looks back (remember Lot’s wife!) and must return from the Underworld bereft and alone. A taboo has not been heeded. So Orpheus is doomed to wander an earth which has lost its sweetness. Yet he endures, singing to the end: and his lyre is set among the stars.

We might well ask, as did Paul Hazard:

How would heroism be kept alive in our ageing earth if not by each fresh, young generation that begins anew the epic of the human race? The finest and noblest of books intended for children tell of heroism. They are the inspiration of those who, in later life, sacrifice themselves that they may secure safety for others.

(Hazard 1947: 170)

So it is with Beowulf – or King Arthur, who, some say:

sleeps still in Avalon, while his wounds heal, awaiting the call to the upper world as king in the hour of his country’s need. Others say that he sleeps in the fiery cradle of Etna or at Snowdon in Wales, or at Glastonbury. Perhaps he rests in the hearts of all noble men. Hic Iacet Arthurus, Rex Quondam que Futurus – Here lies Arthur, the Once and Future King.

(Saxby 1989: 141)

This is the hope that myth and legend sets before us: that we all, if we pursue our odyssey to the end, will find ourselves and thus be saved: and in saving ourselves we save the world. It is thus that the world is being constantly redeemed and renewed.

Plato, in *The Republic*, states that the ultimate goal of education should be to create in children an active imagination, because imagination, he claims, is the means through which we recreate the world, and we each rediscover the meaning and significance of life, experience the joy of being alive. Plato would educate children through myth, through story and through folklore. Aristotle claims that the friend of wisdom is also the friend of myth.

In more recent times, Joseph Campbell, the author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, maintains that myths are metaphors or fields of reference to what ordinarily can’t be known or named. He says that they are guiding signs to a deep, rich, satisfying inner life, a vivifying spiritual experience. Campbell points out that in medieval times the tallest building in any city was the tower of the church, temple or mosque whereas today it is an office block – to which could be added the television tower. In forsaking myth for technology and commerce, a society runs the risk of being inwardly impoverished. We can now bring Mount Olympus into close range with our giant telescopes; listen through our headsets to the music of the spheres; read and print out the pronouncements of the oracle from the computer screen. Hermes has been replaced by the fax machine.

Yet the awesome wonder of the old tales remains; but only if the versions and retellings remain true to the spirit of the originals, as far as we can trace them. The prototypes of many myths and legends, however, have come down to us in fragmented form and are not accessible or even suitable for use with children.

In ancient days, tales of heroes were often sung by minstrels and gathered by poets in the form of an epic: a long narrative verse cycle clustered around the exploits of a named hero who embodied the cultural symbols and qualities which the society held dear. The first known and recorded epic would appear to be the legend of Gilgamesh sung to the harp by Sumerians and recorded in clay some 3,000 years before Christ. It exalts the wondrous exploits of Gilgamesh, King of Uruk, and celebrates his friendship with Enkidu. It probes the mysteries of life and whatever is beyond it. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, an English version with an introduction by N. K. Sanders (1980) is a source book for retellings such as that in Maurice Saxby's *The Great Deeds of Superheroes*, the introduction to which, 'We all need heroes' includes a comprehensive table charting the heroic pattern in myth and legend (Saxby 1989: 6–12). (A companion volume, *The Great Deeds of Heroic Women* (Saxby 1990) retells stories of goddesses, saints, warrior women and strong females who became legends in their own time.) The Gilgamesh story has been used by Ludmila Zeman as the basis for two rich and lavish picture books, *Gilgamesh the King* (1992) and *The Revenge of Ishtar* (1993), illustrated in Sumerian art style. The text, which is pitched at the newly independent reader, is pared down to an accessible level without being impoverished.

Myths and legends from ancient Greece used with children today come largely from Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (c. 850 BC), telling the story of the Trojan War and its aftermath. After the fall of Troy, between 600 and 700 BC, Hesiod, Homer, Pindar and other Greek writers collected and wrote down the myths of the gods and the legendary stories of the heroes. Apollonius of Rhodes (c. 305–235 BC) and Apollodorus (fl. c. AD 100) also gave us versions of the stories. Other sources are the odes of Pindar (c. 502–446 BC) and the Greek dramatists, Sophocles (born c. 496 BC) and Euripides (born c. 480 BC) as well as the *Metamorphoses* of the Roman poet Ovid in the first century BC. Many of the common myths have been pieced together from several sources – fragments of poems and references in plays – and there are variant versions, even among the writers of the ancient world, as detailed by Robert Graves in *The Greek Myths*. Yet when they are retold faithfully the Greek tales are staggering in their imaginative power and psychological insight and are always intensely dramatic. Lillian Smith (1953: 66) has said that 'to read them is to experience the wonder of the morning of the world'. It is also to experience the aspirations, joys, terrors, defeats, triumphs and the creative energy of humankind throughout the ages.

As few today can read ancient Greek, we are dependent on translations such as those of E. V. Rieu, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would seem to capture the swift stateliness of Homer's narration along with the detail of everyday life in ancient Greece. For young readers there is poetry and dignity as well as swift narrative action in Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Black Ships before Troy: The Story of the Iliad* (1993), combining as it does the drama of human emotion and that of a ferocious naval and military campaign. Alan Lee's universal 'Greek'-style illustrations both here and in Sutcliff's *The Wanderings of Odysseus* (1994) harmoniously complement the text; and, with the 'picture story' format of the book, add tremendously to the reader appeal. Remarkably, most retellings of the *Odyssey*, including that of Barbara Leonie Picard for the Oxford Myths and Legends series, retain a third-person narrative throughout. In Homer, however, when Odysseus in Part II is

presented to Alcinous, King of Phaeacia, the hero narrates in the first person his adventures from his imprisonment on Calypso's isle to his arrival at the palace of Alcinous. One of the few recent children's versions to retain this structure is by Robin Lister (1987). Lister and his illustrator, Alan Baker have collaborated successfully here and in *The Story of King Arthur* (1988) to produce eye-catching illustrations and euphonious texts of two of the world's most potent stories.

One of the first to recognise the literary merit of the Greek tales for children was Nathaniel Hawthorne. In *A Wonder Book* (1851) he retells them in lush but vivid prose, treating them more as fairy tales than as high drama. He adds his own detail, giving Midas a daughter whom he calls Marygold and who is turned into gold by her father along with everything else he touches.

Hawthorne's cavalier treatment of the text motivated Charles Kingsley to restore the purity of the tales. In his introduction to *The Heroes* Kingsley wrote, 'Now, I love these old Hellens heartily,' (1856/1903: 209) and so proclaimed his enthusiasm for the language as well as the story. His version is lofty in idealism yet homely in detail, poetic in expression yet dramatic in action. The stories as he tells them reflect his belief that we 'call it a "heroic" thing to suffer pain and grief, that we may do good to our fellow men'.

Later Padraic Colum in *The Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived before Achilles* (1921) used the technique of having Orpheus sing the stories to the heroes as they sailed in search of the golden fleece. His retelling is poetic and full of wonder. Yet he is not in awe of the gods, but treats them with familiar respect.

Since Hawthorne, Kingsley and Colum, versions of the Greek stories have proliferated. For the reteller it is easy to seize upon a tailor-made story and recount it in facile, easily digestible prose. Sheila Egoff dismisses most modern retellers, such as Roger Lancelyn Green in *Tales of the Greek Heroes* (1958) and Doris Gates in *The Warrior Goddess: Athena* (1972), as 'faceless and styleless' (Egoff 1981: 214). While Green is certainly no stylist, and he lacks Kingsley's 'awesome wonder', he tells the stories clearly and dramatically, preserving traditional storylines and making them accessible to young readers. Through his collections he has provided a basic introduction to a wide range of traditional literature: *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* (1953), *Tales of the Greek Heroes* (1958), *The Tale of Troy* (1958), *Myths of the Norsemen* (1960), *The Luck of Troy* (1961) and *Tales of Ancient Egypt* (1967).

Current publishing projects to keep the Greek and Roman myths and legends alive for a contemporary audience have had mixed success. Anthony Horowitz's retellings for *The Kingfisher Book of Myths and Legends* (1985) are workmanlike and make for easy if not inspired reading. Most disappointing are Geraldine McCaughrean's versions for *The Orchard Book of Greek Myths* (1992). Here the tragedy of Persephone is reduced to melodrama through banal dialogue and trite narrative. Persephone, captured by Pluto (Hades), cries out: 'Who are you? What do you want of me? Oh let me go! Help me, somebody! Mother, help me!'; in the Underworld Persephone sobs: 'I want to go home! I want my mother!'; and Demeter calls: 'Persephone darling! Time to go home!' (McCaughrean 1992: 16).

Of the recent picture story books based on myths and legends, those retold and illustrated by Warwick Hutton – *Theseus and the Minotaur* (1989), *The Trojan Horse* (1992) and *Perseus* (1993) – remain faithful to the traditional storyline but are told simply and directly as adventure stories in language adapted to the ability of newly independent readers. Hutton's illustrations are modern interpretations of classical Greek design.

The source for retellings of the Norse myths is, in the main, two thirteenth-century Icelandic sagas compiled after Iceland had been Christianised for over one hundred years:

the so-called *Elder Edda* of thirty-four poems, sometimes referred to as the *Iliad* of the North, and the *Younger Edda*, a prose collection written partly by Snorri Sturluson who lived between about 1179 and 1241. The dramatic succinctness yet the imaginative power of these stories has been faithfully retained in Dorothy Hosford's *Thunder of the Gods* (1952) while her earlier *Songs of the Volsungs* (1949) is a prose adaptation of William Morris's verse drama *Sigurd the Volsung*; his version of the ancient *Volsunga Saga* of Sigmund and his son Sigurd. Hosford's account of the death of Balder is told with stark directness and moving simplicity yet with the pathos and intensity of the old Eddas.

Kevin Crossley-Holland, a later reteller, has by his own admission not hesitated to develop hints of action in the Eddas, flesh out dramatic situations and add snatches of dialogue, to hone some sound or meaning. Hence his *Axe-Age, Wolf-Age: A Selection from the Norse Myths* (1985) and *Northern Lights: Legends, Sagas and Folk-tales* (1987) have a hard glittering edge as befits the 'fatalism, courage, loyalty, superstition, cunning, melancholy, a sense of wonder, curiosity about all that's new' which in his foreword to *The Faber Book of Northern Legends* (1977) he claims as the 'most pronounced strain in the make-up of the Germanic heroic peoples, as revealed through their prose and poetry' (Crossley-Holland 1977: 20). This author's sombre yet ringing prose version (1982, re-issued in 1999) of *Beowulf*, the Anglo-Saxon poem dating back to before AD 1000, is extended to become an atmospheric horror-hero story by Charles Keeping's chilling black-and-white drawings. (Rosemary Sutcliff has also retold the story of Beowulf in prose as *Beowulf: Dragon Slayer* (1966), while Ian Serrailier tells the tale in verse, *Beowulf the Warrior* (1954)). As with Keeping's illustrations for Leon Garfield and Edward Blishen's sagas of creation and the early Greek world, *The God beneath the Sea* (1970) and *The Golden Shadow* (1973), there is an overtone of sexuality which is often latent but at times explicit in the early stories themselves.

Also at times chilled by northern mist and tempest is the *Kalevala: The Land of Heroes*, fragments of heroic songs collected by a nineteenth-century Finnish folklorist and poet, Elias Lonnrot. These songs tell of Vainamoinen the Wise, Ilmarinen the Smith and the hare-brained rogue, Lemminkainen, and of their feud with Mistress Louhi, the sorceress of the bitter North. Ursula Synge has retold the stories in lyric prose in *Kalevala: Heroic Tales from Finland* (1977); and a striking picture book for young children, *Louhi Witch of North Farm* (1986) has text by Toni de Gerez and ice-cold pictures by Barbara Cooney.

Since Caxton printed Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* in 1485, the Arthurian romances have attracted many scholarly retellings as well as popularised chapbook versions. Robin Hood stories taken from early ballads and oral sources have also proliferated. From America has come Howard Pyle's grandly medieval cycle of both the Robin Hood (1883) and Arthurian stories (1903). But perhaps the finest modern interpreter of the old hero tales from the Middle Ages has been Rosemary Sutcliff. Her Arthurian trilogy remains one of the most accessible and poetic yet scholarly versions for children and adults – *The Sword and the Circle: King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (1981); *The Light Beyond the Forest: The Quest for the Holy Grail* (1979); and *The Road to Camlann: The Death of King Arthur* (1981). Her *Tristan and Iseult* (1971) pares away accretions to the romantic love story to lay bare in taut narrative the stark tragedy of the star-crossed lovers.

A latter-day Celtic revival was perhaps fuelled by the publication in 1949 of a translation of the thirteenth-century Welsh classic *The Mabinogion* by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones. Here the story is dense and concentrated, and daunting to young readers. More easily digestible are the tales from the *Mabinogion* included in Barbara Leonie Picard's *Hero Tales from the British Isles* (1963) and Gwyn Jones's *Welsh Legends and Folktales*

(1955). Gwyn Jones and Kevin Crossley-Holland collaborated to tell in measured prose *Tales from the Mabinogion* (1984) with strong, stylised illustrations by Margaret Jones.

A comprehensive analysis of available editions of myths, legends and fairy tales up to 1976 is Elizabeth Cook's *The Ordinary and the Fabulous* (2nd edn, 1976), while Mary Steele in 1989 compiled *Traditional Tales: A Signal Bookguide* which details then available collections of legend and hero tales, Norse myths, Irish myths, Welsh legends, Greek legends, Robin Hood stories and traditional tales from around the world.

Perhaps one of the most useful references to world mythology is the Hodder and Stoughton series of some twelve titles ranging from *Gods, Men and Monsters from Greek Mythology* (1977) to *Warriors, Gods and Spirits from Central American Mythology* (1983). Each volume sets the stories in their cultural and historical context; the retellings are dramatic, vivid and arresting; the illustrations colourful and energetic. For children exploring world mythology they provide an invaluable resource. Similarly Penelope Farmer's *Beginnings: Creation Myths of the World* (1978) and John Bailey's *Gods and Men: Myths and Legends from the World's Religions* (1981), although spare and tightly told, are useful springboards for further research.

Each year new versions of mythic and heroic literature are published for the children's market. Geraldine McCaughrean in 1989 produced a lively and dramatic retelling of the story of a hero whose exploits were the subject of medieval manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Latin, Hebrew, Arabic and Spanish, *El Cid*. In 1992 appeared Margaret Hodges's adaptation of the Cervantes novel *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza* (1605–15) as a 'literary' hero tale. Among notable picture-book additions to the field is Margaret Early's *William Tell* (1991).

Perhaps the ancient myths, legends and hero tales are today taking second place to more contemporary myths of religious, political, sporting and cultural icons, along with the stars of screen and stage. International figures such as Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, along with superheroes like Batman and Spiderman, take their place alongside Odysseus, King Arthur, Robin Hood and the like – although in Australia, at least, Ned Kelly would today out-rival Robin Hood in popularity. The language applied to Elvis Presley has much in common with that usually reserved for King Arthur, or divine beings; the monsters of the ancient world are replaced by dictators, corrupt presidents and terrorist leaders.

The thirst for heroes – both ancient and modern – appears to be unabated. Shackleton comes to the giant screen; the exploits of Harry Potter and Tolkien's hobbits enthral audiences across the globe. Arthurian romances proliferate around the world through seminars and television programmes for those with a scholarly interest in the legend, and through retellings from a fresh point of view – such as Robert Leeson's *The Song of Arthur* (Walker Books, 2000) where Arthur is presented through the eyes of Taliesin, a bard and storyteller. Penelope Lively reworks Virgil's epic story of the fall of Troy, told from a Roman perspective, *In Search of a Homeland: The Story of the Aeneid* (2001) a work that stands alongside Rosemary Sutcliff's retellings of Homer.

In this visual era, the myths, legends and hero tales have inspired an array of beautifully illustrated and sumptuously presented picture books designed to entice young readers and adults. Margaret Early's richly decorated and bordered pages help give her *Robin Hood* (1996) international coinage, and Deborah Klein's illustrations add similar international appeal to Nadia Wheatley's view of the less well-known side of the Emperor Charlemagne, *The Greatest Treasure of Charlemagne the King* (1997). Anna Fienberg and Kim Gamble have collaborated to produce a picture book, *Joseph* (2001), that shimmers with desert

heat in retelling the biblical narrative of the boy who came to be Governor of Egypt; while Ireland's patron saint is reintroduced to children across the world in Joyce Denham in *Patrick: Saint of Ireland* (2002) with Diana Mayo's suitably Celtic-style illustrations.

The last two decades have seen a great ingathering of heroic stories not unlike that which took place in the middle of the nineteenth century. However, while the earlier collectors and retellers produced great epics such as the *Kalevala*, the present emphasis is more on heroic folk tale through which is preserved elements of both myth and legend. As early as 1954, Janis Andrup and Vitauts Kalve, in *Latvian Literature; Essays*, wrote of the 'tendency towards creating *legends* out of material provided by Latvian past history' (170). Gulcin Alpoqe has documented the upsurge in the collection and classification of Turkish traditional literature, which began in the late 1940s. She notes that, after 1980, Turkish publishing houses began to issue such traditional literature in its original form, and into the twenty-first century, folk tales – as part of national mythology – take equal place with picture books and novels on children's lists:

Folktales and Fairytales are retold as closely as possible in their original form. Very few re-interpret a folktale or have brought the story forward to modern times. In south-eastern Europe the folktale seems to be the most popular genre, but it is often used as metaphor and modernised. Turkish fairytales, however, are still located mostly in the traditional imaginary space and fairytale past.

(Alpoqe 2002: 27–8)

The line between myth, legend and folk tale is fragile. Many folk tales contain myth elements – pourquoi stories, for instance – and the classification of legend as opposed to folklore is frequently problematical. The more generic term 'traditional literature' is ultimately more reliable and useful. The Romanian story of a girl who dresses up as a fully armoured knight to protect her father's kingdom (a tale that has currency also in Greece, Russia, Italy and the Czech Republic), for example, appears along with similar heroic tales in Dorling Kindersley's *The Illustrated Book of Fairy Tales* (1997/2002) where the term 'fairy tale' is used in its very broadest sense. More frequently, folk tales having elements of myth and legend have been retold and illustrated in a style that reflects the country of origin. John Steptoe's *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* (1987), an African tale inspired by G. M. Theale's *Kaffir Tales* of 1895, is a book dedicated to the children of South Africa and acknowledges the expertise of the Zimbabwe Mission and the Afro-American Institute. The Massai story *The Orphan Boy* (1990) by Tololwa M. Mollé goes beyond legend to explore the heroic virtues of strength, loyalty and male bonding. The illustrator, Paul Morin, also worked on Alice McLerran's *The Ghost Dance* (1995), a lament for the Paiute people of North America, and the stuff of legend. In the same year, James Riordan published *The Songs My Paddle Sings: Native American Legends* (illustrated by Michael Foreman), which includes creation and other myths along with the story of the legendary Hiawatha, uniter of the Iroquois, and also an Apache Cinderella story. Even earlier, in Australia, Allan Baillie had collaborated with the Chinese professor Chun-Chan Yeh, to provide the text of an ancient Chinese legendary hero tale, *Bawshou Rescues the Sun* (1991).

Aboriginal myths and legends (non-sacred) have been retold by native Australians, notably Arone Raymond Meeks and Dick Roughsey (in the 1970s), but these books were edited and published by white Australians. In the following decades, Aboriginal people began to take more responsibility for the retelling, illustrating and publishing of their

myths. Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation, based in Western Australia, has in the past twenty years produced highly acclaimed books such as Daisy Utemorra's *Do Not Go around the Edges* (1990) that ranges through legend and Dreamtime stories and which expresses this Aboriginal elder's deep and wise personal philosophy. In 1992, Magabala published *Tjarany Roughtail* by Gracie Greene, Joe Tramacchi and Lucille Gill, with text in both English and dialect; it was voted Australian Book of the Year, and is a landmark in postcolonial publishing.

Such publishing is indicative of an almost world-wide recognition of the desire to collect and preserve the mythology – sometimes in folk tale rather than epic form – of ‘the people’, for such stories are part of deep cultural roots. Not a few entries in the biennial IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Awards arose out of this recognition, either as the basis for literary stories or for picture books that reflect in both word and picture the culture from which they spring. Entries from central and southeastern Europe, from Asian countries such as Japan, and others from Latin America have drawn on their country's store of mythology. Writers and artists around the world are turning to their country's cultural heritage for inspiration – Serpil Ura and Can Goknil, for example, in Turkey. Tales from Africa, South America and Asia are gaining international currency through translation and by being included in anthologies such as Geraldine McCaughrean's *The Crystal Pool* (1998).

The loom of myth and legend is seemingly never still, even today. The *mythos* of south-east Asia, Third World countries, the Middle East, Australia and Papua New Guinea, for example, are slowly being woven from their oral sources. In time they will take their place with those from Europe, the Near East and the old world to provide children the world over with a fabric which is both timeless and multicultural.

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19 Fairy tales and folk tales

Ruth B. Bottigheimer

Tales about fairies, and fairy tales

Tales about fairies depict the quests, tasks, trials and sufferings of usually royal heroes and heroines as well as intersections between their lives and fairyland inhabitants. The protagonists' destinies generally change when they encounter good or evil fairies, whose actions are often unintelligible and frequently lead to troublingly amoral consequences and conclusions. During the reign of Louis XIV, writers such as Mme L'Héritier, Mme d'Aulnoy, Mme de Murat and Mlle de la Force composed ornate and lengthy tales about fairies with complicated subplots. Based partly on a rich heritage of late medieval French and Italian romances expanded by Renaissance and Baroque Italian tale collections, their tales about fairies exploded with colourful descriptions of bejewelled gardens, beguiling heroines and appetising feasts. Adapted for adult aristocratic French audiences, the stories found favour among children and lasted well into the nineteenth century. A representative example, Mme d'Aulnoy's 'Wild Boar', begins with a long-barren queen, whose longing for a child is complicated by a mischievous fairy's wish that it be born with a boar's skin.

The common people were familiar with a fairy world that included leprechauns, kobolds, gnomes, elves and little people (Briggs 1976, 1978), which they often called upon to frighten children. John Locke decried this practice and urged readers of his *Thoughts on Education* to eschew hobgoblins and their ilk altogether (Locke 1693: 159). Despite his influence in other educational questions, his advice was often ignored.

Fairy tales, unlike tales about fairies, as often as not have no fairies in their cast of characters. They are generally brief narratives in simple language that detail a reversal of fortune, often with a rags-to-riches plot that culminates in a wedding. Magical creatures regularly assist earthly heroes and heroines achieve happiness, and the entire story exemplifies a proverb, as in Giambattista Basile's *Pentamerone*, or demonstrates a moral point, appended separately, as in Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, or built into the text, as in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.

In terms of the history and development of children's literature, tales about fairies and fairy tales postdate the earliest writing for children – instructional manuals, grammars, school texts, and books of courtesy. Bible stories, too, regularly preceded the appearance of fairy tales, and in the eighteenth century were often intermixed with them, as in Mme Leprince de Beaumont's *Magasin des Enfants* (1756). Although her preface privileges the truth of Bible stories (*histoires*) over the falseness of fairy tales (*contes*), it was her version of the fairy tale 'Beauty and the Beast' that survived as a nursery classic.

The magic of modern fantasy fiction is an offspring of the joint parentage of tales about fairies and fairy tales. Born in the second half of the nineteenth century, fantasy fiction matured in the twentieth century.

Both tales about fairies and fairy tales demonstrate the phenomenon of readership boundary cross-over. The content of tales about fairies that were originally composed by and for adults often passed, in simplified form, into the domain of children's reading. Mme d'Aulnoy's 'The Yellow Dwarf' provides an example of this process: published with its tragic conclusion throughout the eighteenth century for adults and for children, it was altered to end happily for nineteenth-century child-readers (Warner 1994: 253).

For centuries, discrete narratives, whether tales about fairies, fairy tales or secular tales, had been embedded within overarching story-telling narratives, like that provided by the pilgrimage in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Some of the French story-tellers' tales about fairies maintained this narrative tradition, but Perrault's *Contes* broke with it. His structural innovation, the free-standing fairy tale, became the norm in children's literature, although the embedded fairy tale periodically returned, for example in Sarah Fielding's eighteenth-century novel *The Governess* (1749) and in a nineteenth-century English reformulation of *Grimms' Tales* into a twelve-night cycle between Christmas and Twelfth Night told by 'Gammar Gurton'.

France

Charles Perrault's relatively brief *Histoires, ou Contes du Temps Passés* (1697), with their limited vocabulary and witty morals, together with Madame d'Aulnoy's lengthy and lexically rich *Contes des Fées* (1697–8, collected in four volumes 1710–15), sowed the seeds for early modern and modern fairy tales and tales about fairies. Mme d'Aulnoy's stories, which were initially the more popular, fit seventeenth-century notions of story-telling in terms of plot and language. For instance, her 'The Yellow Dwarf' opens with a princess disdainful of her suitors and continues with an unfortunate promise of betrothal to a physically deformed yellow dwarf. When the princess finally meets and falls in love with a worthy suitor, the valorous and virtuous King of the Gold Mines, the yellow dwarf kills him and the princess swoons and dies in sympathy. The tale ends distinctly dystopically: 'The wicked dwarf was better pleased to see his princess void of life, than in the arms of another.' Although Mme d'Aulnoy's 'Ram' met an equally unhappy end, most of her tales about fairies ended with princes and princesses happily wed. Perrault's tales gained popularity more slowly, but fit modern notions of fairy tales in a folk style and in the nineteenth century outpaced Mme d'Aulnoy's tales in popularity, maintaining their precedence in the twenty-first century.

At a very early point, tales about fairies and certain kinds of fairy tales were identified as the products of women's imaginations. Demonstrable qualitative differences exist between the tales women tell and those that men recount (Holbek 1987: 161ff), particularly with reference to the naming, speech and initiative of female characters. Children have often been assumed to have produced fairy tales, but whether children were ever significant contributors to the fairy-tale tradition, as the Abbé de Villiers suggested in 1699 (Warner 1991: 11) is doubtful.

For the French bookbuying public in the eighteenth century, fairy tales existed in three forms. The first consisted of chapbooks of the *bibliothèque bleue*, which foraged among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tales about fairies and fairy tales in search of fodder for their hungry presses and delivered French tales about fairies and fairy tales to a semi-

literate and illiterate public in France ravenous for stories. It was a population that provided nurses who told fairy tales to children put in their care and who were, in part, responsible for the myth of a link between fairy tales and oral transmission by peasants. The second form comprised fantasy tales about fairies. These tales, with little or no moral or moralising component, had been composed for adult readers and often offered distinctly dystopic views of the human condition. Hence, their suitability for children was highly problematic. However, there existed a third form, intensely moralised fairy tales that were intended for child readers. Enlightenment pedagogy remained dissatisfied with magic in any form, and by the late 1770s and early 1780s, educators under the influence of Rousseau and Locke inveighed unendingly against the dangers of fantasy. It does not seem likely that those same educators ‘gradually alienated the child from the world of Perrault’s fairies ... and Mme Leprince de Beaumont’s “Beast” [based on evidence that] Mme de la Fite had openly attacked the highly moralised fairy tales of Mme Leprince de Beaumont’ (Davis 1987: 113). After all, the Grimms’ own informants were well acquainted with fairy tales whose origins lay in France.

In nineteenth-century France the market for fairy tales for children was limited to Perrault (Caradec 1977: 53ff) and a few translations of *Grimms’ Tales*. In general, France’s educational system, and hence its book market, was firmly closed against fantasy.

Germany

Fairy tales in Germany derived extensively from the French tradition. For a century, translations and borrowings had enabled German booksellers to repeat the French model: the writings of Charles Perrault, Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, Charlotte de la Force, Suzanne de Villeneuve, Mme Leprince de Beaumont, and the *Cabinet des Fées* supplied middle- and upper-class German adults and children with elaborate tales about fairies and simpler fairy tales, such as ‘Puss in Boots’, ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Beauty and the Beast’. Chapbooks delivered simplified versions of the same material (Grätz 1988: 83ff) to the lower orders.

The French had ascribed fairy tales to women’s authorship, despite the manifest participation by men such as Charles Perrault. German intellectuals took a circuitous route to arrive at the same conclusion. First, they developed a theory of the fairy tale (*Märchen*) that linked it with ancient history, which they defined as the childhood of the human race. Then the childhood of the human race was equated with childhood *per se*. Because of fairy tales’ simple structure and plot lines (so different from the tales about fairies), J. G. Herder further equated fairy tales with nature. And finally, because a body of gender theory had developed in eighteenth-century Germany that defined women as the incarnation of nature, fantasy and non-rational cerebration, and because – in the same theory – women’s natural state was motherhood, the establishment of the two fairy-tale correlates, childhood and nature, forged a theoretical linkage between fairy tales and women. Much contemporary feminist interpretation of fairy tales is coloured by this conclusion. Enlightenment pedagogues thus denigrated fairy tales as stories told by ignorant nursemaids, or by women, who were understood to be incapable of intellection, and they sought, unsuccessfully, to eradicate fairy tales from the nursery and classroom. Nonetheless, fairy tales entered the precincts of some privileged German homes just as they had in England: Mme de Beaumont’s *Magasin des Enfants* was translated into German as *Lehrreiches Magazin für Kinder* and published for girls’ reading in 1760, and Sarah Fielding’s *Governess*, with its fairy-tale inclusions, was translated into German and published in the following year.

With the rise of German Romanticism, fairy tales were proposed as a paradigm for educating the imagination (Steinlein 1987: 115ff), and when Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm published their *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812 *et seq.*), they labelled their collection a childrearing manual (Grimm and Grimm 1812: preface). The collection eventually contained 210 tales, culled from friends, acquaintances, village informants, children's almanacs and old books. 'The Twelve Brothers' (no. 9) may be taken as typical. Twelve brothers face relinquishing their patrimony and losing their lives if and when their mother bears them a sister. When that happens, they flee to the forest and vow blood vengeance on every girl they might encounter in the future. A full complement of fairy-tale situations ensues and, although the tale ends happily, the sister is exposed to the threat of her brothers' violence and her mother-in-law's hatred.

Even before Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm published their collection of fairy tales, Albert Ludwig Grimm had turned against Enlightenment children's literature and had issued a call for a revival of the tales like 'Cinderella', 'Hansel and Gretel' and 'Snow White' ('Ashenpittchen', 'Hänsel und Gretel', 'Schneewittchen') which he included in *Kindermärchen* (1808), his collection of children's fairy tales. In a later book, *Linas Märchenbuch* (1827), A. L. Grimm scolded Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm for the 'un-child-like style of their fairy tales'.

In time, fairy tales came to form the nucleus of German romantic children's literature: Wilhelm Hauff's *Märchenalmenache* (1826–8), E. T. A. Hoffmann's fairy tales (especially 'The Nutcracker') (Ewers 1984: 195), with the fairy tales of Karl Wilhelm Contessa and Friedrich Heinrich Karl Fouqué expanding the corpus.

The runaway fairy-tale bestseller of the mid-to-late-nineteenth century in Germany, however, was Ludwig Bechstein's *Deutsches Märchenbuch* [German Fairy Tale Book] (1845 *et seq.*). Bechstein's playful prose style, depictions of loving and unified families, and above all, an ethic of self-reliance in their characters distinguished his tales from contemporaneous collections of fairy tales. Bechstein's 'Twelve Brothers', for example, are filled with joy rather than inclined to homicide when they unexpectedly find their sister in their midst. His fairy tales exemplified bourgeois behavioural norms and social expectations, while *Grimms' Tales* expressed values that paralleled those of an agrarian proletariat. However, with the wholesale republication and recirculation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German chapbooks in nineteenth-century Germany, the ethic of *Grimms' Tales* was reinforced, and that of Bechstein's *Deutsches Märchenbuch* denigrated, with consequential results for German children's literature.

In the late nineteenth century *Grimms' Tales* began to dominate the fairy-tale market in German children's literature. Their eventual hegemony owed much to newly developed nationalist theories of pedagogy, but even after these were displaced in the mid-twentieth century, *Grimms' Tales* reigned supreme until they were attacked as fundamentally flawed in the aftermath of German university unrest in 1968. When they re-emerged, it was often with much of the stories' primitive violence removed, a process that had occurred twenty years before in West Germany's then sister-state, the German Democratic Republic.

Britain

The English Puritans had been deeply antipathetic to tales about fairies, which they considered relics of pagan, pre-Christian thought. In their view, tales about fairies and fairy tales were non-Christian in content and anti-Christian in intent. 'And yet, alas!' one committed Christian wrote,

how often do we see Parents prefer Tom Thumb, Guy of Warwick, Valentine and Orson, or some such foolish Book ... Let not your children read these vain Books ... Throw away all fond and amorous Romances, and fabulous Histories of Giants, the bombast Achievements of Knight Errantry.

(Fontaine 1708: vii)

Popular taste did not concur with Puritan antipathy, however and, when *Tales of the Fairies* (1699) was published in England, and when Galland's *Mille et une nuits* (12 vols, 1704–17) was translated into English as *Arabian Nights*, individual stories were taken into the chapbook trade. There, chapbook purchasers immediately signalled their approval of magic by buying them in large numbers, together with subsequent translations of Madame d'Aulnoy's *Contes des Fées*, which appeared in English translation as *Tales of the Fairies* (1699). With later, enlarged editions entitled *Diverting Works* (1707, 1715) and *A Collection of Novels and Tales* (1721) Mme d'Aulnoy's tales provided texts that from the last third of the eighteenth century became well known in English: for example, 'The Yellow Dwarf', 'Finetta the Cinder-girl' and 'The White Cat'.

In 1729 Robert Samber translated Perrault's fairy tales as *Histories, or Tales of Past Times* and completed the eighteenth-century inventory of tales about fairies and fairy tales in England. In his dedication to the Countess of Granville, mother of Lord Carteret, Samber discussed the fairy tale as an improvement on Aesop's fables: 'stories of human kind,' he wrote, 'are more effectively instructive than those of animals' (A 3v). Perrault's fairy tales,' he continued, were 'designed for children' yet the stories themselves 'grow up ... both as to their Narration and Moral' because 'Virtue is ever rewarded and Vice ever punished in these tales' (A 4r). Samber meant his book to be morally instructive, and he licensed no 'poor insipid trifling tale in a tinkling Jingle' with a 'petty Witticism, or insignificant useless Reflection'. Samber bridged the cultural gap between France and England by giving some of Perrault's characters English names (Red Riding Hood's Christian name became Biddy, and the bad girl in 'The Fairy' was called Fanny), by defining an ogre ('a giant that has long teeth and claws, with a raw head and bloody bones, that runs away with naughty little boys and girls, and eats them up' (43)), and by offering a recipe for Sauce Robert in 'Sleeping Beauty' (51). Nonetheless, Perrault's tales were slow to penetrate the market for children's books, doing so effectively only from the 1760s onward (Bottigheimer 2002).

When fairy tales entered both the chapbook trade and the children's book market, they reproduced Samber's prose, but dispensed with Mme d'Aulnoy's frame tales and particularised vocabulary to produce simplified narratives of tales like 'The Blue Bird'. They also simplified *Arabian Nights* stories to bring 'Aladdin' and 'Sindbad' to a broad reading public (Summerfield 1984: 55).

When children's literature was formally and self-consciously instituted in the mid-eighteenth century, England's traditional giants were still an integral component of the moral lessons composed for children. Thomas Boreman's tiny fourpenny book *The History of Cajanus, the Swedish Giant* (1742) offered a tongue-in-cheek biography of a seven-foot-tall giant, capable of remarkable fairy-tale-like acts. Sarah Fielding also used tales about fairies for *The Governess* – 'the story of the cruel giant Barbarico, the good giant Benefico, and the pretty little Dwarf Mignon' and 'Princess Hebe ... To cultivate an early Inclination to Benevolence, and a love of Virtue, in the Minds of young Women' (Fielding 1749: A 2r). Mrs Teachum, the governess of the title, viewed fairy tales with some alarm and cautioned that 'Giants, Magic, Fairies, and all sorts of Supernatural

Assistances in a Story, are only introduced to amuse and divert ... that they are figures of a sort' (Fielding 1749: 68).

England's fairies had long been securely harnessed to moral education, as the full title of Henry Brooke's 1750 collection indicated: they contained 'many useful Lessons [and] Moral Sentiments' (cited in Kamenetsky 1992: 222). And although the word 'moral' was absent from its title, *Robin Goodfellow, a Fairy Tale* (1770) did the same.

In this period a new visual code was in the process of being established in Europe, in part codified by Lavater's study of physiognomy. Lavater aimed to demonstrate that character could be read from countenance, and in children's literature that perception translated into an equation of virtue with beauty. One stylistic consequence was that the authors of fairy tales for girls increasingly described the facial appearance of characters in their books.

Mme Leprince de Beaumont, whose arrival in England coincided with an acceleration in the commercial development of books for children, elevated tales about fairies and fairy tales to religious company in her *Magasin des Enfants* (1756). 'La Belle et la Bête' (70–102) appeared between the stories of Adam and Eve, and Noah. Like her predecessor, Sarah Fielding, she employed the device of a frame tale, in this case conversations between pupils and a governess. Eleanor (or Ellenor) Fenn, the author of *The Fairy Spectator* (1789), in the guise of Mrs Teachwell, used fairies for equally high moral ends. By the late eighteenth century, primers began to include fairy tales as reading exercises for children, and children's magazines mixed fairy tales into a pot-pourri of rhymes, stories, and anecdotes (MacDonald 1982: 45, 110). Even the thoroughly amoral tales of *The Thousand and One Nights* were transformed by the earnest efforts of English educators into books with titles like the Reverend Mr J. Cooper's (Richard Johnson) *Oriental Moralist or The Beauties of the Arabian Nights Entertainments* (1790). The stories themselves, quite different from the unobtrusive, almost logical metamorphoses of Western convention, re-stocked the European inventory of the fantastic with new magic objects, enchanted places and a dazzling array of startling transformations (Jan 1974: 35). In *The Enchanted Mirror, a Moorish Romance* (1814), for example, the properties of traditional magic mirrors were adapted to the requirements of moral improvement, so that this one returned viewers' gazes with images of how they *were* rather than how they appeared (cited in Pickering 1993: 188), a further indication of the formative power of physiognomic thought on literature.

Despite the scoffing dismissal of fairy tales by official pedagogy in the eighteenth century – the Edgeworths commented in 1798 that they did not 'allude to fairy tales, for we apprehend these are not now much read' (cited in Opie and Opie 1974: 25) – fairy tales continued to grow in popularity (Pickering 1993: 187). Even Sarah Trimmer, who would later turn against fairy tales, acknowledged in *The Guardian of Education* that she had enjoyed them as a child.

The most frequently published individual fairy tale, 'Cinderella', provided a satisfying rags-to-riches plot that answered a longing felt in many segments of society: for example, among the newly literate but still poor buyers of chapbooks, as well as among the middle-class children who aspired to inclusion in more elevated social classes. The 'Cinderella' paradigm was as evident in *Goody Two-Shoes* (1765) as it was in *Primrose Prettyface*, but the tale contained within itself not only the hopeful promise of social elevation, but also disturbing possibilities for frightening social inversion. The French Revolution of 1789 and the bloody executions of the 1790s aroused suspicion about 'Cinderella' plots, which were believed to undermine social and political stability and evoked violent reaction. Sarah

Trimmer now criticised fairy tales, and especially ‘Cinderella’, whom she ‘accused of causing ... the worst human emotions to arise in the child’ and conservative educators excised first Cinderella plots and then fairy tales themselves from books of moral improvement. One result was that post-1820 editions of *The Governess* appeared shorn of their fairy-tale interludes.

These attacks on fairy tales echo those that occurred a hundred years before, but a telling distinction separated criticisms of fantasy for children at the beginning and at the end of the eighteenth century. John Locke had warned against elves, gnomes and goblins (in tales about fairies), but by the end of the century it was the narrators that came under attack, as in Mrs Trimmer’s 1803 essay, ‘Mother Goose’s Fairy Tales’ in *The Guardian of Education*.

Enlightenment pedagogical principles left little room for imaginative constructs (Steinlein 1987: 115) and led to the ‘censorship of everything fanciful’, yet many authors recognised that imaginative tales induced a love of reading in children, and that, furthermore ‘much good advice and information can be conveyed in a Fable and a Fairy Tale’ (dedication of *Oriental Tales* (1802) cited in Jackson 1989: 195–6).

All of the practices and controversies that centred on fairy tales marked the genre as it appeared in nineteenth-century American and English children’s literature. For instance, the question of the educational value of fairy tales versus their putatively damaging consequences met head on in the Peter Parley–Felix Summerly debate. Samuel Griswold Goodrich’s *Peter Parley* books (1827 *et seq.*) grew directly out of eighteenth-century utilitarian principles and were relentlessly useful in their informational didacticism. Sir Henry Cole, under the pen name of Felix Summerly, opposed Goodrich’s objections with the playful fantasy of stories in his *Home Treasury* (1843–5) (Darton 1983: 219–51). This debate was never resolved, and both trains of thought survived into the twentieth century.

The maternity that had been imputed to fairy tales by both French and German theoreticians, if one may dignify the rank sexism that passed for reasonable fact with that word, lived on in the titles of fairy tales for children. Perrault’s tales were attributed to Mother Goose and Mme d’Aulnoy’s to Queen Mab or Mother Bunch, and along the way other fictive female relatives took their place among the authors of fairy tales: Aunt Friendly, Aunt Louisa and Mme de Chatalain.

It can be argued that national identity played a far smaller role in the English project of valorising fairy tales than in Germany and in other countries that were either emerging from domination by foreign governments, like Finland and Norway, or amalgamating a national state from disparate units, like Italy and Germany (cf. Schacker 2003). It was, rather, the dynamics of the publishing trade that played a large part in determining the contents of the scores of fairy-tale collections that English booksellers purveyed to the English child.

Chapbooks remained a prominent feature of nineteenth-century fairy tales for English children. Ross’s Juvenile Library delivered small twopenny 48-page books like *Fairy Tales of Past Times from Mother Goose* (1814–15) into young hands. The wolf became ‘Gaffer Wolf’; Blue Beard’s wife used part of the estate she inherited on the death of her wifecidal husband to marry her sister to a young gentleman and to buy military commissions for her brothers.

Moralisation continued to mark nineteenth-century fairy tales, but it was more limited than it had been in the eighteenth century. For example, Cruikshank used ‘Cinderella’ as an anti-drink platform and Charles Dickens credited fairy tales with inculcating ‘forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force’ (cited in Townsend 1974: 92).

Translations of other national fairy-tale collections poured into England, enriching its store of available fairy material. In 1849 *The Fairy Tales of All Nations* entered England from a German collection that was itself based on French publications; before that, in 1823, Edward Taylor had imported German fairy-tale narrative when he translated and published the first of two volumes of the Grimms' tales as *German Popular Stories*. Illustrated by Cruikshank and provided with scholarly notes, its lively stories enchanted children, while the Grimms' scholarly reputation overcame the objections of doubting parents. In 1848 Taylor also translated Giambattista Basile's Neapolitan *Pentamerone* (1634–6), which like *German Popular Stories*, was illustrated by Cruikshank. He edited both the German and the Italian fairy tales heavily to remove objectionable features, such as some violent episodes in the case of Grimm and sexual references in the case of Basile.

Hans Christian Andersen's Danish tales entered the British tradition in 1846 and soon gathered a large and enthusiastic following. Norse material arrived in 1857 when the *Heroes of Asgard* was printed, and Peter Christian Asbjornsen and Jørgen Moe's enchanting Norwegian fairy tales were first translated in 1859 as *East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon*. There had also been imports from other parts of the British Isles, like Crofton Cooker's Irish fairy tales (1825–8) and various collections of Scottish tales.

Each of the translations listed above represented a form of republication, but true republication began in earnest with renamed and reprinted collections of stories and fairy tales containing material taken from English-language books already published in England. Benjamin Tabart's *Popular Tales* (1804 *et seq.*) was one such early republication, and the genre flourished increasingly as the century wore on. *The Fairy Tales of All Nations* (1849) reappeared as *The Doyle Fairy Book* (1890), while Mrs D. M. Craik's *Fairy Book* (1863) retold stories from Perrault, d'Aulnoy and Grimm.

When Andrew Lang's 'colour' Fairy Books appeared between 1889 and 1910, they codified fairy-tale narrative in the English language. The formative importance of Lang's books for the English can hardly be overestimated, for they became a mother lode for many twentieth-century 'authors' of fairy tales for children. Lang himself firmly believed that fairy tales represented an 'uncontaminated record of our cultural infancy' (cited in Rose 1984: 9), and all twelve of his Fairy volumes – Blue, Brown, Crimson, Green, Grey, Lilac, Olive, Orange, Pink, Red, Violet and Yellow – were 'intended for children', whom he hoped would like 'the old stories that have pleased so many generations' (Lang *c.* 1889: Preface).

In the decade in which Lang began producing his Fairy Books, Joseph Jacobs issued *English Fairy Tales* (1890) and *More English Fairy Tales* (1894), which were followed by *Celtic Fairy Tales* (1892, 1894) and *Indian Fairy Tales* (1892). Ultimately, however, Lang's fairy tales, with their more accessible prose style, carried the day.

The nineteenth century had also seen a return to tales about fairies. John Ruskin can be said to have initiated the movement with his extraordinary fantasy, *The King of the Golden River* (1851). The story's three protagonists – Hans, Schwartz and Gluck – suggest the book's Germanic imaginative ancestry, while its elaborate plot and magical devices link it to French tales about fairies that flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), another quasi-fairy tale, united adventure tale qualities to fairyland characteristics and 'seems like a prospectus for future generations of children's fiction' (Carpenter 1985: 38). The alternative reality it delineated came alive in George MacDonald's classic tales about slightly allegorised fairy-tale-like worlds in *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1882). With these books, nineteenth-century tales about fairies had trans-

formed themselves into forms that would serve as models for nineteenth- and twentieth-century high fantasy.

In the twentieth century, fairy tales in Britain's children's literature derived largely from the canon established in the nineteenth century. Modern fairy tales of that pattern can be said to have originated with 'Uncle David's Nonsensical Story' in Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* (1839) (Townsend 1974: 93).

The USA

America's English-language children's books were almost exclusively of English parentage until about 1850, yet fairy books remained conspicuously absent from children's reading, because American intellectuals, and especially the teachers among them, rejected their magic as contradictory to the enlightened rationalism that underlay and guided American political thought. Consequently, they equated tales about fairies and fairy tales with Old World superstition, and held their kings and queens to be antithetical to the concepts of equality on which the new country had been founded. Hence, Perrault's fairy tales remained unavailable in any American printing until Peter Edes' Haverhill edition of 1794, two full generations after their introduction into England.

Italy, Spain, Portugal

In Italy, Straparola's magic tales were published from 1551 throughout the sixteenth century and into the early seventeenth. Translated into French and published there at least sixteen times, they can be understood as France's first fairy tales, particularly since Charles Perrault, Mme d'Aulnoy and Mme de Murat all borrowed heavily from 'Straprole'. Straparola's collection was also translated into Spanish, but had a far briefer publishing history there (Bottigheimer 2002: 123).

Basile's tales were published throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Naples and several times in the eighteenth century in Bologna. Every printing of fictional narrative provided material for the Italian chapbook trade, and many of Basile's tales found their way into the cheap press and thence to the semi-literate and illiterate population, where they reinforced existing oral tradition and created new narrative lines. Basile's 'Sun, Moon, and Talia', 'Gatta Cenerentola', and 'Petrosinella' tales underlay Perrault's 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Cinderella' and Charlotte de la Force's 'Persinette' ('Rapunzel') stories, but Basile's own sources have not yet been conclusively identified.

In Spain and Portugal, religious regulation and a rigid system of imprimatur proscribed publication of tales of magic from the early seventeenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth century, as the history of Straparola's magic tales clearly demonstrates (Senn 1993).

Readership

From the eighteenth century onward, frontispiece illustrations always included both boys and girls listening raptly to a woman telling, or sometimes reading, fairy tales, or to a man who was usually shown reading aloud. As the frontispiece was one of the first visible parts of a bound or an unbound book, it advertised itself as suitable for both boys and girls. In fact, dual-language school text editions of Perrault's tales are more often marked by boys' names as owners, English-language ones by girls. Even in the subscription list of Thomas Boreman's

History of Cajanus (1742), which dealt with a male giant, a breed more generally associated with boys' interests (Wardetzky 1993), girls nonetheless outnumbered boys by a slight margin. In France Mme L'Héritier remembered that fairy tales and tales about fairies were for girls, fables for boys (cited in Warner 1991: 13). Shortly thereafter, Richard Steele, as Isaac Bickerstaff, described the reading habits of his godson and his sister. The boy, he said, read fables, and Betty, his sister, read fairy tales (*Tatler* 95, cited in MacDonald 1982: 106). England's Sarah Fielding confirmed Mme L'Héritier's observation when she produced *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744), a character with whom boys and young men could easily identify, 'a moral Romance' (A2r) without a single reference to faerie; in *The Governess*, however, she embedded 'Fable and Moral,' but her 'fable' included stories of fairy magic.

The pattern of gender-specific readership was broken with the mixed content of *Grimms' Tales*. Along with traditional fairy tales of magic and reversal of fortune that culminated in a wedding, the Grimms included religious tales, nonsense tales, folk tales, aetiologies, moral tales, burlesques and animal tales. In expanding the 'fairy-tale' canon to embrace many forms of the brief narrative (*Märchen*), the Grimms successfully incorporated both boys and girls into their readership. When, in the twentieth century, the genre in effect contracted to a small corpus of girl-tales like 'Cinderella,' 'Sleeping Beauty,' 'Red Riding Hood,' and 'Beauty and the Beast', readership boundaries similarly contracted to a primarily female audience.

It is worth noting the international spread of European fairy tales in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The entry of the Grimms' tales into China around 1900 was eased by the writing system shared by Chinese and Japanese, into whose language part of the collection had been translated in the 1860s by Lafcadio Hearn. Other Grimms' tales penetrated oral cultures in some of Germany's African colonies. Perrault's tales appear to have made their way into the elementary school curricula of France's Asian and African colonial empire and thence into local tradition. The presence of some fairy tales of European origin in India may be explained by similar mechanisms.

Folk tales

The definition of folk tales is more fluid than that of fairy tales and tales about fairies. The term 'folk tale' normally embraces a multitude of minor genres, like nonsense tales, aetiologies, jests, burlesques, animal tales and never-ending tales, but there is good reason to incorporate a discussion of chapbook romances within a consideration of folk tales in children's literature. *Guy of Warwick*, *Valentine and Orson* and *Bevis of Southampton* typify medieval romances that were borne by printing presses into the modern world and carried further on the backs of chapmen to new readers, both young and old. In their medieval original forms, their dragons, giants, kings, queens, wicked mothers and faithful fairies provided a cast of characters that fit into the schema of the modern fairy tale, but their sheer length distinguished them from the modern fairy tale. When romances were refashioned for chapbook distribution, they were shortened drastically, although they kept their familiar panoply of royalty, giants and dragons. Romances required dragons, as the adventure-filled *Seven Champions of Christendom* indicates. Newly assembled in 1596–7, it included the obligatory dragon, but did without heroic romantic involvement, as befitted its cast of seven national saints as protagonists. *Fortunatus*, another medieval romance, included Oriental magic in the form of a bottomless purse of gold, and a hat that could cause him to be transported anywhere in the world. Thus romances were ready-made for chapbook wear.

Another set of tales, *Jack and the Giants*, *Tom Hickathrift*, *Robin Hood* and *Tom Thumb*, embody and thematise the confrontation of a small, weak, poor but witty hero against a large, strong, rich but stupid real or metaphorical giant. The early eighteenth-century chapbook *Jack*, 'brisk and of a level wit', could irreverently best a clergyman as well as cunningly defeat a giant. He used the common tools of a Cornish miner – horn, shovel, and pickaxe – to dig a pit and decoy the giant Cormilan into it, and after killing him he gained the giant's treasure. Amazing adventures follow hard upon one another – Jack killed several more giants, released maidens from captivity, succoured a virtuous prince and gained magical objects, including a coat that conferred invisibility, a cap that furnished knowledge, a sword that split whatever it struck, and seven-league boots. With these, Jack overcame the Devil himself and was made a knight of the Round Table. A second part recounts more encounters with English giants, all of whom Jack gorily vanquished, their heads sent to King Arthur as announcement and proof of his valour. Jack himself ended his days married to a duke's daughter and rewarded 'with a very plentiful Estate' where they 'lived the Residue of their Days in great Joy and Happiness' (Opie and Opie 1974: 51–65).

Jack, Robin and the two Toms are true folk heroes who rise from penury to esteem, and whose stories bear many close resemblances to fairy tales. Each of these tales became 'folk tales' by virtue of their wide chapbook circulation among the 'folk'. That 'folk' also included literary worthies, such as Samuel Johnson (1696–1772), Henry Fielding (1701–54), William Cowper (1731–1800) and James Boswell (1740–95), who all record chapbooks and their adventurous stories as beloved, even inspiring, childhood reading.

The term 'folk tale' suggests an intimate relationship between tale and folk; nineteenth-century scholars therefore defined all minor genres that comprised folk tales as belonging peculiarly to unlettered country dwellers. Either as an example of cultural infancy or as an artefact of an early stage of individual maturation, fairy and folk tales' association with children remained unchallenged until J. R. R. Tolkien disputed the belief that children understood fairy tales better than adults do (Tolkien 1964: 31–62). Unlike fairy tales, nearly all folk tales enjoy an ancient literary lineage. Some folk tales can be documented in the Indian *Panchatantra* or in the Bible. Many animal tales derive from classic collections like *Aesop's Tales*, and many burlesques and jokes circulated orally and are documented in the text or in the margins of medieval literature.

Children must have overheard folk tales when they were told in small groups or were alluded to in theatrical productions, and they also had formalised contact with them when Latin translations of *Aesop's Tales* were adapted as classics by monastic schools and used as textbooks. *Aesop's Tales* continued to serve this function well into the early modern period, as attested by the number of translators and editors under whose names they appeared: John Henryson, John Brinsley, Roger L'Estrange, Nathaniel Crouch, John Locke, Bernard Mandeville, Charles Hoole, Samuel Croxall, Samuel Richardson, Robert Dodsley, John Newbery (possibly the work of John Oakman) and 'Phaedrus'. Animal tales also circulated as part of court literature from the Carolingian period into the high middle ages, when they flowered in Reynard cycles in England, Germany and France. From the thirteenth century onward, preachers integrated Aesopic fables into sermons. It is reasonable to assume that children came into contact with fables in both of these milieus, even though court and church literary traditions would have affected different segments of the population. In the sixteenth century Steinhöwel, Luther, Erasmus and Waldis all prepared fable collections whose contents eventually found their way into school readers, and in the seventeenth century La Fontaine's humorous and psychologically subtle reworking of

Aesopic material became foundational for European children's literature; German writers – like Friedrich von Hagedorn, Johann Gleim, Johann Gottfried Herder and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing – embraced the genre enthusiastically in the eighteenth century, and produced not only collections of tales but also theory about them. Aesopic material, unlike fairy-tale magic, was approved for general use in both Catholic and Protestant countries, and hence it joined Bible stories as a narrative corpus shared in common by children all over Europe.

By the eighteenth century, the only folk-tale genre to have survived for children's reading was the fable, and it had done so in large part because its brief texts with miniaturised plots could be easily edited to produce morals acceptable within the reigning social code: a single fable might – and did – have different morals attached to it at different times, in different places, and for different readerships.

Folk tales, as a whole, as opposed to the sub-genre of fables, flowered as a component of children's literature in the nineteenth century. The chief source was *Grimms' Tales*, the majority of whose tales derived from folk-tale genres. 'Clever Gretel', a good example, is a cook who helps herself so generously to the dinner she is preparing for her master and his guest that not enough remains for their meal. By an ingenious ruse she scares off the guest and simultaneously blames him for the missing chicken. Generations of little girls have delighted in her clever cover-up, and their brothers have similarly enjoyed the antics of 'Brother Jolly', who sinfully transgresses one prohibition after another only to be rewarded with free entry into heaven. The folk-tale component of fairy-tale collections expanded with the publication of Ludwig Bechstein's *Deutsches Märchenbuch* (1845 *et seq.*), which incorporated many tales from the *Panchatantra*, like 'The Man and the Serpent' (no. 57).

By the end of the nineteenth century many people believed so unquestioningly in the appropriateness of folk tales for children that new stories were collected or composed directly for them. Some of the Uncle Remus tales by Joel Chandler Harris fit this paradigm. As animal tales whose plots detail the eternal enmity and repeated encounters between Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox, the Uncle Remus stories bear a close resemblance to the tales of the medieval Reynard cycle that form the basis of so many of the animal tales in *Grimms' Tales*.

A distinctly American folk-tale cycle was composed by the American poet Carl Sandburg in his three volumes of Rootabaga stories (1922, 1923 and 1930). They begin with railroads and continue with a nonsense cast of characters and actions that express midwestern humour, at once gentle and outlandish. Here, as in other examples of folk tales in children's literature, generic boundaries remain fluid.

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20 Playground rhymes and the oral tradition

Iona Opie

The traditional verbal lore available to children up to the age of about eleven includes nursery rhymes, nonsense and satirical verse, riddles, spooky narratives, verses to chant at particular times of the year, trickery and repartee, formulas with which to regulate relationships, counting-out rhymes and the songs and dialogues that accompany various kinds of games.

A child's first experience of the charms of tradition is in the form of a lullaby (the word means 'lull to bye-byes', that is, to sleep). Lullabies must be the most instinctive music in the world; a woman with a child in her arms automatically rocks it and sings. Even today, the song may be only a repetition of meaningless hushing syllables sung to a spontaneous tune, but more often than not a young mother will sing a lullaby handed down in her own family, possibly for generations. The tune is more important than the words, for if the tune is soothing, the infant cannot know whether it is being bribed into quietness ('Dinna mak' a din,/An' ye'll get a cakie/When the baker comes in') or threatened ('Baby, baby, naughty baby/Hush you squalling thing, I say'). Nor can it be frightened by the storyline of the best known of all lullabies, 'Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree top,/When the wind blows the cradle will rock,/When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,/Down will come baby, cradle and all.'

Lullabies come under the heading of nursery rhymes, that comprehensive collection of songs and verses which assist grown-ups in pacifying and entertaining children from birth to the age of about five. Known as Mother Goose rhymes in the eighteenth century after the influential nursery rhyme booklet *Mother Goose's Melody* (c. 1765), probably compiled by Oliver Goldsmith, they have retained the appellation in the USA. In England the term 'nursery rhymes' began to be used soon after the turn of the century, promoted by Ann and Jane Taylor's immensely successful *Rhymes for the Nursery* (1806), and James Kendrew of York's pirated edition of 1812, which was entitled *Nursery Rhymes, for the Amusement of Children*. The earliest record of the term having entered the language is in *The British Review*, August 1815, when the reviewer of Wordsworth's *The Excursion* took to task those who were currently condemning his poems as being 'beneath the dignity of what they call poetry, and as worthy only of being celebrated in nursery-rhymes'.

The huge diversity of the nursery rhyme corpus (there are 800 rhymes in *The Oxford Nursery Rhyme Book* (Opie and Opie 1955)) includes verses suited to every practical purpose as well as songs to take the imagination soaring. There are baby games to play with the child's features, fingers and toes, dandling rhymes and knee rides; and occasional rhymes to chant when it is raining or snowing, or when a ladybird or snail is encountered. Alphabet and number rhymes, riddles, tongue twisters, rhymed proverbs and rhymes of advice are for people approaching school age. However, the lines which have caused

nursery rhyme books to be called ‘poets’ primers’ are from evocative, magical songs like ‘How Far Is It to Babylon?’, ‘I Have Four Sisters beyond the Sea’, and ‘Tom, He Was a Piper’s Son’, with its refrain of ‘Over the Hills and Far Away’. These, and the long ballad-like songs such as ‘A Fox Jumped Up One Winter’s Night’, are for aesthetic pleasure alone, and lucky is the family who has at least one performer who can say or sing some of them from beginning to end.

Most people, even those who disclaim any repertoire, will find that they know about twelve nursery rhymes, which are in such common use that they seem to be ‘in the air’ and no one can remember how they first came to know them. These are the rhymes most illustrated in ephemeral children’s books, and used to decorate babies’ toys and children’s china. Typically, they are narratives which pack a whole drama into four or six lines, and describe characters which have entered the English language: everyone understands an allusion to the Grand Old Duke of York’s march or Mother Hubbard’s cupboard. They include ‘Hey Diddle Diddle, the Cat and the Fiddle’, ‘Hickory, Dickory, Dock’ (with its limerick-like structure), and a group of histories, each beginning Little Somebody-or-other and each containing six dactylic lines, which may have originated in a seventeenth-century craze similar to the later limerick craze. The best known of these are ‘Little Miss Muffet’, ‘Little Polly Flinders’, and ‘Little Jack Horner’, but other, less skilful attempts have survived, such as ‘Little Poll Parrot’ and ‘Little General Monk’ (General Monk was a famous Cromwellian soldier who died in 1669).

Two of the chief characteristics of nursery rhymes are their brevity and strongly marked rhythm; in fact these may be said to be necessary qualifications for a verse to enter the nursery rhyme canon, since they ensure memorability. In a desperate need to pacify or divert a squalling infant, an adult needs to recall instantly the rhyme that will do the trick.

Another effect of the emphatic syllables is to implant the rhythms of the English language in minds too young to understand all the words (and some of the words are distinctly archaic). Rhymes with trochaic lines, like ‘Baa, baa, black sheep’ and ‘Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall’, are the simplest for two-year-olds to master, and are favourites for reciting to admiring grandparents.

The overwhelming majority of nursery rhymes were not in the first place composed for children. They are for the most part fragments of songs and ballads originally intended for adult delectation. For instance, the ballad of the ‘Moste Strange weddinge of the ffrogge and the mowse’ was registered at Stationers’ Hall in 1580, and went through various transmogrifications before, in the early nineteenth century, Grimaldi made famous the version with the refrain ‘Rowley, powley, gammon and spinach’ which is still popular today. ‘Lavender’s Blue’ and ‘One Misty Moisty Morning’ were, in the second half of the seventeenth century, black-letter ballads written by anonymous literary hacks.

Anonymity is, by definition, a requirement of traditional verse, which is handed down by word of mouth without thought of authorship. The few authors of nursery rhymes whose names are known are never credited with their productions. Who cares to know that Sir Charles Sedley wrote ‘There Was a Little Man, And He Woo’ed a Little Maid’ (1764), and Septimus Winner ‘Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?’ (1864); or, among the few compositions written for children, that Jane Taylor wrote ‘Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star’ (1806) and Sarah Josepha Hale ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb’ (1830)? ‘Wee Willie Winkie’ was the first verse of a poem about a ‘waukrife laddie that winna fall asleep’, written by William Miller, published in 1841, and immediately commandeered for inclusion in nursery rhyme books, stripped of its Scotticisms and unacknowledged.

A large number of nursery rhymes have not been found recorded before the nineteenth century, when folklore of every kind began to be taken seriously and investigated, but haphazard references from the Middle Ages onwards confirm the existence of some of them. A phrase of 'Infir Taris' is recorded about 1450; 'White Bird Featherless' appears (in Latin) in the tenth century; the germ of 'Two Legs Sat on Three Legs' may be seen in the works of Bede. Agricola (b. 1492) learnt the German version of 'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John' from his parents. The whole of 'I Have a Young Sister Far beyond the Sea' had been set down by 1450. A French version of 'Thirty Days Hath September' belongs to the thirteenth century. A game of 'falling bridges', on the lines of 'London Bridge', seems to have been known to Meister Altswert in the late fourteenth century.

References in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to verses now known in the nursery exist in some number. Almost certainly one in nine of the rhymes were known by the mid-seventeenth century. At least a quarter and very likely over half the rhymes are more than 200 years old. However, before the emergence of nursery rhyme literature in the eighteenth century, the glimpses we get of the existence of children's lore are by the way; a clergyman (1671), wishing to illustrate a theological point, quotes 'A Apple Pie'; an ageing lexicographer (1611), attempting to define the Italian word *abomba*, recalls part of a rhyme from his childhood, 'as we use to say Home againe home againe market is done'; a pamphleteer (1606), reporting a murder trial, reveals that children regularly repeated a Cock a doodle doo couplet; and a playwright (c. 1559) introducing a clown singing old songs ('Tom a lin' among them) makes him admit they were learnt from his fond mother 'As I war wont in her lappe to sit'.

It is the difficulty of dating the nursery rhymes precisely, and their anonymity, that has made them so suitable for ingenious historical 'interpretations'. As early as 1708 Dr William King was speculating light-heartedly on the identity of Old King Cole in his satirical *Useful Transactions in Philosophy*. Sixty years later the jesting editor of *Mother Goose's Melody* gave birth to a new set of propositions, still sometimes taken seriously (for instance, that the old woman tossed in a blanket was composed in derision of Henry V when, during the Hundred Years War, he conceived new designs against the French).

The game of fitting historical events to the rhymes was especially popular in the twentieth century, and Katherine Elwes Thomas's *The Real Personages of Mother Goose*, published in 1930, provided shadow personalities for most of the best-known rhyme characters (best known in the present day, be it noted, but not likely to have been known at the time of their supposed historical origin): thus Bopeep became Mary, Queen of Scots; Jack Sprat, Charles I; Old Mother Hubbard, Cardinal Wolsey; Tommy Tucker, also Cardinal Wolsey, and so on. Amusing and often detailed 'solutions' to the rhymes continue to be invented, usually in universities (for example, the equation of Humpty Dumpty with Dr Chillingworth's tortoise-like siege machines of the ancient Roman type, tried out during the siege of Gloucester in 1643, a theory Professor David Daube put forward in *The Oxford Magazine* of 16 February 1956). This is ingenuity for ingenuity's sake; but the inventor must also feel some satisfaction if, as with the current craze for horrific 'urban legends', he can watch his story spreading to a public gullible enough to repeat it in earnest.

Like other oral traditions, nursery rhymes have also been disseminated in print. Once it was allowed that books for children should contain entertainment as well as instruction, nursery songs were naturally considered candidates for inclusion. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the reign of Queen Anne, appeared a primer, *A Little Book for Little Children*, by T. W. (c. 1712), which contained 'A Was an Archer' and 'I Saw a Peacock

with a Fiery Tail', as well as three well-known riddle verses. The first considerable nursery rhyme book was *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, published in two volumes by M. Cooper 'According to Act of Parliament', probably in 1744. Only 'Voll. II' survives, in a unique copy in the British Library. Measuring only $3 \times 1\frac{3}{4}$ inches, it nevertheless contains thirty-nine rhymes which (with three exceptions) are as familiar to the child of today as they were to the young Boswells and Cowpers and Gibbons, its readers at the time: 'There was a little Man, And he had a little Gun', 'Who did kill Cock Robbin?', 'Bah, Bah, a black sheep', 'Hickere, Dickere Dock'. Nearly every rhyme is illustrated with a pleasant and appropriate little woodcut. The far-sighted publisher was Mary Cooper, whose imprint also appears on works by Gray, Fielding and Pope.

The publication of illustrated nursery rhyme books has continued unabated until the present day, when superb Mother Goose picture books are a mainstay of the children's books market and it seems to be the ambition of every established illustrator to 'do a Mother Goose'. There has also been a constant flow backwards and forwards between oral tradition and literature. Consider only two examples: Lewis Carroll's use of nursery rhymes in the *Alice* books, and Robert Burns's use of traditional songs as a basis for his own lyrics. Burns's song 'My love, she's but a Lassie yet' was written for the third part of Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* (1790); but a verse of it ('We're all dry with drinking on't') had already appeared, most unsuitably, nearly fifty years before in *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*.

When children go to school they encounter a quite different oral tradition. It might be said that while nursery rhymes echo the voice of the adult, being adult approved and adult transmitted, school rhymes echo the voice of children out on their own in a potentially unfriendly world. The rhymes pass with lightning speed from one child to another, and have a quite different character. They have a different cadence, and a difference purpose, which is often mockery. Schoolchildren will chant: 'Good King Wenceslas/Knocked a bobby [policeman] senseless/Right in the middle of Marks and Spencer's [a British chain of shops]', and: 'Julius Caesar the Roman geezer/Squashed his wife in a lemon squeezer'. They parody the rhymes their parents taught them at home:

Mary had a little lamb
She also had a bear;
I've often seen her little lamb
But I've never seen her 'bear'.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Eating black bananas.
Where do you think he put the skins?
Down his best pyjamas.

Their mockery includes rhymes which can be recited *sotto voce* to make fun of a teacher. The most popular is one which was already known in 1797, when it appeared in the song book *Infant Amusements*:

Mr — is a very good man,
He tries to teach us all he can,
Reading, writing, arithmetic,
And he doesn't forget to use the stick.

When he does he makes us dance
 Out of England into France,
 Out of France into Spain,
 Over the hills and back again.

Schoolchildren have preserved the ancient art of riddling in its true form (to be found, for instance, in the predominantly eighth-century riddles in the *Exeter Book*), in which some creature or object is described in an intentionally obscure manner. Characteristically, children continue to take delight in amusements once enjoyed, and now discarded, by adults. For instance, in the mid-1950s a thirteen-year-old boy from Knighton, in Radnorshire, wrote down a riddle, 'What goes up a tree with its head turned downwards? A nail in your boot', which was printed in the adult-oriented *Booke of Meery Riddles*, 1629: 'What is it that goes to the water on the head? It is a horse-shoe naile.' Another riddle in the same work, 'What is that: goeth through the wood, and leaveth on every bush a rag? It is snow', was known to a fifteen-year-old girl in Kirkcaldy in 1952, though with the answer 'A sheep':

Round the rocks
 And round the rocks
 The ragged rascal ran,
 And every bush he came to,
 He left his rags and ran.

Usually, however, what the present-day schoolchild means by 'a riddle' is really a conundrum, whose wit depends on a pun. Many conundrums still popular today have been found in literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, a typical example being 'What is the difference between a warder and a jeweller? One watches cells and the other sells watches.'

Whereas the playground narratives of the mid-twentieth century made fun of death and decay, children today apparently prefer to retell the explicitly sexual stories they learn from their older brothers. On certain occasions at home, however, and especially at Hallowe'en, they like to frighten each other with spooky tales, told softly, in which the tension builds up until the last word is suddenly and frighteningly shouted. The best-known such tale is undoubtedly,

In the dark, dark wood, there was a dark, dark house,
 And in that dark, dark house, there was a dark, dark room,
 And in that dark, dark room, there was a dark, dark cupboard,
 And in that dark, dark cupboard, there was a dark, dark shelf,
 And in that dark, dark shelf, there was a dark, dark box,
 And in that dark, dark box, there was a GHOST!

In the remoter parts of Britain children mark the seasons by going round to their neighbours and chanting traditional verses, in expectation of some small reward in money or kind. For instance, on Exmoor and in the Bredon Hills, at least until the 1950s, the custom of Lent Crocking was still carried out at Shrovetide. Children with soot-blackened faces went round the farmhouses, and after singing, 'Tippety, tippety tin, Give me a pancake and I will come in. Tippety, tippety toe, Give me a pancake and I will go', they crept in – if the door was left open – threw a load of broken crocks on the floor and tried

to escape unseen. If the householders caught them they had their faces further blackened with soot, were given a pancake and allowed to go.

It is difficult to know how many of the little songs asking for a gift in exchange for seasonal good wishes are still extant. Perhaps those collected in the 1950s as material for *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (Opie and Opie 1959) have disappeared in response to a new social climate in which children have more money at their disposal, and are more protected and escorted. Of the various celebrations conducted by children on their own initiative, at Christmas and New Year, on St Valentine's Day and May Day, at All Souls and in the weeks before Guy Fawkes Day, the most likely to have survived is probably May Day (especially in Manchester), when little groups of girls chose a queen, visited their neighbours with the maypole they had decorated, and sang a song such as:

Around this merry maypole
 And through the livelong day
 For gentle — —
 Is crowned the Queen of May.
 With hearts and voices ringing
 We merrily dance today,
 For gentle — —
 Is crowned the Queen of May.

The Hallowe'en custom 'Trick or Treat', which flourishes in the USA as an occasion for children to dress up in fancy dress and go round the neighbourhood asking for sweets and other goodies (the implied threat seldom if ever being carried out) has been reimported to Britain. It is a development of a darker Celtic belief that evil spirits were abroad on the eve of All Saints' Day and that 'guising' (disguising) oneself was a way of avoiding danger. Some of the more jocular rhymes celebrating the night linger on in Scotland:

This is the nicht o' Hallowe'en
 When the witches can be seen,
 Some are black and some are green,
 And some the colour o' a turkey bean.

Human society has a tendency to split into antagonistic groups, and children are no exception. Other schools and localities, members of other religions or political parties, and supporters of other football teams, are seen as peculiar, unpleasantly different and possibly threatening. The rhymes children shout at these outsiders are no less irritating for being traditional, and seem designed to lead to a skirmish. Those attending Forfar Academy used, in the 1950s, to be harassed by: 'Academy kites, ye're no very nice,/Ye bake yer bannocks wi' cats and mice.' Recognisably the same formula had been used, a hundred years before (as M. A. Denham reported in *Folk-lore of the Northern Counties* (1858)) to denigrate the inhabitants of a Northumberland village:

The Spittal wives are no' very nice,
 They bake their bread wi' bugs and lice:
 And after that they skin the cat,
 And put it into their kail-pat,
 That makes their broo' baith thick and fat.

Even artificial groups created in schools, as for instance teams denominated the Red and the Blue, raise a partisan spirit, and enthusiastic supporters yell the following adjustable encouragement:

Red, red, the bonnie red,
The red that should be worn;
Blue, blue, the dirty blue,
The blue that should be torn.

The armoury of the schoolchild is filled with verbal weapons of attack and defence which are of importance for survival in the milieu of the playground. They are effective because they have been tested by time (though the children are not aware they are old) and because they are immediately available in situations when there is no time for original thought. Well-established rhymes of an insulting nature can be launched on the spur of the moment against anyone felt to be obnoxious. A person who is 'being silly' is told,

You're daft, you're potty, you're barmy,
You ought to join the army.
You got knocked out
With a brussel sprout,
You're daft, you're potty, you're barmy.

Someone thought to be staring too hard (an intrusion on privacy which is universally resented) is warned, 'Stare, stare, like a bear,/Then you'll know me anywhere'; and the accused one may reply, 'I'm looking at you with your face so blue/And your nose turned up like a kangaroo.' Liars, especially, are vilified ('Liar, liar, your pants are on fire'), and can only defend themselves with solemn oaths ('Wet my finger, wipe it dry, Cut my throat if I tell a lie'). Cowards, cry-babies and sneaks have been ritually taunted with their failings for a hundred years and more: 'Cowardy, cowardy, custard' is part of the title of a pantomime of 1836; 'Cry, baby, cry' is quoted in an essay by Charles Lamb in *The London Magazine*, April 1821; and 'Tell tale tit' appeared in *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, vol. 2, 1744 ('Spit Cat, Spit, Your tongue shall be slit, And all the Dogs in our Town Shall have a bit').

If, in the past, more notice had been taken of the minor delights of childhood, the same sort of antiquity could probably be claimed for many of the catches with which schoolchildren amuse and tease each other. A correspondent to *Notes and Queries* (1905) showed that the lines 'Adam and Eve and Pinch-me/went down to the river to bathe;/Adam and Eve were drowned,/Who do you think was saved?' were already 'a schoolboy's catch for the innocent new boy' in 1855. The trick dialogue beginning 'I went up one pair of stairs' and ending 'I saw a monkey', with the dupe having to answer 'Just like me' after each statement, was recorded by J. O. Halliwell in *The Nursery Rhymes of England* (1844).

Rhyme and assonance give an almost spell-like authority, and this is exploited in the solemn oaths and imprecations children use to regulate their social life. When swearing to the truth they will chant, with hands crossed over heart, 'Cross my heart and hope to die,/Drop down dead if I tell a lie.' They will confirm a bargain by linking little fingers and reciting, 'Touch teeth, touch leather,/Can't have back for ever and ever.' As with swopping, so with giving. Something given must not be asked for again, and the answer to

one who does so is the centuries-old formula (which once more directly consigned the asker to the Devil), ‘Give a thing, take a thing,/Dirty man’s plaything.’ The ability to keep a secret is tested with a rhymed ritual:

Can you keep a secret?
I don’t suppose you can.
You mustn’t laugh or giggle
While I tickle your hand.

And even the quick-fire exclamations needed for claiming something found are often thought to need the reinforcement of rhyme: ‘Finders keepers,/Losers weepers!’

Regulatory rhymes are also needed to organise the playing of games. At the outset of a game of He (or Tig, Tag or Touch, according to locality) the players must form up in a line or circle and the ‘boss’ of the game counts along the line the number of counts prescribed by the stressed syllables of some little rhyme such as the following, which has fifteen counts:

Errie, orrie, round the table,
Eat as much as you are able;
If you’re able eat the table,
Errie, orrie, *out!*

When the word ‘out!’ falls on a person they must stand aside, and the survivor – on whom the count has never fallen – has to take the disliked role of chaser. This procedure is known as ‘dipping’. Sometimes the dipping can be extended by using fists (as in ‘One potato, two potato, three potato, four,/Five potato, six potato, seven potato, More!’ when one fist is put behind the player’s back on ‘More!’) or by counting-round on feet in a similar fashion. However, the most enjoyable verses incorporate an element of choice (which, if the player is quick-witted, can be adjusted to avoid the count landing unfavourably). One such is ‘My Mother and Your Mother’, an old-established favourite in Scotland, where an Edinburgh version was recorded among *The Rymour Club Miscellanea* (vol. 1, 1906–11):

My mother and your mother
Were hanging out the clothes,
My mother gave your mother
A punch on the nose.
What colour was the blood?
Shut your eyes and think.
Blue.
B-L-U-E spells blue, and out you go
With a jolly good clout upon your big nose.

The most interesting of these rhymes are perhaps the mysterious rigmoroles that the children sometimes refer to as Chinese counting. They are gibberish, yet sound as if they might contain some hidden meaning. A widespread favourite in Britain during the 1950s and 1960s went like this:

Eenie, meenie, macca, racca,
 Air, rie, dominacca,
 Chicka pocka, lollipoppa,
 Om pom push.

Yet this construction is in none of the nineteenth-century folklore collections and can only be traced back (except for precursors of the last two lines) to the 1920s. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, indeed, far the best-known counting jingle was:

Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,
 Catch a nigger by his toe,
 If he squeals, let him go,
 Eenie, meenie, minie, mo

whose predecessors in the nineteenth century were composed of completely meaningless syllables. An example is the following from the *Northumberland Glossary* (vol. 2, 1854):

Any, many, mony, my,
 Barcelony, stony, sty,
 Harum, scarum, frownum ack,
 Harricum, barricum, wee, wo, wack.

Other groups of variants exist. Those beginning 'Inty, minty, tippety, fig' have always had a more lively existence in America than in Britain. Those beginning 'Zeenty teenty' were popular in Scotland in the nineteenth century and remain in circulation. The starting point, or inspiration, or source of occasional words in 'Zeenty teenty' and its associates, would appear to be versions of the 'Shepherd's score', so called, the numerals reputedly employed in past times by shepherds counting their sheep, by fishermen assessing their catch, and by old women minding their stitches. In the north of England this score is still known, not only to old folk but to children when dipping; though the scores vary, in a typical example, the first ten numerals are 'An, tan, tethera, methera, pimp, sethera, lethera, hothera, dothera, dick'. However, the relationship between the children's rhymes and the shepherds' scores is not close.

The games of children are accompanied by verses and songs which, later in life, are remembered with affection – and a certain puzzlement, for most of the older songs have been corrupted in their passage through oral tradition into a kind of surrealist poetry. A singing game like 'The Wind Blows High' is losing popularity in its old ring form, as a mating game, since girls, now the custodians of the singing game tradition, are beginning to find it unnatural to play the roles of both sexes. The power of the story is, however, undeniable:

The wind, the wind, the wind blows high,
 The rain comes scattering down the sky,
 He is handsome, she is pretty,
 She is a girl of London City,
 He comes a-courting of one, two, three,
 And may I tell you who it be?

Tommy Johnson says he loves her,
 All the boys are fighting for her.
 He takes her in the garden, he sits her on his knee,
 And says, Pretty girl, will you marry me?
 Pick up a pin and knock at the door,
 And say has *Tommy* been here before?
 She's in, she's in, she's never been out,
 She's in the parlour walking about.
 She comes down as white as snow,
 With a baby in her arms all dressed in silk.

The story of the girl of London City has, however, not been relinquished. The first verse, with its haunting tune, has been turned into a skipping song; it functions very well, with the skipper calling the next player into the rope at 'May I tell you who it be?'

The main custodians of the oral literature of childhood are female. Mothers and grandmothers purvey nursery rhymes; and it is the girls who cherish and pass on the singing games and the multitude of rhymes used in the skipping, ball-bouncing and clapping games. Whether this is because females have a stronger sense of tradition, or because they have a stronger appreciation of rhyme and rhythm, is not clear. Certainly it is generally assumed that they enjoy repetitive words and actions.

When skipping in a long rope ceased being a boys' game and came into the possession of girls, towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was increasingly ornamented with rhymes which regulated the movement of the players through the rope. The rhymes may be custom-made, like 'All in Together, Girls', which brings players into the rope, and sends them out again, one by one; a version of this was in circulation c. 1900, and it is still a favourite today:

All in together, girls,
 Never mind the weather, girls,
 When it is your birthday,
 Please jump in [later, 'jump out']
 January, February, March ...

Or they might foretell the future, like the ever-popular,

Raspberry, strawberry, apple tart,
 Tell me the name of your sweetheart,
 A, B, C ...

which, in the 1890s, was a divination formula for use in a game of battledore and shuttlecock. Or they might be old songs, sung once through for each skipper. The following, in the 1870s simply a set of words for the Sultan Polka, was being used for skipping by the 1890s (Gomme 1898: 203):

Dancing Dolly had no sense,
 For to fiddle [more often 'She bought a fiddle'] for eighteen pence;
 All the tunes that she could play,
 Were 'Sally get out of the donkey's way'.

Some of the words girls chant while juggling two balls against a wall have instructions built into them – ‘Oliver Twist’ for instance:

Oliver Twist
 Can you do this? [clap]
 If so, do so [clap]
 First your knee [touch knee]
 Next your toe [touch toe]
 Then under you go [lift leg over ball]

The actions named must be performed; then the rhyme is repeated and the hands clapped before the knee, and so on, is touched; then all actions are performed ‘Standstills’ without lifting a foot; then ‘Dancing Dollies’, doing a kind of dance; lastly, ‘Faraways’, when the player stands further away from the wall and the ball is allowed to bounce once before the action.

Another regulatory rhyme is ‘Plainsie, clapsie,/Round the world to backsie,/Highsie toosh, lowsie toosh,/Touch the ground and under.’ But most of the ball-bouncing rhymes have the same character as the rest of children’s oral literature; everyday life and fantasy are inextricably mixed, and the whole is suffused by an air of defiant gaiety. They chant ‘Mademoiselle she went to the well, Robin Hood and his merry men,/Went to school at half past ten, Winnie the witch fell in a ditch,/Found a penny and thought she was rich’, and many other rhymes, some of which are borrowed from the disciplines of skipping and counting-out.

If the totality of children’s experience of oral literature is to be covered, mention must be made of the dialogues which precede some of the side-to-side catching games, and of the strange, archaic-seeming scenarios of the acting games. In ‘Sheep, Sheep, Come Home’, for instance, a game also traditional in German-speaking countries and in Italy, a player in the role of shepherd calls ‘Sheep, sheep, come home’ and the sheep reply ‘We are afraid.’ ‘What of?’ says the shepherd. ‘The wolf,’ say the sheep. The shepherd deludes them, saying, ‘The wolf has gone to Devonshire, Won’t be back for seven year, Sheep, sheep, come home.’ The sheep run towards the shepherd and the wolf springs out and tries to catch one of them, who becomes the next wolf.

The acting game of ‘Fox and Chickens’ is possibly the weirdest of this weird genre. The actors are the fox, the mother hen and the chickens, who form up in single file behind the hen, holding on to each other. They march up to the fox, who is crouching on the ground, and chant:

Chickany, chickany, crany crow,
 I went to the well to wash my toe,
 When I came back a chicken was dead.

Then the hen asks ‘What are you doing, old fox?’ and he replies in a gruff voice, ‘Picking up sticks.’ ‘What for?’ ‘To make a fire.’ ‘What do you want a fire for?’ ‘To cook a chicken.’ ‘Where will you get it?’ ‘Out of your flock.’ As the fox says this he springs up and tries to seize the last chicken in the line. When he catches her, he takes her back to his den, and the whole scene is gone through again and again until all the chickens have been caught. The game has been known under many names, through many centuries – it seems to be referred to a number of times as far back as the Middle Ages – and in many countries of

the world. In the older versions the sinister crouching figure, who is sometimes a hawk or wolf, and is sometimes sharpening a knife, raises a dark, mythological shadow.

Oral traditions are subject to change, and children's rhymes are no exception. Words take the place of other words, usually through misunderstandings, as when the old Scottish singing game 'I Lost My Lad and I Care Nae' became 'I Lost My Lad in the Cairnie' and then 'Rosa Love a Canary'. Shifts in taste and contemporaneity account for other changes. Thus in 'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary' the line 'Sing cuckolds all on a row' became, more politely, 'And pretty maids all in a row'; and a 1956 parody of 'The Yellow Rose of Texas' was found, when collected as a ball-bounce chant in 1975, to have shed its dramatis personae – the Yellow Rose herself and Davy Crockett – in favour of Batman and Robin, and Cinderella.

Often the change in the lore is caused by a change in use. Take the old courting game 'All the Boys in Our Town', for instance, in which, during the nineteenth century, each turn at choosing from the ring was prefaced by as many as twenty-four lines of song. Revived as a skipping game, the chant was necessarily shortened and became only eight brisk lines. Songs have a tendency to split or coalesce in an almost biological manner. An example is the clapping sequence 'Under the bram bushes, under the sea', which was originally a students' song formed from two popular songs, 'Harry Harndin's a Cannibal King' (1895) and Cole and Johnson's 'Under the Bamboo Tree' (1902). The central verse of this amalgamation developed into the clapping verse, 'bamboo tree' became 'bram bushes', and 'When we are married happy we will be' proliferated into a variety of forms of which this Leeds (1973) version is typical: 'True love for you, my darling,/True love for me;/And when we are married,/We'll raise a family,/With a boy for you,/and a girl for me,/I tiddle om pom, pom pom' (which itself carries echoes of Vincent Youmans' song 'Tea for Two' (1924)). The custodians of oral lore have a careless and carefree way with their inheritance.

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21 Children's rhymes and folklore

Contemporary and comparative approaches

Andy Arleo

Children's folklore, or childlore, may be regarded as the traditional playful speech, behaviour, objects and mental representations (such as superstitions or game rules) that are exchanged by word of mouth among children in their peer groups, especially on the school playground, but also at home, on the street, in summer camp, on the school bus and in other places where children gather informally without close adult supervision. Among the many genres studied under the heading of children's folklore are play rhymes, satirical rhymes, singing games, secret languages, puns, riddles, tongue twisters, taunts, nicknames, parodies, jokes, stories, games, pranks, beliefs, calendar customs and material folklore. The flavour, functions and mode of oral transmission of children's folklore are quite different from *nursery lore*, the adult folklore that aims to educate and entertain the young child (see Opie in this volume), although there is some overlap between the two categories, as when children parody nursery rhymes.

Children's folklore today

According to a well-documented and entrenched adult folk belief, children's folklore is disappearing under the assaults of modern life and technology. Opie and Opie (1997) provide a series of quotations going back to the seventeenth century showing that this attitude has become a tradition in itself. Thus, the putative decline of children's play and folklore has been attributed in the past to the development of the railway, cinema, motor vehicles, radio, television and pop music; today, video games and computer technology are among the often-cited culprits. Actual fieldwork around the world has time and time again disproved such dire predictions (Despringre 1997; Chauvin-Payan 1999; Bishop and Curtis 2001). Recent surveys, such as that in New Zealand by linguists Laurie and Winifred Bauer of Victoria University of Wellington, demonstrate that children's folklore is a vibrant, living and evolving tradition that shows no signs of dying out (Bauer and Bauer 2002).

The classification of children's folklore

The boundaries of children's folklore have considerably expanded since the nineteenth century and each new generation of scholars has attempted to redefine and recategorise the field. It should be noted that, although children's folklore and children's play are closely linked, the two concepts are somewhat different. Children's play may be solitary whereas children's folklore is usually construed as a social phenomenon involving interaction between several children. Furthermore, while play comprises individual spontaneous

inventions that are not passed on to other children, the term folklore implies some form of transmission. Third, the study of play covers areas like adult-organised sports and commercial games, such as *Monopoly*, categories that are usually not studied by children's folklorists. Finally, while play begins at a very early age, children's folklore is mainly associated with primary school.

Bishop and Curtis (2001) provide an up-to-date discussion of the classification of children's play traditions, a phrase which corresponds quite closely to children's folklore as defined above. One of the most obvious ways to classify children's folklore is to list the items in alphabetical order according to their names, as in a dictionary. One problem that arises with this approach is that games and other forms of folklore usually have many different local names, making it difficult to recover specific items unless a detailed cross-reference system is devised. Furthermore, this method is essentially arbitrary as it fails to create coherent categories that might give insight into how children's folklore is actually used. One of the first attempts to classify items of children's folklore according to their category of use was *Games and Songs of American Children*, first published in 1883 (Newell 1883/1963). In addition to thematic categories like 'love games' or 'bird and beast', Newell included 'the pleasures of motion', 'guessing-games', 'games of chase', 'ball and similar sports' and 'counting-out rhymes', thus anticipating a functionalist approach.

Classification schemes often stem from practical research concerns, such as organising archives or arranging materials for publication. Iona and Peter Opie, the pioneers of modern childlore studies, organised their material into four books published over nearly four decades. *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959) deals mostly with language: satirical and nonsense rhymes, puns, tongue twisters, riddles, parodies, nicknames, truce terms and so on. Their second book, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969), describes games that six- to twelve-year-old children play on their own without adult supervision. The games are arranged in twelve categories according to the way they are played, such as starting a game, chasing games, catching games, seeking games, hunting games and racing games. *The Singing Game* (1985) includes both singing games in chains ('Thread the Needle') and circles ('Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush'), different types of dances or dance routines, and also handclapping games. The fourth book, *Children's Games with Things* (1997), is organised according to the play object used. It contains chapters on marbles, fivestones (also known as jacks or knucklebones), hopscotch, ball-bouncing, skipping and tops, as well as other categories.

A more recent classification of children's play traditions, proposed by Bishop and Curtis (2001), sets up three main categories: play with high verbal content, play with high imaginative content and play with high physical content. The classification moves from the purely verbal, such as jeers or riddles, to the highly physical, such as playing with balls or collecting things. There are subdivisions in each category. For example, within play with high verbal content are genres that are not accompanied by singing or by movements, such as jokes and riddles, as well as singing games, which involve singing and body movements, like handclapping or ball-bouncing. A particular play activity may involve more than one category. For example, when children, usually girls, skip (or jump) rope they often sing or chant a skipping rhyme. The rhyme would be in the first category, high verbal content, whereas the actual movements would be classified in the third category, high physical content.

The second main category, imaginative, which involves role-playing and make-belief transformation, has two subcategories: role enactment and acting games. In role enactment the general roles are defined by the overall idea of the game, but the plot and

dialogue and specific characters are improvised. This would include games like 'School', where one child plays the role of the teacher and the other(s) the pupil(s). In acting games the characters and plot are fixed by the game, but the dialogue is improvised: for example, a group of children used the plot and characters of an Australian soap opera to construct an imaginative acting game called 'Neighbours'. In other acting games, such as a series of games played by Punjabi-speaking girls and called by them 'Grandma games', the dialogue is mostly set and there is little room for improvisation.

The third main category has four major subdivisions: games without playthings, games with playthings, making things and collecting things. The games are then split into individual, group and team. The group games are classified according to the 'It' role: in chasing games like 'Tig' (also known as 'Tag'), 'It' has relatively low power over the other players and so is considered a 'low-power It'; in other games, like 'Grandmother's Footsteps', 'It' has more control over the other players' movements, and is therefore termed a 'high-power It'.

Recent trends in the study of children's folklore

The study of children's folklore in the last few decades has been characterised by continuity and change. Researchers continue to use fieldwork in order to document the ever-evolving children's traditions, and to make their findings available in the form of articles, books, dissertations, archives, films, and more recently websites. In perusing the many collections and studies of childlore that have appeared in this period, one notes that the core genres such as counting-out or basic chasing games are still found among schoolchildren (Bronner 1988; Factor 1988; Bishop and Curtis 2001; Delalande 2001). Traditional counting-out rhymes such as 'Eeny Meeny Miny Mo' continue to be popular, albeit with new twists and variations. The following variant of this rhyme was collected by Laurie and Winifred Bauer in their survey on New Zealand playground language (Bauer and Bauer 2002):

Eeny meeny miny mangi,
Catch a mangi by the tangi,
If he squeals, steal his wheels,
Eeny meeny miny mangi.

As they point out, the derogatory term *nigger* found in the traditional rhyme is still reported, but it has often been replaced by something else: tigger, tiger, moa, nickel and tula. This process is itself traditional and in the past the offensive word has been replaced by names of animals or national enemies: tiger, rabbit, black cat, rooster, Hitler, Tojo, Castro, Viet Cong (Abrahams and Rankin 1980: 58–9).

Research on childlore has also been marked by a number of changes linked to broader academic and societal issues, including the evolution of technology and paradigm shifts within folklore studies and other disciplines. Much of the earlier focus on the historical aspects of children's rhymes has given way to detailed studies of contemporary performance, accompanied by attempts at functional and contextual explanation.

An early seminal study on strategy in counting-out by folklorist Kenneth S. Goldstein shows how an ethnographic approach based on fieldwork can overturn adult assumptions as to the nature of childlore (Goldstein 1971). In the past, counting-out was often described as a fairly straightforward impartial procedure used to select the central player

(‘It’) in games like ‘Tig’. Goldstein’s study demonstrates that these idealised accounts do not correspond to what children actually do. His fieldwork was in a section of northwest Philadelphia in 1966–7 among sixty-seven children between the ages of four and eleven. Goldstein discovered that a number of manipulative strategies were used to change the outcome of the counting-out process. The most common technique is rhyme extension; when the rhyme ended on a player that the counter did not want to be ‘It’, the counter added on one or more extra phrases. For example, the ‘Eeny Meeny’ rhyme (see above) could be extended by ‘My mother says that you are It’. If the counter was still not satisfied by the outcome an additional phrase could be tacked on: ‘But I say that you are out.’ Another strategy consisted in using specific rhymes with a known number of stresses in order to predict the outcome. One informant had a fixed repertory of four rhymes containing seven, eight, nine and sixteen stresses. Knowing both the number of stresses and the number of players allowed the counter to determine who would be ‘It’. One precocious nine-year-old boy, who had the reputation of being a mathematical genius, utilised another strategy based on calculation: for a particular rhyme (‘One Potato, Two Potato’) he would memorise the ‘first out’ position for two to ten players and then move to a new position according to whom he wished to eliminate. Counters also used less sophisticated ploys, such as skipping over themselves.

A more recent study, spurred by Goldstein’s work and based on a survey of sixty-seven children in Saint-Nazaire, France, found strikingly similar results: 82 per cent of the respondents admitted to ‘cheating’ when counting-out (Arleo 1991: 26–7). The ‘skipping over’ technique was the most popular strategy, but the children also mentioned ‘counting in their heads’, that is calculating the outcome. A popular extension rhyme, shown in italics below, was also cited:

Pouf, pouf.

Ça sera toi le Loup,

mais comme le roi et la reine ne le veulent pas, ça ne sera pas toi.

[Pouf, pouf.

You will be the Wolf,

but as the king and the queen don’t want this (to happen), it won’t be you.]

The above utterance is made up of three components. First, like a judge with a gavel calling the court to order, the counter usually taps the ground in the middle of the circle twice and says the nonsense syllables ‘Pouf, pouf’ before the actual counting begins. This is followed by a short counting-out rhyme, ‘Ça sera toi le Loup’, which could stand on its own. The counter, however, decides to extend the rhyme by using a well-known ‘coda’. It is interesting to note that, as in the example given by Goldstein (‘my mother says that you are It’), responsibility is shifted from the counter to an adult authority figure (in this case the king and the queen), thereby making it more difficult for the other players to challenge the final outcome. As can be seen in this example, counting-out rhymes function very much like performative speech acts, such as ‘I dub thee knight’. The pragmatic meaning of a counting-out rhyme may be stated as ‘the player who is designated on the last syllable of the present utterance is appointed ‘It’ (or, alternatively, is called ‘Out’).

Whereas in the past children’s rhymes have often been published as collections of decontextualised items, more recent in-depth ethnographic approaches show how they are actually embedded in a complex ongoing process of play, often involving negotiation

between the players. This may be illustrated by Marjorie Harness Goodwin's sociolinguistic study of the game of jump rope, based on fieldwork in Philadelphia among black working-class preadolescent girls (Goodwin 1985). Goodwin argues that the social interaction occurring during games like jump rope is continuous with that outside the play frame. Specifically, she notes that the ways games are played are 'open for negotiation' and that 'girls demonstrate repeatedly their ability to deal with conflict expeditiously in the course of games' (316). The following sequence from Goodwin's research illustrates the fluidity of children's play, where different versions of a rhyme may blend into each other without a break in the jumping. In the transcription, double obliques indicate the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped with the talk of another, as in lines 2 and 3; while double square brackets indicate that two speakers begin to talk simultaneously, as in lines 3 and 4.

Michele begins her jump.

- | | | |
|---|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Michele: | Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack |
| 2 | | jump//over |
| 3 | Pam: | Over the candle stick. |
| | | [[|
| 4 | Priscilla: | Over the candle stick. |
| 5 | Priscilla: | All around // alimbo |
| 6 | Pam: | Do it fast, do it quick |
| 7 | Priscilla: | NO! Around the limbo rock, |
| 8 | Priscilla: | Hey let's do the limbo rock. |
| | | [[|
| 9 | Pam: | Hey let's do the limbo rock. |
- (Goodwin 1985: 320)

The well-known traditional rhyme is performed in a collaborative manner, with Pam and Priscilla chiming in together in lines 3 and 4, overlapping with Michele. In line 5, Priscilla continues with her version of the next verse. After Pam persists with her version (line 6), Priscilla 'corrects' her with an emphatic 'NO!' in line 7. The contradictory claims are resolved in lines 8 and 9 with Pam joining Priscilla. In her conclusion, Goodwin remarks that 'arguments by girls in the midst of play are thus strikingly divergent from the prolonged disputes that occur among boys in similar domains' (323). Furthermore, in their games and constructive play activity, boys 'create hierarchical distinctions among themselves', using 'aggravated' or unmodulated types of action, whereas girls use more 'mitigated' types of speech actions' (324). For instance, girls may make mitigated requests when calling for the start of a new rhyme by suggesting, 'Hey um let's do "Old Bastard Grandmom".' Such speech actions are proposals that include the other players as relevant agents and they are consistent with the egalitarian types of actions found in previous research on girls' constructive play and task activities.

The contribution of technology

The availability of audio-visual recording technology since the 1960s has allowed researchers to describe and analyse the performance of children's folklore in much greater detail than before, and to investigate the interaction of speech, movement and music within the overall context of play. Films, such as Bess Lomax Hawes and Robert Eberlein's 1969 documentary

on African-American singing games, *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, capture 'the details and nuances of the games' and put the texts in perspective, 'as verbal expressions of bodily forms' (Beresin 1999: 77). Furthermore, films or videos can be checked and rechecked 'long after the fieldwork is over, in slow motion and in fast forward, with sound on and sound off, to see things not possible in the quick blur of the moment' (77). A more recent illustration of the value of such resources is Ann Beresin's study of videotaped performances of Double Dutch jump rope by third-through-fifth-grade girls in an urban, public, working-class and racially integrated Pennsylvania school yard (Beresin 1999). The transcription of the actual video footage of different variants of jump rope found in this playground include a diagram representing the position of the rope and the players as well as a description of actions, vocalisations and other events (such as the ringing of the bell), all linked to a precise time-scale. This allows Beresin to analyse the performance in detail, in some cases second by second, thus identifying variations in the game and the language related to the game as well as examples of direct and indirect instruction. At the same time, a second camera provided macro footage of the school yard, presenting an overview of larger-scale patterns.

Many other studies of children's folklore involving the use of recording technology have been published in recent years. Ethnomusicologist Kathryn Marsh recorded and analysed over 600 examples of children's playground singing game performances (predominantly clapping games) among five- to twelve-year-old children in Sydney, Australia between 1990 and 1996 (Marsh 2001). Her transcriptions include not only the text and music, but also rhythmic notation of the handclapping patterns and other actions, such as the imitation of the pelvic thrusts of popular singer Michael Jackson used in a parodic singing game. Marsh notes that the media, classroom practices and the interaction of immigrant groups combine in many playgrounds around the world to transmit game elements from one culture to another, but that within this apparent unity lies constant diversity. In her study of children's folklore collected in the Rhône-Alpes region of France, linguist Carole Chauvin-Payan used special software to analyse the synchronisation of gestures with text and music; she also developed a detailed iconic code to represent the gestures used by children in their games.

Other forms of technology have been utilised to analyse specific performances of children's rhymes. In an experimental study based on an acoustic analysis, Arleo and Flament (1988) contrasted two types of performance of the famous French counting-out rhyme 'Une Poule sur un mur' (also studied by Cornulier 1985). The text of the rhyme was first read aloud by the children individually, like a story; it was then performed together as a counting-out rhyme, with the appropriate gestures. The results of the study showed great divergence between the narrative version and the counting-out version. The latter was performed at a slower tempo, perhaps due to the influence of the gestures, with fewer pauses and a more regular rhythm. The counting-out version also ended with a well-known melodic cliché found in many French children's rhymes, corresponding roughly to the first, second and fifth degrees of the diatonic scale (C, D, G, C).

The people in the playground

While technology has certainly contributed to new discoveries regarding children's folklore, it should be noted that a sensitive keen observer armed with little more than pencil and pad can still yield valuable insights into the life of the 'people in the playground' (Opie 1993). The friendly interplay between the sympathetic adult researcher and the eager young informant is evident in the following extract:

I was adopted by a boy with shining eyes, who plied me with jokes and stood on tiptoe to watch me write them down. 'What is a teacher's best fruit?' he asked. 'A date – in history, you see. What was the egg doing in the jungle? He was egg-sploring.' 'Hurry up,' said a girl to him, irritably, and went away. He continued, 'Here's a funny one.'

(184)

Such passages, which abound in Opie's delightful and perceptive chronicle, not only bring the playground to life but also focus on children as individuals. Many past studies of children's folklore have neglected to deal with the differences among children, some of whom appear to have a special status in their community. It is not uncommon, for example, to find riddle or joke specialists whose talents are recognised by their peers. A recent in-depth ethnological study in France examines the complex social dynamics in the school yard, showing how play forges friendship groups and how the relationships among individual children within these groups evolve over time (Delalande 2001).

Rude rhymes and folklore

The field of children's folklore has also been affected by changing attitudes in society regarding taboo language and topics. As Australian researcher June Factor points out, 'the existence of vulgar and obscene children's folklore is now recognised as a universal phenomenon' (Factor 1988: 160). However, in the past such material was expurgated in nearly all English-language collections of children's folklore. In his study of counting-out rhymes, the nineteenth-century American folklorist Henry Carrington Bolton wrote that 'in all our oral and written communications with children in every walk of life we have not received a single vulgar rhyme, nor one containing foul language. The nearest approach to an oath is the exclamation of "Gracious Peter"' (Bolton 1888/1969: 25). Recent collections and studies of children's folklore attempt to present a more realistic picture of playground language and no longer bowdlerise obscene or 'gross' material (for example, Factor 1988; Bronner 1988). A major study of obscene French children's folklore shows that rhymes referring to excrement, farting and sex have existed for centuries (Gaignebet 1980). It should, however, be remembered that obscene items do not necessarily carry the same meanings for children as for adults; explicit sexual allusions, for example, are often only partially understood and the degree of comprehension varies from child to child. The same applies to sexist and racist material that can be found on the playground.

The comparative study of children's rhymes and folklore

Researchers have long recognised that children's rhymes and folklore, like folk songs and folk tales, spread from culture to culture, hopping over geographical and linguistic barriers. Commenting on a courtship game called 'Knights of Spain', the nineteenth-century American folklorist William Wells Newell noted that this game was not 'the exclusive property of English-speaking peoples, but current under a score of forms throughout Europe – from Latin France, Italy, and Spain, to Scandinavian Iceland, from the Finns of the Baltic coast to the Slavs of Moravia' (Newell 1883/1963: 39). In 1888 Newell's contemporary, Henry C. Bolton, published a collection of 877 counting-out rhymes from nineteen languages or dialects, including Arabic, Basque, Marathi and Penobscot as well as many Indo-European languages. The work of Iona and Peter Opie,

although it focuses primarily on British children's folklore, also contains extensive annotations documenting different versions of rhymes and games in other languages. For instance, the well-known children's incantation 'Ladybird, Ladybird, Fly Away Home' has close counterparts in France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden (Opie and Opie 1951: 263).

A recent study of the handclapping game known in English as 'When Susie Was a Baby' illustrates how children's folklore continues to spread from culture to culture (Arleo 2001a). Variants of this game have been collected in Australia, Britain, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, South Africa, Spain and the United States. The narrative, which can be traced back to the earlier singing game 'When I Was a Lady' (Opie and Opie 1985: 458), usually portrays a named central female character (for example, Susie, Lucy, Fanny, Delphine, Sophie) as she goes through stages of life, from infancy to death and beyond. A French version, recorded in 1985 at a recreation centre in Saint-Nazaire, France, presents eight life stages:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Quand Delphine était un bébé,
Un bébé, un bébé,
Quand Delphine était un bébé,
Elle faisait comme ça:
<i>Spoken: 'areu'.</i> | [When Delphine was a baby,
A baby, a baby,
When Delphine was a baby,
She used to do this: |
| 2 | Quand Delphine était une p'tite fille ...
<i>Says 'Un, deux, trois.'</i> | When Delphine was a little girl ...
'One, two, three.' |
| 3 | Quand Delphine était une jeune fille ...
<i>Says 'Allo, chéri.'</i>
<i>Mimes holding receiver.</i> | When Delphine was a young girl ...
'Hello, dear.' |
| 4 | Quand Delphine était une maman ...
<i>Says 'Chh, bébé dort.'</i>
<i>Index in front of mouth and then mimes rocking baby to sleep.</i> | When Delphine was a mummy ...
'Shh, baby's sleeping.' |
| 5 | Quand Delphine était une grand-mère ...
<i>Says 'Ouille, mes reins.'</i>
<i>Right hand on lower back, bends over in pain.</i> | When Delphine was a grandmother
'Ouch, my back.' |
| 6 | Quand Delphine était un squelette ...
<i>Says 'Oououou.'</i> | When Delphine was a skeleton ...
'Oooooo.' |
| 7 | Quand Delphine était une poussière ...
<i>Says 'Balaie-moi.'</i>
<i>Mimes sweeping.</i> | When Delphine was a dust speck ...
'Sweep me.' |
| 8 | Quand Delphine était invisible ...
<i>Performers stop suddenly on the last syllable.</i> | When Delphine was invisible ...] |

An Australian version of the same handclapping game, recorded in Melbourne in 1984, presents seven life stages: baby, schoolgirl, teenager, mother, teacher, grandmother and

skeleton. As in the French version, each verse is followed by mimed actions: the teacher, for example, shakes her index finger in rhythm as if reprimanding a pupil. In most versions the verses are sung and accompanied by a simple repeated handclapping pattern. The basic story is found in versions collected in other cultures, with occasional narrative twists. Several British and American versions, for instance, have a pregnancy stage, either before or after marriage. A Spanish version, which begins directly in the courtship stage, deals with marital conflict and separation; an embedded sub-narrative explains that the central character's boyfriend no longer loves her and stole her necklace. There is also considerable variation in the stages involving death, with some versions evoking religious themes like heaven, hell and resurrection. The 'Susie saga' no doubt provides insight into how notions like time, growth and death are conceptualised by the child: Susie moves from the initial familiar life stages (for example, 'schoolgirl') to uncharted territory, such as motherhood, and finally to the unknowable stages of death and beyond. With its endearing mixture of realism and fantasy, this miniature musical comedy, in which the player is story-teller, actor, singer and dancer, 'simultaneously rehearses and mocks the conventional categories of time and growth' (Arleo 2001a: 129). Susie's success around the world lies in the fun of acting out a fanciful, facetious and tragic-comic narrative 'that deals lightheartedly with fundamental and universal issues like growing up, falling in (and out of) love, sexuality, motherhood, ageing and death. Such themes no doubt strike a resonant chord in school-girls at a crucial transitional period of their life, as they leave elementary school and childhood' (Arleo 2001a: 130).

Do children's rhymes reveal universal metrical patterns?

The previous example has demonstrated the appeal of children's games based on universal themes such as the human life-cycle. Another strand in research has dealt with the linguistic and poetic form of children's rhymes. In the middle of the twentieth century, Romanian ethnomusicologist Constantin Brailoiu and American linguist Robbins Burling independently uncovered evidence showing that children's rhymes around the world have strikingly similar metrical patterns and speculated that these may indeed be universal. According to Brailoiu, children's rhythms, as embodied in children's rhymes, constitute an immediately recognisable autonomous system that is 'spread over a considerable surface of the earth, from Hudson Bay to Japan' (Brailoiu 1984: 207). Furthermore, 'children's rhythms are based on a restricted number of extremely simple principles', which are 'constantly concealed by the resources (almost unlimited here) of variation' (209). Brailoiu describes what he calls 'series' of syllables, which generally correspond to lines. The most frequent series is the equivalent of eight short syllables or, in musical terms, eight quavers, as shown in the examples below:

J'ai	pas-	sé	par	la	cui-	si-	ne	(French)
Ques-	ta	ro-	sa	e	Ma-	riet-	ta	(Italian)
I-	pu-	tuy-	or-	ti-	gu-	wa-	ra	(Eskimo)

The series worth eight does not necessarily comprise eight pronounced syllables. The counting-out rhyme 'Eeny Meeny Miny Mo', for example, has seven-syllable lines, but each line has a total duration of eight quavers. Brailoiu concludes that children's rhythms

are governed by ‘strict symmetry’ and suggests that ‘the system proceeds, if not from dance, then at least from ordered movement, which is closely associated with it.’ He notes that ‘it remains to be seen how the most diverse languages manage to bend themselves to its inflexibility’, a task that can only be accomplished by collaboration between researchers ‘as numerous as the languages themselves’ (238).

Ten years after Brailoiu’s paper first appeared (it was first published as ‘Le Rythme enfantine’ in 1956), Robbins Burling published a seminal study on the metrics of children’s rhymes in several structurally different languages, such as English, Chinese and Bengkulu, a Malayo-Polynesian language spoken in southwestern Sumatra (Burling 1966). While Brailoiu had focused on the line, Burling examined the stanza, discovering a widespread sixteen-beat pattern, consisting of four four-beat lines. This is illustrated by many familiar nursery rhymes in English, such as ‘Hickory Dickory Dock’ or ‘Old King Cole’. Burling points out that four-beat lines are extremely widespread in popular verse in English, not only in nursery rhymes but in innumerable popular songs, advertising jingles and light verse. Furthermore, the four-beat line has great historical depth and appears to be linked to the earliest poetry in the Germanic languages, in which the line is made up of four predominant syllables. In his conclusion Burling states: ‘If these patterns should prove to be universal, I can see no explanation except that of our common humanity’ (Burling 1966: 1435). He suggests that sophisticated verse might be built in part on the foundation of simple verse, the result of modifying rules and adding restrictions. If this is the case, the ‘comparative study of metrics would then be the study of the diverse ways in which different poetic traditions depart from the common basis of simple verse’ (1436).

The hypotheses put forth independently by Brailoiu and Burling are compatible, at least for the line; although Burling also deals with the stanza, his four-beat lines are equivalent to Brailoiu’s ‘series worth eight quavers’. Unfortunately, the two studies do not offer much contextual information and do not attempt to systematically investigate specific genres of childlore. The play function of rhymes often has a direct effect on the metrical pattern. In the French handclapping rhyme shown below each line has five beats, reflecting the fact that the player claps her partner’s hands three times on the last syllable of each line:

1	2	3	4	5
La sa-	ma-ri-	tain’	tain’,	tain’,
Va à	la fon-	tain’,	tain’,	tain’ ...

A second weakness of the two studies is that they do not indicate the frequency of the supposedly universal metrical patterns for each language or culture. More recent work has attempted to provide quantitative data for specific genres of childlore in different languages. For example, the sixteen-beat pattern described by Burling is common in French and English counting-out rhymes, but appears to be more frequent in English (Arleo 2001b). Likewise, an investigation of 540 English-language jump-rope (skipping) rhymes showed that 43 per cent had four lines and 20 per cent had two lines, thereby supporting a hypothesis of metrical symmetry stating that rhymes tend to have an even number of lines or a number of lines equal to a power of two.

Future directions in the study of children’s folklore

The study of children’s rhymes and folklore has been a cross-disciplinary venture, involving folklorists, literary scholars, historians, linguists, sociologists, psychologists,

anthropologists and ethnomusicologists as well as non-academics such as play consultants and teachers. The Internet has facilitated communication among these different categories of researchers and has offered unprecedented access to material from cultures around the world. One challenge of future research will be not only to put the results of fieldwork online, but also to make sense of this vast quantity of information by ensuring reliability and developing new methods of analysis. Although there have been some attempts to deal with the folklore of non-Western children, the bulk of past published research has focused on childlore in the developed world. A second challenge will therefore be to provide more complete coverage by gathering and making available data from these under-researched cultures and languages. As has been emphasised above, the field of childlore has broadened considerably since the nineteenth century and now includes genres of speech, behaviour and material folklore that were neglected in the past. We can expect that more attention will be paid to the 'other people in the playground', such as disabled children and children in specific institutional settings (Mechling 1999). Finally, research should continue to help educators become more aware of the value of childlore in the acquisition of social, cognitive and linguistic skills (Widdowson 2001).

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22 Catechistical, devotional and biblical writing

Ruth B. Bottigheimer

Judaeo-Christian religious literature for children takes the Bible as its central reference point and confirms religious identity by inculcating ritual practices or by mediating Bible content in edited versions that conform to national, temporal, confessional or denomination expectations. Its chief representatives are catechisms and Bible story collections. Devotional literature differs from religious literature in its sources, form and intent. Unlike Bible stories and catechisms, devotional literature generally does not derive from Scripture, but from ancient, medieval or recent history. In form it may appear in prose or verse and as fictional or historical narrative, allegory or song. In intent, devotional literature strengthens religious identity in political, religious, moral and doctrinal terms. Religious and devotional literatures, principally concerned with the soul's welfare, differ from moral literature, which is primarily concerned with inculcating values (which may be religious or devotional) that lead to worldly success.

Catechisms and Bibles before 1900

Catechisms for children represent the oldest form of religious instruction. Known since the early middle ages, catechisms multiplied dramatically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in conjunction with the Protestant and Catholic Reformations. Early catechisms did not discriminate in terms of age among 'the simple': Richard Barnard's *Two twinnes: or, two parts of one portion of scripture* (London, 1613) included adult 'babes in knowledge' together with young 'babes in yeares'. It was only in the eighteenth century that children came to be distinguished as a separate group of religious readers. Catechesis as a pedagogical practice affected only a small proportion of Jewish children (cf. Abraham Jagel's *Catechismus judaeorum*, composed c. 1587 *et seq.*).

According to Isaac Watts's *Discourse on the Way of Instruction by Catechisms* (1730), catechisms were 'the best Summaries of Religion for Children'. Simple and brief, Cotton Mather's *The A, B, C. of Religion* read in its entirety:

- Q. Who Made You and all the World?
- A. The Great GOD made me, to serve Him.
- Q. Who Saves the Children of Men from all their Miseries?
- A. Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man, saves them that Look unto Him.

Q. What will become of You, when You Dye?

A. If I obey Jesus Christ, my Soul will go to the Heavenly Paradise; and He will afterwards Raise me from the Dead. If I continue Wicked, I shall be Cast among the Devils.

(1:15)

The most durable genre for children, apart from catechisms, was the Bible story collection, which had first appeared in the high middle ages when Peter Comestor composed the *Historia Scholastica* (c. 1170) in Latin for students at the University of Paris. Entering Latin grammar school curricula and adult devotional literature in the later middle ages, the *Historia Scholastica's* stories provided Europe with a common set of Bible narratives. Most books of Bible stories, however, were rooted in Reformation attempts to familiarise children (and unschooled adults) with biblical material.

Bible story collections written solely for children emerged in the mid-seventeenth century and were the first extended prose narratives composed specifically for child readers. They thus predated the emergence of fiction intended for children alone by about fifty years. Children's Bible histories, which claimed to be true stories composed by 'the Holy Penman' himself, differed from contemporaneous chapbooks, which were written for a mixed audience and whose prose mixed 'true reports' of prodigious experiences with fanciful fictions like *Tom Thumb*, *Robin Hood* and *Fortunatus*.

In France, Nicolas Fontaine's *L'Histoire du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament* (1670 *et seq.*) provided virtually the only Bible story collection for Catholic children until the nineteenth century. At that point, additional titles appeared. In Germany, Johann Hübner's *Zweymahl Zwey und funffzig Biblische Historien* (1714 *et seq.*) dominated the eighteenth century and was only slowly displaced by competing versions of Bible stories later in the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. In England, Bible story collections began in 1690 but proliferated only in the mid-eighteenth century when John Newbery, and later his heirs and rival publishers, repeatedly printed *The Holy Bible Abridged* (London, 1757 *et seq.*), which was followed in the later eighteenth century by *The Bible in Miniature*, *A Concise History of the Old & New Testaments*, *The Holy Bible Abridged*, *A New History of the Holy Bible*, *The Children's Bible* and *The History of the Holy Bible Abridged*. The genre appeared in Switzerland and the United States in the late eighteenth century, but south of the Alps and Pyrenees only after 1945 for a mass market.

The principal developments in the history of Bible story collections were their shift from negative to positive exempla at the beginning of the eighteenth century, their slow reduction in the number of female characters in the course of the eighteenth century, and their increasing emphasis on New Testament stories in the nineteenth century. It was common in the eighteenth century to assume that all children shared a 'common spiritual inheritance', as did Isaac Watts in his *Discourse on the Education of Children and Youths* (1725). Yet educators also prescribed different forms of education for different classes, one consequence of which was that authors of Bible story collections between 1750 and 1850 built social expectations about anticipated child-readerships into their editing. A century-long two-tier tradition of Bible stories resulted (c. 1750–1850), in which differing topics or differing treatments of the same topics appeared in the two tiers. For example, children's Bibles for the well-off largely ignored work, its spiritual causes and its gritty consequences, while those for the poor advocated work as spiritually beneficial.

From the sixteenth century onward authors explored a variety of prose and verse forms to familiarise children with the Bible. Like Bernard's *Two Twinnes*, Henoeh Clapham's *Briefe of the Bible* (London, 1596) addressed 'all young ones in Christs Schoole', that is, the untutored of all ages. A lengthy interpretative recapitulation accompanied each six-line versified chapter summary. For the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the commentary read thus:

Ioseph, placed in *Potiphar* the Eunuch his house, is for his beautie, lusted after by his inordinate eyed Mistress. She, having no blush in her fore heade, wooeth *Ioseph* to Sinne; but he avoideth her alluring presence. Her lust, for that cannot be properlie called Love, it turned into Hate. She therefore pulling his Garment from him, accuseth him to her Husband, for a wanton Hebrewew, and an Assailer of the Marriage-bed. He believing her, cast *Ioseph* into Prison.

In the nineteenth century, Bible story collections proliferated in England and America and offered scores of approaches for micro-readerships of different ages, educational levels, confessions or denominations. Bible story collections for Jewish children also began to appear in the nineteenth century, the first German example of which was Moses Mordecai Büdinger's *Der Weg des Glaubens* (1823), which appeared in English as *The Way of Faith; or, The Abridged Bible* (London, 1848).

There were also sub-genres. *The Child's Bible* (London 1677), whose title misleadingly suggests story content, was simply a concordance of 'all the Words that are found in the Old and New Testament (excepting some of the most unusual proper Names)'; it grouped common nouns by the number of their syllables. Postils, specialised excerpt collections whose content was arranged according to liturgical Bible reading throughout the church year, familiarised communicants with the words and meaning of specified Bible verses. Bible excerpts, like postils, preserved Bible language, but were usually presented in verse-a-day format for the calendar year and bore fanciful titles, like William Mason's *Crumbs from the Master's Table; or, select sentences, doctrinal, practical, and experimental* (London, 1831) or *Scripture Gems* (1835). Bible summaries concentrated not on Bible language but on abbreviated Bible content, often in minuscule thumb Bibles. Prose thumb Bibles, like *Biblia; or a practical summary of the Old and New Testaments* (London, 1727), initially intended for adults, were manifestly read by children. Versified early Bible summaries, like John Taylor's 1614 *Verbum Sempiternum* (London, 1614) galloped through the Old Testament, allotting sixteen lines to the fifty chapters of Genesis:

Jehovah here of Nothing, all things makes,
 And Man, the chief of all, his God forsakes.
 Yet by th'Almighty's Mercy 'twas decreed,
 Heaven's Heir should satisfie for Man's misdeed.
 Men now live long, but do not act aright,
 For which the flood destroys them all but eight;
Noah, his Wife, their Sons, with those they wedd:
 The rest all perish'd in that watery Bed.
 Read here of *Abraham's* numberless increase,
 And of their journeying, and his own decease.
 Of *Israel's* going into *Aegypt's* Land,
 Of their Abode, their Entertainment, and

Of *Joseph's* Brethren, faithless and unkind,
 Of his firm faith, and ever-constant mind.
 He pardons them that did his death devise;
 He sees his Children's Children, and he dies.

Verbum Sempiternum, which remained in print for nearly two centuries, provided a model for Benjamin Harris's *Holy Bible in Verse*, which substituted a rollicking tetrameter for Taylor's pentameter:

This book contains a full relation
 Of God Almighty's wise Creation,
 Who by his Power in six Days,
 The Earth did frame and Heav'n raise.

First printed in London *c.* 1712, it was imported to Boston in 1717. Nathaniel Crouch also versified Bible material in *Youth's Divine Pastime* (2 vols), using fast-paced trimeter. A second volume turned towards violent death and lurid sex as it recounted stories like Lot's incest, in which his daughters made him 'drunk with Wine,/ And then both with him lye;/ He being ignorant of this,/ Their wanton policy.'

Bibles edited for children in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were usually illustrated. On occasion, however, pictures alone were printed to elicit spontaneous tellings of Bible stories. Such picture albums, of variable graphic and aesthetic merit, were directed at adult buyers all over central, western and northern Europe for use in the family circle. One early example that may stand for many was *The History of the Old & New Testament described in Figures* (London, *c.* 1670). Typical for the late eighteenth century was Sarah Trimmer's *Series of prints from the Old Testament* (London, 1797), which was soon joined by her publisher's *New Series of Prints for Scripture History* (1803 *et seq.*) and – in the chapbook market – by the 24-page *New Pictorial Bible*.

Hieroglyphic Bibles, like Elisha Coles's *Youth's Visible Bible* (London, 1675), became popular in the USA in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The full title of an early import, published by Isaiah Thomas in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1788, advertised its intent:

A curious hieroglyphick Bible: or select Passages in the Old and New Testaments represented with Emblematical Figures for the Amusement of Youth Designed chiefly to familiarize tender Age in a pleasing and diverting Manner, with early Ideas of the Holy Scripture to which are subjoined, a short account of the Lives of the Evangelists, and other pieces.

Coles united hieroglyphics to Latin instruction in his 1675 book (published in London) with the forbidding title *Nolens Volens; or, You shall make Latin whether you will or no. Together with the youth's visible Bible* (London, 1675).

In some Latin schools, English-speaking boys encountered Sebastian Châteillon's (also spelled 'Castalio') *Dialogorum Sacrorum libri quattuor* (London, 1577), which reformulated those parts of the Bible that lent themselves to dialogic presentation. Thus Châteillon's dialogues began not with the monological Creation, but with the serpent's conversation with Eve, while his Sodom story included Lot's altercation with the lowering mob, though not his daughters' discussion of inebriating him in order to become pregnant by him.

Scripture catechisms inculcated a knowledge of Bible content in two modes. Protestants favoured prescribed responses, while Catholics tended to elicit Bible content summaries. One of the earliest Protestant Scripture catechisms was Eusebius Pagit's *Historie of the Bible briefly collected by way of question and answer* (London, 1613). It had grown out of Pagit's twenty-six years of reading Scripture to his assembled servants and family, making 'such observations as [he] thought fit for their capacities and understanding', and questioning them 'daily [to take] an account how they understood and retained [Bible content] in memorie'. Bible catechisms continued into the eighteenth century, for example with Ambrose Rigge's *Scripture Catechism for Children. Collected out of the whole Body of the Scriptures, for the instructing of Youth with the Word of the Lord in the Beginning ... that they might be taught our children, and Children's children ... Presented to Fathers of Families, and Masters of Schools, to train up their Children and Scholars, in the Knowledge of God and the Scriptures* (London, 1702). Historical catechisms, like some Bible story collections, could on occasion be interconfessional, as when the English Protestant publisher T. Cooper adapted the Jesuit Abbé Claude Fleury's *Catechisme Historique* for Anglican children. The genre survived into the nineteenth century with *A Brief Historical Catechism of the Holy Scriptures, designed for the Use of Children and Young Persons* (York, 1815), which its author William Alexander proudly announced had been rearranged to make its format small and its facts clear, so that even the poorest classes might buy, and understand, it.

Bible subjects also made their way into English chapbooks like those printed and distributed by the English firm of Dicey. Individual stories, like Joseph and Potiphar's wife, sold well, while cheap reference works like *A Family-Index to the Bible* (Northampton, 1739) entered modest households at small cost (two pence apiece or one shilling and six pence per dozen).

English publishers supplied American printers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a situation confirmed by the title of Cotton Mather's catechism, *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes in either England* (1662; first British edition 1646). Mather's *Spiritual Milk* lived on in the eighteenth century in editions of the enormously influential *New-England Primer* (c. 1686 *et seq.*) assembled by the transplanted London printer, Benjamin Harris. Until the nineteenth century the majority of American children's religious books, including children's Bibles, originated in England and generally appeared on the western side of the Atlantic with a lag of one or two generations. For example, John Taylor's 1614 *Verbum Sempiternum* was printed in Boston in 1693; and Newbery's 1757 *Holy Bible Abridged* appeared in Boston in 1782 and in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1786. The printing of American children's religious books differed from English ones, however, in one important respect. Whereas in England such printing centred almost exclusively in London, in the USA small local presses produced children's Bibles and religious books in places like Leicester in Massachusetts; Bridgeport, New London and New Haven in Connecticut; and Sag Harbor, Cooperstown and Buffalo in New York, as well as in regional printing centres like Boston, Worcester, New York and Philadelphia.

Devotional literature before 1900

John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, which soon came to be known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, was first published in England in 1563, and soon made its way into abridged editions for children, its horrifying reports of martyrdoms affirming Protestant identity, in part by vilifying Catholics. (It remained in print in illustrated editions well into the twentieth century.)

James Janeway, one of the first writers to recognise that a message can be most effectively communicated by exploiting children's love of story, published *A Token for Children* (1671–2), which contained accounts of the 'Conversion, holy and exemplary lives and joyful Deaths of several young Children'. The children, some of them of very tender years, set an example to their families by their piety and by welcoming death as the way to everlasting bliss, while their sorrowing families look on, full of awe and admiration. Similar books, such as *The Young Man's Calling* by Nathaniel Crouch (1678) and *An Account of the Remarkable Conversion of a Little Boy and Girl* (1762), *The Happy Child* (1762) and the Cheap Repository Tracts tale, *The Story of Sinful Sally, Told by Herself*, were published throughout the eighteenth century.

John Bunyan offered doctrinal doggerel in *A Book for Boys and Girls: or, Country Rhymes for Children* (London, 1686), using the already established pattern of illustrating divine truths and moral ideas through everyday and familiar objects. However, children appear to have been much more attracted to the earlier *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), which not only told a good story, but used familiar figures and images from popular traditional tales. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been published in countless editions for children.

The *Divine Songs* of Isaac Watts (London, 1715), verses in which he emphasised moral virtues in order to 'beautify [children's] Souls', also enjoyed a long-lasting popularity and were still widely known when Lewis Carroll parodied some of them in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Although much devotional literature was didactically grim, some used a toy book format. For example, a rotating dial in Nathaniel Crouch's *Delights for the Ingenious* (London, 1684) guided readers to appropriate moral verse. At home and in school English and American children routinely encountered verse and prose with religious and devotional intent. Rhyming ABC books taught that 'A is our Advocate, Jesus his name; / B is a Babe, in weakness who came'. In the mid-eighteenth century Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont mixed Bible stories with fairy tales and interleaved both with edifying conversations in her *Magasin des Enfants* (1756).

Drama also proffered religious and devotional messages. At the French court of Louis XIV the pious Marquise de Maintenon encouraged girls to act in Bible dramas, a practice that François Fénelon codified in his *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (1687), where he discussed girls' dramatising appropriate Bible stories. In the eighteenth century Mme de la Fite's *Drames et contes moraux* (1778 *et seq.*) and the Comtesse de Genlis's *Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes* (1785) were part of an elite English education, while Maria Edgeworth's *Little Plays for Young People*, Hannah More's *Sacred Dramas* and Mark Anthony Meilan's *Holy Writ Familiarized to Juvenile Conceptions* (London, 1791) provided much the same kind of material for anglophone pupils.

Magazines and miscellanies also included religious and devotional material, and with support from Protestant and Catholic churches the religious component blossomed in the nineteenth century. Magazines like *Child's Companion* and *Children's Friend* elevated English values, purveyed the message that it was better to be pious than rich, and included grotesque narratives and pictures of heathen barbarity. Death was luridly prominent with titles like 'You Are Not too Young to Die' and 'The Dying Sunday Scholar'.

Allegories, which followed the pattern set by *The Pilgrim's Progress* and which were written especially for children, were enacted in symbolic space by archetypal characters, without linear plots; people's actions were surely and simply eponymous, their names predicting their individual fates. Mrs Sherwood's *Infant's Progress, From the Valley of Destruction to Everlasting Glory* (1821) exemplifies this genre. Her histories were structured by sequential events that impinged on their stories' characters, shaped their fates,

and generated their attributes, for example 'chaste' Joseph. Moral narrative amalgamated the characteristics of allegories and histories by retaining allegorical naming (Squire Allworthy, Peter Prudence, Betsey Goodchild, Anthony Greedyguts and Marjory Meanwell) with an essentially historical narrative structure. Allegories, histories and moral narratives shaded one into the other and shared a single aim – to produce good and successful children. In early children's books religiously demonstrated piety often brought socially advantageous results.

Further reading

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23 Contemporary religious writing

Rita Ghesquière

From its inception, children's literature has been closely linked with religion. Several literary historians (Sommerville 1992; Cunningham 1995) have pointed out the contributions of Protestant parents in the development of a specific literature for children. Since the responsibility for education could no longer be entrusted to the Church as an institution, parents and educators discovered the power of stories. *A Token for Children: Being the Exact Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Children* (1671) by James Janeway exemplifies the adult manner of addressing children in the seventeenth century. Roman Catholics too invested in children's literature. In the course of the following centuries religious orders would assume this task, forming the basis of thriving publishing houses. The Assumptionists founded Bayard-Pressé – now called Maison de la Bonne Presse – in 1873; the Salesians in Turin laid the foundation of the publishing firm Societa della Buona Stampa (1859), the present-day SEI; the Flemish Norbertines in Averbode (Belgium) founded a bilingual publishing house specialising in periodicals; while the Fraters of Tilburg (the Netherlands) formed the basis of the successful firm Zwijsen.

Because children's literature always mirrors the society in which it exists, the relationship between children's literature and religion is obviously subject to change. Specific changes in society create a climate allowing the religious children's book to prosper. Missionary work in the wake of colonisation exported Christianity to Africa, where Islam also spread along the major trade routes. In the postcolonial period religion often reinforced a sense of identity. In Brunei Darussalam, a vigorous Islamic children's literature developed. After the fall of the Soviet regime, the new culture of *glasnost* led to a flourishing orthodox children's literature.

The secularisation of Western society raises the question of whether juvenile fiction and religion still enjoy a privileged relationship. Traditional models such as the saint's life, the missionary story or the vocational tale, which still enjoyed an enormous popularity in the first half of the twentieth century because of their affinity with the religious revival of the first decades, have been relegated to the periphery since 1970.

On the other hand, an increasing multiformity and multiculturalism increase the need for a private (also religious) identity. Religious children's books therefore satisfy a real need by encouraging the process of socialisation. The innovation and emancipation of juvenile fiction — specifically the recent philosophical trend — have heightened a sensitivity to existential themes. Religion still often leads a modest, almost hidden existence in juvenile fiction — as in society as a whole.

This chapter investigates the links between children's literature and religion to the present day. Its scope is not limited to Western society: the subject is placed within a

broader, global perspective. The focus, however, mainly lies with the great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Other religions are mentioned where possible.

Before we discuss the actual literary works, we must establish working definitions of religion and religiosity. We can then give an overview the extensive range of books dealing explicitly with aspects of religion. Third, we can look at a broad spectrum of texts and models that treat religious themes and motifs — in the broadest sense of the term — in very different ways.

The term *religiosity* and the related terms *religion* and *religious* form a complex network of meanings. In this jumble, two semantic nuclei can be distinguished. On the one hand religion and religiosity function within an explicitly theist context; they acquire a limited, exclusive meaning. On the other hand these same terms are also used implicitly, almost in a secularised way. In the first case we can also refer to verticality; in the second case to horizontality.

According to sociologists of religion, explicit religiosity refers to the awareness and the believing acknowledgment of a supernatural reality of gods and spirits into which man will be admitted after death. Etymologically this sense of the term relates to the Latin word *re-ligare*, meaning re-bind. Religion expresses the deep intimacy of man with the cosmos, with life, with humankind and with God. The *pietas*, the pious remembrance of the dead who in a sense are part of deity, is an essential aspect of every religion.

The Jewish–Christian religion added a new dimension to existing cultural religions; in them the meaning of religion was narrowed by the theist perspective. In the monotheistic religions God reveals himself as the absolute ‘Other’: ‘He who is’. He calls on the worshipper to practise justice and love. In Christian religions, God invites the worshipper to a personal relationship through the person of Christ. The response of the worshipper is also personal. We find traces of it in ethical choices inspired by the Bible, including the Gospels, and the Quran. Ethics is where God, man and the world meet. If we look for religion/religiosity in this exclusive sense in contemporary juvenile fiction, we find texts dealing with belief and religiosity in the context of the Church. The emphasis may lie on institutionalisation or on the socio-ethical dimension.

Religion lacking the theist dimension and existing outside an established Church can be taken to refer to the fundamental questions about existence (ultimate concerns, *letztes Anliegen*), to the vague ultimateness, the fundamentals that give life its meaning. There are values to which one wants to dedicate oneself unconditionally, and that are unaffected by any suffering one may experience. In this broad sense religion is found in books containing a deeper dimension without explicit reference to religion or traditional religiousness.

Theist religiosity in children’s literature

In this first part we discuss children’s books and juvenile fiction in which religion is treated as the believing acknowledgment of a supernatural reality or in which ethical behaviour implies more than horizontal involvement with the world. The last decades have shown a remarkable growth in this area, probably caused by a number of specific circumstances. In a secularised society, parents and educators who take the religious education of their children seriously need to consciously coach them during the process of religious socialisation. Furthermore, in a multicultural environment religion often helps to define one’s identity.

Every major religion has books that familiarise children from an early age with the basic elements of their own religion: the doctrine, holy texts or books, holy places, feasts and

rituals. In the UK, institutions such as the Islamic Foundation, the Muslim Educational Trust, Taha Publications and IQRA' Trust publish Islamic children's books.

Non-fiction series such as Religions of the World (published by the Rosen Publishing Group) or Eyewitness Books cover such diverse religions as Judaism, Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism and Shintoism. Books like these have a double role to play: they familiarise the child with its own religion, and fulfil an informational function for followers of other religions. In *All Kinds of Beliefs* (2000) British author Emma Damon clearly chooses the multicultural approach. In this pop-up book young children get to know different external symbols of religiosity, different ways of praying, and different places of worship. Mutual respect for differences is also the leitmotif in *How Do You Spell God? Answers to the Big Questions from Around the World* (1995), a book for teens tackling the difficult questions of life. It was written by two Americans: Marc Gellman, a rabbi, and Thomas Hartman, a Catholic priest. The Dalai Lama wrote the preface. Katherine Paterson, an American writer for children, together with her husband wrote *Images of God* (1998), in which she narrates the different images of God in the Bible in readable stories.

Special mention ought to be made of *Le Voyage de Théo* (1997) [*Theo's Odyssey* (1999)], a book for adolescents by French author Catherine Clément. The premise of this book is similar to Jostein Gaarder's *Sofies verden* (1991) [*Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy* (1994)]. Clément deals with the different great religions of the world, but the information is embedded in a story. Fourteen-year-old Theo is ill and travels around the globe with his eccentric aunt. Their voyage leads to the birthplace of the different religions, allowing information about the origin, doctrine and views of God and major rituals to be introduced into the story.

Books for young children often focus on a religious feast such as Christmas, Easter, Pascha (Passover), Chanukah, Id-ul-Fitr (the feast at the end of the Ramadan) or Hari Raya (Islamic new year). At these moments religious experience in the family and in society becomes visible and can be discussed. Books have an important role to play in this. By means of colourful images and/or sensitive texts they familiarise children with the message and rituals. Series such as Celebrate or Celebration Stories (both by Hodder Wayland Publishers, UK) present information about major feasts in a straightforward manner. The first series Celebrate with, for example, *Celebrate Passover* (2002) by Mike Hurst, is purely informative; the second series presents the information through stories: *A Present For Salina* (2002) by Kerena Marchant is set in Morocco at the time of Id-ul-Fitr.

In Jewish children's literature especially, Chanukah remains a popular subject. Norma Simon writes about Chanukah in *The Story of Hanukkah* (1997), Maida Silverman in *Festival of Lights: The Story of Hanukkah* (1999), Michael J. Rosen in *Our Eight Nights of Hanukkah* (2000), Jonny Zucker in *Eight Candles to Light: A Chanukah Story* (2002). Light also plays a major role in other religions. In *Here Comes Diwali: The Festival of Lights* (2000) by Meenal Pandya the importance of the Buddhist feast of the light is explained to children.

In Islamic children's literature the main topics are Id-ul-Fitr and especially the time of fasting. *Magid Fasts for Ramadan* (1996) by Mary Matthews and *Ramadam* (1996) by Suhaib Hamid Ghazi are two books about the time of fasting in an Islamic family. *Jamal's Prayer Rug* (1993) by Kathy Fanoun highlights the importance of prayer and the ritual of praying for Islamic children. Joëlle Stolz in *Les Ombres de Ghadamès* (2000) [The Shadows of Ghadamès] writes about the role of women in the transfer of Islam to the next generation. *L'Afrique de mes pères* (1987) by Gondia Cissé [Africa of My Fathers] describes Islamic piety in a West African setting, while Nigeria-born author

Cyprian Ekwensi in *Gone To Mecca* (1991) stresses the importance of the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to the holy place of Mecca. In *Next Year in Jerusalem: 3000 Years of Jewish Stories* (1996) Howard Schwartz collects a number of Jewish stories centred around Jerusalem, the most holy place for Jews.

The degree of religiousness differs substantially in these books. Picture books about Christmas can closely follow the biblical Christmas story (Dick Bruna, *Kerstmis* (1976)), or take another legend as a starting point, or provide a fanciful or contemporary version of the Christmas idea of 'peace'. German authors Sigrid Heuck in *Frohe Weihnachten, liebes Christkind* (1999) [Merry Christmas, Dear Infant Jesus] and Brigitte Weninger in *Engel, Hase, Bommelmütze und 24 Adventsgeschichte* (2002) [Angel, Hare, Bobble Hat and 24 Advent Stories] but also Norwegian writer Jostein Gaarder in *Julemysteriet* (1992) [*The Christmas Mystery* (1996)] try to provide young readers with appropriate stories for the time of Advent before Christmas. Many important authors have written Christmas stories. Dickens wrote his *A Christmas Carol* (1844), Andersen the sad fairytale '*Lille pige med svovlstikkerne*' ['The Little Match Girl'], Selma Lagerlöf *Julklappsboken und andra berättelser* (1954) [The Christmas Present and Other Stories] and Astrid Lindgren *Jul i stallet* (2001) [The Crib]. Christmas stories are found in all countries: *Desert December* (1991) by Dorian Haarhoff hails from South Africa. *The Miracle Tree* (1985) by Australian writer Christobel Mattingley describes how three desperate characters find comfort with each other at Christmas after the atomic catastrophe at Nagasaki. In other Christmas stories fancy gains the upper hand. In *Sarah's Bead* (2000) by Caroline S. Garrett we watch Christmas through the eyes of a rat, Sarah. She gives her most prized possession, a glass bead, to the Christ Child.

A second group of children's books adapts the major religious or mythical texts for a young audience. The French publisher Gallimard collects texts from different religions in the series 'Contes du ciel et de la terre'. Gallimard explains the concept of the series as follows:

Cette collection réunit des contes, des récits, des paraboles, des fables ou des légendes issus de toutes les traditions religieuses. En voyageant à travers ces contes, les enfants rencontrent une humanité multiculturelle, multiethnique et multiconfessionnelle.

[This series collects stories, tales, parables, fables or legends from all religious traditions. Travelling through these stories, children encounter a humanity that is multicultural, multiracial and multiconfessional.]

Almost all religions pay attention to creation, and children's literature follows this example. There are a great many creation stories, with an individual accent and character according to each religion. This theme is also present in Eastern, African and Latin American children's literature through ancient mythical stories or 'pourquoi stories'. Ivonne Rivas in *El dueño de la luz* (1995) narrates myths of the Warao Indians about the birth of light, the sun and the moon. *The Children of the Omumborombonga Tree* (1990) by Meshack Asare is a creation myth from Namibia. *Afsaneh* (1990) [Legends] by Mohdokht Kashuli contains seven pre-Islamic creation stories. Steven Zeitlin in *The Four Corners of the Sky. Creation Stories from Around the World* (2000) collects creation stories from different cultures. *When the Beginning Began: Stories about God, the Creatures and Us* (1999) is a collection of Jewish creation stories edited by Julius Lester. *The Creation* (1994) by James Weldon Johnson dates from 1927 and is a poetic rendering of the

creation story in the tradition of the Southern black country sermons, illustrated by James Ransome. It demonstrates how old texts can be revitalised and adapted for children. Other important religious texts such as the *Bhagavad-gita* also exist in children's versions. Jean Vishaka Griesser adapted this sacred book in *Our Most Dear Friend: An Illustrated Bhagavad-gita for Children* (1996). *The Wisdom of the Crows and Other Buddhist Tales* (1997) is a collection of stories from Tibet, China and Japan narrated by Sherab Chodzin and Alexandra Kohn. The book contains fables, stories and the life of Buddha.

A biblical character with an enduring popularity in children's fiction is Noah, the subject of many illustrated books — often by famous authors. Isaac Bashev Singer wrote *Why Noah Chose the Dove* (1987), Peter Spier *Noah's Ark* (1992) and Lucy Cousins *Noah's Ark* (1997). *Papa Ob Long: The Animals' Great Journey* by Leroy Blankenship (1998) narrates the Flood as seen through the eyes of the giraffe; in *A Prayer for the Earth: The Story of Naamah, Noah's Wife* (1996) by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, Noah's wife tells her story. Noah can also be found as Nuh in Islamic children's books: for example, *Nuh [Noah: Peace Be upon Him (Stories of the Prophets from the Qur'an)]* (1999) by Siddiq Juma. The same series contains the stories of Adam, Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus).

Explicit religiosity is also found in books upholding a religious figure as an exemplary character. A well-known model is the lives of saints; because of their links with traditional Catholic religious experience, they were mainly used in Catholic juvenile fiction. Some saints stir the imagination more than others, with St Francis ending in first place in the popularity poll. Famous authors such as Max Bolliger in *Euer Bruder Franz* (1982) [Your Brother Francis], Tomie de Paola in *Francis: The Poor Man of Assisi* (1990), Margaret Hodges in *Brother Francis and the Friendly Beasts* (1991) and Margaret Mayo in *Brother Sun, Sister Moon: The Story of St Francis* (1999) write and illustrate his story. St Nicholas owes his popularity to the folk rituals connected with his name-day. He is the exemplary saint of the children. Very few children's books refer explicitly to the religious importance of the figure of Nicholas. Ann Tompert adapts a number of Nicholas legends in *Saint Nicolas* (2000) whereas German author Josef Quadflieg in *Nikolaus von Myra* (1994) established the link between present-day folklore and the original legends. In *Martin von Tours* (1993) Quadflieg uses the same procedure for the similar figure of St Martin.

Some saints are more exclusively embedded in a certain culture. Joan of Arc is the main character in numerous French children's books, while St Patrick, St Ciaran and Columcille form part of the Irish cultural heritage. The fascinating stories of their lives, full of adventure and suspense, have made their way into juvenile fiction. Margaret Hodges in *Saint Patrick and the Peddler* (1997) and Colman O Raghallaigh in *An Sclábháí* (2002) consider St Patrick; Gary D. Smith makes the case for *Saint Ciaran: The Tale of a Saint of Ireland* (2000) while Don Brown in *Across a Dark and Wild Sea* (2002) tells the story of the monk Columcille. In Spanish children's literature *Marcelino Pan y vino* (1952) [*The Miracle of Marcelino* (1963)], an old legend recorded by José Maria Sánchez Silva, has become very popular. The Italian Don Bosco, founder of the Salesian order, has found a place in juvenile fiction through the youth work of this order. The lives of saints also form the subject of comic strips.

Although some religions do not worship saints, the children's literature associated with them may yet propose exemplary figures. In Islam, the prophet is one such exemplary character. In *Haft Hekayat as Bacheha Va Payambar* (1373/1994) [Seven Anecdotes about Children and the Prophet] Mostafa Rahmandust introduces Muhammed as a true children's friend. In Buddhism, Siddharta Gautama, the first enlightened person or Buddha, is the stock example, but the Dalai Lama can also fill that role. In *The Prince Who*

Ran Away: The Story of Gautama Buddha (2001) Anne Rockwell narrates the life of Buddha for young readers. *I Once Was a Monkey: Stories Buddha Told* (1999) is a collection of *jatakas* or birth stories by Jeanne Lee. Tradition has it that Buddha told these fables in order to teach his pupils fundamental attitudes such as attention, respect and tolerance. For many Chinese, Confucius is still an inspirational figure. Russell Freedman narrates his life for children in *Confucius: The Golden Rule* (2002). Gandhi too fits the role of exemplary character: for example, in *Gandhi: The Man of Peace* (1995) by Indian writer Manorama Jafa. Many traditional Hindu stories confront children with appropriate ethical behaviour. In Madhur Jaffrey's *Seasons of Splendour. Tales, Myths and Legends of India* (1985) the story of 'Savitri and Satyavan' from the Indian epic *Mahabharata* is told. This exemplary tale demonstrates how a young woman finds spiritual strength by selflessly helping others. This allows her to confront Yama, the Lord of Death.

In Jewish juvenile fiction, stories by survivors of the ghettos and camps are passed on in order to preserve the memory of their experiences. Hope and freedom are the recurring motives in *My Bridges of Hope: Searching for Life and Love After Auschwitz* (1999) by Livia Bitton-Jackson and *Escape: Teens Who Escaped from Holocaust to Freedom* (1998) by Sandra Giddens. In *A Hero and the Holocaust: The Story of Janusz and His Children* (2002), Polish doctor and children's writer Janus Korczak is the main figure. He dedicated himself unconditionally to the cause of Jewish orphans, and died with them in Treblinka.

Many stories highlight important episodes from the history of a religion. They consider both moments of grandeur, such as the spread of religion by missionary work, and the tragic events happening when different religious convictions clash or try to impose their views forcefully (religious wars, inquisition). Traditional Christian historical tales in the first half of the twentieth century often had a triumphalist tone. Missionary tales often linked religious zealotism and adventure. The series 'Aus fernen Landen' from the German publisher Herder is a good example, as is the American series from Benzinger Brothers. The contribution of Jesuit authors to this genre of 'new Catholic fiction' is remarkable. The Swiss Jesuit Joseph Spillmann and German Jesuits Alexander Baumgärtner and Huonder rank among the most prolific authors in the series 'Aus fernen Landen'. The American Jesuits Henri Spalding, R. A. Welffle and Neil Boyton also acquired great popularity as children's writers. The missionary tale has all but disappeared, but the South African book *Joseph Zulu* (1991) tells the story of the first black missionary in Zululand from a proper 'black perspective'.

Since the 1970s historical stories about religious subjects show signs of a new approach. The 'new historicism' does not assume the superiority of one's own position. Tales about the crusades trade the triumphalism of the past for a reflection on the sense of the immense bloodshed. Whereas the adventurous character predominates in *The Children's Crusade* (1958) by Henry Treece, the crusader's story *La espada y la rosa* (1993) [The Sword and the Rose] by Spanish author Martínez Menchén Antonio interweaves mystery, religiosity and brutality, presenting the Middle Ages in a much more realistic way. Such authors point out human weaknesses: greed, ambition and abuse of power are the grim face of idealism. Juvenile fiction also discovers the dark pages of history. In descriptions of witch trials or religious wars the intolerance of church authorities, the sensationalism of the crowds and the human dignity of the oppressed are recurring motifs. In *Geier über dem Montségur* (1973) [*The Siege of Montségur* (1982)] German author Inge Ott describes the fall of the last stronghold of the Cathars. After a siege that lasts many years, the church authorities together with the worldly lords finally

capture Montségur. Hundreds of simple and ‘pure’ heretics are sent to the stake. Death by burning is also the fate of the anabaptist Johan Kloppeis, the main character in the novel *Übergebt sie den Flammen!* (1988) [Deliver Them To the Flames] by German author Tilman Röhrig.

New historical novels narrating the suffering caused by religious conflicts are also found outside of Western literature. Japanese author Sukeyuki Imanishi in *Uragami no Tabibito-tachi* (1969) [Exiles of Uragami] describes the persecution of Christians in Nagasaki during the early Meiji period.

On the other hand, the non-Christian religions also use the model of the historical novel to show their own religious heroes in the best possible light. Khurram Murad in *The Longing Heart* (1985) tells about the journey to Mecca by Abu Dhar, who went looking for the prophet at a time when this choice was not without risks. Iranian writer Ebrahim Hassanbeigui in *Amujan Abbas* (1995) [*Dear Uncle Abbas*] narrates the death on the battlefield of Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Muhammed. Martin Ballard in *Uthman dan Folio: Commander of the Faithful* (1977) describes the victories of Islam in Africa. In *Travellers and Explorers* (1992), a publication of IQRA’ Trust, the Muslim contributions to the development of science, law and economy in the past centuries are highlighted.

A last group of stories shows the impact of religion on the everyday life of the characters. These here-and-now stories explicitly relate the confrontation with faith. In the first part of the twentieth century, most of these are *Bildungsromans* in which an individual vocation, conversion or moral choice are the central issue. *Das Licht der Berge* (1931) [*The Light on the Mountains* (1960)] is a character novel by the Austrian Jesuit F. X. Weiser describing how Hein Moll, a boy from Tirol, is confronted in the capital Vienna with a number of fundamental issues. By trial and error he finds the strength to remain faithful to his Christian ideals. In this type of traditional novel a priest often acts as an adviser. In more recent juvenile fiction religion no longer forms the familiar setting in which the young characters grow up. A number of novels describe the search following the confrontation with religion. *Are You There, God? It’s Me, Margaret* (1970) by Judy Blume may well be the most famous book about this subject. Margaret is born into a mixed Jewish-Christian family and grows up without religion. She gets to choose later, but she does not want to remain ‘nothing’; she wants to belong and spends a school year searching. In *Now I Know* (1987) by British author Aidan Chambers the adolescent Nik gets an assignment on the historical Jesus. He too looks for answers to his many questions and, at the end of his stimulating quest, presents an individual interpretation of the figure of Jesus. In Katarina Mazetti’s *Det ar slut Mellan Gud och mig* (1995) [It’s Over between God and Me] Linnea is confronted with fundamental questions about God after her friend Pia commits suicide. God is also written about for young children. In the work of the Polish priest, poet and children’s writer Jan Twardowski, the Catholic religion with its familiar rituals and self-evident articles of faith plays an important role. His stories and poems are playful and humorous, but religion is seldom problematic. In *Robin en God* (1996) [Robin and God] by Dutch author Sjoerd Kuypers, on the other hand, six-year-old Robin quizzes his grandfather about God at Christmas — his unreligious parents being unable to answer his questions. In *Granddad’s Prayers of the Earth* (1999) by Doug Wood, a little boy whose grandfather has died finds comfort in what he told him — that everything in nature is connected with God. Authors often give their imagination free play, as in the picture book *God* (1999) by Flemish author Paul Verrept. A little boy discovers

God through his grandfather's telescope. In this story God is a kind, gentle father of rabbits, unconditionally taking sides for his children.

In many of these stories the title acts as a road sign, alerting the reader to the religious content of the book. Certain characters can also function as an explicit religious sign for the reader. In the last decades of the twentieth century the angel again appeared in children's fiction. Ariel in *I et Speil i en gåte* (1993) [*Through a Glass Darkly* (1999)] by Norwegian author Jostein Gaarder is a perfect example of an angel with a sound philosophical schooling. He keeps watch at the sickbed of the girl Cecilie and has profound discussions with her about God, man, life and death. Angels are often linked with the theme of death, as in *Min syster ar an engel* (1995) [*My Little Sister is an Angel*], a picture book by Ulf Stark and Anna Höglund, in *Bedstemor i Himlen* (1996) [*Grandma in Heaven*] by Thomas Winding or in *Painting Sunsets with the Angels* (1996) by Vann Wesson. Angels also play the role of helpers in everyday life. They offer support during difficult decisions, like Pontifex the guardian angel from Andrew Matthews' *From Above with Love* or Haniel in *Haniel kommer in die Stadt* (1989) [*Haniel is Coming to Town*] by Austrian Lene Mayer-Skumanz. Sometimes the guardian angels point out a specific problem to the children in the story: for example, bullying in the novel *The Angel of Nitshill Road* (1992) by Anne Fine. In the tragic *Hanna, Gottes kleinster Engel* (1995) [*Hannah, God's Smallest Angel*] by Angela Sommer-Bodenburg, little Hannah is a shining example, but she cannot survive the violence in the family that takes her in. In *The Angel with a Mouth-Organ* (1984) by Australian Christobel Mattingley the angel is just a sign, a symbol of hope of a better future. The children in this story about the Second World War keep a piece of stained glass depicting an angel as a talisman that will allow them to survive.

In most stories religion is shown to have positive effects. The stories demonstrate how characters find answers to the questions of life in their faith, which allows them to tackle life with more confidence. Other stories opt for an open ending or are more 'neutral'. On the basis of the information that is presented, the reader has to reach her own conclusion. Occasionally religion or the Church as an institution are put in a bad light or hamper the development of the main character. In *The Chocolate War* (1974) by Robert Cormier, the main character Jerry Renault becomes the victim of intimidation and violence tolerated and even stimulated by the friars in high school. In *Deliver Us from Evie* (1994) another American author, M. E. Kerr, describes how a small traditional church community condemns the homosexuality of Evie.

Hidden religiosity

A large portion of contemporary juvenile fictions lacks explicit markers alerting the reader to the religious content of the book. The religious theme may be recognisable as such in the story, or be veiled or hidden to such extent that young readers fail to notice it — even more so since many young readers do not possess the expertise necessary to recognise the religious information (symbolism or intertextuality).

The first genre in which the religious message is often consciously veiled is fantasy. The master of the genre is C. S. Lewis, whose *Narnia* tales contain Christian symbols and themes that do not diminish the fantasy. The young reader can dive into a world of fantasy, while the more mature reader finds herself confronted with a hidden Christian message. Both the symbolism and the numerous references to the Bible add a second layer of meaning to the stories, allowing them to be read as allegories. Other famous children's books such as *Król Maciuś Pierwszy* [*King Matt the First*] (1923) by Janus Korczak, *Le*

Petit Prince (1943) [*The Little Prince*] by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and *Momo* by German author Michael Ende (1973) use the same allegorical technique to introduce profound themes. In these stories the protagonist is a young child, an outsider with an unprejudiced view, who shows the reader what is wrong with society. These characters keep the dream alive of a better world where other laws and values reign.

The Giver (1979) by Lois Lowry is an allegorical tale about a future world where memories, emotions, feelings and moral consciousness have disappeared. Just one character, the 'giver', acts as the keeper of the past. The main character, Jonas, gradually realises the existence of another reality, 'Elsewhere', that transcends this limited world. In *Der alte Mann und die Tauben* (1983) [*The Old Man and the Pigeons*] by Czech author Jan Procházka the hospital is used as a symbol of the rotten society. The pigeons stand for freedom and the spiritual values from which life derives its meaning. The works of the Brazilian liberation theologian Rubem Alves also show allegorical traits. In the fairytale-like *A menina e o pássaro encantado* (1994) [*The Girl and the Enchanted Bird*] he uses the Brazilian concept of *saudades*, an existential feeling of loneliness and melancholy experienced when leaving loved ones behind.

Die letzten Kinder von Schewenborn (1983) [*The Last Children of Schewenborn* (1988)], a dystopian vision of the future by German author Duitse Gudrun Pausewang, bathes in a sombre atmosphere. The story describes the ravage and misery following a nuclear disaster that has caused not just material destruction but also psychological and moral havoc. A small group of survivors faces difficult choices. This pessimistic story forces the reader to consider responsibility, peace and fraternity. Similar themes are treated in other German pictures of the future such as Horst Heidmann's *Auf der Suche nach dem Garten Eden* (1984) [*The Quest for the Garden of Eden*] and Charlotte Kerner's *Geboren 1999* (1989) [*Born 1999*]. Presenting ethical questions about the present in stories about the future is the strategy followed by Canadian writer Monica Hughes and British author Philip Pullman. In his trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000) Pullman juxtaposes science and religion as an institution. In his fantasy world a struggle between freedom and authority, between creativity and subservience takes place. At the same time the author involves the reader in a maelstrom of opinions about the origin of creation and of human consciousness, and together with his characters considers ethical questions about good and evil.

Fables are traditionally used to convey ethical norms and values in an imaginative way. In India the stories from the *Panchatantra* have acquired classical status in children's literature. They are mostly fables with animals or elements of nature as the main characters, have a didactic purpose and propagate moral values. The stories have become well known outside of India. The Italian version of *Varma Nishu, Il Lago Della Luna e altre favole dell'India* (1994) [*The Lake of the Moon and Other Fables of India*] immediately won an important award. In Africa and the Caribbean, stories about Anansi the Spider or Leuk the Hare are extremely popular. L. S. Senghor in 1953 wrote the story of the clever hare in *La Belle Histoire de Leuk-le-lièvre – cours élémentaire des écoles d'Afrique noire* [*The Beautiful Story of Leuk the Hare – Elementary Course for the Schools of Black Africa*]. Western children's literature also presents animals in books for young children. In *The Story of Ferdinand* (1936), the tale of a young bull who refuses to fight, Robert Lawson openly pleads for pacifism.

Many books for children describe the conflict between good and evil. In *Krabat* (1971) by German author Otfried Preussler, Krabat tries to beat the master of the black mill (the devil) who holds the apprentices in thrall. Timm in *Timm Thaler oder das verkaufte Lachen* (1962) [*Timm Thaler or The Boy Who Sold His Laughter*] by James

Krüss, confronts the devil who tricked him out of his ability to laugh, and in *Mo* (1994) by Costa Rican author Lara Rios a girl wanting to become a Sukia or Shaman must travel to the land of Kus, the malevolent master of the goblins; in the Japanese novel *Sorairo Magatama* (1989) [*Dragon Sword and Wind Child* (1993)] Noriko Ogiwara describes the conflict between light and darkness, inspired by ancient myths. Last but not least, Harry Potter can be seen as a moral crusader in his fight against evil, although he operates as a secular knight.

A second group of stories with a hidden religious content are autobiographical narratives, a genre that has been in the ascendant during the past decades. This is related to the outspokenness of a generation of authors wishing to come to terms with their traumatic experiences during the war, but also to a new open mentality in juvenile fiction that treats children seriously and wants to confront them with the darker side of existence.

Jewish autobiographical war stories can be found in many European literatures, but also in the USA and Israel — the destinations of many Jewish emigrants. Books such as *Wie niet weg is wordt gezien* (1981) [*Hide and Seek* (1991)] (by Dutch author Ida Vos, *I Am a Star* (1986) by Inge Auerbacher, *The Devil in Vienna* by Austrian writer Dorris Orgel (1978), *Touch Wood* by French author Renée Roth-Hano (1986) and *No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War* (1998) by Anita Lobel narrate how the authors managed to survive in spite of being Jewish. Looking back to difficult times in these 'personal narratives', the authors discover the ambiguity of their faith: it is a liability but at the same time an essential part of their identity. Prayers play an important role in the difficult conditions of war, but often go unanswered. The Jewish author Uri Orlev in *Hayale Oferet* (1956) [*The Lead Soldiers* (1979)] describes the power of human imagination that helped him survive.

Other religions also find a place in autobiographical stories. The Senegalese writer Nafisatou Diallo colourfully describes his Islamic roots in *De Tilène au plateau: une enfance dakaroise* (1975) [*Dakar Childhood* (1982)], just as Moroccan Rabia Zennaki in *La Petite Princesse de Sidi Bou Medien* (1996) [The Little Princess of Sidi Bou Medien]. Jonathan Addleton, who grew up in a family of Baptist missionaries, in *Some Far and Distant Place* (1997) looks back to that strange place where Muslims and Christians met.

A third group of books that treat fundamental questions in plain terms are the 'problem novels'. The new realism in juvenile fiction has pleaded for openness and disregard for taboos since the 1960s. Young readers were allowed to be confronted with tales about suffering, death and the fundamental questions related to them. The Austrian writer Karl Bruckner acquired world-wide fame with *Sadako will leben* (1961) [*The Day of the Bomb* (1962)], the story of the girl Sadako, a victim of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. But death can strike much closer to home. In *Ein Baum für Mama* (1995) [A Tree for Mama] by German writer Sophie Brandes and in *Ik moet je iets heel jammers vertellen* (1996) [*Something Very Sorry* (1997)] by Dutch author Arno Bohlmeijer the mother of the family dies. Her faith offers the other family members a glimpse of hope and opens a perspective for the future. In *Popura no aki* (1997) [A Poplar in Autumn] by Japanese author Yumoto Kazumi the father of young Chiati dies, and an old female neighbour helps her to find a way to love life again. When the neighbour encourages Chiati to write letters, she restores the severed bond with her dead father. After the death of the old lady, Chiati looks back upon the warm friendship that helped her to overcome a difficult period of grief.

Several children's books use stars or a dancing kite to symbolise the enduring bond with a deceased parent, grandparent or family member. In *Kan du vissla Johanna?* (1994)

[Can You Whistle, Johanna?] by Ulf Stark and Anna Höglund the kite is a reminder of the grandfather. In *Yo las Quería* (1985) [I Loved Them] by Spanish duo Maria Martinez Vendrell and Carme Solé Vendrell, the character Myrthe is reminded of her dead mother by watching the stars at night. In *Lo Stralisco* (1987) [*Radiant Herb*] by Italian Roberto Piumini the young protagonist is himself confronted with death, but his master teaches him to say goodbye to life with dignity.

In other stories the young protagonist is faced with responsibility or guilt. In *Alan and Naomi* (1977) by Myron Levoy, Alan is charged with the care of the Jewish girl Naomi, who is traumatised by her war experiences. In spite of his efforts, Alan does not succeed in inspiring his friend with the courage to live. Other novels such as *Collision Course* (1978) by Nigel Hinton, *Blackwater* by Eve Bunting (1999) and *Preacher's Boy* by Katherine Paterson (2001) poignantly describe the moral dilemma and the psychological evolution of a young protagonist who caused a (fatal) accident and initially tries to run from his responsibility. Aided by others, he can bear the confrontation with the truth and his own guilt.

On an abstract level the problems of suffering and of care for others can also be found in *Juul* (1996), a picture book by Flemish author Gregje de Maeyer containing photographs of a wooden statue by artist Koen van Mechelen. The protagonist is prepared to do anything to please the bullies that harass him: he shaves his red hair, cuts off his sticky-out ears and closes his squinting eyes until he becomes a human wreck. The girl Marieke is touched by his helplessness and takes care of him.

Religion is not always presented as a naive remedy in juvenile fiction. In *The Passport of Mallam Iliá* (1960) Nigerian author Cyprian Ekwensi describes how after years of inner turmoil the protagonist kills the vicious Usuman, his rival in love and the murderer of his wife. The solace he finds in religion after his journey to Mecca does not last and cannot appease the feelings of revenge. In *Words By Heart* by Ouida Sebestyen (1983) the black girl Lena discovers how important religion is in the life of her father, but also how vain the words of the Bible are to most whites.

Conclusions

The broad spectrum of texts shows that faith and religion continue to attract a great deal of attention in juvenile fiction. In the course of the past century the presentation and image of the 'other' — including the 'religious other' — have changed significantly. In the first part of the twentieth century, the other was often presented as the enemy in adventures or historical tales. In missionary tales he was the inferior 'heathen' who had to be converted to the true faith as soon as possible. In recent decades the other also appears in realistic stories, often as the protagonist or as an equal partner. In addition, quite a number of information books present the 'other' religion in an open and attractive manner.

On a theoretical level the discussion persists whether books about a specific religion are best written by followers of that religion (insider texts) or rather by others (outsider texts) who often claim a more objective perspective. Followers are often very sceptical about the presentation of their religion by outsiders. They fear that others may be led by prejudices and stereotypes, and have too little affinity with the dynamics of the faith. Because of this their stories lack authenticity. The outsiders themselves consider this rejection of their right to write freely about any subject as a form of censorship.

The most important question is probably whether religious subjects have any impact on young readers and in this way have a positive influence on the process of socialisation. Do

stories dealing with the fundamental questions of life offer a solid basis for an ethics of virtue, or is their entertainment value more important than their formative influence? Can we share the optimism of C. S. Lewis, who believed that 'hidden' religious symbols also take root in the memories of the young reader, or do we follow the pessimists, who claim that stories read in youth vanish without trace from our memories?

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24 The development of illustrated texts and picture books

Joyce Irene Whalley

Children learn to read pictures before they learn to read words. Pictures also form the earliest records of man's attempts at communication: cave paintings, church murals, stained glass windows – all testify to the importance placed on pictorial representation. It is surprising therefore to realise how long it took for due significance to be placed on the illustration of children's books. Early books for the young were not without pictures, but they were not illustrated books.

What is the difference? A good illustrated book is one where the accompanying pictures enhance or add depth to the text. A bad illustrated book is one where the pictures lack relevance to the text, or are ill placed and poorly drawn or reproduced – these are books with pictures rather than illustrated books. In this outline study of illustrated children's books we shall trace the rise of the importance of pictures and the improvement in standards of illustration, until on occasions the pictures assume greater significance than the text – or even replace it.

The emphasis in this study is on books for children's leisure reading, not textbooks. Nevertheless, the first illustrated book of any significance for children was in fact a Latin textbook. This was *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, by Johann Amos Comenius, published in 1659. There had been many Latin textbooks before this, but Comenius, an educationalist from Moravia, was among the first to realise that children best remember things they have *seen* rather than merely read about. His book was translated into English by Charles Hoole in 1659. It consisted of a picture at the top of every page, with the name of each object depicted in it listed below in Latin and then in English. The crude little woodcut illustrations covered a great variety of topics, both familiar and unfamiliar, and so provided the widest range of pictures for the young then available. The book was popular throughout Europe and remained in use in schools for many years. A popular imitation in English was James Greenwood's *The London Vocabulary*, which by 1771 had reached its sixteenth edition.

But the point about all these books, to our eyes at least, is that the illustrations were so crude. This was not because good illustration was impossible in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although England did not have a school of illustrators such as existed in France at the time. There were, however, many competent engravers who rendered their French models very finely, as we can see from contemporary adult books. But the models for children's book illustration were taken from the lower end of the market, from chap-books and broadsheets, selling to a partially literate readership at a fraction of the cost of the better-class adult book. This fact is in itself indicative of the attitude at that time to children's books, their production and illustration.

It is appropriate here to consider the methods available in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the actual reproduction of illustrations, which were of course largely

manual processes. For children's books in particular, the most important method of reproducing illustration was by woodcut – a process that goes back to the late fifteenth century. In this method, everything that was not required to print was cut away on the block so that the resulting illustration was one of mass rather than line. Such illustrations lacked subtlety, especially in the small size common in children's books. But the method was cheap and the blocks could go through the press at the same time as the type, so that in an illustrated book, text and pictures could be printed together. Children's books have always been required to be cheaper than adult books, and in a society where such books were little regarded, this form of simplified – or crude – illustration was considered quite suitable. It was also the method used in the production of chapbooks and broadsheets, which themselves lay at the cheaper end of the market.

A superior form of illustration, and one used in technical books and the more expensive eighteenth-century adult works, was engraving. This is an intaglio process, by which the line of the drawing is engraved on to a copper plate, which is subsequently inked for printing. To reproduce this incised inked line, the plate has to be put under great pressure in a printing press, and cannot therefore go through at the same time as the type, which is raised. As a result, any book using engraving as a means of illustration either had to go twice through the press, or else it had its illustrations and text printed separately (this was the more common method). Engraving was certainly used in children's books, especially in the more expensive ones produced towards the end of the eighteenth century. It was also used by John Harris and William Darton in the mainly didactic works produced by them in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Engraved illustration permitted the reproduction of far greater detail in a picture, and a good engraver could produce very fine effects of line as well as of mass, giving much greater variety to the illustrations.

But the use of this more expensive process of illustration indicates that a change had taken place in the course of the eighteenth century in the whole attitude to children and their books. This change was initiated to a large extent by one man, John Newbery, who in 1744 set up his shop in St Paul's Churchyard, London, where he produced a wide range of children's books. He was not the first to do this – Thomas Boreman had preceded him in this new approach to children's books. But Newbery was the first to appreciate, and to exploit commercially, the market in illustrated children's books. He realised that his new product had to be reasonably cheap and so his books were small – no disadvantage in young eyes – and certainly illustrated, but by the cheapest method, namely the woodcut. Few names of the artists employed by Newbery are known, and many of the pictures he published were used again and again, in his own or other publishers' books. This was made possible by the general nature of the pictures: two children in a garden, a coach and horses, a lady and a child in a room. Such basic pictures could easily have stories written round them, though of course there were even at that date illustrations specially commissioned for specific books.

By the end of the eighteenth century the idea of illustrated books for children had become established and some of their authors had become well known – although others still preferred to hide behind such phrases as 'by the author of ...' or 'by a lady'. These books tended to emphasise religious and moral matters (not good illustrative material), or social behaviour which was seen as the key to prosperity. By contrast, the early nineteenth century turned towards more factual themes. Children's books were of course written by adults and for the most part bought by adults for their children. It is surprising, therefore, that such poor-quality material was for so long allowed to circulate among the young by people who would not have tolerated similar standards in their own books. Moreover it

was the most scorned type of reading – the chapbook – which in the end effected the revolution in children’s books.

The chapbook was a small, crudely illustrated booklet of about 2½ x 4 inches, which could be easily carried in the chapman or pedlar’s pack as he traversed the countryside selling ribbons, pins, ballads and other small items to villages and farmsteads. The middle-class child probably only obtained sight of these cheap booklets through the servants’ hall, but whether the child saw them or not, they certainly flourished among the poorer and semi-literate members of the population. Their content was varied: folk tales, nursery rhymes, ballads, riddles, short entertaining or moral tales. All these continued to flourish as a substratum of literature, ready to surface when the time was right and a change had taken place in children’s reading, when fairy tales, folk tales and nursery rhymes were once again permitted in the nursery.

But while the crude woodcut illustration continued to prevail in the cheaper productions for children, certain improvements were taking place. By the early nineteenth century the rationalism so much in favour for children’s literature was being supplemented by an appreciation of new discoveries of all kinds. The publishers William Darton and John Harris caught the public mood admirably in the books they produced over the next few decades. Nearly always didactic in content, these books sought to bring to children an awareness of the wider world beyond the British Isles, as well as to explore in depth the wonders of their own country. The titles of such works are themselves revealing. John Harris produced a number of travel books specifically for ‘Little Tarry-at-Home Travellers’, while there were also such works as *Scenes of British Wealth* (1823), *Rural Employments* (1820) and *City Scenes; or A Peep into London for Children* (1828). Publications of this sort demanded, and got, plenty of illustration. But since detail was essential in these pictures, engraving was the method most frequently employed to reproduce them. This often meant that the books contained texts which were separated from the pictures. These were usually grouped together, two or three to a plate, for the technical reasons described earlier. This was not a very satisfactory arrangement for the young child. Nevertheless, these books, often with the pictures hand-coloured, were a popular if rather expensive contribution to children’s reading. The names of the artists employed are rarely known – it would appear that many quite well-known illustrators were prepared to contribute pictures to children’s books, but at this period the standing of juvenile publishing was not such as to openly attract the named artist. Much work remains to be done on the identity of artists working for both William Darton and John Harris.

By the 1830s there were various methods of illustration in use in children’s books, which were now being produced in considerable quantity. The didactic books still led the field, but there were also religious and moral tales, now often by named authors, and it was certainly accepted that for the most part children’s books should be illustrated. The earlier engraving had been done on copper plate, which had a limited life. By the 1820s onward, it was found that the use of steel plates gave longer runs, and so steel engraving frequently took the place of copper in the more popular works, such as the ‘Keepsakes’ and gift books of the period. Though cheaper and longer lasting, steel engraving had one disadvantage; it gave an appearance of coldness and lack of subtlety to the illustrations where it was employed. Lithography, the invention of Alois Senefelder at the end of the eighteenth century, was also used in children’s books, but less frequently in Britain than on the European continent. It had the same disadvantage as engraving, in that it too needed to go through the printing press separately from the text, so that books illustrated by lithography were expensive and usually had far fewer illustrations. There remained the woodcut, but by the 1830s the improved version of

white-line wood engraving pioneered by Thomas Bewick was almost universally used in preference to the cruder woodcut. Thomas and his brother John had both themselves illustrated children's books, but it was in the 1830s and 1840s that their method of engraving on wood became more widely used in children's books.

The 1840s saw great developments in the field of children's books, in content and in production. Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*, and the first translations of Hans Andersen's *Fairy Tales* both appeared in 1846. The *Fairy Tales* of the Brothers Grimm had appeared with Cruikshank's illustrations as early as 1823–6, although their circulation was probably not widespread until later. But equally important for the acceptance of nonsense and fairy tale in the nursery was the advent of Henry Cole and Joseph Cundall. Henry Cole was a man who had a finger in many pies baked in the mid-nineteenth century, including such outstanding events as the Great Exhibition of 1851. But he was also a father, and as such was appalled at the state of children's books when he came to provide them for his own family. Under the pseudonym 'Felix Summerly' he instituted the Home Treasury series. In this he published fairy tales and nursery rhymes, commissioning well-known artists of the day, many of whom he knew personally, to illustrate them. He also commissioned special covers for his books. Joseph Cundall, with his interest in producing well-designed books, was the right man to work with Henry Cole. Such productions should have been outstanding, but it must be confessed that to modern eyes the Home Treasury series often appears somewhat dull. The cover designs were based on various traditional arabesque patterns, taken from older bindings, and were usually printed in gold on coloured paper, but they were not eye-catching, especially for children. The illustrations were of good quality, relevant and attractive – but (no doubt because of the cost) very few in number. These booklets were certainly very tasteful productions, but left to themselves children do not necessarily exhibit good taste, preferring a brightly coloured cover to a well-designed one. Nevertheless, a precedent had been set by which all aspects of a book designed for children should be given the same degree of attention previously only allocated to adult books. Moreover, Henry Cole's standing ensured wide publicity for these new ideas – he was known to be a friend of the Prince Consort, and later became the first Director of the South Kensington Museum (later the Victoria and Albert Museum).

By the end of the 1840s, well-known book artists were no longer reluctant to put their names to their work in children's books. The establishment of popular illustrated papers during this period, *The Illustrated London News* and *Punch* among them, ensured a regular demand for good illustrators and engravers, thus encouraging a native school to flourish.

By the 1850s many of the artists whose names were to become well known in the next decade were already producing notable work. In 1851 the *Punch* artist Richard Doyle produced illustrations to accompany John Ruskin's text *The King of the Golden River*, so getting the new decade off to a good start. Others working in the 1850s were Hablot K. Browne (Phiz), one of the Dickens illustrators, and 'Alfred Crowquill', a pseudonym for the two Forrester brothers. George Cruikshank's work spanned a large part of the nineteenth century, starting with his illustrations for the Brothers Grimm's tales in the 1820s, but in the middle of this decade he started to issue his own Fairy Library.

Whereas almost all the children's book illustrators of this period used wood engraving, Cruikshank used etching. This method, like engraving, is an intaglio process, but uses acid to bite the line on the plate rather than a burin or graver; it too can give a fine detailed picture, as we can see from Cruikshank's own pictures for his *Cinderella* of 1854. Also using etching, and writing and illustrating his own stories, was Charles Henry Bennett, another *Punch* illustrator.

Having now reached the middle of the nineteenth century, it is a suitable point to consider the state of children's books, and how they differed from those of the beginning of the century. In the first place there were far more of them. The prosperous middle class now provided an extensive reading public, while the tremendous technical improvements made good-quality illustrated books more widely available and relatively cheaper. The subject matter too had changed. Entertainment was much more to the fore, and nonsense, folk and fairy tales, as well as longer stories, were now provided for children's reading. Other more subtle trends are noticeable in the illustrations of the period. Following the popularity of Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* in 1844, there was a fashion for a more primitive or archaïcising style, which would certainly amuse the young, and a tendency to facetiousness. We can also see the beginning of the cult of childhood, as the illustrators start to depict coy, quaint or sentimental children – something almost unthinkable at the beginning of the century. Obviously didactic, religious and moral books continued to be published – after all, even today children's books still have an underlying moral tone, even if it is scarcely noticeable.

The best illustration was still uncoloured, although some books were issued in two kinds: plain or coloured. The colouring at this date, in children's books at least, was still by hand. But experiments were taking place to produce a commercially acceptable form of colour printing – it was in fact already available, but it was expensive. Colour became much more widely used from the 1850s onward, especially in the popular 'toy books'. The toy book had nothing to do with toys, but was basically a publishers' description of a paper-covered picture book. In its earliest manifestations it consisted of about eight pages, with a minimum of text and a picture on each page, which was usually blank on the back. Various artists obviously worked on the 'toy books' but few early publications can be attributed to known illustrators, and some must have been done by hack workers employed for the job. But these booklets were cheap and colourful, and covered a wide range of topics in a very basic way, whether it was a summary account of the story of Red Riding Hood or Robinson Crusoe, or a brief description of the wonders of the world. These books were at first hand-coloured, often by children employed as cheap labour, but they were also among the earliest to bring colour printing – of a sort – to the mass market of child readers. In the hands of a master they could indeed become works of art in their own right, as we shall see towards the end of the century.

As we move into the 1860s we reach the peak period of British book illustration for children and adults alike, since by now the illustrators worked equally for both the juvenile and the adult market, boldly putting their names with those of the authors on the title page. Indeed, not only were some artists their own story writers, as we have seen, but sometimes the artist could even dominate the book – Harrison Weir, the famous animal artist, was one such example; the text had now become subsidiary to the pictures.

Not only did Britain now produce black-and-white illustrators of very high calibre, but these also had the satisfaction of being much in demand, so that security further encouraged them to work to the highest standards. The spread of popular illustrated papers continued, while the increase in the actual reading public, and a middle class with more leisure, all encouraged the production of books of all kinds. This was the era of Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Trollope, and also of the gift book (the Victorian equivalent of the 'coffee-table' book) – and all these works were lavishly illustrated, providing plenty of work for the book artist.

Although colour was now more prevalent and improving in quality, it is interesting to note that the best illustrators of the period still preferred to work in black and white, in

the method of wood engraving derived from Thomas Bewick. But we should always remember that in the production of these illustrations two sets of hands were at work – the artist who drew the original artwork, and the engraver who engraved it on the block ready for printing. But here too in Britain at this period a good school of engravers had developed, the best known often working for the firm of the Dalziel Brothers. Artists already mentioned, such as Richard (Dicky) Doyle, C. H. Bennett, and ‘Crowquill’, all produced outstanding children’s books during this decade. There were new names, too, at least as far as children’s books were concerned, who were often already artists in their own right. One of these was John Millais, with his illustrations for books such as *Little Songs for Me to Sing* (1865), or Arthur Hughes, who produced the evocative drawings for George MacDonald’s *At the Back of the North Wind* (1869), as well as other similar high-quality illustrations, all usually set spaciously on the page.

The book was now considered as a work of art in itself, and layout and cover were, in the best instances, receiving as much care as the text and illustrations. Illustration could also be much more sophisticated too, as we see in the often dramatic work of Ernest Griset. Griset was for long a rather neglected artist, though much appreciated in his own time. His illustrations to a work like *The Purgatory of Peter the Cruel* (1868), in which the incidents are sometimes shown from an unusual viewpoint, such as that of a fly or a frog, and his melodramatic designs for Aesop’s *Fables* or *Robinson Crusoe* (reminiscent of Gustav Doré), put him high on the list of mid-century illustrators.

But surely dominating the mid-1860s and early 1870s we must consider the two *Alice* books by Lewis Carroll. Here we have perhaps for the first time an artist and a writer working together to produce a definitive form of an illustrated story. Others have since tried to interpret Carroll’s *Wonderland* creatures, but surely no one has portrayed them so memorably as their first illustrator, Sir John Tenniel. Subsequent artists have also given permanent form to a writer’s imagination (Shepard’s illustrations for A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* books spring to mind), but here in a book for children was the first complete interpretation of a fantasy world, which has survived more than a century of change in children’s books.

Would the *Alice* books have survived to the same degree if they had been unillustrated? It is an interesting speculation, since it can also be applied to other books where text and pictures complement each other so perfectly – in Beatrix Potter’s work for example. Certainly Lewis Carroll depicted his creatures verbally with great care, but readers would have been left to imagine the exact form of the *Wonderland* creatures without Tenniel’s guide. This is perhaps the great mark of a good book illustrator, in that the visual forms they give to the text linger in the mind, whereas those of lesser illustrators (and there have been many of *Alice* alone) do not.

Some of the finest children’s books date from the 1860s, a notable period for British book illustration, when known illustrators worked with book designers to produce works for children which were as fine inside as out, and as good reading as viewing. But Sir John Millais, Arthur Hughes, Ernest Griset and others were all producing high-quality black-and-white work during this period, just at the moment when colour printing and photography were about to be applied to children’s books in such a way that, for a time at least, progress would seem to go backwards rather than forwards. For it is very rare that any new process immediately reaches its peak – there has to be a period of trial and development.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, technical developments were increasing in all fields of book production and helped to satisfy the immense growth in children’s

reading. This increase in readership was brought about by the various Education Acts, starting with that of 1870. With the expansion of literacy went also the further development of the illustrated journal, widening in scope and reaching lower down the social scale – with the consequent need for ever cheaper productions.

At the end of the century there was a conscious effort to reduce costs, which led to the employment once again of hack artists – often unnamed as in the past – together with poor-quality paper and type, as we can see from those journals and cheap books which have survived. In colour printing, especially the three-colour process, there was both good and bad, and on the whole, the good was much more expensive. Fortunately the ‘toy book’, in the hands of publishers such as Darton, Routledge and Warne, ensured that the standard was largely maintained, aided by the arrival on the scene in the last quarter of the nineteenth century of a great triumvirate of illustrators, Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott and Kate Greenaway, together with the remarkably competent colour printer, Edmund Evans.

Of the three artists mentioned, Randolph Caldecott was probably most truly a book illustrator. Walter Crane was certainly more prolific, but his other work in the decorative arts tended to spill over into his books, making him more of a book decorator than an illustrator. This is particularly evident in his ‘toy books’, where contemporary motifs – the fan, the sunflower, the general air of japonaiserie – manifest themselves on nearly every page. If we look at Crane’s *Sleeping Beauty*, for example, we find the whole of the centre-page spread covered in illustration and design, and looking more like a decorative tile than a book picture. The same is equally true of his illustrations to *Goody Two-Shoes* and *Aladdin*.

By contrast, Randolph Caldecott made great use of space in his illustrations, allowing his line to speak for itself, and his pictures to enhance the (often traditional) texts he chose to illustrate. In *The Queen of Hearts*, for example, the simple basic nursery rhyme is ‘expanded’ by the pictorial comment of the cat who has seen the knave steal the tarts – no text is used, or indeed needed. The same is equally true of his other ‘toy books’, such as *The House That Jack Built* or *The Three Jovial Huntsmen*.

Kate Greenaway, however, was to some extent in a category of her own, and for the most part she chose to write and illustrate her own poems – *Under the Window* and *Marigold Garden* are perhaps her best-known books. She ‘invented’ a style of dress and a ‘never-never’ period of her own, in which she placed her elegantly clad and immaculately clean children. Her work was highly stylised and very popular – although not very well drawn (her figures tend to have no bodies under their clothes) – and this popularity has remained firm to the present day. These books were not cheap, with their fine colour printing and high-quality illustrations, but they formed a small if influential section of the children’s book market.

By contrast there was a great outpouring of muddy-coloured and indifferently illustrated works, often printed in Germany (Bavaria for the most part), which have survived in large quantities to show how widespread they were. These frequently contained not the traditional nursery rhymes or folk tales used by Caldecott and Crane, but *ad hoc* verses and short tales made to accompany pictures – one can hardly call them illustrations. The use of photographic methods and of the three-colour process led to a lowering of standards, while at the same time providing school and Sunday School prizes and Christmas and birthday gifts in plenty. Such books demanded little from the child, and indicated their level of approach by their titles: *Our Little Dots* or *Little Chicks* are examples – and their poorly drawn and indifferently coloured pictures matched their titles.

In the early years of the twentieth century the highly sophisticated type of work by Kate Greenaway, for example, was carried to extremes by the productions of several artists whose books lie on the borderline between those for children and those for adults. Kate Greenaway's books had been intended for children, with their simple rhymes and games, but illustrators like the Frenchman Edmund Dulac, Kay Nielsen from Denmark, and Arthur Rackham offered a fantasy world which was scarcely that of the child. Of the quality of their illustrations to well-known works like *Cinderella*, Hans Andersen and others, there can be no doubt, and the lavishness of production ensured that the books were duly treasured, but they stand to one side of the general production of children's books.

Although the names of Rackham, Nielsen and Dulac may be linked together as indicating a particular type of lavish book for children, their styles were very different. Of the three, Rackham was possibly the most significant because of the stories he chose to illustrate, and also because his very personal style invited imitation. Even today it is possible to describe a woodland scene as 'Rackhamesque', and the picture which arises in the mind's eye is revealing. For Rackham made good use of line as well as colour, at the same time using both to convey a twilight fairy world, based on the factual (trees, flowers, buildings), but to which his art added an air of fantasy, sometimes even of the grotesque and the eerie. Although a frisson of fear does not come amiss to some children, as Charles Lamb pointed out in his essay 'Witches and Other Night Fears' (*Essays of Elia*, 1823) the more sensitive child may be greatly alarmed by illustrations, even in so-called children's books. Both Nielsen and Dulac relied more on a subtle use of colour rather than line, and both made use of oriental and other exotic touches to conjure up the romance in the children's books they illustrated.

Almost contemporary with these illustrators, and with a stronger touch of the real world, was Beatrix Potter. This writer, like Charles Henry Bennett, was also her own illustrator, and as a result her artistic creations have a homogeneous quality with her text. Unlike the fine (and expensive) colour books mentioned above, Beatrix Potter was determined that her books should be of a size and price to suit children – she saw her books as quite definitely aimed at the child reader, and many of her stories were first tried out on young relatives or friends. She was particularly concerned that picture and text should match each other on the page, and that both should progress from page to page with the story. Although she used only black-and-white sketches in her privately printed *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901), the commercial edition subsequently issued by Frederick Warne (1902) was coloured, and the vast majority of the pictures in her subsequent books were in colour. Where black and white was used, it was usually subservient to the colour pages. Beatrix Potter based her art on the real world – she made many detailed studies of animals, flowers and scenes before she began to illustrate each story. Her tales are of course fantastic – but in quite a different way from those artists whom we have just been considering. There it is the trappings of their art that give rise to the fantasy – it lies in the colour, the line, the mystery. But Beatrix Potter takes identifiable places and animals and, without comment, gives them lives and speech which make them live and move in a world which is both ours and theirs. It is probably this mixture, together with the concern for the physical make-up of the little books, that has kept her work among the foremost of the twentieth-century illustrated books.

But the first two decades of the twentieth century saw a great outpouring of books of all kinds for children in Britain. The Education Acts of the previous century and the provision of a public library service all ensured a good reading public – though not necessarily a

public for good books. There was much ‘run of the mill’ illustration in weekly comics and in the popular Christmas annuals and ‘bumper books’. But a lot of good work was also being provided for children, often in black and white to ensure relative cheapness. The Robinson brothers produced a wide range of good-quality illustrations during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth century. William Heath Robinson in particular gave new interpretations to the work of Hans Andersen and others, as well as illustrating his own stories for children. Although his best work is perhaps in his black-and-white drawings, he too was a subtle master of the three-colour process. One interesting feature of early twentieth-century illustration was the use of silhouette: it was to be found in works as diverse as Rudyard Kipling’s illustrations to his own *Just So Stories* (1894), W. Heath Robinson’s edition of Hans Andersen’s tales, and Arthur Rackham’s illustrations to C. S. Evans’s retelling of *Cinderella* (1919).

European contributions came from Hoffman, and Wilhelm Busch, whose *Max und Moritz* cartoons were to influence a wide range of later illustrators. From the USA, Howard Pyle was important on both sides of the Atlantic at the end of the century, together with his pupils Maxfield Parrish and Jessie Willcox Smith.

There were indeed many prolific and competent artists working for the children’s market in the decades before the First World War, besides those who catered more for the luxury trade. Interestingly, most of their work was done in black and white, though their range within this limitation was quite remarkable. Among such artists was H. J. Ford, who provided the illustrations for Andrew Lang’s widely read twelve colour fairy books, which began with *The Blue Fairy Book* in 1889 and ended with *The Lilac Fairy Book* in 1910. Norman Ault and the Brock brothers were also working in the early decades of the century along similar lines, while an artist of rather greater stature and imagination was Leslie Brooke, whose *Johnny Crow’s Garden*, published in 1903, was deservedly popular. Having noticed at the beginning of this chapter the influence of continental artists on British book-making, it is interesting to note at this period some examples of influences working in the opposite direction. This was especially true of Maurice Boutet de Monval, whose books were influenced by Greenaway, although his colours are more subtle, and he has a charming sense of humour. He in turn greatly influenced the work of Henriette Willebeek Le Mair, a Dutch artist, with her flat pastel colours and rather flat ornamental pictures. Her work was very popular in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially accompanied by nursery rhymes, and several of her books have been recently reprinted.

In the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century there were almost as many women illustrators as men; notable were the Scot Jessie M. King, Anne Anderson, Jessie Wilcox Smith and Mabel Lucie Attwell. But the immediate future lay with what was almost a throwback to an earlier style. The work of William Nicholson, Cecil Aldin and John Hassall carried with it overtones of the chapbook style of the 1890s. Simple masses and flat colours, set on a spacious page, were quite striking when they first appeared, as we can see in such work as Nicholson’s *An Alphabet* (1898) and Aldin and Hassall’s *Two Well-worn Shoe Stories* (1899). It was to some extent this simpler style which was to appeal to the book-makers of the 1920s and 1930s, though all too often these lacked the courage to allow the use of blank spaces which had contributed so much to the success of the earlier artists’ work. But the 1914–18 war made a break which, though not immediately apparent in the children’s books of the 1920s, soon asserted itself, and a new era of children’s book illustration began to develop.

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25 The picture book

Modern and postmodern

Michèle Anstey and Geoff Bull

In recent times, dramatic influences such as changes in technology, globalisation and mass marketing have not only changed the way we conduct our business but have also impinged upon traditional forms of communication and sociocultural icons such as picture books. As the place of picture books in society is rethought, so they are constructed in different ways and this has impacted on the way we read and write them.

Defining picture books

Townsend (1987: 304), writing originally in 1965, defined picture books in terms of illustration. Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1986: 81) introduced the concept of a typology of picture books where either the illustrations or the text were predominant. In both cases picture books were seen as the province of 'young children' although specific age ranges were not defined. Writers such as Huck *et al.* (1987: 197), Cullinan (1989: 29) and Saxby (1997: 184) were more concerned with the integration and relative roles of illustration and text than they were about the age of the audience. Debate over the role of illustration led some art historians and authors to suggest that 'true' picture books were solely the creation of the artist where the illustrations were seen more as a work of art rather than a different text that had its own role to play in the construction of the narrative. Later, picture books came to be seen as sites where illustrative and written texts related to each other in a way that went beyond merely supporting one another in the telling of the story; for example, the illustrative text might provide additional meaning and clarity to the narrative. Lewis (1990: 142) suggested that this characteristic, the interplay of written and illustrative text, makes picture books a supergenre.

Since the illustrative text has a role in the creation of the narrative, it produces a continuous interplay and has the potential to construct multiple narratives. Conceivably a picture book can contain more meanings and be able to be read in more ways than the novel, by virtue of the presence of both the illustrative and written texts. Therefore in Bakhtin's (1981) view a picture book can be polyphonic or have many voices that can work contrapuntally combining to produce a dialogic whole, consisting of many different genres that continually 'reshape' to produce different meanings. More recently both Kiefer (1995: 6) and Sheahan (1995: 15) referred to this concept as 'combination' or 'harmony'. While this position is supported by de Certeau (1986), Foucault (1973: 9) and Stephens (1992: 158), there are those such as Tolkien (1964) and Bettelheim (1976) who believe that pictures add little meaning to written text.

The issue of the intended audience of picture books is still debated. Recently, because of the blurring of boundaries between picture books and other genres, and between adult

and children's literature, by picture-book authors such as Gary Crew in Australia, Anthony Browne in the UK and David Macaulay in the USA, the notion that picture books are only for younger readers is difficult to maintain. Critics such as Rudd (1994) and Hollindale (1997) have questioned the idea that the readability level or degree of difficulty of some books is a sufficient reason for denying young readers access to more sophisticated texts. They take the view that readers may make many different readings of a book at different times and may read themselves into meaning each time a particular book is revisited. Similarly we would suggest that issues of audience and age with regard to picture books has become largely irrelevant, as childhood and reading are socially and culturally determined and, as we will demonstrate in this chapter, picture books adapted and will continue to adapt to change in society.

We propose the following definition: a picture book is a book in which the written text and the illustrative text are in concordance and work interdependently to produce meaning (Anstey and Bull 2000: 5).

In this chapter we have limited our discussion mainly to Australia, the UK, and the USA, and generally to books of agreed historical importance. For a detailed history see Whalley and Chester (1988) and Anstey and Bull (2000).

1900–39: the emergence of the picture book

In the early 1900s the dramatic improvement in the technology of colour and offset printing, using the four-colour process, led to a new focus on literature for young children. The first full-colour 'true' picture books of the century were those by Beatrix Potter, for example *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), reflecting an ironic view of the cautionary approach to childhood. With the work of Leslie Brooke (not full colour), notably *Johnny Crow's Garden* (1903) and *Johnny Crow's Party* (1907), they were almost the only true picture books to be produced until the 1920s. Illustration flourished in the 'gift book', elaborately produced and illustrated books with full colour plates meant for the whole family to enjoy, and these continued to be popular up to the First World War. Examples in the UK were *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) illustrated by Arthur Rackham and *Stories from the Arabian Nights* (1907) illustrated by Edmund Dulac.

Up to 1917 there were few books illustrated by Australian illustrators and produced in Australia for Australian children, a cause of concern in Australia's literary and publishing community. For example, Atha Westbury's *Australian Fairy Tales* and *The Youngsters of Murray Home* were published in London at the turn of the century and illustrated by English artist A. J. Johnson. Muir (1982: 39) reports that the *Bulletin* magazine consequently ran a competition and later William Brookes published a selection of rhymes from it using all Australian illustrators to illustrate them. Out of this grew the publication of the Australian icons of May Gibbs' *Snugglypot and Cuddlepie* (1918) and Norman Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding* (1918), the equivalent of the British and American gift books.

The period 1900 to 1939 saw the rise in importance of the picture book. It became an important object of study and the role of illustration was recognised and changed as the interdependence of illustrative and written text was established. Other important characteristics were the inculcation of attitudes and morals and the passing on of central cultural, political and sociological themes.

After 1918, migration patterns in the USA in particular produced periods of significant cultural change that served to enrich the field of children's literature, especially in the picture-book market. These developments were reinforced by the first Children's Book

Week in the United States in 1918 and the creation of juvenile departments in publishing houses, booklists for children's books, the establishment of the *Horn Book* magazine on children's literature in 1924 and the beginning of serious study and analysis of the field.

In the late 1920s the first 'true' picture books were published in the USA, such as Sir William Nicholson's *Clever Bill* (UK 1926, USA 1927). This was closely followed by Wanda Gág's *Millions of Cats* in 1928, *The Pirate Twins* by Nicholson and *Runaway Sardine* by Emma Brock in 1929. The offset printing used in these books meant that they were largely completed in black and white with just two or three additional colours. *Clever Bill*, for example, was in black and white with blue, yellow and red, which suited the depiction of the main character, a toy soldier, and *Millions of Cats* a cumulative story, was printed in black and white only. The Wall Street crash of 1929 led publishers to produce more inexpensive editions, and in Australia a lack of paper led many printers to publish comics, painting books, colouring books and out-of-copyright stories, re-illustrated. Some of these printers were to become the first picture-book publishers in Australia during the 1940s and 1950s.

Animal and adventure stories, sometimes with the traditional cautionary and moral content, dominated the picture-book scene in the 1930s. In the UK, Edward Ardizzone and Kathleen Hale began their careers. Ardizzone's books were illustrated in line and watercolour with handwritten text. *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* was published in both London and New York in 1936. As Gág and Nicholson had done, Ardizzone used the turn of the page to enhance the story rather than interrupt it and employed this technique to create suspense in the adventures of Tim, and in subsequent books, *Lucy Brown and Mr Grimes* (1937) and *Tim and Lucy Go to Sea* (1938). Working in crayon, Kathleen Hale produced extravagantly detailed illustrations in *Orlando the Marmalade Cat: A Camping Holiday* that tended to carry the narrative with little reliance on the written text. Joan Kiddell-Munroe's monochrome *In His Little Black Waistcoat* (1939) featured characteristics of traditional oriental art. A feature of this picture book was the use of perspective to emphasise the feeling of distance between foreground and background. In the USA, animal stories also dominated, as with Gág's illustrations for *Snippy and Snappy* (1931) and Kurt Weise's illustrations for Marjorie Flack's *The Story about Ping* (a disobedient Chinese duck) (1933). This was followed by *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* by Virginia Lee Burton in 1938. It was during this time that the work of Dr Seuss (Theodore Geisel) began, with the publication of *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1937). This book, with *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* (1938), stretched the parameters with fantastic artwork and an ironic treatment of traditional folk tales. An American book which challenged the 'young reader' concept of audience and the role of picture books was Munro Leaf's pacifist *The Story of Ferdinand*, illustrated by Robert Lawson (1936).

1940–50: war and the immediate post-war period

The immediate effect of the Second World War in England was paper rationing and shortages. The result was that, during the war few books with illustrations were published, and those that were published had narrow margins and poor binding on poor-quality paper. Fold-out and very basic pop-up books were popular, as were the shaped toy books of the Marspen series, produced by Marks and Spencer's stores.

It was also during this time that Picture Puffin Books were established with Kathleen Hale's *Orlando's Evening Out* (1941), emphasising the constraints of wartime. A series of

information books covering a variety of subjects was one of the more significant developments (Whalley and Chester 1988: 198)). The Puffin series began in 1941 and had published over a hundred titles by the mid-1960s. Clarke Hutton produced a Picture History series with books on Britain, France, Canada and the United States intended for self-education because of the wartime evacuation of many English children and the interruptions to their education. But despite the long-term effects of the war on Britain, the place of the picture book was recognised as a separate and important entity in children's book publishing, with the establishment in 1955 of the Kate Greenaway Medal awarded by the British Library Association.

During the same period in Australia the influx of American servicemen, and Australian servicemen being away from home, led to a demand for books as gifts for fathers to send home. This was the era when a large number of picture books with largely Australian characters and settings became available. Such titles as *Digit Dick on the Barrier Reef*, *The Story of Shy the Platypus* and *The Story of Karrawingi the Emu* written by Lesley Rees and illustrated by Walter Cunningham signalled the arrival of Rees and Cunningham as a market force. *The Story of Karrawingi the Emu* received the first Australian Children's Book Council (CBC) Book of the Year Award in 1946, and in 1952 Australian Picture Book of the Year Award was instituted, although it was given only four times between 1952 and 1970, indicating the paucity of the offerings.

There were few new picture books in the USA during the war (Bader 1976: 333), although the Little Golden Books of 1942 grew into major industry by 1953 with Big Golden Books, Tiny Golden Books (a boxed collection), Golden Story Books, Golden Play Books and Little Golden Records (and even Little Golden Writing Paper), with themes aimed at reinforcing socially acceptable behaviour, responsibility and appropriate values. The picture books of Dr Seuss remained very popular, while Maurice Sendak explored the world of childhood with his illustrations for *A Hole Is to Dig* by Ruth Krauss (1952) and his own books such as *Kenny's Window* (1956) and *The Sign on Rosie's Door* (1960). The USA also moved into information books with a series of nature books by Tresselt and Duvoisin published between 1953 and 1975; other countries followed.

This period was a significant period of change in the design, layout and format of picture books. The double-page spread was used more and illustrations began to be found in margins and cartoon-like sequences across the page, interspersed between written text. Endpapers also became an integral part of the book and books were produced in a range of sizes and portrait and landscape formats. Colour began to be used more deliberately to denote mood and the range of media used for illustration expanded.

Noticeable too was a change in the view of the reader. Authors and illustrators now positioned the reader in a range of new perspectives that demanded different interaction with both the written and illustrative text, and tended to give the reader and viewer more agency in making meaning. Dr Seuss recognised an expanded audience in parents reading to young children and included messages for them as well (as in *Horton Meets a Who*, 1954).

1960–79: a period of change – the modern picture book emerges

The same influences on the picture book continued, but at a vastly increased pace, and there was a divergence in the types of picture book published in Australia, the UK and the USA. This owed as much to the social, political, historical and geographical conditions in

the three countries as it did to the desire to make the picture books reflect those cultural icons that were important in each country.

The 1960s and 1970s were times of great social change, notably with the effects of immigration in the UK, the civil rights movement and the space programme in the USA. In Australia there was a substantial increase in population, brought about by immigration from the Europe and by the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme that brought an infusion of cultural groups with new skills into the country. These developments were to change the market-place in each country in many areas of the economy including the picture-book trade. Expansion and experimentation also occurred in picture books, particularly in colour printing, photographic lithography and choice of medium – there was a marked shift from black and white to full colour illustrations.

In Britain, the changes were heralded in the work of Brian Wildsmith, Charles Keeping and John Burningham. Wildsmith's brilliantly coloured and textured gouache paintings in *ABC* (1962), *Birds* (1967) and *Fishes* (1968), published by Oxford University Press, were a far cry from previous books and were an immediate success. Whalley and Chester (1988: 219) refer to Wildsmith's work as 'painterly', suggesting that it was a work of art as well as illustration, thoroughly exploring the medium of gouache. This success signalled that young readers could profit from access to sophisticated art forms just as much as adults and reinforced the idea that the illustrative text was equally as important as the written text.

Charles Keeping's work, from *Black Dolly* (1966) to *Sammy Streetsinger* (1984) and *Shaun and the Cart-Horse* (1967), was a complete departure from the work of previous illustrators, and became progressively more abstract; his use of medium was far more adventurous and experimental than Wildsmith's. Keeping allowed colours to run into one another and used techniques such as wax resist, sponge work and overpainting. John Burningham, beginning with *Borka, The Adventures of a Goose with No Feathers* (1963) combined the painterly quality of Wildsmith's gouache and the texture and overpainting of Keeping, and, as with Keeping, the illustrations emphasise emotions and themes. In Keeping and Burningham's work, layout and design of both individual pages and the whole book – sizes and formats – became increasingly sophisticated.

Pat Hutchins's *Rosie's Walk* (1970) is the first of many picture books in which the illustrative text tells a story contrary, or additional to, the written text and demonstrates a further evolution of the picture book. It seems to tell the simple story of a farmyard walk by Rosie the hen, who is stalked by a fox. However, multiple meanings are realised through a subtext about the concepts of direction ('*across* the yard, *around* the pond, *over* the haycock') in the written text. Rosie's story is told in the written text while the fox's story that is of mishap and injury represented in the illustrative text. The landscape and frieze-type design and layout are also important features of the book, the linear layout of the illustrations taking the viewer across and over the page, and providing anticipation in the narrative. Hutchins, quoted in Cummins (1992: 73), suggested that this layout makes the action happen. The illustrations themselves are flat, naive, folk-art depictions of the farm, with texture introduced through the black line patterning (in contrast to the work of Wildsmith, Keeping and Burningham).

In the USA in the 1960s the heterogeneity of picture books led to a challenge of traditional themes, content and narratives. This caused a shift away from the more rose-coloured view of the world of the child to a more realistic one where childhood fears and humour could be explored. This movement had begun in the 1950s with Sendak and was developed further by a range of illustrators who more accurately represented the

growing diversity of the culture and moved toward a more accurate representation of the different social classes and ethnicities.

Humour was taken to a new level by Tomi Ungerer, a French immigrant, who extended the picture-book genre by introducing a macabre and even violent tenor in his depiction of humour. Bader (1976: 548) suggests that Ungerer's *The Three Robbers* (1961) is a melodrama, but it also contains elements of irony with its sophisticated, yet satirical, comments about human nature, in its parody of the fairy tale. (Tiffany enjoys being kidnapped by the robbers and encourages them to spend their ill-gotten gains – albeit on a worthwhile project.) Ungerer expects that the reader will be able to appreciate the different layers of meaning in the text and relate it to other texts. The reader needs quite sophisticated intertextual skills to appreciate fully the humour in the narrative.

Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) (Caldecott Medal 1964) began the challenge to traditional picture-book forms; he experimented with the written text by spreading the first two sentences of the narrative over eight pages in contrast to the one sentence (or sentences) per opening that is still a feature of many picture books. The illustrative text extends the fantasy of the written text by expanding to full double-page spreads and then contracting to a half page as the fantasy of 'the wild rumpus' waxes and wanes. This balance between the illustrative and written text was picked up by many of the young readers of the book, who interpreted the 'wild things' as friendly since they were always smiling in the illustrations, while many of the adult readers focused on the written text and therefore expected the book to prove frightening to the young reader. This book also begins to challenge the notion of audience since it is as much a book for adults as it is for young children. Sendak also demonstrates that it is often what the illustrations do not show that is just as important as what is on the page – for example, we never get to see Max's mother.

Ezra Jack Keats contributed to a multiculturalism in picture books with *My Dog Is Lost* (1960), written by Keats and Pat Cherr and illustrated by Keats. Through the hero Juanito, a Puerto Rican boy recently arrived in New York, we meet children from other races in China Town, Little Italy, Park Avenue and Harlem. In Cummins (1992: 95), Keats explains his decision to portray Peter, the main character in the Caldecott-winning *The Snowy Day* (1962) as black in order to show that goodness and beauty can be associated with black children as well as with white. He sustained these themes in *Whistle for Willie* (1963) and *Peter's Chair* (1967).

The experimentation with form, style, audience and format continued with Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (1969). This mixes the factual life-cycle of the butterfly with the fictional (and metafictional) actions of the caterpillar (chewing holes in the book) and the non-naturalistic pictures. Carle's collage explores the space between exposition and narrative.

While the picture-book industry was burgeoning in the USA and the UK, in Australia it was still very slow to develop because of the small population and the commensurately small and expensive print runs. Competition from the UK and USA also restricted output until the late 1960s when a high-quality printing industry was established in Asia. Ivan Southall's *Sly Old Wardrobe* (1969), illustrated by Ted Greenwood, was highly influential in its use of either aquarelles or a combination of coloured pencil and watercolour. The changes in design, layout and point of view that Greenwood introduced represented a considerable change in Australian picture books of the time, and he continued to challenge the constructs of the genre into the 1970s.

In the UK, Fiona French, a pupil of Keeping's, chose her media and style to emphasise theme and mood, and to fit the period in which the book was set. In *Jack of Hearts*

(1970) she used the style of playing cards, in *Huni* (1971) Egyptian-style friezes and in *Matteo* (1976) the style of murals painted in Renaissance Italy churches. In this way French expects more of her audience and also appeals to a greater variety of audiences.

Similarly, John Burningham constructed his readers as sophisticated enough to read a number of texts simultaneously. In *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* (1977), a depiction of a young girl at the seaside with her parents, there are two illustrative texts for the reader/viewer. In one of these texts Shirley's parents are pictured on the beach giving all sorts of instructions about what to do and what not to do. In the other illustrative text Shirley is off on a wonderful adventure with pirates that is not even hinted at by the written text. So there are two illustrative, but opposing, texts and one written text, all of which interact to provide a fourth text that is a clever exploration of the relationship between parents and their children. This book and *Time to Get out of the Bath, Shirley* (1978) are interesting parallels to the work of Sendak, as they explore a child's view of the world, the child's appreciation of the imaginary world, and the ability of the child reader to interpret both illustrative and written texts. There is a similar effect in Burningham's later book *Oi! Get off Our Train* (1989).

In the 1970s, picture books in the UK increasingly incorporated social comment (as with Michael Foreman's *War and Peas* (1971) and *Moose* (1974)), but in the USA, apart from the introduction of characters and settings from other cultures and classes, there was very little change. Some show great mastery of particular media and techniques and unusual approaches to layout, but they are somewhat limited in terms of their opportunities to challenge or engage the reader in anything other than the story. They contrast strongly with some picture books of this time which challenged the reading and viewing audience and suggested that more can be expected of the young reader without interfering with the enjoyment in the act of reading (see Arizpe and Styles 2003).

In Australia in the 1970s the picture book underwent marked change and 'came of age' with the establishment of school libraries and a reliable and competent printing industry in nearby Asia. Saxby (1997: 77) suggests the publication of Desmond Digby's retelling of *Waltzing Matilda* (1970) established characteristics that formed an identity peculiar to Australian picture books during this period: a strong appeal to adults as well as children, a strong idea expressed in words and pictures, careful matching of words and pictures, skilled use of the artistic medium, and meticulous attention to the design of the book. Australian identity was celebrated in many of the winners of the Children's Book Council (CBC) and Visual Arts Awards, particularly in the first publication of Aboriginal Dreamtime stories by Aboriginal authors and artists and in the interpretation of well-known Australian poetry, mythological creatures and events. Dick Roughsey, a north Queensland Aboriginal, wrote and illustrated on his own (*Giant Devil Dingo*, 1973) and later shared the stories of his area with a white Australian, Percy Tresize (*The Quinkins*, 1978). The illustrations in these books recreated the vastness and colour of the Australian landscape with amazing accuracy through a 'naive realism'.

The growing sophistication of Australian children's books, producing multi-layered, complexly designed texts, was shown in Ted Greenwood's *Joseph and Lulu and the Prindiville House Pigeons* (1972), dealing with the theme of urban renewal. *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek* (1974) written by Jenny Wagner and illustrated by Ron Brooks can be seen as a turning point in Australian picture books as it explores abstract and philosophical themes of identity. Brooks's superb use of pen and ink, finely hatched, crosshatched and textured, which is then coloured, was also seen in the classic *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* (1977) by the same team, which won the CBC Picture Book of the Year

award in 1978. The theme is one of jealousy and rivalry, but there are sub-themes about ageing, caring and loneliness. Brooks has the same illustrative technique as in *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek*.

The origins of the postmodern picture book

Picture books that self-consciously contain multiple meanings by virtue of the fact that the written text and the illustrative text combine to construct the narrative are a relatively recent development. The meanings constructed by these texts sometimes conflict with, as well as support, one another, and authors have begun to create different meanings through differing narrator positions and points of view, indeterminacy and intertextuality. These metafictional elements support the more traditional elements such as plot, theme and characterisation, but interrupt readers' expectation and interpretation of texts.

Through these developments, postmodernism in picture books has broadened the traditional audience of the genre to encompass the young adult and adult reader, by challenging the traditional view of plots, characters and even the formatting of books, and often using a pastiche of illustrative styles, the effect of which is to produce picture books that require a different and multiple reading (see Grieve 1993).

Since the late 1970s, there has been a plethora of picture books where authors and illustrators have purposefully employed metafictional elements (see Waugh 1984; Anstey 2002); these texts rely on intertextuality for their interpretation, as in the picture books of Anthony Browne. One example: Browne's homage to the art of Magritte in *Willy the Dreamer* (1997) or of recurring characters (notably gorillas). Janet and Allan Ahlberg use the written text in *Jeremiah in the Dark Woods* (1977) to encourage the reader to reference well-known fairy-story characters such as the seven dwarfs, a frog prince and a mad hatter.

It is also a matter of how the reader/viewer approaches the text. Old favourites (such as *Where the Wild Things Are*) can be revisited and read differently from a postmodern perspective. In a traditional reading, *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) can be constructed as a cautionary tale where the illustrations expand and shrink to illustrate the element of fantasy; from a postmodern perspective Sendak can be seen as challenging the traditional view of the hero and the prevailing views about illustration and format. In *Outside over There* (1981) and *Dear Mili* (1988) Sendak developed a more readily identifiable postmodern stance by using a pastiche of illustrative texts that demanded a sophisticated level of interpretation.

Early examples of postmodern picture books include the work of Burningham and Carle, and Monique Felix's *The Story of a Little Mouse Trapped in a Book* (Switzerland, 1980) in which the mouse 'literally' eats through the blank pages of a book to discover the pictures underneath and then enters the illustrations to take part in the narrative, making a paper plane which is then used to fly into the scene depicted by the illustration. Similar techniques were taken up by Martin Waddell and Phillippe Dupasquier in *The Great Green Mouse Disaster* (1981) through the use of cartoons to create multiple narratives and riddles for the reader to solve. (These earlier picture books are useful as introductory models for students and teachers to familiarise themselves with the effects of metafiction.)

The picture books by Babette Cole, as in *Princess Smartypants* (1986) and *Prince Cinders* (1987), and Jon Scieszka's *The Frog Prince Continued* (1991) and *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* (1989) re-invent well-known stories, using different characters' points

of view and are examples of books that cross the boundaries of what is expected by (and of) the reader.

The appeal of these ‘sophisticated’ books is not limited to older or gifted readers. We have suggested elsewhere (Bull 1995; Bull and Anstey 1996) that five- and six-year-old students can make complex decisions regarding the relationship between illustrative and written text. Lewis (1990) supported this ability of young children to ‘play’ in the post-modern picture book. Watson and Styles (1996: 27) also reported that young children, even before they can read, can understand the ‘humour and profundity’ in the illustrative texts of Anthony Browne and can understand the metaphor in the representations of reconciliation in *The Tunnel* (Browne 1989). Arizpe and Styles (2003) concluded that young readers are capable of making sophisticated judgements about illustrations at the metaphorical as well as visual level.

The characteristics of contemporary postmodern picture books

Variations in design and layout

One of the more obvious metafictional devices from a reader’s perspective is that of varying book design and layout, but of course the reader still needs to be familiar with other more traditional picture books.

The most obvious device is the use of comic-strip or cartoon-like illustrations. In *Have You Seen Who’s Just Moved in Next Door to Us?* by Colin McNaughton (1991), traditional formatting has been restyled to a double fold-out page supported by cut-away houses. This is reinforced by the use of rhyming couplets and many plays on words (‘eggcellent’ and ‘eggsactly’), the use of a subtext that plays out in the background and intertextuality in the form of well-known characters from other tales and even plays on other titles such as Hairy Mary’s Dairy (*Hairy Maclary from Donaldson’s Dairy*, Dodd 1983). Raymond Briggs (1982) used the same device to deal, disconcertingly, with a nuclear strike in the ‘crossover’ text *When the Wind Blows* (1982), and Gary Crew and Steven Woolman’s *Tagged* (1997) uses comic-book devices to construct a fractured retelling of the life of a traumatised Vietnam veteran. Format and design underwent an even more radical change in another of Gary Crew’s books, *The Viewer* (1997) illustrated by Shaun Tan, in which the picture book actually became an artefact of the illustrations by taking on the form of the viewer being described in the written text. The cover of the book has frames cut into it so that it resembles a viewer or kaleidoscope that is itself viewed by the protagonist. This design feature positions the reader to ‘read’ the book in a particular way, by creating two separate, or as Tan calls them ‘cleaved’, worlds or universes. The reader or viewer looks either into, or out of, the viewer itself.

In Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith’s (1992) *The Stinky Cheese Man*, the written text is printed in different fonts, upside down and in unexpected places on the page, while the design subverts expectations (the Contents is not at the beginning), and the narrator argues with the characters. All of this allows sophisticated interrogation of the text. Beth Gnarling in *the stone baby* (2002) uses a variety of dramatic horizontal and vertical formats, whole-page spreads and double-page spreads to reinforce the dream of the main character in a way that is reminiscent, but extends the effects produced by Sendak in *Where the Wild Things Are*. The different format sometimes requires the reader to read across the whole double-page spread in a series of horizontal layers and sometimes expects the reader to

read a progression of vertical segments. The layers and segments accurately reproduce the disjunction of scenes in a typical dream and add immeasurably to the written text.

Variations in the grammar of the author and illustrator

In the same way that written text has a grammar that supports the construction of meaning through semantics and syntax, so illustrative text has a grammar of its own (Anstey and Bull 2000). Illustrators sometimes vary the expected or traditional construction of this grammar to focus the attention of the reader. In postmodern picture books the narrative is often told by both the author and the illustrator, and so decisions about illustrative grammar that are made by the illustrator have the potential to augment, modify or change existing meaning in the written text. For example, in *Smoky Night* (1994), describing the street riots in Los Angeles, the illustrator David Diaz has reinforced the tension in the written narrative by using dark borders around all the scenes to illustrate the frightening nature of the events taking place. Diaz also uses visual puns by including caution signs for handling on a television set that is being 'lifted' by rioters. Similar puns occur throughout the book and are reinforced in the backgrounds by scenes filled with rubbish from the surrounding streets.

Indeterminacy

Texts that contain indeterminate or inconclusive scenes are designed to challenge the reader/viewer to produce a range of readings different from those 'authorised'. Thus in Margaret Barbelet's *The Wolf* (1991), the wolf remains invisible throughout the story even when, in the resolution, it is invited into the house. The entrance of the wolf signals a triumph over fears although the reader is left to wonder whether the wolf ever existed. Similarly, in Gary Crew's *Kraken* (2001) indeterminacy plays a role in the inexplicable blindness of Christopher and the fantastic and frightening portrayal of the mythical Kraken. The reader never knows whether the Kraken really exists or is merely a figment of the children's imagination.

Contesting discourses

The *Shirley* books by John Burningham provide an example of contesting illustrative and written texts where the written text is placed in collocation with two alternative illustrative texts. Jane Tanner and Allan Baillie have followed Burningham's lead and successfully incorporated contesting written and illustrative discourses in an Australian picture book, *Drac and the Gremlin* (1988). Baillie relates the story of two children who battle mythical creatures in a garden that is full of gadgets from science fiction. This battle is watched over by the White Witch, who turns out in Tanner's illustrations to be the mother. This irony is extended throughout the narrative and increases the sense of humour both exhibited by the main characters and expected of the reader. This humour and irony is exemplified when Baillie writes of an 'Anti-Gravity Solar Powered Planet Hopper' which is portrayed by Tanner as an ordinary swing suspended from a tree branch. Other notable examples have been Libby Hathorn and Gregory Rogers' *Way Home* (1994) and the Caldecott Medal winner *Black and White* by David Macaulay (1990). In this book there are four contesting, illustrative discourses, and on the title page Macaulay advises his readers that the words and pictures may contain either 'a number of stories' or perhaps 'only one story'.

Intertextuality

Retold or new versions of traditional tales are an important source of intertextual references as in Scieszka and Lane's *The Frog Prince Continued* (1991) where the Frog Prince, and the reader, meet witches from 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Snow White' and 'Hansel and Gretel' and have an adventure with the Godmother from 'Cinderella'. The final twist at the end, where both the Prince and the Princess are turned into frogs, relies for its impact on knowledge of the structure of the original narrative. Similarly Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *The Jolly Postman* (1986 and sequels) delivers letters to nursery-rhyme characters. Perhaps more subtly, Anthony Browne habitually makes visual references to popular culture: in the suburban background of *Gorilla* (1983), a portrait of the Mona Lisa turns into a gorilla, King Kong appears in the bedroom, Whistler's mother becomes a gorilla, and even Charlie Chaplin, Superman and Gene Autrey are similarly transformed. Browne also makes reference to some of his other gorilla books and to *The Tunnel* (1989).

Multiple meanings and audiences

The potential of all of the metafictional devices that have been discussed so far is to create a multiplicity of meanings, from Anthony Browne's *Zoo* (1994), in which it becomes harder and harder to tell whether the humans or the animals are the ones who are imprisoned, to Jeannie Baker's *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (1987), addressing the issue of the destruction of native flora and fauna in the name of progress. Peter Gouldthorpe in Paul Jennings *Grandad's Gifts* (1992) positions the observers in a number of spectator positions so that they are never quite sure whether individual scenes are being seen through Grandad's eyes or through the eyes of a fox.

Postmodern devices have introduced a new kind of picture book that more clearly demonstrates how narrative is structured. These books also explicate how both the illustrative and the written texts play a part in determining meaning in an age where access to the visual content of communication is becoming more important. The more traditional literary features such as theme, plot and characterisation can be emphasised and further developed through the use of various metafictional devices.

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26 Shaping boyhood

British Empire builders and adventurers

Dennis Butts

Origins of the adventure story

Romances of the Middle Ages, such as the tales of Robin Hood and the story of Bevis of Hampton, seem to have been the earliest forms of adventure stories British children enjoyed. Richard Baxter, the famous seventeenth-century preacher, lamented his youth ‘bewitched with a love of romances, fables and old tales’ (*Reliquiae Baxterianae*, quoted in Ure 1956: 10), and in 1709 Richard Steele described his eight-year-old godson’s acquaintance with ‘Guy of Warwick’, whose brave deeds included killing a dragon and repelling Danish invaders.

As more children learned to read, their appetite for adventure stories grew, and as well as devouring the romances circulated in chapbooks, they turned to Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Defoe’s novel may have been intended originally as a tale about Christian Providence, and Swift’s work as a political satire, but both were often read by children as exciting stories about shipwrecks and adventures at sea. Many readers have seen Crusoe’s development of his desert island, particularly with the help of his black servant Man Friday, as a parable of the way British colonisation worked, and thus connected the ideology of imperialism with the adventure story almost from its beginnings. Defoe’s work was so popular that it inspired a whole series of imitations throughout Europe, which were called ‘Robinsonnades’, including versions edited specifically for children. A Swiss pastor, Johann Wyss (1743–1818), produced the most famous adventure story for children modelled upon *Robinson Crusoe* in *The Swiss Family Robinson*, first translated into English in 1814.

In 1814 Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) produced his first historical romance, *Waverley*, in which he showed that exciting adventures need not only be set on desert islands, but could be just as thrilling when set in the past. Many of his novels were enthusiastically read by children, and his success helped to establish the form of the historical novel. James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851), the American novelist, followed Scott’s example in such stories as *The Pioneers* (1823), and in writing about the adventures of his fellow Americans struggling against treacherous foes and the natural elements, he discovered the value of placing the action of his stories on the exotic frontiers of North America.

Defoe, Scott and Cooper did not write specifically for children, but their books were enjoyed by them, and other writers were eager to provide similar stories designed for young readers. Agnes Strickland’s *The Rival Crusoes, or the Shipwreck* (1826) is a typical example of a Robinsonnade. Mrs Hofland’s *The Stolen Boy* of 1830, about the adventures of a young boy who is captured by Red Indians in Texas, illustrates the growth of stories with exotic backgrounds; and Mrs J. B. Webb’s *Naomi, or the Last Days of Jerusalem* (1841) reveals the growing interest in historical tales.

This appetite for adventure stories coincided with Britain's emergence from the Napoleonic Wars as a great military and naval power, with an expanding empire and a growing enthusiasm for foreign enterprises. The exploits of Clive in India and of Wolfe in Canada had whetted boys' thirst for adventure in the late eighteenth century, and the more recent triumphs of Nelson and the Duke of Wellington had raised patriotic feeling to great heights. The rise in popularity and to some extent the contents and form of adventure stories may be seen as an expression of this feeling and of the growth of popular interest in the British Empire which rapidly expanded in the nineteenth century.

Captain Frederick Marryat (1792–1848) played the decisive role in establishing the popularity and forms of the adventure story for children. After a distinguished career as a naval officer, he became the extremely popular author of such seafaring novels as *The King's Own* (1830).

In response to a request from his own children to write a story like *The Swiss Family Robinson*, Marryat, who was annoyed by that book's inaccuracies, produced *Masterman Ready: or, the Wreck of the Pacific* (1841–2), the story of a family who are wrecked on a desert island but protected by the wise advice of an old seafarer. Despite a tendency to moralise typical of the period, Marryat produced an interesting Robinsonnade, which can still surprise us with its broad-minded discussion of imperialism and its unexpectedly poignant ending. The book's success encouraged Marryat to continue writing for children, and he produced a Cooper-like tale, *The Settlers in Canada* (1844), about the adventures of an immigrant family who settle near Lake Ontario, despite the threats of Red Indians and wild animals.

Then in 1847 Marryat published his best book, *The Children of the New Forest*, a historical novel about the adventures of the four Beverley children who are orphaned during the English Civil War. Marryat vividly describes how the children are taken into hiding in the New Forest by a poor forester who teaches them how to survive by hunting and farming, and evade capture by parliamentary troopers. Marryat's story-telling is not without faults, but in his account of the children's learning to survive on their own in the forest (rather like an inland Robinsonnade), the story of the maturing of Edward Beverley, the rather rash eldest teenager, and in his treatment of the historical situation with a picture of growing understanding and tolerance, Marryat produced a near masterpiece. With *The Children of the New Forest*, the first historical novel for children which has endured, and with his stories of shipwreck and of British settlers struggling to survive in Canada, Marryat laid down the foundations of the nineteenth-century adventure story for children.

Meanwhile the British Empire continued to expand. In 1815 it had hardly existed. Although the West Indies supplied Britain with sugar, Australia was regarded as little more than a convict station and on the African continent Cape Colony was the only part inhabited by white people, and they were mainly Dutch. Canada was largely unexplored, and New Zealand was inhabited by natives only. India was the one major possession overseas Britain cared about, although three-quarters of that was ruled by native princes and the rest by the East India Company.

But new forces were at work and during the nineteenth century Britain vastly extended its overseas territories, forming the New Zealand Colonisation Company, consolidating its control of India, and acquiring the whole of Burma and huge areas of Africa including Uganda, Nigeria and Zanzibar. The Empire over which Queen Victoria reigned in 1897 was four times greater than at her accession sixty years earlier.

Improvements in communications by railways, steamships and the electric telegraph, together with the availability of cheaper newspapers, made the British public more aware

of affairs overseas, and newspaper reports from Special Correspondents such as W. H. Russell of *The Times* helped to sharpen the public consciousness of such events as the Charge of the Light Brigade, the Indian Mutiny, the Zulu War and the Relief of Mafeking during the second Boer War.

The eighteenth-century explorations of Captain Cook and Mungo Park, the wanderings of Charles Waterton in South America, the dramatic encounter of Livingstone with Stanley in Africa in 1871, and the travels of such men as Sir Richard Burton, all intensified interest in adventures in exotic places. When the domestic economic situation seemed to offer only the grim alternatives of unemployment or dreary factory work, many began to look overseas. As well as searching for opportunities of trading with British colonies, hundreds of thousands of Britons emigrated to America, Australia, Canada and South Africa, because there was more scope for enterprise and even excitement there. In the process, links between Britain and its great Empire overseas were gradually extended and strengthened.

Many middle-class Victorian children, particularly boys, shared their parents' interests in the Empire, expecting to work there when they left school, in commerce, the armed forces or as public servants. (Girls would expect to become the loyal companions and helpmates of their husbands according to the conventions of the age, of course.) The United Services College at Westward Ho! in Devon was actually founded to help prepare boys to serve in such countries as India, and it is no coincidence that Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), 'the poet of imperialism', was a pupil there. Thus the British public's interest in thrilling deeds in faraway places, normally within the hegemony of British imperialism, helped create a cultural climate in which boys and girls wanted to read adventure stories in which the heroes and (less often) the heroines were young people like themselves.

Like Captain Marryat, many of the writers who contributed to the proliferation of adventure stories from the middle of the nineteenth century had also enjoyed exciting lives before settling down to writing. Captain Mayne Reid (1818–83), after an adventurous life which included serving with distinction in the American War against Mexico, began to produce such stories as *The Desert Home* (1851). R. M. Ballantyne (1825–94), after years working for the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, wrote a whole series of adventure stories, such as *Snowflakes and Sunbeams: or the Young Fur Traders* (1858) and his popular Robinsonnade, *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858). W. H. G. Kingston (1814–80), the third of Marryat's mid-nineteenth-century successors, tended to specialise in sea stories, such as *Peter the Whaler: His Early Life and Adventures in the Arctic Regions* (1851). Many children, of course, continued to enjoy adventure stories written for adults such as *Westward Ho!*, an Elizabethan romance by Charles Kingsley (1819–75).

Kingston was succeeded as editor of the significantly named periodical *The Union Jack: Tales for British Boys*, a penny weekly devoted to adventure stories, by G. A. Henty (1832–1902), who became the most prolific writer of boys' adventure stories in the last decades of the nineteenth century. A war correspondent who had travelled widely and covered most of the major conflicts in Europe from the Crimean to the Franco-Russian War as well as various colonial expeditions, Henty began writing full time for children when his poor health made strenuous travelling impossible. He was soon producing four books a year, ranging from historical works, such as *With Clive in India: or the Beginnings of Empire* (1884) to stories based upon recent or even contemporary events, such as *The Dash for Khartoum: A Tale of the Nile Expedition* (1892).

Henty was enormously popular, with sales of his books reaching 150,000 annually, according to his publisher Blackie. In view of this kind of success, it is not surprising that, by the end of the century, almost every publishing house in Britain was eagerly providing adventure stories for a young reading public which was growing in size not only because of the expansion of the public (that is, private) schools but also of the national state schools, after education had been made compulsory for all children by a Parliamentary Act of 1870.

Even the Religious Tract Society, originally founded to disseminate religious works, launched a weekly periodical, the *Boy's Own Paper*, in 1879 to cater for a new generation of readers by serialising adventure stories by such writers as Ballantyne and Kingston. So popular was the magazine that within five years its circulation had reached a quarter of a million, rising over half a million within ten years.

Other periodical publishers followed suit. In the years between 1855 and 1901 over a hundred secular magazines for boys were published in Britain, the majority after the 1870 Education Act – *Young Folks* in 1871, *Young England* in 1880, *Chums* in 1892 and *The Captain* in 1899, to name some of the most famous examples. Most of them attracted the major writers of adventure stories at this time, including Ballantyne, Kingston and Stevenson. They were well produced on good-quality paper, and copiously illustrated.

Alongside these periodicals produced by the respectable, middle-class publishers, however, there also existed penny magazines of a more sensationalist character. Edwin J. Brett (1828–95) dominated this field with his *Boys of England* launched in 1867, featuring the boisterous adventures of Jack Harkaway, but Brett had notable rivals in the brothers George and William Emmett with melodramatic serials in their periodical *Sons of Britannia*, launched in 1876.

In the 1890s Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe (1865–1922), started a series of weekly periodicals selling at only one halfpenny each, such as *The Halfpenny Marvel* in 1893, *The Union Jack* (reviving Henty's old title) in 1894 and *Pluck*, also 1894. *The Halfpenny Marvel* specialised in stories about buried treasure and adventures at sea, while the *Union Jack* concentrated more on stories about how Britain obtained her colonies. *Pluck* also contained tales of daring deeds in imperial settings, and serials based upon such topics as General Gordon and the Siege of Khartoum. The weekly fiction found in *Pluck* and *The Union Jack*, with their stories about youthful heroes in romantic parts of the British Empire, extended and reinforced familiarity with the form and imperialistic values of the adventure genre which had developed from the middle of the century. 'Dr Jim of South Africa', for example, which appeared in *Pluck* in 1896, actually featured Dr Jameson, the instigator of the notorious Jameson Raid into the Transvaal in 1895, in a plot similar to many boys' adventure stories of the previous forty years.

The genre

What were the characteristics of the British boys' adventure story as it developed in the nineteenth century? How were they shaped by individual writers, such as Stevenson, and how were they developed in the twentieth century?

The most important feature of the genre is its combination of the extraordinary and the probable, for if the events in a story are too mundane they fail to excite, but a sequence of completely extraordinary events fails to be credible. Whether an adventure story deals with shipwrecks or heroic battles, the events have to seem to arise naturally from the context of the story to retain the young reader's confidence. The remarkable

adventures that H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925) describes in *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) are carefully led up to, step by step, the illusion of reality being created by the narrator's low-key introduction of himself, his quasi-scholarly footnotes about the African vegetation and wildlife, and his modest unwillingness to make any dramatic claims about his own part in the treasure hunt. The unfolding of more and more extraordinary events is done so gradually and skilfully as to suspend (or at least reduce) the reader's sense of disbelief.

This sense of the probable is usually achieved by choosing as hero a normal and identifiable teenage boy, generally from a respectable but not particularly wealthy home. Peter Lefroy, the fifteen-year-old son of a clergyman in Kingston's *Peter the Whaler*, is a typical example. Neither particularly clever nor stupid, the hero has plenty of common sense and that spirit often called 'pluck'. Under the influence of evangelism, the heroes of the early books are apt to be rather pious at times (in the novels of Marryat and Ballantyne, for example), but, though the hero is always keen to do what is right, by the beginning of the twentieth century he is often portrayed in more secular and fiercely nationalistic terms, like Yorke Harberton in Henty's *With Roberts to Pretoria* (1902), who is introduced as

a good specimen of the class by which Britain has been built up, her colonies formed and her battlefields won – a class in point of energy, fearlessness, the spirit of adventure, and a readiness to face and overcome all difficulties, unmatched in the world.

The beginning of the story usually depicts the young hero in a minor crisis which reveals an early glimpse of his pluck. Charley Kennedy demonstrates his spirit with a display of horse-breaking in Ballantyne's *The Young Fur Traders* and David Balfour shows his courage in dealing with his Uncle Ebenezer at the beginning of Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886).

Usually as the result of a domestic crisis, sometimes because of the death of a parent or a decline in the family fortunes, the hero leaves home and undertakes a long and hazardous journey – to seek other relations, or to repair his fortunes elsewhere. The whole family emigrate after losing their estate in Marryat's *The Settlers in Canada*, but it is also common for the hero to be an orphan as in G. M. Fenn's *Nat the Naturalist* (1883), or to lose his father early in the story, as Dick Varley does in Ballantyne's *The Dog Crusoe* (1861).

The settings of adventure stories are usually unfamiliar and often exotic. Those in Britain focus on out-of-the-way places such as the New Forest or the Scottish Highlands, but normally the hero's journey takes him even further, sometimes overseas to European wars, but more frequently to the desert or bush of Africa, the snowy wastes of Canada or the jungles of South America. These unusual and dangerous locations, as well as adding drama to the story, often act in a quasi-symbolical way to reinforce the sense of moral obstacles which the young hero struggles to overcome.

The hero often acquires a faithful companion during the journey, sometimes in the shape of a surrogate father, such as the old servant Jacob Armitage in Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest*, or sometimes a friendly native, following the precedent of Man Friday, who can speak the language and knows the local customs, such as Makarooroo in Ballantyne's *The Gorilla Hunters* (1861). Although average in many ways, the hero often possesses some special asset which proves invaluable on his journey. Henty's heroes often have a remarkable facility for acquiring foreign languages as well as an extraordinary aptitude for disguise, while Captain Good's possession of false teeth and an Almanack prove to be unexpectedly useful physical assets in *King Solomon's Mines*.

As the hero continues his journey, all kinds of complications and difficulties threaten the quest – shipwreck, attacks by cannibals, treachery. In Rider Haggard's *Allan Quatermain* (1887), for instance, the hero canoes down a dangerous river, rescues a missionary's daughter from kidnappers, is swept under a volcanic rock, and survives an attack of giant crabs before finally becoming engulfed in a civil war. The story thus rises by a series of minor crises to a great climax, which is often a ferocious battle against blood-thirsty antagonists.

Normally the hero survives, and the end of the story sees him rewarded with wealth and honour. This is sometimes more than the conventional 'happy ending', however, as if the author, having shown how the hero has proved himself through enduring various trials on his quest, and discovered his real worth, deserves symbolic proof of this. The young hero generally discovers the truth about his family, and so his real identity, in such stories as Kingston's *In the Eastern Seas* (1871) and Stevenson's *Kidnapped*. More usually, however, the hero returns home laden with great wealth to be warmly greeted by his family, and sometimes to marry.

Religious didacticism is not so apparent in adventure stories produced in the second half of the nineteenth century as in earlier books. But their authors took their responsibilities seriously, guiding their young readers towards such virtues as loyalty, pluck and truthfulness, nearly always within the ideological framework of Victorian laissez-faire capitalism, a hierarchical view of society and strict gender divisions. Girls occasionally play a minor role in adventures, and there were even some women writers of adventure stories, such as Anne Bowman (1801–90). (Later writers such as Bessie Marchant (1862–1941) actually showed girls enjoying adventures.) But the nineteenth-century genre was dominated by male values.

One of the strongest features of the genre was its belief in the rightfulness of British territorial possessions overseas, and the assumption that the British Empire was an unrivalled instrument for harmony and justice. Occasionally a writer such as Marryat discussed the system, but most nineteenth-century writers of adventure stories accepted the values of British imperialism quite uncritically. G. A. Henty was not afraid to criticise aspects of British policy in his stories, but it is always within an unquestioning acceptance of the legitimacy of British rule. Indeed, he often prefaced his tales with a letter addressed to his readers – 'My Dear Lads', he calls them – in which he drew attention to the heroic feats in the story which followed, and which helped to create the British Empire. The imperialist statesman Winston Churchill (perhaps deliberately?) echoed the title of one of Henty's books *A Roving Commission* (1900) in the subtitle of his early autobiography *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* (1930), and he was also a great admirer of Rider Haggard's stories.

Thus many of these stories describe the beginnings and extension of the British Empire. The island adventures of *Robinson Crusoe* provided an early opportunity to project a detailed fable of colonialism, as Defoe depicted a wild and savage land taken over and developed by a European settler. Later writers went on to narrate the adventures of explorers and pioneers, often combining Christianity with commerce, and gradually economic activities began to be discussed too, as heroes travel, for example, to India or Africa to make their fortunes, and then retire to an English country home. Both Marryat and Henty wrote about settlers in Canada and Africa, while traders and businessmen, all under the aegis of British rule, also appear in the stories of Ballantyne, Henty and Rider Haggard. Britain's imperial history became a literary romance.

In their use of formulaic plots and stereotypical characters, adventure stories owed a great deal to the structure of traditional folk and fairy tales. Propp has shown how Russian

folk tales contain many features also found in western European stories, such as ‘Jack the Giant Killer’ and the English ‘Dick Whittington’, in which a young hero, often with the help of a companion and a magical gift such as a ring, leaves home to perform some great feat before returning triumphant to his family. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* Joseph Campbell argues that such tales, with their mixture of realism and the extraordinary, their narrative of the hero’s journey as quest, and their happy ending, also have much in common with the myths of Greece and other ancient cultures; and he suggests that they remain powerful because they express the unconscious fears and desires which lie beneath the surface of much conscious behaviour. In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim also vigorously defends the psychological value of folk and fairy tales, particularly for young people.

Despite their surface realism, many nineteenth-century adventure stories are based upon the pattern of folk tales, transformed by Victorian ideologies and reflecting contemporary attitudes towards race and gender, but popular because they satisfied some of the same human and psychological needs as traditional tales. The use of a narrative structure which depends upon a familiar pattern also has other advantages: the young readers may actually be encouraged in their reading of narrative as they recognise familiar patterns of story-telling, and also obtain aesthetic satisfaction in learning to appreciate the ways different writers vary the expected formula or use it to express a personal vision.

The finest writer within the tradition of the Victorian adventure story was Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94), and the structure of the folk tale is clearly visible behind many of his books. In both *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* Stevenson portrays heroes who are young boys when their fathers die. In *Treasure Island* Jim goes off on a voyage in search of buried treasure, and in *Kidnapped* David leaves home in search of his surviving relations. Both heroes take ships, visit remote islands and return triumphantly. The story pattern is a familiar one.

But Stevenson uses and develops these formulaic elements with imagination and seriousness. He introduces considerable variety into his heroes’ journeys, describing the way an apparently loyal crew reveal themselves as mutinous pirates in *Treasure Island*, and transforming David Balfour’s role from that of hunter into that of victim in *Kidnapped*. Indeed, both stories are full of imaginative touches with an enduring resonance – the Black Spot, Jim’s visit to the apple-barrel, David’s climb up the stair tower, and his miseries on the isle of Earraid, among many.

Less explicitly interested in imperialism in his tales than his contemporaries, Stevenson achieved the most radical variation in the adventure-story formula, however, in his treatment of the faithful companions and the predictable villains. Most strikingly in the relationships between Jim and Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*, and David and Allan Breck Stewart in *Kidnapped*, Stevenson exploits the familiar elements to portray the ambiguities of human behaviour. For Silver is the leader of the pirates and ostensibly the villain of *Treasure Island*; but he consistently looks after Jim Hawkins, and they become, in a wonderful stroke of irony, like father and son. Conversely David dislikes Allan’s flamboyant Jacobite values in *Kidnapped*, and they bitterly quarrel in the flight across the heather, but when they draw swords on each other they are forced to recognise their fundamental brotherhood. Stevenson was preoccupied with the contradictions and complexities of human behaviour, seeing it constantly changing, and therefore all the more difficult to make judgements about. He is constantly challenging the reader’s response and powers of moral assessment. Who is really good or bad, he asks the reader. Which is better – cool, rigid principles or erratic principles and genuine love? Stevenson’s

work demonstrated how the traditional structure of the adventure story could be a magnificent instrument for raising serious issues.

So powerful was the tradition created by Captain Marryat and his successors that it continued through the last years of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century, with such writers as Captain F. S. Brereton (1872–1957) and ‘Herbert Strang’, the pseudonym of the collaborators George Herbert Ely (1866–1958) and James L’Estrange (1867–1947), who produced such works as *With Drake on the Spanish Main* (1907).

The only work of this period which seems to have endured, however, is *Moonfleet* (1898) by J. Meade Falkner (1858–1932), a tale of smugglers and treachery in eighteenth-century England, more reminiscent of Stevenson than the imperialistic writers.

New developments were discernible. Richard Jefferies (1848–87), with *Bevis: The Story of a Boy* (1882), the account of a boy’s exploits exploring and sailing near his father’s farm, successfully demonstrated how a realistic domestic setting was no obstacle to a tale of engrossing adventures. Thomas Hardy’s one children’s book, *Our Exploits at West Poley* (serialised in America 1892–3), about some teenage boys’ exploration of a cave in the Mendips, also portrayed realistic adventures combined with humour at a time when tales of imperial heroics dominated the scene.

British boys’ adventure stories were read throughout the Empire, so that it is not surprising that Canada should publish such a book as Catharine Parr Traill’s *Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains* in 1852, or that conflicts in New Zealand should inspire such books as Mona Tracy’s *Rifle and Tomahawk: A Stirring Tale of the Te Kooti Rebellion* in 1927.

A different kind of boys’ adventure story had long been popular in North America, however. Even the early didactic books of Jacob Abbott (1803–79) portrayed his young hero Rollo in realistic situations of danger, for example when he is caught in a storm while sailing to visit relations in Europe. That tradition was extended by ‘Oliver Optic’ (the pseudonym of W. T. Adams (1822–97)), whose story *The Boat Club* (1854), about two rival bands of rowers on a New England lake, became immensely popular. *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1868) by T. B. Aldrich (1836–1907) gave the emerging genre a more humorous flavour, helping to prepare the way for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), by ‘Mark Twain’ (the pseudonym of S. L. Clemens (1835–1910)). Despite its comic beginning, this famous book’s power depends enormously upon such traditional adventure-story ingredients as Tom and Huck’s involvement with a murder and their subsequent discovery of a treasure chest.

Many Americans were deeply influenced by the contents and form of British adventure stories. Howard Pyle (1853–1911), for example, produced *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* in 1883 and his first historical novel *Otto of the Silver Hand* in 1888; and later works such as Esther Forbes’s *Johnny Tremain* (1943) and Scott O’Dell’s *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1960) show the continuation of that tradition, while Cynthia Voight’s *Homecoming* of 1981 adopts the formula of the epic journey to a contemporary urban setting. The success of ‘dime novels’, works of cheap, sensationalist American fiction which began to appear in the 1860s, also contributed to the enduring popularity of tales of frontier and pioneering life with heroes like Buffalo Bill, although perhaps only E. S. Ellis (1840–1916), with such books as *The Boy Hunters of Kentucky* (1889) and *On the Trail of the Moose* (1894), seems to have made much impact on British readers.

British adventure stories were also known through translations into most European languages, including Germany which in Joachim Campe produced its own Robinsonnade with *Robinson der Jüngere* in 1779–80, while Karl May (1842–1912) became an extremely

popular author of Cooper-like adventures. Switzerland produced its own great Robinsonnade with J. D. Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson* of 1812–13, while France, with such authors as Alexandre Dumas (1802–70) and Jules Verne (1828–1905), though not deriving directly from the British tradition, certainly contributed to the rise of juvenile adventure stories. The great Russian novelist Leo Tolstói (1828–1910), who wrote a number of tales for children, produced one remarkable adventure story for the young, *A Captive in the Caucasus*, in 1872.

Many other countries and cultures have produced, of course, their own tales of adventure for many years, not belonging to any British tradition but springing more often from their own cultural and oral roots, such as the collection of tales known as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. Although not originally intended for children, perhaps, they have often been much enjoyed by them, particularly in versions adapted for them by such writers as Andrew Lang.

New developments – the twentieth century

The great scientific and technological changes which took place in the first years of the twentieth century had an enormous influence on the development of the boys' adventure story. The invention of the motor car and particularly the rapid evolution of powered flight, with von Zeppelin's airship of 1900 and Blériot's journey across the Channel in 1909, all began to affect the content of such stories. The outbreak of the First World War, with the advent of airship and aeroplane attacks, bombing raids and the emergence of flying heroes such as Billy Bishop and von Richthofen accelerated these developments.

Some of Herbert Strang's books, such as *The King of the Air* (1908), tried to exploit the new technology. But the writer who reflected these changes most clearly was Percy F. C. Westerman (1876–1960); after writing historical novels in the manner of G. A. Henty, he began to introduce aviation into such stories as *The Secret Battleplane* (1918) and *Winning His Wings: A Story of the R.A.F.* (1919).

From now on, flying stories, with their formulaic elements of young hero, his introduction to the skills of aviation, and subsequent encounter with an enemy, whether in peacetime or war, became an important sub-genre of the adventure story. From the 1930s W. E. Johns (1893–1968) came to dominate the field, eventually becoming even more popular than Westerman. Johns had served as an airman in the First World War, and had experience of bombing raids and of being shot down and taken prisoner. When he eventually left the Royal Air Force, he began to contribute to magazines, and in 1932 published 'The White Fokker', his first story about 'Biggles', the nickname of the pilot James Bigglesworth, who was to become his most enduring creation. In the magazine stories collected in such books as *Biggles of the Camel Squadron* (1934), Johns successfully conveyed the way many flyers, with their strange mixture of flippancy and idealism, behaved during the First World War. When Johns had exhausted his war experiences, he turned his knowledge of aviation to producing more conventional adventure plots, dealing with the adventures of Biggles and his wartime companions as, for example, they foil criminals or search for treasure in the Brazilian jungle. But although Johns wrote primarily to give entertainment to his young readers, like earlier writers of adventure stories he was always conscious of the need to educate them too – 'I teach a boy to be a man,' he said, 'I teach sportsmanship according to the British idea ... I teach that decent behaviour wins in the end as a natural order of things. I teach the spirit of team work, loyalty to the Crown,

the Empire and to rightful authority' (quoted in Trease 1965: 80). By the time of his death Johns had written over a hundred books about Biggles, who remains popular.

The ambivalence readers increasingly began to feel towards Johns's books, however, is best expressed by the great Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Ngugi's older brother ran away to join the Mau Mau army, which was formed to oust the British from Kenya, and was the subject of intense bombing by the Royal Air Force. Despite finding Johns's books compulsive reading, Ngugi says,

in reading Biggles in the years 1955 and 1956 I was involved in a drama of contradictions. Biggles could have been dropping bombs on my own brother in the forests of Mount Kenya. Or he could have been sent by [his boss] Raymond to ferret out those who were plotting against the British Empire in Kenya. Either way he would have been pitted against my own brother.

(Ngugi 1992)

The events of the First and Second World Wars influenced more than the technical content of adventure stories. The massive loss of life, eclipsing anything seen in the nineteenth century, clearly affected society's attitude to wars in general, and, after the shocks of the Somme and Gallipoli, Dunkirk and Singapore, many found it increasingly difficult to believe in the incontestable superiority of British arms. The growth of international organisations such as the United Nations, and radio and television's revelation of the world as a global village, together with the swift liquidation of the British Empire from 1947 onwards, also removed the imperial basis of many enterprises. The ideology of an expanding and self-confident British Empire, which had underpinned the rise of the nineteenth-century adventure story, was gradually eroded, and its replacement by a troubled, multiracial and democratic humanism sought new forms of story-telling.

Despite the popularity of such writers as Westerman and Johns, even in the 1930s some writers had found it impossible to produce stories with the same formulaic confidence as their Victorian predecessors. Geoffrey Trease, for example, in such historical tales as *Bows against the Barons* (1934), had tried to write more realistically about 'Merrie England' and portrayed Robin Hood's battles against the aristocracy as tragically doomed. Arthur Ransome (1884–1967) developed the tradition of the realistic adventure story created by Jeffries and Hardy by writing about the adventures that ordinary middle-class children might credibly experience, especially when sailing, in such books as *Swallows and Amazons* (1930). Katherine Hull (1921–77) and Pamela Whitlock (1920–82) followed suit with *The Far Distant Oxus* in 1937, a story set on Exmoor.

The historical story took on a new lease of life in the 1950s, perhaps inspired by Trease's pioneering work. Gillian Avery, Hester Burton, Cynthia Harnett, Kathleen Peyton, Rosemary Sutcliff and Barbara Willard all produced interesting and often distinguished work, frequently taking different perspectives on history from earlier writers, and engaging with the lives of the underprivileged, for example, rather than the great and well-born. Rosemary Sutcliff (1920–92) chose a disabled hero in her Bronze Age *Warrior Scarlet* (1958), and Leon Garfield portrayed the life of an eighteenth-century pickpocket in *Smith* (1967). More recently Jan Needle has produced a powerful account of the navy in Nelson's time from the point of view of two pressed sailors in his dark *A Fine Boy for Killing* (1979), while Philip Pullman has produced a superb quartet of novels with a late Victorian setting, the Sally Lockhart series, culminating in *The Tin Princess* (1994).

Michael Foreman's spirited re-telling of the quasi-historical *Robin of Sherwood* (1996) is also noteworthy.

The character of realistic contemporary adventure stories has also changed dramatically since the Second World War, for when total war came to involve women and children at home as well as men at the front, children were quite likely to become involved in dangerous events. Ian Serraillier's *The Silver Sword* (1956) about the journey of a group of Polish children through war-torn Europe was an early example, and other writers such as Jill Paton Walsh and Robert Westall (1929–93) have also produced successful stories with Second World War settings.

As society has changed since the war, and adult fiction begun to deal with sex and violence more explicitly, so, too, have children's books, narrowing the gap between 'teenage' and adult novels particularly. Authors such as Bernard Ashley and Farrukh Dhondy have dealt with racism in their stories, and children's writers have also begun to deal with issues involving the Third World and problems such as terrorism. Ruth Thomas deals with the discovery of real-life crime within her heroine's dysfunctional family in *Guilty* (1993). Gillian Cross has used the traditional framework of an explorer's search for a lost Aztec city in Bolivia to discuss the values of so-called 'primitive' people in her *Born of the Sun* (1983), while Eva Ibbotson in her *Journey to the River Sea* (2001) uses similar material to explore personal values. In *AK* (1990) Peter Dickinson takes us inside the mind of a child guerrilla struggling to live in a country once part of the British Empire but now torn apart by civil war. Michael Morpurgo's *Kensuke's Kingdom* (1999) successfully develops the form of the Robinsonnade to explore such issues as survival and contrasting cultures. Nearer home, Catherine Sefton uses the political violence in Northern Ireland as the background to her tale of criminals in *Along a Lonely Road* of 1991.

The flying stories of the 1930s, which replaced the sea stories of the previous century, have now been replaced by tales of space travel set in the future. Although the use of the folk-tale formula, with a fearless young hero and the successful fulfilment of a hazardous quest, has almost disappeared from other adventure stories, being replaced by increasing social realism and psychological doubt, this pattern can still be found in much science fiction. Douglas Hill's *Planet of the Warlord* (1981), for instance, describes the hero's journey, with a female companion, in a spaceship across the galaxy, to find and destroy the warlord who annihilated his own planet.

While apparently dealing with civilisations of the future, however, many science fiction stories, such as John Christopher's *The White Mountains* (1967) or Robert Westall's *Future Track 5* (1983), actually offer a critique of trends in contemporary society, and explore such issues as the advantages and disadvantages of new technology, or the needs of the individual as against the welfare of a whole community. Monica Hughes writes about the dangers her young Canadian heroine faces in *Ring-Rise Ring-Set* (1982) as her technological society struggles to deal with the problems of a new Ice Age, and in the process reflects her concern for a better relationship between science and nature. Louise Lawrence's *Moonwind* (1986), another story about space travel, in which two teenagers win a month's stay at the American moon base, is even more radical in its conclusion, showing Gareth preferring to die and join the world of spirit in company with Bethkahn, a female from another planet, rather than return to the materialism and violence of Earth. More recently, as the millennium approached, Jan Mark, who had already written such science fiction as *The Ennead* of 1978, produced a millennium story combining social and spiritual insights with a Swiftian invention and bleakness in her *The Eclipse of the Century* (1999).

Changes in British society in the closing years of the twentieth century were reflected in the growing importance of women writers and of girls as protagonists or equal partners within recent adventure stories. Along with the introduction of such themes as racism, the environment, and debates about the meaning of political freedom, they show how much the modern adventure story has changed from the self-confident, imperialistic and male-dominated tales of the Victorian age. Although opportunities for deeds of adventure remain, Western society is changing, and it is inevitable that adventure stories should reflect these changes.

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27 Childhood, didacticism and the gendering of British children's literature

Christine Wilkie-Stibbs

In line with the ascendancy of the novel over the last century and a half, the most prestigious writing for children has become realistic children's fiction, seemingly owing less to the religious and moral admonitions of pioneer women writers than to their, and their successors', tales. Contemporary children's fiction, by men or women writers, has inherited more from the nineteenth-century domestic and family classics by women than it has from the 'bloods' and adventure stories by men like Stevenson, Marryat or Ballantyne. It is a feminised genre characterised by personal plots (many a contemporary classic for young people is a *Bildungsroman*), and implicitly it endorses a personal – not public – morality (Eagleton 1985) just as strongly as the tracts did so explicitly.

Radical or Evangelical, women writers of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England wrote both for children and adults in order to improve the lot of women and the working classes. Their aims were practical and, even when they used fiction, it was only in the form of exemplary or cautionary tales. That they wrote for an unprestigious readership has added to their marginalisation, but their effect has been immense, and provided a quite distinct and deliberate cultural origin for a feature of subsequent children's fiction and attitudes to childhood which we now take for granted. In propounding Christian or practical virtues and making the family and home the site of virtue, they feminised the child and the genre and, in adopting an educative purpose for their writing, they developed an intimate and eventually realistic style.

Anna Laetitia Barbauld was one such woman. Susan Eilenberg described her as being 'Once regarded as among the most distinguished poets of England, admired by Johnson, envied by Goldsmith, praised by Wordsworth and read by everyone', but '[in] this last century or two thoroughly sunk into oblivion' (1994: 18). Barbauld is one of that 'band of women' derided by Charles Lamb who in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were writing simultaneously for both child and adult readers. In their day they enjoyed prestige, fame and admiration, but they have been relegated to the margins of literature in much the same way as children's literature itself. Nevertheless, they began a covert process of constructing a feminised concept of the child and giving a didactic, reforming and socialising purpose to children's literature which has pervaded its development through ever more sophisticated modes of address.

Barbauld was an intelligent, well-educated Nonconformist who wrote poetry and books for children, and translated her own and other writers' works into French, for example the correspondence of Samuel Richardson (1804). Her social status is significant because she represents a class of women who perceived themselves to be the moral and educative authority of the nation. Her religious convictions, concern for the nation's morality and concern at what she and others regarded as its spiritual depravity, drove her

to join a growing number of women who, from different political motives and in different forms and registers, addressed a child audience. They had deduced that the future spiritual and political character of the nation depended on the present spiritual and political education of its children.

Barbauld's most notable works for children were *Lessons for Children* (1780), *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), and (with her brother John Aiken) *Evenings at Home* (1792–6). The first of these, divided up for children from two years to six, was explicitly intended to teach reading itself, as well as natural history and proper conduct, so the vocabulary and style were limited and terse:

Do not spill the milk.
 Hold the spoon in the other hand.
 Do not throw your bread upon the ground.
 Bread is to eat, you must not throw it away.
 Corn makes bread.
 Corn grows in fields.
 Cows eat grass.

(Barbauld 1780/1820: 15–19)

Influenced, like Wordsworth, by Hartley's then-fashionable associationist philosophy of mind, Barbauld wrote *Hymns in Prose for Children* 'to impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind ... to impress them by connecting religion with a variety of sensible object' (Barbauld 1781/1866: iv–v). She uses many nature images to teach the child reader about her God (who is male), and the child's learning about God and its learning about nature are conflated. It learns about an invisible but ubiquitous and ever-active God, and also about itself as a fallen subject with a debt of obedience to be repaid to a benevolent, bounteous, personal being.

It is symptomatic of women's cultural underestimation that once-prominent writers like Barbauld have been omitted from the record by all but a handful of revivalist academics. And even that handful largely ignores how these women wrote so influentially for children. For example, Jane Spencer traces the development of the novel from a low-status woman's genre, associated with immorality and on a par with newspapers, magazines, tracts and pamphlets (Spencer 1986: 86), to a 'feminised', sentimentalised and moralising, but successful and respected, form produced mainly by women and ideologically entangled with changing conceptions of women and femininity.

In their endeavour to reclaim the centre-ground for women's writing, feminist critics like Jane Spencer have emphasised this prolific output but they have ignored the part played in it by writing for children. Julia Briggs suggests that twentieth-century feminist criticism may have downplayed the role of women in the history of children's literature because to be seen as writers for children may have made women writers doubly marginalised:

They were responsible for some of the earliest fairy stories and fables, nursery rhymes and moral tales; yet their large contribution in this particular field has so far attracted little attention from feminist critics. One obvious explanation for this is that until recently, children's books were regarded as marginal, less than serious as literature, and while feminist criticism was concerned to shift women and their writing away from the periphery, this scarcely looked a promising topic for exploration, indeed

women writing for children seemed doubly marginalized. As long as children's books were not taken seriously, the writing of them could not be felt to advance the status of women as writers in any way.

(Briggs 1989: 222)

Changes in the concepts of women (and their writing) and of femininity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were all making woman's role more private and domestic, and making women economic dependants of their husbands. They tied the idea of womanhood to a socially constructed idea of femaleness which was virtuous, modest and moral, and impacted upon the idea of the child and of writing for the child, because the idea of femaleness also subsumed an educative role: the reconstruction of femaleness reconstructed the idea of childness and the role of literature in constructing it.

The significance for writing for children of this new ideology of femininity was that it accepted and exploited the position of housebound women, who acted not just as carers for children, but as their educators and guardians and producers of their moral values – playing a role pioneered by the Barbauld 'crew' (Block 1978: 237–52). Julia Briggs relates how this new proximity of middle-class women to their children, and the opportunities offered by a burgeoning of publishing (and in some case, economic necessity) allowed women to use writing – for children as well as adults – to address their role in society and gain acceptance and respect in what had become a respectable genre (Briggs 1989: 223). One strand of this new writing by women consisted of 'conduct-books' or 'courtesy-books', directed at both women and young girls, from which can be traced a whole tradition of writing for children.

Lissa Paul has observed that children's literature and women in history have shared the same forms of physical, economic and linguistic entrapment (Paul 1990: 150). Historically, both stories by women and stories for children have been characterised by being private, not public stories. Since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women's stories have been, for the most part, concerned with domestic plots and with everyday happenings to everyday people. A close association between the writers' personal identities and the lives represented in their fictions was necessarily implied to authenticate work in a mimetic model of fiction. So women's stories are not like the heroic quests and 'bloods' of fiction written by men for boys. On the whole, while men wrote for boys about boys in public spaces, women wrote for girls about girls in private places. But however 'entrapped' they were, a significant number of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women wrote successfully and prolifically, creating a new phenomenon of writing for children, with prototypes like the novels of Mrs Sherwood, and later classics like those of Louisa Alcott, Edith Nesbit and Frances Hodgson Burnett.

Mary Wollstonecraft (a proto-feminist), Hannah Moore (a religious tract writer) and Maria Edgeworth (a romantic historical novelist) all wrote both for children and adults in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They used, as well as what became conventional novel forms, the epistolary novel, the moral tale, hymns and sermons, verse, fables, and books of direct instruction. In different ways they were all caught up in a struggle to establish a role and public identity for women at a time when a redefinition of womanhood sought to tie women to the home and domestic life, and to make women less sexually responsive and aware, and therefore more submissive and socially subordinate.

The increasing separation of the home from the workplace in the late seventeenth century and eighteenth century laid the foundations for a bourgeois ideology of femi-

ninity, according to which women were very separate, special creatures ... Sexual differences received emphatic attention; and with their endless discussions of 'femalities' and 'feminalities' eighteenth century writers were helping to construct a new definition of womanhood.

(Spencer 1986: 15)

An increasingly vociferous, religious minority crusaded for female morality, linking morality to religion, and urging less affective (and therefore, ironically, more rational!) behaviour on the part of women – but all for the purpose of making them into better wives and mothers. During this time, too, the religious lobby was attacking the 'lies' of fictional writing and its use of the 'imagination', in favour of more 'factual' forms based on real life and closely related to Bible stories.

Conflicting groups of women used these cultural phenomena for their own, different ends, though all in their way contributed to the rise of the domestic feminised story of domestic feminised children. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, one of the period's liberal, radical, rational, educationalist women writers, shared the religious lobby's opposition to the imagination. But in her case it was because, like Godwin, she thought progress away from the imagination was progress towards reason and science. Her opposition to encouraging imagination in women was a way to free them from the constraints of what she conceived as the weaknesses associated with female characteristics and behaviours. She argued that the accepted stereotypes of the proper role of women in society give a reason for educating women more, not less – and more rationally. Far from accepting the reduction of the status of motherhood to domestic oblivion, she is elevating it to a position of power and responsibility.

Like so many of her women-writer contemporaries, not least Maria Edgeworth, she was using her writing for children to subvert and interrogate the role of women in society. She remodelled Sarah Fielding's *The Governess; or Little Female Academy* of 1749 into a children's work bearing a title conjured to connote her ideological stance of *Original Stories from Real Life with Conversations Calculated to Regulate the Affections of Mind to Truth and Goodness* (1788). Like Fielding's original, Wollstonecraft's version was intended to regulate the behaviour of young girls, but Wollstonecraft has no allusions to fantasy and fairy tale such as we find in the giants 'Barbaric' and 'Benfico' and in 'The Princess Phebe' of Sarah Fielding's work. The 'real life' of Wollstonecraft's title affirms the factual nature of the work. Fielding's benevolent and liberal-minded Governess, 'Mrs Teachum', has been replaced in Wollstonecraft's reworking by a more literalist and rationalist woman. The educating, moralising voice of authority is no longer that of a child character, as in Fielding, but that of Wollstonecraft's singularly adult 'Mrs Mason'.

The Governess was reworked again, in the early nineteenth century, by Mrs Sherwood with yet another apology for Fielding's use of the imagination:

Several Fairy-tales were incidentally introduced into the original work; and as it is not unlikely that such compositions formed by that period are of the chief amusement of the infant mind, a single tale of this description is admitted into the present edition. But since fanciful productions of this sort can never be rendered generally useful, it has been thought proper to suppress the rest, substituting in their place such appropriate relations as seemed more likely to conduce to juvenile edification.

(Sherwood 1820: Introduction)

Barbauld, Edgeworth, Trimmer and Wollstonecraft came from different quasi-political positions, but they had enough in common to be published by the same liberal dissenting publisher who also published Godwin, Tom Paine, Erasmus Darwin, and Coleridge, Hazlitt and Wordsworth (Barrell 2003: 10). Hannah More, by contrast, represents the conservative Evangelical wing of late eighteenth-century women writers. In her Introduction to *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (With a view on the principles and conduct prevalent among women of rank and fortune)* (1799), she demonstrates how successfully the century's bourgeois ideology of womanhood had influenced the minds and behaviour of educated women but also seemingly licensed them to instruct the less educated. She proposed, for example, that

The chief end to be proposed in cultivating the understanding of women is to qualify them for the practical purposes of life. Their knowledge is not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition. A lady studies not that she may qualify herself to become an orator or a pleader, nor that she may learn to debate, but to act ... She should cultivate every study which, instead of stimulating her sensibility will chastise it. Will bring the imagination under dominion. That kind of knowledge that is fitted for home consumption, is particularly adapted to women.

(More 1799/1830: 1–3)

By the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, writing for children was dominated by women who can be divided between the rational educationalists like Wollstonecraft and Evangelicals like More. Religious and secular alike, they aimed at the education of children and the regulation of their behaviour. The titles of books written in the last two decades of the eighteenth century are enough to indicate the shift that had taken place since Sarah Fielding wrote *The Governess* – with its giants and fairies – to instruct and *entertain* children: Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* (1780) and *Evenings at Home* (instructional dialogues) (1792–6); Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* (1788) and *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787); Trimmer's *An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature and the Reading of the Holy Scriptures: Adapted to the Capacities of Children* (1780); Edgeworth's *The Parents' Assistant* (1796).

The intended readers of the children's books of Barbauld and Trimmer (and of others such as the Kilner sisters and Eleanor Fenn) were children of the middle classes. But at the same time, the Evangelicals like More, especially with their tract literature, aimed at social reform of the working class through education. The success of their campaign depended on bringing literacy to the urban masses, and inculcating a doctrine of subordination which preached that these urban masses were to submit to their God (in all cases), to their husbands (in the case of wives), and to their parents (in the case of children). Middle class or working class, the children addressed by these didactic books were implied as socially existing children, defined by their class and gender and conceived negatively – in need of reform and/or conversion. The texts assume that conversion will be simply and unproblematically achieved by direct address and the assumption of a one-to-one writer-to-reader relationship and the 'Dear Reader' device. Already, fiction for children was being conceived as a teacher-to-pupil phenomenon, with a disempowering, repressive transmission mode of address. The distinct educative purpose of early children's literature produced a distinct implied narrator.

Twentieth-century readings of Edgeworth's moral tales by Myers (1986), Vallone (1991) and others, have, by historicising these texts, revealed them as more than simple, straightforward moral tales for indoctrination. Myers points out how Edgeworth's tales

featured rational linear plots concerned with the experiential reform and progress of their heroes or heroines:

Edgeworth's oeuvre considers issues of adult authority and child empowerment and explores what it's like for juveniles who seek both separation and relation, young people who must develop their own sense of self, yet maintain the affiliative network that defines social being.

(Myers 1986: 134)

Also, on issues of didacticism and of the authors' own denunciations of fancy and fairy tale, Myers looks beyond the surface trappings of 'innocent-looking stories about talking animals, heroic girls, authoritative mothers and worthy peasants' to discover what she describes as 'a fiction of ideas'. However tirelessly didactic and ostensibly down-to-earth, women writers' moral and domestic tales smuggle in their symptomatic fantasies, dramatising female authority figures, and covertly thematising female power.

It is difficult to imagine how this revisionist reinterpretation by Myers could be extended to the seemingly reactionary moral Cheap Repository Tracts of Hannah More, with their flat, allegorical figures ('Wild Robert'; 'Patient Joe'; 'Jemima Placid' and so on). These works were not, on the whole, intended for children, but for the families of the urban poor. However, their simple language and stories made them obvious vehicles for promoting literacy among poor working children – the literacy essential for the project of reform-through-education. Like Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* (1780), they taught reading and good behaviour together. Late eighteenth-century books for the poor and books for children were categorised together in what Charlotte Yonge later described as "class literature": books ... for children or the poor' (quoted in McGavrin 1991: 34). However, it is clear from their titles and the readerly address of some of these tracts that they were also read by middle-class readers.

The Cheap Repository Tracts were sold in their thousands every week, for one penny; in one year over two million were bought and distributed to the poor by the well-to-do (Hopkins 1947: 212). Hannah More herself published one hundred Cheap Repository Tracts between 1795 and 1797 (Smith 1984: 91). Often written in rhymed couplets, the tracts simulated the format and register of popular chapbooks, and thus exploited the already available readership of the newly literate working classes. The new morality came with women's redefined role. That, together with the influence of Protestantism and the Sunday School movement, moved the emphasis away from women's sexuality to their morality (Cutt 1974: 226). Women's opportunity to write and their perception of themselves as carers for their children and moralisers of the nation all made tract literature and writing for children an attractive vehicle for proselytising.

There was nothing neutral or innocent about any of this writing. It was, even if piecemeal and unorganised, an attempt by a select number of interest groups of Christian women, mostly conservative, to exercise social control over the working poor and children through literacy and religious instruction. They cleverly conflated issues of national politics and domestic circumstances to carry a biblical message, while at the same time making an appeal to national acquiescence, submission and moral reform. Given the political background from which these tracts were written, it is not clear, despite their authors' declared intention, whether the primary mission was conversion for spiritual redemption or conversion for purposes of social control. By this time, for these writers, the two were not only linked but indistinguishable.

From all of this early writing, the child as both reader and as text emerges as a paradoxical figure: innocent but Fallen; but also as victim with a redemptive role and exemplary power to convert corrupted adult society. This image of the child as both subject *in* the discourse and as the idealised projection of the child reader *of* the discourse, is one that shaped tract literature. To perform as the ideal reader of these tracts, the child (and adult) reader needed to be minimally literate, submissive and unquestioning. It is an image of the child that was paradoxically both disturbed and consummated in the works of Hesba Stretton (1832–1911).

Mary Martha Sherwood (1775–1851) took all the best and the worst of the moral tales and evangelical tracts and assembled them into a new form of realistic narrative fiction that anticipated the domestic novel, in works such as *Little Henry and His Bearer* (1814) and, most famously, *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818). As in the earlier works of Barbauld and Trimmer, these narratives were directed at a middle-class and an ostensibly child readership. But in fact they were carrying forward the eighteenth-century tradition of tract literature, in using the device of ‘double address’ (Wall 1991: passim) – speaking to parents while overtly addressing the child. In this sense, these early ‘children’s’ fictions were not ‘children’s fictions’ as we have come to regard them in recent Western culture. These were not books for solitary silent child readers. They were *family* literatures, to be read convivially, in a family context, in the company of, and collusion with, parents.

The History of the Fairchild Family (Sherwood 1818) has become notorious in children’s fiction for its gruesome scenes which make moral points to the child characters; but what has become so shocking about these events for readers in subsequent centuries is the fact that, in this domestic novel, Sherwood was pioneering a style in which events are dramatised in a realistic setting. The nearly believable characters speak in a recognisable middle-class idiom and behave believably as if driven by recognisable feelings. To convey the Evangelical message in this particular style and form was new. Sherwood did maintain something of the character of the earlier tracts (each episode concludes with a prayer and a hymn), but she advanced the genre by converting biblical texts like the story of Cain and Abel into events of contemporary family life rather than into metaphors of nature as Barbauld, Trimmer and Sherwood herself in earlier works had done.

The 1913 re-issue of *The Fairchild Family*, edited by Lady Strachey is instructive of the changing concepts of the child and the changing role of child literature:

Unfortunately the book has other characteristics which have caused it to drop out of the library of the child of the present day. Mrs Sherwood’s theory of life was that of Calvinism in its most extreme form and the work is overshadowed with those gloomy inexorable doctrines of the innate depravity of human nature and the terrible doom from which escape is so rare, and one of morbid insistence on death in its most terrible forms as a precursor to hell. In the present edition all those passages are omitted, although the religious teaching on which the work is based has been retained in its milder and more tolerant form. Other omissions are those of the prayer and hymn with which every chapter ended and of one or two lengthy episodes. It is hoped that the alterations will succeed in opening out to the present generation of children a source of as much enjoyment as was found by their forefathers in *The Fairchild Family*.

(Strachey 1913: Introduction)

This suggests that literature for children at the beginning of the twentieth century was again being rewritten by middle-class women whose *presented* purposes in writing for children were to entertain. The extratextual child reader has been relocated in the realm of innocence: its sensibilities need to be protected. In Lady Strachey's revised edition of *The Fairchild Family* all the pastoral elements of the earlier work have been brought into sharp relief by the omission of those extended details that Strachey described as being overshadowing and gloomy, and the evangelical messages are played down – although it is important to note that the spirit of 1913 saw fit to revive this work at all.

Hesba Stretton (Sarah Smith), who disturbed and consummated the image of the passive child, wrote prolifically for children and adults and had a wide national and international readership. The time-span of her work is represented by *Fern's Hollow* (1864) to *Thoughts of an Old Age* (1904). She is responsible for several well-known literary children, notably Jessica of *Jessica's First Prayer* (1867), Meg of *Little Meg's Children* (1868), and Tony and Dolly of *Alone in London* (1869). Her motives for writing were mixed. She wanted to bring the attention of the upper classes to the plight of children of the urban poor in the slums of Manchester, Liverpool and London. But her books were published by the Religious Tract Society, and she also wrote for children and newly literate adults to bring about Christian conversion. However, compared to Hannah More, with whom she shares her squalid settings, she works hard, if indirectly, to better the lot of the poor by appealing to potential benefactors. The slum-dwelling Jessicas, Megs, Tonys and Dollys, who always seem untouched by the squalor of their surroundings and parental neglect, have a capacity for spiritual renewal that correlates almost exactly to their deliverance from their squalor, ignorance and 'heathen' existence. In Stretton's novels we have the first – if late – true incarnation of the Romantic child, untainted by Sin as it was in the works of Evangelical writers. Jessica, of *Jessica's First Prayer*, moves between the slum attic she shares with her drunken mother, the coffee-stall of the miserly Daniel, and the palpable glow and warmth of the Evangelical chapel. In that chapel, eventually, the minister and his three well-heeled children admit her to their religious fold and offer her the chance to earn financial support. She acts as a catalyst who exposes the hypocrisy of organised religion, and a paradigm of virtue who shames middle-class churchgoers into sympathy and charity towards the poor.

In these later Evangelical works of children's fiction, all of them written by women, the paradigm of the Romantic child, as reader and as text, which was to influence and affect the children of children's literature for many decades to come, had arrived: individual, potentially independent from adult patronage, powerful, and empowering. Above all, and despite gender differences, it was feminine.

As evidence of the profound and long-lasting influence of women on children's fiction, Claudia Nelson's *Boys Will Be Girls* (1991) – a title which parodies and subverts that of one of Mrs Sherwood's books – *Boys Will Be Boys, the Difficulties of a Schoolboy's Life* (1854) – shows how women writers of mid-Victorian children's fictions influenced the Victorian stereotype of childhood and feminised both the child and children's literature texts, including books by men. Tom in Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) is an example, and one stereotype we have of a Victorian child is *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1885), the male eponym of an early Frances Hodgson Burnett novel. The domestic and moralising influence in stories *for* children extends beyond novels *about* children. It can be detected in Beatrix Potter's animal stories or Anna Sewell's didactic *Black Beauty* (1877), ostensibly about a (male, if gelded) horse.

In line with the feminine ideal, 'the preadolescent of either sex took on many of the qualities of the 'Angel of the house' (see Nelson 1991: 2). These female qualities were to

some extent taken over even by the Victorian and Edwardian male writers of the undomestic adventures – the ‘manly’ virtues now included modesty, honesty, consideration and chastity. Although late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century children’s literature seemed to be split on gender lines, according to who wrote it, who read it and where it was set, it was all informed by a project to promote personal morality which was in an essentially feminine tradition going back to Barbauld and her like.

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28 Popular literature

Comics, dime novels, pulps and Penny Dreadfuls

Denis Gifford

British children's comics: 150 years of fun and thrills

The familiar British weekly comic magazine of today, usually comprising some thirty-two pages of strip cartoons, most in colour, some in black and white, can trace its ancestry back to an experiment produced for Christmas 1874, and forty years further back to a four-page annual edition dated 1831. And the regular comic characters can trace themselves back to a one-off experimental strip designed with no more ambition than to fill a page in a weekly humour magazine published in the summer of 1867. Both these casual (at the time) events took place long enough ago to secure Britain's claim as founder of the feast of fun that fills the world with laughter.

To take these two events in chronological order, first came the vehicle. *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, a weekly which began on 3 March 1822, introduced a regular pictorial feature called 'The Gallery of Comicalities' in 1827. This series of caricatures, illustrated jokes and humorous engravings was contributed by such favourite contemporary cartoonists as George Cruikshank, Robert Seymour and Kenny Meadows. The pictures were so popular that thirty-four of these cartoons were gathered together and reprinted as a full page of pictures on Sunday 2 January 1831: the first cartoon page in British newspaper history. This was so successful – and economical! – that a further fifty-four cartoons were reprinted in the edition dated 12 March 1831, with the interesting editorial note that the engravings 'cost the proprietors two hundred and seventy guineas'. If true, this would imply that the average fee paid per picture was five guineas, a good deal higher than the fee a comic artist would receive half a century later, when two shillings would be considered a good price per panel!

An enterprising publisher named George Goodyer now enlarged on Bell's idea and, assembling four broadsheet pages from back numbers of Bell's weekly, published them as a one-shot entitled *The Gallery of 140 Comicalities* on 24 June 1831. Goodyer charged the steep price of threepence for this bumper budget of cartoons, editorially reckoning that the total cost to him was £735. His profits can be estimated by the mathematically minded, as we know his total sales to have been 178,000 copies. Another publisher, William Clement Jr, saw even more potential in this pictorial format, and turned *The Gallery of Comicalities* into an annual series, running it from Part II (1832) to Part VII (1841). This regular cartoon paper becomes a good contender for the title of the first comic, for among the myriad cartoons can be found primitive strips, tiny two-picture episodes usually in the form of cartooned comparisons or contrasts. Indeed, in Bell's first full-page 'Gallery of Comicalities' can be found a captionless two-picture strip entitled 'Before and After the Election', reprinted from an issue of *Life in London* of 1830.

Bell's weekly and its reprints represent the mainstream of popular journalism, but at the same time the wealthier end of the market purchased caricature prints, plain or hand-coloured, and issued by the print houses in limited editions.

The original idea of using the lithographic printing system to issue a regular cartoon magazine rather than single sheets of pictures seems to have been born in Scotland. Number 1 of *Glasgow Looking Glass*, dated 23 July 1825, was issued and most probably illustrated by John Watson of the Lithographic Press Office, 189 George Street: 'Price Common Impression, One Shilling, Best Ditto, 1s 6d'. It even included an eight-picture serial strip entitled 'History of a Coat, Part 1'. This monthly was followed by *Northern Looking Glass*, a four-page pictorial drawn by William Heath, who later went to London to draw *The Looking Glass* for Thomas McLean, the famous print publisher of 26 Haymarket. Heath drew the first seven issues (January–July 1830), after which Robert Seymour was given the credit. *The Looking Glass* was 'designed and drawn on stone'.

The father of what most students of the comic would recognise as true British comic art was C. J. Grant. He drew cartoons in the Thomas-Hood style of pictorial pun, but with a common touch: for example, the phrase 'making a deep impression' is illustrated by a slapstick scene showing a top-hatted toff flopping into a puddle of mud. 'Every Man to His Post' shows a bottle-brandishing drunk clutching a horse-hitching post. William Makepeace Thackeray, writing about Grant, saw his drawings as 'outrageous caricatures' with 'squinting eyes, wooden legs, and pimples noses forming the chief points of fun'. They were beneath that great literary gentleman, but that was, and is, their point. In Grant's lively London line can be seen the start of an art appealing to, and belonging to, the working and lower class. Grant's 'pimpled noses' are archetypes for Ally Sloper's.

Grant described himself as 'A.A.E.' which stood for 'Author, Artist, Editor' on the byline of a fortnightly broadside which he drew from 1 January 1834. *Every Body's Album and Caricature Magazine*, published by the lithographic printer J. Kendrick of 54 Leicester Square, London, had a good run, and in its welter of caricatural contents, can be found a comic strip with speech balloons, 'Adventures of the Buggins's', a short serial strip that ran from number 36 to number 37 (July 1835).

The first comic paper to match all the features of the modern comic (low price, regular weekly publication, mass circulation via newsagents, editorial and artistic content) was called *Funny Folks* (12 December 1874). Like the other essential of the comic, the regularly appearing character, the first comic evolved by accident. James Henderson, publisher of *The Weekly Budget*, a family magazine, designed *The Funny Folks Budget* as a pull-out supplement to his Grand Christmas Number. It was to be an all-cartoon section and was advertised as a special one-off edition. However, so striking was it in its large tabloid format, and so intriguing to the readers of *The Weekly Budget* readers, that it was immediately turned into a separate publication in its own right. Curiously, although it laid down a formula clung to by British comics for the next seventy-five years (eight pages, four of cartoons and four of text, in tabloid newspaper size), *Funny Folks* never developed a continuing hero. The few strips it ran were, like the cartoons which dominated its content, topical, even political, following the promise of the magazine's subtitle: 'The Comic Companion to the Newspaper'. Thus we see the first important point a student of the comic should always remember, that originally comics were intended as light entertainment for the adult reader, and not for children.

And so we come to our second essential to the comic, the continuing cartoon character. The first true comic-strip hero (after one or two minor false starts) starred in a full-page cartoon episode entitled 'Some of the Mysteries of Loan and Discount'. He was

created by the astoundingly talented Charles Henry Ross, a prolific author of serial stories, novels and plays, a journalist, an editor, an actor and a cartoonist; and his name was 'Ally Sloper'. Ally was supposed to have been an abbreviation of Alexander, but in fact the name was designed as a pun, a favourite form of verbal humour of the period. Being forever workshy and penniless, Ally Sloper was one who 'sloped' up the 'alley' – that is to say, he slipped around the corner with great alacrity whenever the landlord came to collect his rent!

Charles Ross was already drawing a regular comic-strip page in the weekly joke magazine *Judy*, which had been founded in 1867 as a rival to the successful humorous journal *Punch* (1841). Having now hit by sheer chance on a character who would stand repetition, Ross reintroduced Ally Sloper in his subsequent contributions to *Judy*, probably to save himself the trouble of continually creating new comic heroes. Sloper took the public's fancy as his efforts to avoid hard work and make a comfortable living became ever more outrageous. An annual cartoon publication, a burlesque almanac entitled *Ally Sloper's Comic Calendar*, was introduced from December 1873, followed by a mid-year special, *Ally Sloper's Summer Number* (1880). Eventually Ross sold his character to the famous Victorian engravers and publishers the Dalziel Brothers, and a complete weekly comic was built around the old reprobate: *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday* from 3 May 1884.

Ross's original image of Sloper, crude but full of action, was lost when the artwork for his adventures was taken over by W. G. Baxter. This brilliant comic draughtsman established the vast Sloper family, including the sexy chorus girl Tootsie Sloper who ran the fashion features, depicting them in the bumper Christmas Holiday issues in huge centre-spreads of yuletide activities. Unhappily Baxter died far too young, suffering, it is said, from the curse of drink that so befuddled his cartoon hero and, for the remainder of his long comic career, Sloper was drawn, in the Baxter image, by W. F. Thomas.

Sloper's comic life in his own weekly ran for some forty years. In addition he was the first strip character to be merchandised, and can be found to this day in such venerable collectibles as china busts (with removable top hats!), ashtrays, a pocket watch, a glass sauce-bottle and a brass doorstep. It was the last of these antiques that became the model for the annual (but now defunct) Ally Sloper Award, instituted in 1976 as a mark of appreciation towards veteran comic artists. Although Sloper died officially in 1923, he has refused to lie down, being revived by two comic publishers in 1948, and again as the title for the first British comic magazine for adults (1976).

The true boom in comic weeklies began on 17 May 1890 when an enterprising young publisher named Alfred Harmsworth produced number 1 of *Comic Cuts*. Harmsworth modelled his weekly paper so closely on James Henderson's *Funny Folks* that he even filled it with cartoons and strips that had already been published in the past by Henderson! Harmsworth himself had been an editorial employee of Henderson, and well knew that most of his employer's cartoons were reprinted from back numbers of the American comic weeklies *Judge*, *Life* and *Puck*. Henderson, however, had a perfect right to do this, as he had financial arrangements with the American publishers; Harmsworth had not. In consequence it was not long before Harmsworth was advertising in *Comic Cuts* for British cartoonists to contribute to his new paper. Henderson had moved in with a writ! Thus, through Harmsworth's undoubted perfidy, a brand new market for British cartoonists was opened up. Contributions poured in and were used to fill the four illustrated pages of the eight-page *Comic Cuts*, plus the additional pages of *Illustrated Chips*. The runaway success of Harmsworth's new comic had virtually forced him to produce a companion comic, and *Illustrated Chips* was launched on 26 July 1890. Both papers succeeded beyond

Harmsworth's expectations, not because of the quality of their cartoons (or indeed of their paper itself, which was of the lowest quality and dyed pink), but because both papers cost exactly half the price of his rival Henderson's comics: Harmsworth sold his comics for a halfpenny each, instead of one penny!

The halfpenny-comic boom continued through to the new century, and through it many new cartoonists were discovered. None was greater than a youthful Nottingham lithographer named Tom Browne (1870–1910). Browne scorned the closely cross-hatched style of cartooning so prevalent in the old-established humorous weeklies such as *Punch*, and favoured the new, simple style popularised by Phil May. Applying this formula of linework plus solid blacks to strip art, Browne began freelancing the occasional comic strip to such London weeklies as *Scraps*: his first ever, entitled 'He Knew How To Do It', appeared in the issue of 27 April 1890. A prophetic title: Tom Browne certainly 'knew how to do it', and soon abandoned lithography in Nottingham for a studio in Blackheath, London, from whence he turned out as many as five different front-page series a week, plus posters, postcards, advertising art, illustrations and watercolour paintings. His most popular and famous characters in comics were Weary Willie and Tired Tim, who first appeared as casual tramp heroes in a one-off strip described as Weary Waddles and Tired Timmy in *Chips* for 16 May 1896. Immediately popular with editors and readers alike, these classic comic heroes, one short and fat, the other tall and thin, remained on page one of *Chips* through the comic's entire life, right to the final edition on 12 September 1953. This fifty-eight-year run is something of a record, but one which Tom Browne did not live to see. He died in 1910, some five years after giving up his characters and, indeed, comic work altogether. But he had lived long enough to know that his bold black-and-white style of art, and his working-class type of hero, plus his slapstick, action-packed comedy, had set the style, the standard, and indeed the look of British comic art, and his influence persisted for half a century.

Incidentally, it is a sad sidelight on British comic history that the cartoonist who drew Weary Willie and Tired Tim from 1907 to their very last appearance was never once permitted to sign his work. His name was Percy Cocking, and he continued the classic Tom-Browne style of comic drawing to the very end.

Harmsworth's huge financial success led to many smaller publishers entering the comic market, each with one or more titles, and all modelled on the originals. They invariably featured tramp double-acts on their front pages, virtually carbon copies of Tom Browne's Willie and Tim. Indeed, the more prosperous publishers hired Browne to create these front-page characters for them, such as C. Arthur Pearson: Airy Alf and Bouncing Billy appeared on number 1 of *The Big Budget* (19 June 1897), a huge penny comic divided into three pull-out parts of eight pages each.

At this time all British comics were being published for an adult market: even Harmsworth's price of one halfpenny was a sum beyond the pocket of the average working-class child. Thus all the early comic heroes are adult, and all the themes of their adventures are adult – tramps stealing from shopkeepers and ending up in prison, for example. The first comic paper to feature children as heroes was *Larks*, published as a halfpenny comic by the proprietors of *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday* (one penny). The Balls Pond Road Banditti was a gang of juvenile delinquents whose weekly adventures took them around such landmarks of Victorian London as the British Museum and the Albert Memorial. They were drawn on the front page by Gordon Fraser, an artist whose name still graces a greetings-card publisher. The Banditti can be considered the cartoon ancestors of the *Beano's* gang of destructive schoolboys, the Bash Street Kids. Although

obviously popular with young readers, it would be some years before British comics became the sole property of children. Even then, the heroes of the strips remained predominantly adult, with just the occasional strip concerning itself with the antics of schoolboys and schoolgirls.

The first coloured comics were simply printed in black ink on coloured paper. *Chips*, for example, was almost always printed on pink paper and, despite a brief flirtation with red ink on white paper, reverted in the final decade of its existence to its traditional form. The first British comic to be printed in full colour was the special autumn issue of *Comic Cuts*, published 12 September 1896. This brave failure, an enterprise of Alfred Harmsworth in answer to the coloured comic supplements which were being published as part of the New York Sunday newspapers, failed mainly because the printing costs raised the price of a coloured edition from a halfpenny to one penny. However, Harmsworth continued to experiment spasmodically with special coloured editions of his several weekly comics, but it would be his business rivals, the relatively small firm of Trapps and Holmes, who would publish the first regular weekly comic printed in full colour. Called, appropriately, *The Coloured Comic*, it appeared on 21 May 1898 with the usual tramp partnership on the front – Frog Faced Ferdinand and Watty Wool Whiskers – but after about a year was reduced to being printed black on coloured paper, thus continuing to justify its title, to the publishers at least!

Alfred Harmsworth was, however, the first to publish a really successful coloured comic weekly, launching *Puck*, a twelve-page penny comic, on 30 July 1904, ‘To gladden your eye on bright wings of colour and fancy’. But by the end of the year the comic had completely changed in character, and with it the whole nature and concept of the British comic. *Puck* begins as a weekly magazine for adults, modelled closely on the American Sunday supplements. Even its name was stolen from the American humorous weekly, while many of its characters in the comic strips are also stolen. There was *The Newlyweds*, but by a British artist, not George McManus. There was *Buster Brown* complete with dog and resolutions, redrawn as *Scorcher Smith*. Some weeks there was a full-page cover cartoon, other weeks a decorative drawing of a lovely lady. But the key to the comic was contained in ‘Puck Junior’, a section within the comic intended for the younger members of the family. This quickly took over the entire twelve-page comic (except for some of the serialised fiction pages). *Johnny Jones* and the *Casey Court Kids* (guest stars from Harmsworth’s well-established *Chips*) took over the front page, and by Christmas 1904 the whole pictorial content of *Puck* was geared to children.

And so the first comic weekly designed for children was evolved. It became such a success that almost all comic papers published in Great Britain from then on have been designed for the juvenile market. The special appeal remained for adults – they bought the comic for their children, children still seldom being able to afford the necessary penny. Thus a new style of comic was born, one which appealed to the adult eye as a well-drawn, well-designed, well-printed paper which would have nothing objectionable in its contents for children to see, a style of comic quite separate from the halfpenny knockabouts of *Chips* and its companions, which would remain working class, despite the lowering of the age of their readership, for their entire lives.

James Henderson, Harmsworth’s old employer and now business rival, was the next publisher to attempt a coloured comic. Taking inspiration from Harmsworth’s methods, he succeeded in printing a full-colour comic at half *Puck*’s price – one halfpenny! This was *Lot-O-Fun*, which started on 17 March 1906 and ran for a total of 1,196 weekly issues, most of them featuring George Davey’s clever fantasy strip ‘Dreamy Daniel’, about a tramp whose

weekly dreams took him to the Wild West with Buffalo Bill, and on adventures with many other contemporary heroes, real and imaginary. *Lot-O-Fun* finally closed when Harmsworth, now trading as the Amalgamated Press, bought Henderson out and killed off all his publications, one by one. This shameful practice would be repeated throughout the history of British comics, first with the disappearance of the Trapps and Holmes comics, then with the independent Target Comics of Bath in the 1930s, the J. B. Alien *Comet* and *Sun* in the 1940s, and the Hulton Press comics, *Eagle* and *Girl*, in the 1950s.

British comics were now separated into two distinct classes, the ‘penny blacks’ and the ‘tuppenny coloureds’. The ‘black’ comics, distinguished by being printed on different coloured newsprint, were aimed at the working-class market – the child at the council school – while the coloureds concentrated on the younger child of middle-class families. The age-range of the comics was considerable. *Chick’s Own* (25 September 1920) catered specifically for the very young child just learning to read. All its words were hyphenated into syllables. Next came *The Rainbow* (14 February 1914) for the school beginners aged five to seven, followed by *Sparkler* (20 October 1934) for the eight-year-olds and upwards. Of the many titles covering these age groups *Rainbow* is the most important, and was the most successful, being the pioneer ‘nursery comic’, as the group came to be called. It was also the first British comic to sell one million copies every week, including one copy which was delivered to Buckingham Palace tucked inside the King’s *Times!* This enabled the editor to emblazon his comic with the headline ‘The Paper for Home and Palace!’

The front-page stars of *Rainbow* were the Bruin Boys, a gang of anthropomorphic animals who lived at Mrs Bruin’s Boarding School, and the star of the gang was Tiger Tim. Tim and his chums had been created as early as 1904 for the *Daily Mirror*, then transferred to *The Monthly Playbox* (November 1904), the first coloured comic supplement to a magazine, the sumptuous shilling monthly *The World and His Wife*. This section continued to be given away until May 1910, when it transferred to a fortnightly juvenile educational magazine, *The New Children’s Encyclopedia*, to afford much-needed comic relief. The enormous popularity of Tiger Tim and the (then) Hippo Boys encouraged the editor of the newly conceived comic *Rainbow* to feature them on his front page in full colour. Their popularity was so huge that a second comic, *Tiger Tim’s Weekly* (31 January 1920), was created, but this was still not enough. Finally a weekly comic just for girls was designed, using the old *Playbox* title, and from 14 February 1925 the hitherto unsuspected twin sisters of Tiger Tim and Company, Tiger Tilly and the Hippo Girls, cut their comic capers.

Once again the darker side of British comic publication is cast across the comedy. None of this immense commercial success benefited Julius Stafford Baker (1869–1961), the cartoonist who created the characters. (He also created Casey Court, the large panel of slum-kid comedy that appeared in *Chips* from 1902 to the final issue – again without continued benefit to his income.) Baker was dismissed from the *Rainbow* front page after only a few issues, for being ‘too American’ in style. Tiger Tim was taken over by Herbert S. Foxwell (1890–1943), who redesigned the character and related the style of drawing more to the traditions of British children’s book illustration – amusing but decorative. Foxwell continued the cover strips to the mid-1930s, but was then lured away with greatly increased money to the *Daily Mail* to draw their weekly comic supplement starring their long-established children’s strip hero, Teddy Tail (a humanised mouse). Tiger Tim and his pals are, incidentally, the oldest continuing heroes in British comics: they continued to appear in the nursery comic *Jack and Jill* and celebrated their eightieth birthday in 1984.

The 1930s were the Golden Age of British comics and there was even a handsome black-and-orange penny comic called *Golden*, to prove it. The two styles of comic art, nursery and slapstick, had developed to perfection, building on the pioneering work of Tom Browne, Stafford Baker and others. Of all the many weeklies produced during the decade, the finest has to be *Happy Days* (1 October 1938), a nursery-plus comic printed in full-colour photogravure showcasing the two finest Golden Age artists in comics, Roy Wilson (1900–65) and Reg Perrott (1916–48?). Wilson had started his comic career as assistant to the slapstick artist Don Newhouse, but had speedily overtaken his tutor on such excellent penny comic series as ‘Pitch and Toss’, a fat-and-thin pair of silly sailors, and ‘Basil and Bert’, a monocled secret service agent and his lower-class assistant. Wilson loved to draw funny animals, and his characters ‘Chimpo’s Circus’ on the ever-varied covers of *Happy Days* are his comedy masterpieces. The editor thought so much of this artwork that Wilson was actually allowed to sign his name!

Happy Days was the Amalgamated Press’s answer to *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, the first full-colour photogravure comic which started on 8 February 1936. It was published by the hitherto exclusively adult-magazine publisher Odhams Press, in collaboration with the Walt Disney organisation. Many of the interior strips were American-originated Sunday and daily strips, but the wonderful full-tabloid cover pictures featuring Mickey and his Gang were painted by Wilfred Haughton, who had been the first artist in England to draw the movie mouse for merchandising. Every year from 1931 to the mid-1940s he single-handedly drew the 128-page *Mickey Mouse Annual*. These are collectors’ items today, and it is hard to believe that Haughton was actually discharged from the comic for refusing to bring his characterisations of Mickey and friends into line with the modernised style of the Disney Studio. Also working on the pages produced in England for *Mickey Mouse Weekly* was Reg Perrott, a young comics artist who favoured adventure strips and serials. His historical adventure, ‘Road to Rome’, is a masterpiece in line and wash, followed by his first full-colour serial, the western ‘White Cloud’. Moving to the Amalgamated Press comic *Happy Days*, Perrott drew another great colour serial, ‘Sons of the Sword’, in which cinemascopic panels were used for the first time. Perrott’s early death, not long after his demobilisation from the Royal Air Force, robbed British comics of their finest adventure-strip artist.

As the 1930s closed, a new publisher entered the comic market, and immediately became the most successful of them all. This was the Scottish publisher, D. C. Thomson of Dundee. Thomson had been issuing very successful boys’ story papers (*Adventure*, *Wizard*, etc.) since the 1920s and now entered comics for the first time with *The Dandy* (3 December 1937), produced in their story-paper format: twenty-eight pages, half-tabloid size, with a full-colour front page. It was an instant success, and its two leading strip stars, Korky the Cat on the cover and Desperate Dan the tough cowboy inside, are still running today. Their original artists, James Crichton and Dudley D. Watkins (1907–69), are both long dead, but their characters and drawing styles live on. Watkins was only eighteen when he was hired as a staff artist by Thomson, who lured him to Dundee from his native Nottingham, and he would stay with the Scots firm all his life, dying in mid-strip at his drawing-board. Towards the end of his career he became the only Thomson artist allowed to sign his artwork.

The Beano, a companion comic to *The Dandy*, was introduced on 30 July 1939, and included stories told purely in pictures – Thomson’s had discarded the traditional British style of printed captions underneath every panel (trade term: ‘the libretto’). (The Amalgamated Press continued to support their strips with libretti until well after the

Second World War.) Today the captionless strip is standard, improving the visual drama of the strip but removing much of the traditional reading matter of the comic. D. C. Thomson were also the first to use the American term 'comics' to describe their strips ('All Your Favourite Comics Inside!'), while the Amalgamated Press clung to the word 'comic' (for example, *The Knock-Out Comic*) as descriptive of the whole publication. Finally they too bent to Americanisation with the publication of their *Cowboy Comics* in May 1950. *The Beano*, like its partner, continues to be published to this day, and is Britain's top-selling comic. Of its original heroes, only Lord Snooty and his Pals – another Dudley Watkins creation – survive. Dropped by the comic in 1992, Snooty was swiftly snapped up by the *Sunday Times* comic supplement.

The Amalgamated Press quickly produced rivals to the Scottish comics, similar in format but differing in character. *Radio Fun* (15 October 1938) depicted famous BBC stars in clever caricature adventures by Roy Wilson and others, and was modelled on the successful pioneer comic in this genre, *Film Fun*, which had been running since 17 January 1920. *Knockout* (4 March 1939) also featured famous heroes, but fictional ones, adapting the story-paper characters Sexton Blake, a detective whose origins go back to the 1890s, and Billy Bunter, the fat schoolboy who first appeared in *The Magnet* in 1908. The look of the comic, however, was designed by Hugh McNeill (1910–79), a brilliant and highly personal humorous artist. His slightly zany, very funny characters, Our Ernie, Mrs Entwhistle's Little Lad and Deed-a-Day Danny, were the real stars of the comic. *Knockout* artists (including myself) were encouraged to model their comic style on McNeill.

The years of the Second World War were drab ones for the comics. A national paper shortage helped kill off many of the less successful titles; others suffered from reduced content (down to twelve pages from twenty-eight) and frequency (down from weekly to fortnightly). But the blacked-out 1940s also saw the birth of the British comic book. Gerald G. Swan, a market salesman no longer able to import American comic books, turned himself into a publisher and issued his own. *New Funnies* (January 1940) was the first, sixty-four pages for sixpence, but, unlike the American comics, only the cover was in colour. Further titles followed (*War Comics*, *Thrill Comics*) and even a nursery comic complete with hyphens, *Kiddy Fun*. Many other small publishers flourished during the war, including A. Soloway (*Comic Capers*, *All Star*), Martin and Reid (*Jolly Chuckles*, *Jolly Western*) and the Philipp Marx Group (*The New Comics*, *The Miniature Comic*). Of these minor publishers soon L. Miller and Son would emerge as the most prolific and longest lived. This firm began by reprinting American comic books from Fawcett Publications. When their best-seller, *Captain Marvel Adventures*, had to be discontinued as a consequence of the lawsuit between Fawcett and National-D. C. Comics (who claimed that Captain Marvel plagiarised their Superman), Miller converted his comic to an all-British superhero, *Marvelman* (6 February 1954). Billy Batson became Micky Moran, his magic cry changed from 'Shazam!' to 'Kimota!' (more or less the word 'Atomic' spelled backwards!). *Marvelman* caught on immediately with comic-hungry children, and was soon joined by *Young Marvelman*, replacing *Captain Marvel Junior*, and *The Marvelman Family*, in which Kid Marvelman replaced Mary Marvel, the All-American superheroine. Don Lawrence, whose artwork rapidly became among the best in British comics, began his career in the *Marvelman* comics.

The 1950s began superbly with *Eagle*, launched on 14 April 1950. This large-format comic in full-colour photogravure had been designed by a cleric, the Reverend Marcus Morris, and drawn to his specifications by a failed pilot with his head in the stars, art student Frank Hampson. Hulton Press, publishers of the best-selling weekly magazine

Picture Post, took it on and *Eagle* rapidly flew to become top comic in the country. Its circulation soon touched the magic million mark once achieved by the pre-war *Rainbow*. ‘Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future’ was the leading strip, and Hampson quickly turned this science-fiction adventure into a true saga, his artwork improving week by week. Young readers loved the serial for its apparent accuracy, achieved by the unprecedented idea of Hampson’s to build scale models of Dare’s spacecraft, the futuristic cities of Mars, and so on, so that these would appear authentic from all angles when drawn into the comic. The success of *Eagle* against the hide-bound traditions of the Amalgamated Press and D. C. Thomson comics was to a great extent due to the fact that the entire art and editorial staff of the comic had never worked in either comics or strip cartoons before.

Frank Hampson and his many followers (Frank Bellamy, John Burns, Ron Embleton) changed the face of the British adventure strip. Meanwhile over in the funnies this was being done by a new cartoonist, Leo Baxendale. His strips for *Beano*, including ‘The Bash Street Kids’ and ‘Little Plum’, stood out against the standard and somewhat mechanical slapstick comic art in a way that was both new and very funny. (*Beano* had finally gone into 100 per cent picture format on 5 March 1955.) Baxendale was lured away from Thomson’s by Odhams Press to create the characters and do much of the drawing for a new comic, *Wham* (20 June 1964). His crazy style can still be seen in many modern British comics, although he himself has not drawn for them for many years. After producing an unsuccessful annual of his own (*Willie the Kid*), Baxendale drew for newspapers and Dutch comics, and gathered evidence for a daring lawsuit against his former publishers to claim royalties on his many characters which continued to perform (depicted by lesser pens), without benefit to him as creator. Finally settling out of court, Baxendale was more fortunate than Frank Hampson, who died in near poverty despite the fact that his Dan Dare continued to be a comic star when *Eagle* was revived in the 1980s.

In the 1990s British comics were still published in many titles, but were usually tied in some way with television or video games and toys. Old favourites (*Beano*, *Dandy*) continued, while others (*Victor*, *Beezer*) vanished. *2000 AD* (26 February 1977) has succeeded as a cult comic for older readers through the hideous exploits of its ultra-violent anti-hero, Judge Dredd, and is a science-fiction variation of Britain’s most violent comic, *Action* (14 February 1976), notorious as the only children’s comic ever to be banned.

The surprise here was that *Action* was published by Fleetway/IPC, the company that had inherited the fun factory created by Alfred Harmsworth. An outcry in the tabloid newspapers led to television exposure, and finally refusal by W. H. Smith, the nation’s largest wholesaler, to handle the comic. The last issue to be printed (number 37) was not released and has become something of a collector’s item. Two months later the publisher issued the first of a ‘new series’ of *Action*, but it failed to please the ‘tough-kid’ market it had been created for, and, like its ancestor, it too was wound up; it was incorporated with the war comic *Battle* as *Battle Action*.

Comics began in Britain as picture publications for adults, and it is perhaps fitting that they should now have come full circle after some eighty years as children’s publications. *Action*’s error was in depicting violence for a juvenile market. *2000 AD*, modelled on what had been successful in *Action*, and what teenagers enjoyed in the cinema – the new breed of science fiction – gradually became the best-produced comic in the country, always raising its standards of script-writing, artwork, colour printing and paper. American editions were produced, and a film starring Judge Dredd released in 1995. Many other sci-fi-plus-violence followed *2000 AD*: *Tank Girl* added sex to violence successfully, and W. H. Smith gave way to commercial pressure.

The British adult comic had a rebirth in the late 1960s under the influence of the American 'underground' comic which had been pioneered by cartoonists like Robert Crumb with his comic/erotic *Zap Comics*. These were reprinted in Britain and much emulated in many one-off or short-run comics, drawn and published by amateurs in London and the provinces. The best and longest-lasting of these local cartoonists is Hunt Emerson from Birmingham, who began with his *Large Cow Comix* (1974), and became an internationally admired creator. His style owes much to George Herriman and his vintage American page 'Krazy Kat', but Emerson's style and sense of humour are now all his own (perhaps spoiled for some by his obsession with obscenity).

The most successful comic ever published in Britain is *Viz* (December 1979), which began as a very small circulation amateur comic and now sells over 1,000,000 copies bi-monthly. Some of its characters, such as The Fat Slags, have been animated, shown on television and released on video. Its style is a mixture of American 'underground' and the British *Beano*, and if the humour of its young artists is not 'adult' in the true sense of the word, it is definitely highly unsuitable for children!

American comics and comic books

Superficially, the American comic book is virtually the same as when it began in 1933, a sturdy monthly magazine of comedy and adventure strips told purely in pictures, the textual detail being carried in 'speech balloons' and descriptive boxes within the pictures. The fictional stories, always dominant in the British comic, supported by a single illustration, were never more than a page or two in the American comic books, and were there only to pacify the US Post Office into allowing comics to receive a low-price subscription postal permit.

The history of the American comic book, which was to become such an influence on the world's comic publishing style, begins in a remarkably similar fashion to the British comic, and more especially the European. American comic books have their roots in reprints from magazine and newspaper publication. The first appears to be a book entitled *Scraps*, published in 1849 by the cartoonist himself, D. C. Johnston of Boston. This was a mixture of cartoons and sequential striplets in the form of 'scrap sheets', but whether they were originally issued as separate sheets is not known.

The first comic books intended for children were issued before 1876 by the Broadway publishing house of Stroefler and Kirchner, who had links with Germany, where for some time the large-size picture-story sheets had been published as *Münchener Bilderbogen* in Munich. Two sets of twenty numbered sheets were issued, both loose and bound in two hardback volumes. Translated into English, they were also reprinted in Britain by Griffith and Farran of St Paul's Churchyard. Titles and artists included strip stories such as 'Scenes from Fairyland' by Thomas Hosemann, 'Puck and the Peasant' by H. Scherenberg, and 'Munchhausen's Travels and Adventures' by W. Simmler. The books were entitled *Illustrated Flying Sheets for Young and Old* and sold for \$1.25 a volume (\$2 for colour). The same publisher also issued the pioneering picture-strip books written and drawn by Wilhelm Busch, the German credited with creating the modern comic strip with *Max und Moritz* (1865).

More natively American was *Stuff and Nonsense* (1884), a collection of cartoons and strips drawn by Arthur Burdett Frost for the magazine *Harper's Monthly*, published as a hardback book by Charles Scribner's Sons. The book was divided into two parts: 'Stuff' being the strips, such as 'Ye Aesthete, Ye Boy and Ye Bullfrog', and 'Nonsense' being the

single cartoons. (This book also had a British edition, being reprinted by John C. Nimmo no fewer than three times, and again in 1910 by George Routledge.) The same year saw the start of strip and cartoon reprints from *Life Magazine* (then a weekly humorous publication unrelated to the photo-journal of today), starting with *The Good Things of Life* (1884) and followed by *The Spice of Life* (1888).

Joseph Keppler, a Viennese cartoonist, emigrated to New York and started *Puck*, a German-language humorous weekly, in September 1876. An English-language edition followed six months later, and by 1880 Frederick Burr Opper, who became one of the founding fathers of the American strip cartoon, had joined the staff. The following year a rival weekly, *Judge*, appeared, to be followed in 1883 by *Life*. In this illustrated trio can be found the work of all the men who founded American strips: Richard F. Outcault who gave the world The Yellow Kid, often considered the first newspaper strip hero (1896), Rudolph Dirks, who created The Katzenjammer Kids in the likeness of the German bad boys Max und Moritz, and George Herriman, who would evolve the most surrealist character ever seen in the funnies, Krazy Kat (1910).

The beginnings of the American newspaper strip can be seen in the translations of the well-established *Imagerie d'Epinal*, published in France by Pellerin et Cie from the 1830s. These single sheets of stories for children, printed on extremely thin standard Pellerin paper and illustrated in twelve to sixteen pictures, were translated and distributed in the USA from 1888 by the Humorous Publishing Company of Kansas City. (Sets have also been found in Britain, which suggests that they were also sold there.) A total of sixty different sheets were issued, beginning with 'Impossible Adventures', the wild boastings of an old braggart in the style of Baron Munchhausen. Echoes of many strips yet unborn may be found in these sheets, from fantastic adventures (number 1: 'Impossible Adventures'), fairy tales (number 59: 'Cinderella'), science fiction (number 22: 'King of the Moon') and illustrated 'classics' (number 36: 'Don Quichotte' [*sic*]). Unfortunately it has proved impossible to discover whether these sheets were sold singly or in sets, and at what price.

These Anglo-French sheets did not introduce any continuing characters, but their French-printed fullness of colour, alongside the *Münchener Bilderbogen*, acted as inspiration to the press barons, who were seeking to expand their already flourishing empires.

The first paper to pioneer cheap colour printing in the USA was the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*. This paper introduced a family supplement in colour on 18 September 1892, and the following year added a detachable children's section, *The Youth's Department*. In the spring of 1894, cartoonist Charles Saalburg introduced 'The Ting-Lings', a weekly full-page escapade in which a crowd of pint-sized Orientals wreaked topical havoc. In May 1897 they even crossed to Britain and helped Queen Victoria to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee, an event reprinted 'at a tremendous price' in the woman's weekly, *Home Chat*.

Occasionally these juvenile strips would be reprinted in books, such as *Funny Folks* (1899), a compilation of forty strips by Franklin M. Howarth selected from *Puck*, and *Little Johnny and the Teddy Bears* (1907), a full-colour book reprinting John R. Bray's strip from *Judge*.

More influential than the magazine strips, however, were the Sunday newspapers. The circulation war between New York press barons William Randolph Hearst and his *New York Sunday Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York Sunday World*, led to ever burgeoning weekly packages of several sections. Then, using the new colour printing press, Pulitzer introduced his Sunday *Comic Weekly* in *The New York Sunday World* (21 May 1893), and two years later this supplement included Outcault's single-panel series

'Hogan's Alley'. Among the crowds in that panel lurked a dumb, moronic, oriental character soon to be known colloquially as The Yellow Kid, who made his comments, not by talking, but via slangy scrawl on his bright yellow night-gown, his only clothing! This series eventually evolved into a strip and has come to be thought of (erroneously) as the origin of American comics. This is not to decry the Kid's enormous popularity: he was merchandised in many collectable forms; he was the first comic-strip hero to have his own regular magazine (*The Yellow Kid*, published at five cents by Howard Ainslee), and a book written about him, *The Yellow Kid in McFadden's Flats* by E. W. Townsend (popular author of the *Chimmie Fadden* tales), illustrated by Outcault (1897). The success of the strip led to the cartoonist being lured away with a considerable pay hike by the legendary press baron, William Randolph Hearst. Buster made his Hearst debut in the *New York World* comic section on 14 January 1906. A historic contest over the copyright of the character ensued, with the courts deciding that, while Outcault had every right to Buster Brown, his original employer had equal rights in Buster's name! Thus both the *New York Herald* and the *New York World* could run new adventures of the bad boy but only *World* could have Outcault, while the *Herald* had to find a new cartoonist, and only the *Herald* could call their page 'Buster Brown', the *World* having to be content with a rather anonymous 'He': as in 'He's At It Again!', 'He Makes a New Resolution', and so on. This legal decision was reestablished a few years later when a similar situation arose with cartoonist Rudolph Dirks. He kept drawing his twin terrors' tales for another newspaper, still calling them Hans and Fritz, but under the title 'The Captain and the Kids', while the other pair went under their original title, 'The Katzenjammer Kids', now drawn by Harold Knerr!

On 12 December 1897, the *Sunday World* published the grandfather of all American comic books, *The Children's Christmas Book*, a free supplement which had sixteen pages, eight of them in full colour, and featured strips and cartoons by George Luks, whom Pulitzer had hired to continue his strips about The Yellow Kid after Outcault had been lured away.

In 1900 the first reprint books of newspaper strips began to appear. Carl Schultze, who signed himself 'Bunny', drew a regular half-page set entitled 'The Herald's Vaudeville Show'. This was issued in book form as *Vaudevilles and Other Things* by Isaac Blanchard, using an oblong format to cope with the half-page broadsheet format of the original strips, and a cardboard cover, newly drawn by 'Bunny', necessitated by the awkward shape of the book. This became the standard format for the newspaper reprint comic book through the first quarter of the twentieth century. 'Bunny' replaced his comic vaudeville with a regular character, Foxy Grandpa, and by December 1900 the first reprint book was issued by his own company. Some twenty followed and the character also appeared in a play and some very early movies, and was revived in the comic book *Star Comics* as late as 1937.

The history of American comics now makes its radical departure from the well-established European format. The broadsheet newspaper supplement, originally four pages in full colour (although frequently only front and back), given away every Sunday (and sometimes on a Saturday where no Sunday edition was issued), became standardised throughout the country, and syndicates were formed to supply papers with strips. Characters emerged and became regularised, such as 'Buster Brown', the classic naughty boy whose middle-class pranks and regular 'resolutions' established him as the nation's number one comic star. Buster was drawn by the same R. F. Outcault who gave America The Yellow Kid – a remarkable switch of social strata as well as of style. *Buster* books were assembled out of the strips and sold, not only in the USA, but throughout the Empire, thanks to British editions published by Chambers of London and Edinburgh.

The *Buster Brown* books, enormously popular despite their huge awkward oblong format, began at Christmas 1903 with *Buster Brown and His Resolutions*, probably the most popular of the series, leading to a total of thirty-five books in all, some of which were not by Outcault. (Buster was father to Scotland's Oor Wullie by Dudley D. Watkins (*Sunday Post Fun Section* from 1936) and grandfather to England's Dennis the Menace (*Beano* from 1951).)

The cardboard-covered comic book containing reprints of Sunday strips became well and truly established when William R. Hearst entered the field on 23 November 1902. At the top of his *New York Journal* supplement appeared this startling announcement: 'The popular characters of the comic supplement have been published in book form. Your newsdealer can get them for you. They are the best comic-books that have ever been published.' A historic moment, and the first use of the term 'comic book'. Out came no fewer than five books, all priced at fifty cents. They were *Happy Hooligan*, Fred Opper's tramp in a tin-can hat; *The Katzenjammer Kids* by Rudolph Dirks; *The Tigers* by James Swinnerton, the first in the funny animals field; *Alphonse and Gaston and their Friend Leon*, the funny Frenchmen, another Opper creation; and *On and Off Mount Ararat*, a Noah's Ark with animals, also by Swinnerton. But these hard-to-handle landscape-format books were child's play compared to the first *Mutt and Jeff* comic book. Published by Ball and Co. in 1910, this featured one strip per page and measured 5 inches high by 15½ inches wide!

'Mutt and Jeff' is frequently credited with being the first daily newspaper strip, but in fact it was preceded by several others, including 'A. Piker Clerk' by Clare Briggs (1904) and A. D. Condo's 'The Outbursts of Everett True' (1905). Harry Conway Fisher, better known as 'Bud', began his series as a tipster strip, having his hero, Augustus Mutt, forever losing his shirt on sure things. Jeff, shortened from Jefferson, was an escapee from the lunatic asylum who teamed up with the lanky gambler some time into the series. Bud Fisher was the first cartoonist to personally copyright his creation, and thus was able to move from newspaper to newspaper without copyright prosecution, finally becoming the richest cartoonist in the world with such spin-offs as the longest run of any cinema animated-cartoon series (via the Fox Film Corporation). He even gave up drawing the strip, although his signature was ably forged by a string of assistants including Al Smith, who finally took it over in recent times.

The main publishers of cardboard comic books became Cupples and Leon of New York. They added 'Mutt and Jeff' to their chain, which by the 1920s included George McManus's 'Bringing up Father' (one of the first American strips to be reprinted in England by the *Daily Sketch*), Harold Gray's 'Little Orphan Annie' (later to inspire 'Belinda Blue-Eyes' in the *Daily Mirror*) and Sidney Smith's family saga 'The Gumps' (models for another *Daily Mirror* strip, 'The Ruggles'). These and many other square comic books were quickly established as the popular format, selling at twenty-five cents and containing reprints of forty-six newspaper strips apiece. These, being daily strips, did not come in colour, which helped keep the price down, but it would be the addition of full colour that would see the end of Cupples and Leon comic books and establish the format that remains supreme to this day.

The first attempt at a new-look style of American comic was published on 16 January 1929 by George T. Delacorte Jr, head of Dell Publications. It was entitled *The Funnies* and followed the newly popular tabloid (or half-broadsheet) comic supplements of several newspapers. Under the joint editorial control of Harry Steeger and Abril Lamarque (billed as Comic Art Editor), this twenty-four-page comic sold at ten cents and looked like a

Sunday supplement crossed with a British comic paper: between the strips appeared several pages of text stories, puzzles and features. Its resemblance to the giveaway Sunday comics would prove its downfall: why should children pay for what came free with Dad's newspaper? Dell tried many ways to expand sales – increased pages (up to thirty-two), decreased price (down to five cents), but it was all to no avail. *The Funnies* wound up after thirty-six issues, and it was good-bye to 'Frosty Ayre' by Joe Archibald, 'Rock Age Roy' by Boody Rogers, and all the other original strips that the Comic Art Editor had supervised.

The true father of the modern American comic book did not appear until 1933, and even then it took a while to catch on. The now familiar format was devised by Max Gaines and Harry Donenfield, who worked for the Eastern Colour Printing Co. By folding a tabloid comic section in half, they came up with a handy sixty-four-page booklet measuring 7½ by 10½ inches. Into this they packed miniaturised reprints of popular syndicated strips including 'Reg'lar Fellers', 'Joe Palooka' and the ubiquitous 'Mutt and Jeff'. The result, entitled *Funnies on Parade*, was not sold but given away as promotion by the company Proctor and Gamble. They produced two further booklets: *Century of Comics* was a one-hundred-page edition; *Famous Funnies* was also a success, so they decided to try selling their comic on news-stands at ten cents a time. *Famous Funnies Series One* (1934) led to a regular monthly run, finally expiring at number 218 in July 1955.

The next step was an all-original comic book, which came from Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, a pulp-magazine writer, in February 1936. Entitled *New Fun*, subtitled 'The Big Comic Magazine', this ten-cent monthly initially made the mistake of printing in Dell's failed *Funnies* format, a large tabloid. However, after six issues and a retitle to *More Fun*, it reduced to the *Famous Funnies* format; subtitled 'The National Comics Magazine', it ran to 127 editions. Its partner, *New Comics*, began in the now popular small size in December 1936 and, with a name change to *New Adventure Comics*, later *Adventure*, reached its 503rd edition before closing in September 1983.

Wheeler-Nicholson did not remain at the helm, however. He lost control quite early on and the series was taken over by the same Harry Donenfield who had started *Famous Funnies*. The company was known variously as National Periodicals and D. C. Comics, under which style it continues to this day as America's leading comic book publisher.

Comic books became the newest form of children's publishing, and sixty-four-page magazines (sixty-eight-page if you include the higher-quality paper covers) began to flood the market. Several (*Popular Comics*, *Super Comics*) stuck to the old *Famous Funnies* formula of reprinting popular newspaper strips, but others (*Funny Pages*, *Funny Picture Stories*) preferred the 'all new' approach. Specialised comic books began to appear (*Western Picture Stories*, *Keen Detective Funnies*) and finally, in June 1938, Donenfield issued number 1 of the comic book that would set the seal on the form and set the style that would take the American comic book around the world, conquering all other national variations.

Action Comics number 1, seeking some new character, encountered a failed newspaper strip that two young friends had been trying to get off the ground for five years. The partnership, stemming from schooldays, was that of Jerry Siegel, writer, and Joe Shuster, cartoonist; the strip was called 'Superman'. It told the farfetched yarn of an alien shot from his exploding home planet, Krypton, and growing up on Earth as the adopted child of homespun farming folks. When his powers continue to expand ('Faster than a Speeding Bullet! Able to Leap Tall Buildings at a Single Bound!'), he conceives the idea of changing himself into Superman and, clad in cloak and costume, he zips into action to save the world from gangsters, spies and assorted mad scientists. The concept, considered 'unreal'

by many newspaper editors and even his eventual publisher, hit home with the young readership, and soon *Action Comics* was outselling its rivals. Very soon, Superman was being featured in a radio serial, a movie serial, a novel and all the other manifestations of modern commercialisation. This success was sustained into television series, feature films (among the world's largest-grossing), and animated cartoons – and gone for ever (almost) was the reliance on reprinting old newspaper strips. But although the publishers prospered, Siegel and Shuster made little more than the price of their comic pages. Siegel soldiered on, but Shuster lost his eyesight and, if it had not been for the pressure by fellow comic artists and fans, they would never have received the life pensions eventually awarded to them by the company.

Superman soon conquered Britain, which first imported the original comic books, and then reprinted the daily strip which was syndicated to American newspapers. This began in the British boys' story paper *Triumph* in July 1939, with the strips pasted up into a four-page centre section. The covers, although printed only in blue and orange, showed the new hero in action, and were drawn by John (Jock) McCail, a Scottish illustrator. After the war, Superman comics were reprinted in Australia and exported to Britain before receiving British publication in their own right. In 1959 the traditional comic weekly *Radio Fun* began reprinting the strips, and later several smaller publishers tried their hands. Superman became the most copied comic character in history, by both his own publishers (Bob Kane's 'Batman') and his rivals.

Fawcett Publications, whose original paperback magazine *Captain Billy's Whizbang* had founded their fortune, entered the comic-book field with *Whiz Comics* and their own superhero Captain Marvel. This red-suited strongman was soon outselling Superman, whose publisher brought a copyright suit. This dragged on for so long in the courts that it outlasted the comic's best-selling years; eventually, Fawcett decided that it was easier to get out of the comic-book business altogether, and capitulated without the legal decision being finalised. But in their wartime years, Fawcett's comics had spread where National-D.C.'s had failed to penetrate, and in England a small publisher, Leonard Miller and Son, issued cut-down versions of Captain Marvel (and his sister, Mary Marvel and Hopsy the Marvel Bunny!).

The war years were important to American comic books: they became required reading for the armed forces and millions of copies were issued to the military post exchanges. Publishers upgraded their content to embrace not only more adult-oriented stories, often based on crime and detection, but added pretty pin-up girls. These girls graced every kind of comic from superheroes to college boy capers, and especially, perhaps, science-fiction comics such as *Planet*, published by Fiction House, a former pulp-magazine purveyor. Fiction House comics, including the Tarzan-like series *Jungle Comics* with its leopard-skin-clad ladies swinging around the trees, were the nearest thing to illustrated erotica many a young soldier had ever seen. These comics were also on sale at America's local news-stands, and were naturally bought by youngsters not yet in their teens. It was the beginning of a new wave of comic books and eventually a new wave of adult criticism which, after the war, would lead to the temporary downfall of the whole comic-book business.

Frederick Wertham, a psychologist, wrote a series of articles focusing on the comic book as a corrupter of childhood; his *Seduction of the Innocent* (British edition 1955) blamed comics for leading children into crime and sexual depravity. The illustrations from horror comics in the book made a convincing case; Senate hearings followed, and horror-comic publishers rapidly went out of business – although their legacy is still with us. It was a dark decade for the American comic book, leading to an uninteresting period of 'approved' comics, subject to the seal of an industry-owned censoring board.

Thus the American comic book has grown from localised reprints to world domination in less than sixty years. Early examples can command thousands of dollars from collectors, there are specialist shops selling them in Britain, and there are regular comic markets and annual comic conventions where dealers, artists and fans congregate to spend small fortunes on 'rare' comics and original artwork, and even to dress up as their favourite fantasy heroes for prizes (comics, of course!).

Dime novels, pulps and Penny Dreadfuls

Erastus Flavel Beadle, father of the American dime novel, a pocket-sized paperback of 128 pages of thrilling fiction selling at ten cents (later reduced to five cents), was born in Otsego County, New York, in 1821. His own father, Irvin P. Beadle, had been a ballad hawker who set up as a printer and issued the best-selling *Dime Song Book*, a compilation of the ballads he had been hawking for years. By 1840 Erasmus was a printer in Buffalo, and in 1852 he published number 1 of a children's story magazine, *The Youth's Casket*. But it was in June 1860 that his great idea of popular novels at affordable prices took shape with the first volume in his series of *The Choicest Works of the Most Popular Authors*, otherwise billed as 'Dollar Books for a Dime'. It was entitled *Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter*, and was a reprint of the 'Prize Story' from the magazine, *The Ladies Companion*, written by Mrs Ann Sophia Winterbottom Stephens and first published in 1839. The *Beadle's Dime Library* reissue sold 65,000 copies within a few months.

The title and source of this tattered milestone in popular literature sound romantic, but consider this moment from page 10:

'Touch but a hair of her head, and by the Lord that made me, I will bespatter that tree with your brains!' Thus spake William Danorth, white hunter. Many a dusky form bit the dust and many a savage howl followed the discharge of his trusty gun!

Here, in fact, was the dauntless American hero in action, the lone frontiersman opening up an untamed continent, fighting savage odds with rifle, dagger and bare fist and rescuing a beautiful bride along the way – the very stuff at the heart of James Fenimore Cooper's work, the spirit of whose Hawkeye bestrides the thousands of popular paperbacks that now followed in his trail.

Not that every dime-novel hero was a wilderness scout. Number 2 of Beadle's series was entitled *The Privateer's Cruise* and starred the heroically named Harry Cavendish ('God of my fathers! Every soul will be lost!') and his staunch chum O'Hara, the Irishman who acted as comic relief with his brogue.

Editor for Beadle's books was Orville J. Victor, whose wife Martha Victoria wrote the fourth novel in the series. *Alice Wilde, the Raftsman's Daughter* introduced further comic relief in the shape of rustic Ben Perkins ('That ar log bobs round like the old sea-sarpint!'). Editor Victor was responsible for the first great publicity campaign for a dime novel, posting the countryside with advertisements demanding 'Who is Seth Jones?' He turned out to be a white hunter in fringed buckskin, hero of *Seth Jones or the Captives of the Frontier*, who introduced himself thus: 'How de do? How de do? Ain't frightened, I hope? It's nobody but me, Seth Jones, from New Hampshire!' A nineteen-year-old schoolmaster from Ohio, Edward Ellis, was paid \$75 for the book. The first edition sold 60,000 copies and it finally reached half a million sales, being translated into eleven

languages. Ellis never went back to school, writing 150 volumes of juvenile stories, plus many biographies and histories, before his death in 1916.

Beadle himself died in 1894. He had moved from Buffalo to New York in 1858 and formed a partnership with Robert Adams, publishing joke books and almanacs as well as a string of cheap magazines such as *Girls of Today* and *The Young New Yorker*. The success of their dime-novel library encouraged further publications, and out came *Beadle's Boy's Library of Sport, Story and Adventure* (*Snow Shoe Tom or New York Boys in the Wilderness*), *Beadle's Pocket Library* (*Roaring Ralph Rocked the Reckless Ranger*) and the even cheaper – hence more popular with working-class youngsters – *Beadle's Half Dime Library*. This series would run to over a thousand titles.

Naturally, other American publishers jumped on the dime-novel bandwagon. *Ten Cent Novelles* (1863) came from Boston with *The Brave's Secret*; *Ten Cent Romance* (1867) came from New York with *The Mountain Trapper*. The most successful publisher may have been George P. Munro, whose *Ten Cent Novels* (1867) began with *The Patriot Highwayman*, and who died thirty years later a multimillionaire.

The bloodthirsty descriptions that bespattered dime-novels soon began to bother the ‘better classes’, notably when in 1874 Jesse Pomeroy, a sadistic murderer, claimed to be prompted by ‘literature of the dime novel type’. Beadle and his editors immediately formulated a set of writer’s rules which were sent to all their authors:

We prohibit all things offensive to good taste, in expression or incident, subjects or characters that carry an immoral taint, the repetition of any occurrence which, though true, is better untold, and what cannot be read with satisfaction by every high-minded person, old and young alike.

Moving away from Fenimore Cooper-style frontiersmen, dime-novel heroes began a new trend when somebody had the bright idea of dramatising real-life ‘folk’ heroes. Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett and especially Kit Carson were soon starring in ten-cent libraries of their own. ‘Kit Carson, Mountain Man’ apparently wrote his own reports of his adventures, which were then edited by Jessie Benton Fremont into readable narratives. Published in the early 1840s, these formed the foundation for wilder versions adapted for the excitement-hungry readers of weekly story papers. These were the broadsheets of fiction published in the big cities for family consumption, containing exciting and romantic fiction in serialised chapters. Compiled, these episodes were reprinted (both with and without permission) as dime novels, such as *Kit Carson, the Prince of the Gold Hunters*.

It was in *The New York Weekly* at Christmas 1869 that the greatest of all Wild Western heroes of the combined fact–fiction genre made his gun-toting bow. The title was *Buffalo Bill, King of the Border Men*, the hero was Colonel William F. Cody, and the author Colonel Ned Buntline. Buntline’s real name was Edward Zane Carroll Judson, born 1822 in Philadelphia, and he had started writing hack fiction for *The Knickerbocker Magazine* in 1838 at the age of sixteen. His many early titles included *The Black Avenger of the Spanish Main, or The Fiend of Blood* – a typical title for a typical tale of bloodthirsty buccaneering. Buntline met Cody in Nebraska, saw the possibilities in the Indian scout’s meat-hunting enterprises, and formed a partnership that would prove one of the most prosperous of the day. It is safe to say that the ensuing worldwide popularity of the dime novels and magazine serials made Buffalo Bill the box-office attraction that he shortly became. However, although Buntline profited by \$20,000 in the deal, he and Cody fell

out over how the profits should be shared. As a result he was fired by Cody, who hired another 'Colonel', Prentiss Ingraham. The dime novels continued without interruption or noticeable change in literary style: 'I could see his eyeballs start in agony from his head, the beaded sweat, blood colored, ooze from his clammy skin, each nerve and tendon quivering like the strings of a harp struck by a maniac hand!' Ingraham would write 600 novels before he died in 1904, and is said to have completed a 35,000-word book in one day and a night.

Western heroes continued to reign supreme. There was 'Deadwood Dick, the Rider of the Black Hills', created for Beadle and Adams by Edward L. Wheeler, for the first issue of their new *Pocket Library* (1884). Wheeler, a city man all his life, described Dick thus: 'A youth of an age somewhere between 16 and 20, trim and compactly built with a preponderance of muscular development and animal spirits, broad and deep of chest, with square iron-cut shoulders, limbs small yet like bars of steel.' Dick was clearly designed to appeal to the younger reader, who might not care for Buffalo Bill and his flowing gold moustache. Wheeler's titles also had youth appeal, being invariably alliterative, such as *Deadwood Dick at Danger Divide*.

Another army officer, a Major Sam Hall, created another Western hero in Buckskin Sam, who starred in a dime novel with perhaps the unlikeliest title of them all: *Ker-Whoop Ker-Whoo! or the Tarantula of Taos*. The Major was a specialist in colloquial dialogue: 'Woop-la! Shove out a bar'l o' bug-juice afore I bu'st up yer she-bang!'

With the untamed frontiers taking up so much paper and print, dime-novel publishers looked eastward for their next heroes. They came up with the detective, a hero who first saw public print through the open-eye trademark of Allan Pinkerton and his detective agency (motto 'We Never Sleep'). Pinkerton's casebook of reminiscences was an early best-seller and became a plot source for many of the dime detective writers.

First of the new breed of city dicks was 'Old Sleuth', created by Harlan P. Halsey for *The Fireside Companion*, a family story paper in 1872. Halsey used the pen-name of 'Old Sleuth', and was thus able to write about other detectives he 'knew', such as *Old Electricity the Lightning Detective* (1885). Old Sleuth, however, was not in fact old. He was a young detective who regularly assumed the disguise of an old man. The gimmick caught on, and in 1881 arrived 'Old Cap Collier' in a 'real life mystery' entitled *The Bashful Victim of the Elm City Tragedy*. Not content, as was his predecessor, with one disguise, the Cap had a repertoire of eighteen, ranging from 'Fat Dutchman' to 'Masked Cavalier', although how frequently this latter was used in modern New York is unknown. He was also adept at turning his clothes inside out in an instant. There would be over 700 novels of the Old Cap published by 1898.

But the great Master of Disguise was undoubtedly Nick Carter, who made his detecting debut in *The New York Weekly* in 1886. *The Old Detective's Pupil* was subtitled 'The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square', and it was credited, as would be all the Nick Carter stories, to Nick Carter himself. The author was in fact John Coryell, who wrote the weekly stories for three years and withdrew into romance. The task was taken on by Frederick Marmaduke Van Rennselaer Dey, who proceeded to write one thousand Nick Carter stories (as 'Nick Carter'), over forty million words, before shooting himself in 1922. Dey's stories began with number 1 of the *Nick Carter Library* (1891), which turned into the *New Nick Carter Library* (1897), soon to be renamed *Nick Carter Weekly*. With other title changes this ran right through to 1915, when publishers Street and Smith turned it into a 'pulp', the current craze, called *Detective Story Magazine*. Nick Carter was billed as editor.

Nicholas Carter owed little to the classic English detective, Sherlock Holmes. A handsome young man, son of one Sim Carter (murdered by gangsters), he is never seen without his smart bow-tie, unless he is in one of his many disguises. These, arrayed around the lettering in the title of his *Weekly*, included that of a hunchback involving a false hump that lay

deeper than the coat or the flowered waistcoat that covered it. It was deeper than the shirt beneath the heavy, coarse woollen undershirt he wore, in fact, so that if the occasion should arise to remove his coat, as was likely to happen, the hump was still there.

Carter, nicknamed ‘Little Giant’ (he was not much more than five feet tall), was strong enough to tear four packs of cards in half and ‘lift a horse with ease, and that, too, while a heavy man is seated in the saddle’. Nick is the longest lived of any fictional detective in the world, spanning radio, films and television with ease, and entering the James Bond era of secret agents in a new series of paperbacks.

In 1882 one Frank A. Munsey, a telegraph operator, left Augusta, Maine, for the lights of New York City, with a long-standing ambition to publish a weekly children’s magazine of uplifting fiction. And on 2 December of that year number 1 of *Golden Argosy* went on sale. It was subtitled ‘Freighted with Treasures for Boys and Girls’, and within its eight pages carried the opening chapter of ‘Do and Dare, a Brave Boy’s Fight for a Fortune’. This serial was written by Horatio Alger Jr, an author whose basic theme – if a poor boy perseveres he will win fame and fortune – would eventually fill 118 books, sell 250 million copies, and inspire juvenile weeklies (*Brave and Bold*, *Might and Main*, *Wide Awake Weekly* and others). But meanwhile Munsey’s children’s paper was not doing too well. He had more success with a new adult title, named *Munsey’s Magazine*. He worked on the first, shortening its title to *Argosy*, increasing its page-count and generalising its fiction, until in 1896 a thick, new *Argosy* was born, with 192 pages printed on the cheapest possible paper, coarse, bulky stuff known as pulpwood in the trade. Its value for money at ten cents acted as inspiration to other publishers, especially as *Argosy’s* circulation rose to half a million. The pulp magazine was born.

Pulp magazines, counting 128 pages or more, with their cheap paper bound into art paper covers sporting ever more exciting artwork, would last for sixty years before shrinking in size (to *Pocket Digest* proportions) and number (from hundreds to tens) by 1957. From assorted fiction they started to specialise into themes: Westerns, detectives, adventure, fantasy, horror, science fiction and even erotica (*Snappy Stories* was the first in 1912). Pulp were only briefly for the young, who quickly took to the half-price (five cent) story weeklies. These continued into the 1920s, averaging sixteen pages of cheap paper bound within thin art paper colour covers. The boys’ heroes were cowboys, outlaws (*Jesse James Stories*), college boys like William Patton’s ‘Frank Merriwell’ in *Tip Top Weekly* (from 1896), and incredible inventors whose extraordinary sci-fi adventures were recorded by ‘Noname’ in *The Frank Reade Library*. Inventor Reade was first read about in *Irwin’s American Novels*, when he fought Red Indians with his incredible *Steam Man of the Prairies* (1865).

This was the origin of a genre which would eventually flower under editorial genius Hugo Gernsback in his monthly pulp *Amazing Stories* (1926). But as for the juvenile reader, he would soon be wooed away from nickel novels by the ‘all in color for a dime’ illustrations of the comic books.

The bloodstained saga of the ‘penny bloods’ later known (both popularly – by their readers – and unpopularly – by those who disdained them) as the Penny Dreadfuls, has its

roots in the records of the eighteenth-century's worst criminals, known as *The Newgate Calendar*. The prime edition of this seems to be *The Malefactor's Register or New Newgate and Tyburn Calendar*, an illustrated collection published by Alex Hogg in book format, but which had a cheap edition in penny parts, published once a week. Pirate publishers quickly pounced on the series and printed their own, including one James Catnach of Seven Dials, a noted publisher of broadsides of many kinds, including criminal confessions known as 'Goodnights'. There followed *The Tell-Tale* (1823), *Legends of Horror* and *The Terrific Register* (both 1825). This last ran two years (104 penny parts) and in number 11 featured Sawney Bean and family, 'The Monster of Scotland' and king of the cannibals, while *The Tell-Tale* saw the first English reporting of the man who might have been Sweeney Todd: 'Horrible Murder and Human Pie-Makers' (1825).

The 'father of the Penny Dreadfuls' was Edward Lloyd, a farmer's boy from Surrey. He was not more than a youth when he came to London and set up as a bookseller, from whence it was but a small step to becoming his own publisher. He was twenty-one when he issued number 1 of his first partwork, *Lives of the Most Notorious Highwaymen*. It ran for sixty weeks, but well before it expired Lloyd had started three more popular penny-worths: *The Gem of Romance*, *The History of Pirates of All Nations* and *The Calendar of Horrors*. Criminal history could not provide enough material for Lloyd's profitable presses, and so a new industry was launched, fiction-hacking at a halfpenny a line.

Lloyd's leading hack, who also acted as editor on many of the weekly parts, was Thomas Peckett Prest, a relation of the Archdeacon of Durham. Although Prest relished blood and thunder (he wrote some 200 series with titles like *Mary Bateman the Yorkshire Witch* (1840), *The Maniac Father or the Victim of Seduction* (1842) and the classic *Varney the Vampire or the Feast of Blood* (1847)), he was also sufficiently well educated to successfully write pirate versions of current best-sellers by Charles Dickens, as well as the now 'standard' version of the Sweeney Todd story, *The String of Pearls* (1840).

The villain as hero was popular in both 'proper' fiction and penny parts. Dick Turpin, who died on the gallows in 1739, was raised to high stardom by W. Harrison Ainsworth in his 1834 novel *Rookwood*. The ride to York on Bonnie Black Bess is said to have been an author's invention, and it seems to have been the key to the story's popularity. It featured ever after in the many rewrites of Turpin's career, and was the centrepiece of action in a number of stage and circus dramatisations as well as early films. Turpin weeklies and libraries were being published into the 1930s, and the hero and his horse were illustrated in *Thriller Picture Library* (a pocket comic) as late as 1957.

Several of the hack writers found a fair living churning out Dreadfuls before ascending to better things. One such was George William MacArthur Reynolds, whose partworks included the plagiarised imitation *Pickwick Abroad* (1838). Son of a sea captain, Reynolds spent some time in Paris where he read Eugene Sue's popular partwork *The Mysteries of Paris*. Inspired, he returned to England and commenced his own *Mysteries of London* (1845), a long-runner which wove into its fictional narrative factual reports on the evils of the nation's capital. Five years later Reynolds founded his own Sunday journal, *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, a title which would run, latterly supported by the Co-operative movement, until it turned into the tabloid *Sunday Citizen* in the 1960s.

The change from penny parts to penny magazines came about in 1866 when Edwin J. Brett, operating as the Newsagents Publishing Co. and publisher of some of the 'fiercest' (to use a contemporary term) Dreadfuls of the day, including *The Wild Boys of London* (which was eventually suppressed by the police), issued number 1 of *Boys of England*. There were already plenty of religious-based weeklies and monthlies for boys and girls, especially 'Mr' Samuel

Orchard Beeton's *Boy's Own Magazine* which began in 1855. But these were either too 'goody-goody' for a young taste corrupted by Dreadfuls, or were too expensive: Beeton's magazine cost sixpence a month, and was therefore thoroughly middle-to-upper class.

Boys of England, sixteen pages of stories, serials, illustrations and competitions (prizes ranged from fifty pairs of ducks to a hundred concertinas!), was at the beginning not far removed from a Dreadful; the lead story was 'The Skeleton Crew'. But in time, as the Victorian era progressed, Brett boasted on his front page that the weekly was 'subscribed to by HRH Prince Arthur, the Prince Imperial of France and Count William Bernstorff'. It was the start of a publishing gold rush as publisher after publisher put out penny weeklies for boys. Brett's main rival, William Laurence Emmett, also of Penny Dreadful fame, issued his *Young Gentleman's Journal* (1867). Brett answered with *Young Men of Great Britain* (1868), and Emmett counterpunched with *Young Gentlemen of Great Britain*. Finally both men issued virtually identical papers on the same day: Brett's *Rovers of the Sea* and Emmett's *Rover's Log* (1872).

Brett holds the distinction of publishing the first boys' weekly printed in full colour. This was the slightly fabulous *Boys of the Empire*, but after a year he had to revert to standard monochrome printing. However, the paper led to another Brett battle. A rival, Melrose, revived the *Boys of the Empire* title in 1900, seven years after Brett's paper collapsed. Immediately Brett rushed a *Boys of the Empire (New Series)* on to the bookstalls, and beat Melrose by two weeks. The battle of the bloods ended with surrender, and Melrose's paper changed to *Boys of Our Empire* on 29 June 1901, while Brett's added the subtitle 'An Up-To-Date Journal', as it incorporated another of his failed weeklies.

The modern boys' weekly was born in 1893 when Alfred Harmsworth, who had created the boom in comics with his *Comic Cuts* (1890), now tackled the story-paper field. He used the same tactic, known as the 'Harmsworth Touch'. He priced his paper as he did his comic, at half the current market price: one halfpenny. *The Halfpenny Marvel* was also launched on a spearhead of anti-Dreadful publicity. Number 1 carried the slogan 'No more Penny Dreadfuls! These healthy stories of mystery, adventure, etc, will kill them!' An editorial exclaimed: 'The Penny Dreadful makes thieves of the coming generation and so helps fill our jails! If we can rid the world of even one of these vile publications, our efforts will not have been in vain.' Soon *The Marvel* (as it would later be known when Harmsworth raised the price to one penny) proclaimed an unsolicited tribute from the Revd C. N. Barham of Nottingham: 'So pure and wholesome in tone,' said the Revd. But on the cover of that issue was a picture of Greek bandits at work, with this caption: 'The gaoler screwed up the horrible machine until the brigand's bones were nearly broken and he shrieked aloud for mercy, though none was shown.' Small wonder a contemporary critic wrote, 'Harmsworth has killed the Penny Dreadful by inventing the Ha'penny Dreadfuller!'

Although Harmsworth's ha'porths revolutionised the market for cheap reading matter for boys, with smaller hack publishers issuing halfpenny weeklies as fast as they were able, it would not be until the turn of the century that the weeklies began to settle into the formula still remembered by readers of what came to be popularly called 'tuppenny bloods'. These were the more sumptuous successors to the ha'penny (penny by the 1900s; penny-halfpenny by 1918) weeklies with more pages (leaping from eight to sixteen to twenty-eight to thirty-two), coloured covers (from black on pink paper to mixtures of red and blue, to four-colour photogravure), and very often a Grand Free Gift, which might be anything from a booklet about pirates to a tin jumping frog. The formula changed from one long story, or a serial or two, to 'Seven Star Stories', a favourite headline of the 'Big Five'.

These were the D. C. Thomson weeklies, which began issuing from Dundee, Scotland, in 1921 with number 1 of *Adventure*. Instant success soon brought on *Rover* (1922), *Wizard* (1922), *Skipper* (1930) and *Hotspur* (1933), with only *Vanguard* (1923) falling quickly by the way. Each paper had a character of its own via its choice of heroes: 'Dixon Hawke' was *Adventure's* answer to Harmsworth's Sexton Blake; 'The Wolf of Kabul' was *Wizard's* empire-builder, and 'The Chums of Red Circle' was the innovative school story in *Hotspur*. This rival to *Magnet's* long-running Greyfriars, home of the bulging Billy Bunter from 1908, was unique in that, during its 1,197 episodes, boys arrived at school, rose from form to form, and in six years or so left as other boys came in to replace them (masters, however, stayed on for ever!).

The Second World War saw the demise through paper shortage of many of the British boys' weeklies (by then, fortnightlies). The Amalgamated Press was left with one, *Champion*, while Thomson lost only one, *Skipper*. After the war some of the papers went over to serial strips and became comics (*The New Hotspur*, 24 October 1959); others died and were incorporated into comics (*Tiger and Champion*, 26 March 1955). The last of them all to go was *Rover*, joining *Wizard* (revived as a comic) from 20 January 1973. Some heroes continued as strips ('The Wolf of Kabul'); some went into paperbacks ('Sexton Blake') – but it was the end of an enjoyable and nostalgically remembered era.

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29 Contemporary comics

Katia Pizzi

At the thirteenth Festival Internacional de Banda Desenhada (Amadora, Portugal, 18 October–3 November 2002) an international panel convened with a view to listing the hundred best comics of the twentieth century. This exercise caused at least ‘one hundred headaches’, as Michael Dean put it in his presentation, excerpted in *Comics Journal* (2002: 21). Quite apart from the difficulty of allocating aesthetic and value judgments on their century-long history, a definition of comics today is extremely elusive, due to cultural variables, intersections with cognate media such as video-art, cinema and advertising and, more generally, the number of transformations undergone by comics worldwide in the past few decades. This overview of contemporary comics focuses on three aspects in particular: the survival of older comic characters, in particular favourite ones from Marvel and DC Comics; the incisive and widespread presence of Japanese comics, or mangas; and the cross-pollination between traditional, for example mainly text-based, comics and new technologies leading to non-textual final products.

The crisis affecting post-war comics in the western hemisphere has been compensated, more recently, by ‘enormous improvements in printing technology coupled with the emergence of a “direct sales” system of marketing to specialist comics shops’ which not only improved the aesthetic and material quality of comic books, but also ‘opened up new spaces for more complex and imaginative stories and artwork than ever before’, ensuring the ‘revival of the entire industry’ (Sabin 1996: 7). Comics evolved in parallel with the entertainment industry while the market at large adapted to young consumers’ new competences and requirements. While television made the most significant impact on comics from the 1950s, and comics have similarly long been elaborating ideas later appropriated by both television and cinema, advances in and wider access to information technology have led to further changes, placing contemporary comics at the interface of a variety of complex communicative technologies. Communicative systems evolved in ways that occasionally forced traditional comics to metamorphose even radically in an effort to remain competitive. Comics, on the other hand, have not become obsolete, maintaining a capacity, unknown to other media, to evolve and keep abreast of modern developments.

Comics from the Far East, rising steadily in numbers since the Second World War, have also penetrated western markets, feeding new ideas and technologies into what at times appeared to be a languishing industry. Though traditional comics have survived and continue to thrive, albeit in possibly less canonical areas, hybrid forms, which incorporate traditional forms of comics with more or less related forms of visual and textual communication, have also become the norm. Traditional characters have survived a number of metamorphoses, re-emerging later as parodied versions of their previous selves, at times in a number of different incarnations (see especially Superman, Spider-Man and Batman).

Contemporary comics have become increasingly parodical, relying on a substantive history of traditional narratives now reworked in meta-fictional form.

In short, contemporary comics have retained their specificity as well as reflecting both traditional media such as television, cinema and popular literature, and more advanced and increasingly less cognate new technologies (Frezza 1995: 143). Comics have progressively become a communicative system in themselves, speaking the language of our collective imagination at large.

Since the late 1950s and 1960s comics have gravitated towards television. In the UK, this is best demonstrated by *TV Century 21* (1965), *TV Tornado* (1967) and *Playland* (1968) (Gifford 1975: 120). Since the 1960s, many nursery comics have borrowed their characters and story-lines from children's television programmes, for instance *Playhour*, featuring the *Magic Roundabout*. 'The picture stories in these comics, generally arranged as symmetrical frames with short captions, seldom with speech balloons, present incidents in the lives of frolicking humanized animals, cute animated little dolls and unbelievably well-behaved and neatly dressed children' (Carpenter 1983: 97). 'The trend towards separate comics for each class of reader' was also carried forward from the 1950s, with new titles such as *Romeo* (1957), *Bunty* (1958) and *Twinkle* (1968) designed to appeal to young girls (Gifford 1975: 125). In France, *Asterix* (1958) by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo appealed both to children, thanks to its fast and punchy script and narrative rhythm, and also to adults on a political-satirical level ('Asterix le Gaulois' satirised General de Gaulle and his intentions to defend France's dignity and power with xenophobic suggestions).

Walt Disney's original favourites Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck thrived in both comic and cartoon form, as did Hanna-Barbera's Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Hound and the Flintstones (Perry and Aldridge 1971: 242–4). However, comic books and traditional USA newspaper comic strips experienced a decade-long crisis starting in 1960. The only successful new strips of the years 1960–75 were *The Wizard of Id* by Johnny Hart and Brant Parker, *Doomsday* by Garry Trudeau, and *Hägar the Horrible* by Dik Browne. The 1975 issue of *Editor and Publisher* listed fewer than 200 current comic strips: a significantly low set of figures. The whole comics industry in the UK and USA experienced a crisis between the 1960s and the early 1970s, a crisis leading to significant changes. Even though particular sections of the market, such as newsagent sales, never fully recovered, comics developed nonetheless worldwide, finding new ideas and new distribution channels.

In the USA, the renaissance of comics was effected through irony and tongue-in-cheek: *Peanuts* by Charles Schulz became extremely popular among all ages and categories of readers, proceeding to become a sort of 'national myth' (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 71). Artists Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and Jim Steranko experimented with new ideas and eventually developed vulnerable superheroes who carried an all-too-human baggage of anxieties and existential problems (a trend which became especially prominent in the mid-1980s). These heroes included the Fantastic Four, Thor, Hulk, X-Men, Iron Man and, especially, Spider-Man, all published by Marvel (Horn and Secchi 1978: 34). *The Fantastic Four* (1961), by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, were painfully aware of the responsibilities attached to their superpowers, resenting their superhuman status. This is best exemplified by Ben Grimm, the 'thing', whose revulsion for his grotesque and bestial appearance is overcome by his strenuous efforts to cling to the human half of his semi-animalesque nature. Other experiments were made, such as introducing more 'politically correct' characters. *The Avengers* (1963), by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, integrated within their group for the first time in comics history a coloured colleague, Black Panther (origi-

nally in the Fantastic Four), after the death of Captain America. Lobo was the first coloured cowboy in comics history who became the protagonist of his own strip (published by Dell in 1965). Lobo, however, came out in only two issues and the character disappeared after having been unjustly accused of murder (Bertieri 1969: 107). *Batgirl* (1967) by Bob Kane was created, in part at least, in order to redress the suspected misogyny of Batman.

In 1960 Marvel comic books sold 14 million copies, increasing to 34 million in 1965 and nearly 40 million in 1970 (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 66). Marvel was closely followed by its competitor DC Comics, who also published characters destined to become classics, such as Superman, Batman, Wonderwoman, Flash, Green Lantern, Atom and Hawkman. *Batman* (1939), originally by Bill Finger and Bob Kane (later by Gardner Fox, Frank Robbins, Carmine Infantino and others), was initially modelled on Superman but after the film *Batman* (1965) by Leslie H. Martinson, the TV series of 1966 and the TV animated series of 1968, he acquired more specific characteristics. Batman introduced a dark, gothic dimension into the realm of comics, as well as more than a hint of human vulnerability. *Phantom* (1936) came out in comic book form in 1961 while Nick Cardy created Aquaman, Teen Titans and Bat Lash for DC. *Conan the Barbarian* (1970) by Barry Windsor-Smith and Roy Thomas was an unlikely yet popular Marvel superhero who went on to inspire the *Conan* movies released in the 1980s (Sabin 1996: 150).

Successful comics launched and developed in this decade include, in the UK, *Bristow* (1960) by Frank Dickens, *The Forsdyke Saga* by Bill Tidy, *Barry McKenzie* by Nicholas Garland, *Modesty Blaise* by James Holdaway, *Tiffany Jones* by Pat Tournet and Jenny Butterworth, and *Frazer of Africa* by Frank Bellamy. The prolific and influential artist Leo Baxendale produced *Wham!* (1964) and proceeded to work for 'virtually all the post-war humorous comics' by the early 1970s. Girls' comics also continued to thrive, evolving in the direction of glossy magazines such as *Oh Boy!*, *My Guy*, *Mates* and *Love Affair*. Sex, fashion and pop music became widespread interests here, as these publications cultivated a young consumer's mentality (Carpenter 1983: 102, 112). In France new comics included *Achille Talon* by Greg, *Gai Luron* by Marcel Gotlib, *Lieutenant Blueberry* by Jean Giraud, *Philémon* by Fred; and in Belgium: *Bernard Prince* and *Comanche* by Herman Huppen and Greg, *Chevalier Ardent* by Francois Craenhals, *Les Schtroumpfs* by Peyo. Other popular characters emerging from the *Journal de Spirou* and drawn in the manner of the Charleroi school were *Vieux Nick et Barbe Noire* by Remacle, *Marc Dacier* by Paape and Charlier, *Benoît Brisefer* by Peyo, *Boule et Bill* by Roba, *César* by Tillieux, *La Rimbambelle* by Roba, *Les Petits Hommes* by Seron, *Natacha* by Walthéry, and *Yoko Tsuno* by Leloup (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 74). The old guard of artists of the Brussels school, such as Hergé, Edgar-Pierre Jacobs, Paul Cuvelier, Jacques Martin, Jacques Laudy and Willy Vandersteen, who had created the weekly *Tintin* (1946), were joined by 'new blood' in the persons of Greg, Godard, Dany, Dupla, Bob de Groot, Hermann, Denayer, Paape and others (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 77). The '*ligne claire*', invented by Hergé in the 1920s with *Tintin* and characterised by simple, neat drawings, a distinctive lack of greys and shadowing, an emphasis on the brightness of the image achieved through skilful colouring and simplified human traits contrasting with laboriously detailed backgrounds, continued to thrive in the 1960s and 1970s. *Michel Vaillant* by Jean Graton, *Albany et Sturgess* (1977) by Floch and Rivière, *Sam Pezzo* (1979), and later *Jonas Fink* (1991) by Vittorio Giardino were all reliant on *la ligne claire* half a century later.

In Italy, traditional comics evolved in more 'adult' directions, paving the way for violent and erotic stories, see for instance: *Diabolik* (1962) by Marchesi and the sisters

Giussani, *Kriminal* by Max Bunker, *Sturmtruppen* by Bonvi, *Una ballata del Mare Salato* and *Corto Maltese* by Hugo Pratt. A master of adventures drawn in black and white, Pratt became later widely influential, particularly on the Argentinians José Muñoz and Walter Fährer (*Harry Chase*), the Belgian Didier Comès and the Spaniard Manfred Sommer (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 113). In Spain Carlos Giménez created *Delta 99* and *Dani Futuro*, Victor de la Fuente *Haxtur* and Esteban Maroto *Cinco por Infinito* and *Wolff* (Horn and Secchi 1978: 36). In Argentina sci-fi was used as a pretext to expose the oppressive regime ruling the country. Héctor Germán Oesterheld, who became a *desaparecido* in 1977, wrote the influential *Eternauta* (1957). Copi and Quino created *Mafalda* (1964), a disenchanted, humorous and candid little girl. During this decade comics started attracting critical attention. The first international conference devoted to comics was hosted in Bordighera in Italy in 1965. International exhibitions (for example, *Bande Dessinée et Figuration Narrative* at the Louvre in Paris in 1967 and *75 Years of Comics* at the New York Cultural Center), and permanent museums (the first one, the City Museum of Cartoon Art, was founded in Omiya, Japan in 1966) all contributed to increasing the visibility of and attention paid to comics (Horn and Secchi 1978: 37).

The 1960s and 1970s also witnessed the establishment of Japanese comics, or mangas. Originally created for ten- to eleven-year-olds, their readership quickly expanded to include all age groups and social and professional categories. The main themes are ‘dramatic stories of sports, adventure, ghosts, science fiction’ in boys’ comics, while girls’ magazines tend to emphasise ‘idealized love, featuring stylized heroes and heroines’ (Schodt 1983: 15). Scatology, violence and erotica are not uncommon to mangas and indeed the breaking of taboos must be regarded as a major contributing factor to the growth of the whole medium (Schodt 1983: 126). The main artists (*mangakas*) were, alongside the world-renowned Osamu Tezuka (*Hi no Tori*), Sanpei Shirato (*Sasuke, Kamui Den*), Gosei Kojima (*Kozure Okami*), Tetsuya Chiba (*Harisu no kaze* and *Ashita no Joe*), Takao Saitō (*Golgo 13*), Shunji Sonoyama (*Gyatoruzu*), Fujio Akatsuka (*Osomatsu-kun*), Tatsuhiko Yamagami (*Gaki Deka*) and, particularly, Hiroshi Hirata and Koo Kojima (Horn and Secchi 1978: 37). Tezuka started experimenting with a sustained integration between comics and television with significant implications for the development of computer animation: by reducing the number of drawings per second to a maximum of five, he both simplified and speeded up the whole montage process, putting for the first time into practice the multi-media approach employed extensively today (Brancato 1994: 124). Akatsuka created serialised gag strips for comics magazines. These were ‘fast-paced and whacky ... his new style of irreverent parody of the real world ... cleared the way for later, more radical artists’ (Schodt 1983: 121). ‘Japanese artists’ are ‘experts at page layout’ and the use of ‘cinematic techniques of fade-out, fade-in, montage, and even superimposition’ (Schodt 1983: 20). In these decades mangas started penetrating western markets: the USA *Astro Boy*, originally a comic story entitled *Tetsuwan Atomu* (1951) by Tezuka, came out in 1965 (Schodt 1983: 154).

The most significant innovation of the 1970s was underground comics (or ‘comix’) that witnessed at the same time a return to the origins and a freedom to experiment with new contents, including pornography and scatology. Early titles include *The East Village Other* and *Zap Comix*. Despite inevitable controversies, comix became extremely successful and helped launch famous artists such as Robert Crumb (*Fritz the Cat* and *Mr Natural*) and Gilbert Shelton (*The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*) (Horn and Secchi 1978: 35). Artists such as Kim Deitch, Spain Rodriguez, Trina Robbins, Art Spiegelman, Bernie Wrightson, Roger Brand, Denis Kitchen, Justin Green, Robert Williams, Willie

Murphy and Bill Griffith refused to continue working for the traditional syndicates and joined avant-garde magazines such as *Trump* and *Humbug* (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 84). European underground comics, clustered around a number of 'fanzines', followed from USA underground. In France, Philippe Drouillet published *Lone Sloane* (1966), the first Western in the history of comics to be set in a distant future and in a space age. *Lone Sloane* was revolutionary in that drawings were not necessarily enclosed in predetermined frames but spread out and roamed across the page, multiplying opportunities for a display of the artist's talent (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 106). The Italian underground, greatly influenced by the French artists Drouillet, Moebius, Fred and Gigi, is best represented by the provocative strip *Ranxerox*, by Liberatore and Tamburini (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 110). In the late 1970s comics thrived Europe-wide, from the Danish *Rasmus Klump* to the German *Roy Tiger* by Rolf Kauka, to the Dutch *Dzjengis Khan*, to *Herlock Sholmes* in Yugoslavia (Horn and Secchi 1978: 36).

Horror and war comics experienced a revival. Even though horror as a genre had been censored by the 'Comics Code', publications such as *Creepy* (1964), *Eerie* (1965) and *Vampirella* (1966) by Al Williamson, Joe Orlando, Reed Crandall, John Severin, Johnny Craig, Steve Ditko, Gene Colan, Gray Morrow, survived (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 84). Later in the 1980s, Stephen King would script *Heroes for Hope Starring the X-Men* (1985) by artist Berni Wrightson. The magazine *Splatter* (1989) inaugurated a series of successful horror magazines in Italy for a target audience of fourteen- to eighteen-year-olds. In Italy, horror in this period is best represented by *Dylan Dog* (1986) by Tiziano Scavi, achieving such popularity that it was able to sustain the faltering fortunes of its publishers Bonelli. Originally dating back to 1958 and 1961, war comics remained a favourite in the UK, in particular *Warlord* (1974), *Battle* (1975; featuring, among others, strips on the Falklands War), and *Bullet* (1976). Youth culture came powerfully to the fore in Italy with *Penthotal* (1977) and *Zanardi* (1980) by Andrea Pazienza, while in France Frank Margerin portrayed ironically a young man entangled in generational conflicts (*Lucien* (1979)).

In the years between 1970 and 1980 a number of traditional characters and publications survived or resurfaced: Dan Dare was resurrected in 1977 in *2000 AD* while in 1982 *Eagle* 'was revived as a glossy comic, with most of the adventure stories presented in photo-strip form' (Carpenter 1983: 94). In Italy the Western strip *Tex Willer* (1948) by Gian Luigi Bonelli and Galep continued selling well through the 1970s–90s (in the 1990s approximately 800,000 monthly copies of *Tex* were printed and distributed). Rupert Bear, who first appeared in 1920, remained incredibly popular thanks to *Rupert Weekly* (1982). *Dandy* (1937) and *Beano* (1938) also retained their immense popularity among 'boys and girls of all age groups' (Carpenter 1983: 101). *Desperate Dan* (1937) and *Beryl the Peril* (1953) continued to thrive, together with the British version of *Dennis the Menace* (1951) who took over the front page of *Beano* in 1974. In *Dandy* and *Beano* 'rebellious youth fearlessly challenges authority ... violence in society and in personality is acknowledged ... but neutralized by humour' (Carpenter 1983: 102).

Three news-stand comics became particularly successful in the UK: *2000 AD* (1977), *Viz* (1979) and *Deadline* (1988). All three came out as magazines and were influenced by the punk movement (Sabin 1996: 133). The closest to punk ideology and most influential of all was *2000 AD*, a comic that combined science fiction and war, 'reporting on the attempts by Judge Dredd and fellow Mega City judges to hold up the advance of the East-Meg army' (Carpenter 1983: 117). It was set in the future in order to avoid the controversies and censorship incurred by its precursor *Action* (1976). Its success was largely due to the number of excellent writers, including Pat Mills, Alan Moore, John

Wagner and Alan Grant; artists such as Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Mike McMahon, Ian Gibson and Kevin O'Neill, many of whom had become famous through underground comix; and, last but not least, its charismatic protagonist Judge Dredd. 'By the early 1980s, *2000 AD* was selling around 120,000 an issue' which was impressive 'in the context of the market conditions prevailing at the time' (Sabin 1996: 138).

In the 1980s French comics became internationally renowned and France the undisputed leader in producing 'artistic' comics, frequently published in monthlies such as *Metal Hurlant* (1975) by Margerin and Vuillemin, *À Suivre* (1978), by Tardi, Cabanes, Benoît, Montellier, Schuiten and *Pilote* (1959), the latter conflated in 1986 with *Charlie Mensuel* to create *Pilote et Charlie*. All three welcomed international contributions and an equally international panel of artists (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 108–9). French comics of this time deeply influenced European comics at large and, in particular, the German artists Birger Grave, Andreas Marschall and Matthias Schultheiss, as well as a number of Argentinean artists exiled in the 1970s, such as Muñoz, Sampayo, Juan Gimenez and Horacio Altuna, who used French comic books as a springboard to reach wider readerships (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 121–2). In Italy, the French influence was apparent in the new wave of culturally and aesthetically engaged magazines such as *Linus*, *Pilot*, *Orient Express*, *Comic Art*, *Totem* and *Eureka*. Famous artists who welcomed French influences, such as Giardino, Magnus, Manara and Bilal, emerged in this period. Altan's spotty dog *La Pimpa* (1975), created for young children, became famous in the pages of *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*. In 1980 Massimo Mattioli produced *Squeak the Mouse*, inspired by USA underground, while Lorenzo Mattotti founded the review *Valvoline* (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 121).

American and European comics engaged in a fruitful dialogue. The genre of 'heroic fantasy', fashionable in the USA in the 1970s, became prominent in Europe after Regis Loisel and Serge Le Tendre published *La Quête de Poiseau du temps* (1982) in *Charlie Mensuel*. On the other hand, the European revolution in graphic art also influenced to some extent the traditional USA strip. The acclaimed *Superman* movie of 1978, starring Christopher Reeve, boosted sales of the comic book (Sabin 1996: 151) and Superman's legend was then elaborated on by John Byrne in the series *The Man of Steel* (1987) where Superman's identity is no longer a secret for Lois Lane. Frank Miller's extraordinary *The Dark Knight's Return* (1984) featured an aging, self-doubting Batman who influenced deeply the film *Batman* by Tim Burton (1989), a postmodern portrayal that incorporated further influences from Japanese mangas and European artists. Dave Gibbons and Alan Moore, who had both contributed to drawing *The Dark Knight's Return*, created the sci-fi series *Watchmen* (1986), intent at revisiting the superhero myth, emphasising his schizophrenic identity, ideological ambiguity, and social and political anxieties. *Watchmen* immediately became a cult series, boasting more than three million readers worldwide (Frezza 1995: 182; Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 111–12).

The 1980s are characterised by the birth and development of cyberpunk comics, based on a hegemony of electronics and genetics, the explosion of the modernist metropolis, the revenge of the slums, and creeping fears relating to an all-encompassing technocracy. In *Ronin* (1983) by Frank Miller, east and west, comics and television, mangas (the Japanese samurai classic *Kozure Okami* was credited as Miller's main inspiration) and superheroes, cybernetics and punk overlap in what Brancato aptly termed a 'semiotic gridlock' (Brancato 1994: 118–19; Schodt 1983: 156). Comics of the 1980s tend to reflect apocalyptic fears embedded in western technological economies, also prominent in related films such as *Tron* (1982), *Terminator*, *Robocop* and *Hardware* (1990). A precursor of cyberpunk comics was *The Long Tomorrow* (1975) by Moebius and Dan O'Bannon (who also

wrote the script for the film *Alien*). Inspired by the novel *The Demolished Man* by Alfred Bester, *The Long Tomorrow* is set in a megalopolis later reproduced by Ridley Scott in *Blade Runner*, and it became extremely influential on cyberpunk comics (Brancato 1994: 121). Comics fed more frequently than ever before into film, and the reverse was also true when 'virtually every new movie released for a children's or teen audience had its comic counterpart' (Sabin 1996: 132). By the same process television series and characters generated comic counterparts, as best exemplified by the enormously successful *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles* (1990) and *The Simpsons* by Matt Groening, generating a comic strip in 1999.

In the 1980s, Japan's massive production of mangas was translated into a variety of media and distributed through a wide network of channels of consumption (Brancato 1994: 124–7). Mangas now included two new areas: home videos and home computers. Animated cartoons (*anime*) became lucrative spin-offs of comic magazines: 'in 1981 there were over a hundred animated programs showing on Japanese television. More than half ... were based on comic stories' stimulating 'further sales of magazines, reprints of comic paperbacks, and massive merchandising' (124–7) (see for instance the series *Candy Candy*, serialised in 1975 in Kōdansha's *Nakayoshi* and animated for television in the same year by the animation company Tōei. Some \$650 million was earned in profit from merchandise carrying the licensed image of *Candy Candy*). By the mid-1980s, the comic paperback series had sold 13.5 million copies (Schodt 1983: 146–7). In the period 1984–5, animation series like *Voltron*, *Defender of the Universe*, *Robotech*, *Transformers* and *Gobots* spread Japanese animation, comics and merchandise worldwide (Schodt 1983: 156). New series were also released on videotape. Cyberpunk overlapped with mangas to produce cybermangas, for example, *Akira* (1982) by Katsushiro Otomo and especially *Appleseed* (1985) by Masamune Shirow, who specialised in catastrophic scenarios. From 1982, samurais, the Japanese equivalent of American superheroes, became recurrent figures in comic magazines for young men (Schodt 1983: 70, 77–8). Japanese mangas were also exported successfully to the whole Far East: Korea's equivalent (*manhwas*) were best represented by Hyun Se Lee who became renowned after publishing *Gongpoui Oeingundan* (1982) and *Armageddon, manhwa* (1988), also available as a cartoon animation film in 1996. Comics in Hong Kong enjoyed the multi-cultural influence of Japan, China and the USA and produced extremely original work as a result. Tony Wong (or Wong Yuk Long), who was particularly influenced by Chinese painting and stories, published *Legend of an Emperor*, *Clique of Brave and Justice* and *Master of Sword*. The skilful use of colour and computer graphics employed by Andy Seto (*Cyber Weapon 2*), Patrick Yu (*Celia*) and, particularly, Chris Lau (*Club Mad*) can be attributed to the influence of American comics. Finally, Taiwan showed European influences in the sci-fi series *Baron* by Tend Bo-Wen and Lin Chi and *The Shadow of the Moon* by Weijung Lu. *Comic, the Love Story* by Eiderdy, on the other hand, relied on purely Oriental sources (Pesci *et al.* 1999: 182–3). Finally, South Korea and even China did not remain insensitive to Japanese mangas (Schodt 1983: 156).

The 1980s inaugurated the era of interactive video-games growing, to a large extent, to the detriment of comic magazines. On the other hand, video-games borrowed extensively from traditional comics, employing, for example, the stories of Mickey Mouse, Flash Gordon, Peanuts and Judge Dredd (Brancato 1994: 135). Mangas also featured prominently in video-games, such as *Pokémon* and, in the late 1990s, *Parasite Eve*. Comics in the 1980s also interfaced more frequently with advertising, competing more and more fiercely with USA and Japanese cartoon animation (the 'Disney Channel', broadcasting exclusively Disney films and cartoons, was launched in 1983) and interactive games on

videotape. Traditional comics found strategies of survival, such as paperback publishing, developing merchandising and collectors' items, and adapting to new technologies able to supplement or integrate information technology. Probably the best-known computer-generated comic is *Digital Justice* (1989–90) a cyberpunk computer-graphic story featuring Batman and designed by Pepe Moreno with a Macintosh II 8 Mega Ram computer (Brancato 1994: 136). The first proper example of a digital comic was *Shatter* (1984) by Mike Saenz, also with the aid of a Macintosh computer (Saenz proceeded to develop *Iron Man: Crash*, a virtual version of 'Iron Man' commissioned by Marvel, and *Donna Matrix* in 1993). The process seems to have reversed now with comics launched on the Internet prior to being released on paper: the first example is probably the basketball manga *Buzzer Beater* (1997) by Takehiko Inoue (see also *Nibelung Ring II* by Leiji Matsumoto). While the graphic rendering of digital comics remained somewhat unsatisfactory, info-comics seemed to be a more appealing product. Info-comics are more like video-games since they are entirely supported by computer technology. They are also interactive, allowing users to select alternative developments in the plot via their computer keyboard (Brancato 1994: 137). Another interesting hybridisation of comics with animation is *animèkomikkusu*, or 'animation comics': 'full-color comic paperbacks that are created not from the original comic artwork but from a print of an animated film' (Schodt 1983: 147). There is now a range of comics published exclusively on the World Wide Web. They have not, however, replaced comics on paper. Periodicals such as *Web Comics* provide mangas and computer-generated illustrations both in print and on-line (Pesci *et al.* 1999: 172).

The 1990s witnessed the demise of long-running children's periodicals such as *Tintin* (or *Tintin Reporter*) in 1989 and *Pif* in 1993. *Hello Bédé* and *Vécu* also closed down in 1993. In the 1990s there was a general return to favour of comics aimed at teenagers, the so-called 'bit-generation'. Crossovers, 'elseworlds' and self-referential, nostalgic re-readings prevailed. DC and Marvel superheroes, presented in 'trash' or demented versions of their previously idealised selves, continued to find a market – see for instance the series *Marvels* (1994) by Alex Ross and Kurt Busiek. *Marvels* relates the advent of Marvel superheroes, from Submariner and Captain America, through to Thor, the Fantastic Four, X-Men and Spider-Man, and their impact on the daily life of the average American citizen (Giromini *et al.* 1996: 274–5). DC on the other hand skilfully orchestrated *The Death of Superman* (1992) by the hands of Doomsday. All DC characters attended Superman's funeral, a device already used effectively in the 1980s, following the death of Batman's alter ego, Robin (Marvel had also used it, featuring a battery of superheroes paying respect to a defunct Captain Marvel). Four Superman alter egos resurrected in four different publications: *Superman*, *Adventures of Superman*, *Action Comics* and *Man of Steel*, providing an opportunity for the old hero to be rejuvenated and re-launched worldwide (Giromini *et al.* 1996: 275–6). Batman revivals also abounded in this period: from *Batman Adventures* (1992), inspired by the TV cartoon animation series, to *Legends of the Dark Knight* by Kevin O'Neill and Mike McMahon, and *Catwoman* (1993) by Jim Balent, Mary Jo Duffy, Chick Dixon and others. In 1991 Erik Larsen, Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Whilce Portacio, Marc Silvestri and Jim Valentino left Marvel and founded an independent company called Image, releasing, among others, *Spawn* (1992). Marvel UK issued the sophisticated *ClanDestine* (1994) by Alan Davis.

In the mid-1990s, a hundred years after comics began, the Italian scene was dominated by cyberpunk comics circulated in the magazines *Decoder* and *Cyborg* (1991) by Daniele Brolli, Davide Fabbri, Onofrio Catacchio, Massimo Semerano, Marco Nizzoli, Antonio

Fara, Francesca Ghermandi and Giuseppe Palumbo. The popular sci-fi series *Nathan Never* by Michele Medda, Antonio Serra, Bepi Vigna and Claudio Castellini, was published by Bonelli in 1991 (Brancato 1994: 131). Sales of indigenous comics dropped significantly in the UK as American comics continued to be preferred (see, for instance, the magazine *Zenith* (1986) by Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell (Sabin 1996: 140)). In Japan mangas were more popular than ever. In 1989 the Japanese spent over 440 billion yen in purchasing mangas, and these figures are constantly rising. There are more than 300 weekly titles selling up to 5 million copies each, representing a 33 per cent share of the whole publishing market. The weekly *Shonen Jump*, a best seller for a good number of years, was replaced by its rival *Shonen Magazine* when sales of the former decreased to 4 million copies while sales of the latter escalated to 5 million. Mangas attract millions of readers. There are mangas for each age group, social and professional category, individual tastes and preferences (Brancato 1994: 128; Pesci *et al.* 1999: 175). *Shojo mangas*, for instance, are intended for female readers aged between six and eighteen, while *shonen mangas* are intended for boys. Usually drawn by female *mangakas*, such as Taeko Watanabe (*Hajimechan ga ichiban*), Mariko Nakamura (*Girlboy!*), Nanae Haruno (*Papa Told Me*), Kyoko Okazaki (*Pink*) and Moyoko Anno (*Happy Mania* was turned into a soap opera broadcast by the Fuji TV channel in 1998), *shojo mangas* 'do not always reflect a ... feminist consciousness' (Schodt 1983: 97). They also typically either derive from or generate successful TV series, as was the case with *Sailormoon*, *Manatsu no Koibito*, *Angel Wars*, *Oh! My Darling*, to quote just a few (Pesci *et al.* 1999: 175). Extremely popular *shojo manga* magazines include *Ribbon*, *Nakayoshi*, *Special Edition Margaret*, *tankobons*, that is, small volumes collecting mangas previously published elsewhere in serialised form; and *dojinshi* ('fanzines') specialising in parodies (*aniparo*) of popular mangas, *anime* and video-games, spawning a large series of sub-genres (Pesci *et al.* 1999: 175; Sabucco 2000: 35). In 1997 the biggest publishers were Shueisha (26.8 per cent), Kodansha (23.5 per cent), and Shogakkan (21.3 per cent) (Pesci *et al.* 1999: 175; Schodt 1983: 14). Mangas continued spreading westwards in the 1990s; in Europe, Spain, Italy and Germany were particularly receptive to their influence whereas France and Belgium remained largely unaffected. In the USA the ostensible influence of mangas was negligible and yet apparent in the exasperated graphics used in re-drawing indigenous characters such as Superman, Batman and Wonderwoman (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 126–7).

The contemporary scene is characterised by more articulate and complex cross-pollination between comics and television (including digital and satellite TV), cinema, literature, video-games, Internet and computer software, graphics and animation in general. While film continues to influence comics, comics continue to inspire the film industry, thanks to the development of computer graphics and digital technologies: see for instance the films *The Fifth Element* (1998) by Luc Besson, engaging in a dialogue with comics by Jordan, Jean Claude Mézières and Moebius, and also *Matrix* (1999) by the Wachowski brothers, who include a number of visual quotations taken from the Marvel strip *Shang-Chi* (Frezza 1999: 115, 120). The synergy between comics and film is well illustrated by *The Mask*, originally a comic strip in *Mayhem* (1989), subsequently turned into a film starring Jim Carrey, which in turn inspired a new comic in 1994, by Mike Richardson and Kilian Plunkett (Giromini *et al.* 1996: 282). The Hollywood blockbuster *Daredevil* (2002), starring Ben Affleck, revives the Marvel superhero in film form with the aid of increasingly sophisticated special effects. These synergies and cross-fertilisations are also currently projecting comics in more intercultural and international directions. Marvel and DC, for instance, now employ European artists more frequently. Multi-cultural and multi-ethnic

comics have also appeared, following prominent social and cultural trends (Frezza 1999: 19–20, 22). Renowned artists today include Lewis Trondheim (*Blacktown*), O'Groj and Nicholas de Crécy (Moliterni *et al.* 1996: 124–5). Young artists such as Anders Brekhus Nilsen (*Nothingness: Big Questions # 5*) and women artists such as Debbie Drechsler (*Daddy's Girl, Summer of Love*) have also come to the fore. *Sin City* (1996), a post-metropolitan comic created by Frank Miller, is also worthy of note. The genre of heroic fantasy, best illustrated in France by the series *Donjon* (1998), an epic saga constantly undercut by humour and irony, by Trondheim, Joann Sfar and Christopher Blain, is popular in Europe (*Comics Journal* 2002: 51). *Tintin et les héritiers* details in comic form the legal disputes involved in securing the copyright of the lucrative Tintin comics, following the death of Hergé (Giordani 2000: 13). The French sci-fi magazine *Metal Hurlant* is being re-issued in comic-book form in English as *Metal Hurlant #1* (2002): computer colouring and lettering have now replaced the airbrushing techniques preferred in the original. Other traditional publications revived recently include *The Rocket's Blast and The Comicollector* (2002), based on the 1970s American series. In the USA, Stan Lee filed a \$10 million lawsuit against Marvel, whom he alleges are withholding profits from *Spider-Man*, the blockbuster movie (*Comics Journal* 2002: 29). Comics enjoy a healthy circulation in Portugal thanks to the activities of long-established publishers Asa, Devir, Book Tree and more recent initiatives from Witloof, Iman and Polvo (the last of these is publishing Portugal's rising star, artist Pedro Brito (*Comics Journal* 2002: 22)). In Italy, comics have continued to shift from the newsagent to the specialised bookshop. A decrease in sales has, however, been compensated by an improvement in aesthetic quality and editing at large.

The advent of global economies and global markets ensures the survival and dissemination of traditional characters throughout the developed world, from the recent Hollywood blockbuster movie *X-Men*, to text-messaging on mobile phones, frequently accompanied by logos featuring characters such as Mickey Mouse, Peanuts and the Simpsons, to phone cards bearing images of Disney and other characters (see the series 'Pippo olimpionico' or 'Olympic Goofy' in Italy, and also Tintin in Belgium and mangas in Japan) which have now become highly collectable items. In short, the daily activities, as well as the free time, of children and teenagers are saturated with comics and there are no signs of comics losing their powerful hold on the collective imagination of young consumers worldwide.

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30 Poetry

Morag Styles

‘Country rhimes’ and ‘fingle-fangles’: what is poetry for children?

‘Country rhimes’ and ‘fingle-fangles’ both come from John Bunyan’s (1628–88) book of verse for the young which had a complicated publishing history and was variously titled *Divine Emblems, A Book for Boys and Girls* and *Country Rhimes for Children* (1686). The notion of ‘country rhimes’, which comes from the title, and ‘fingle-fangles’, which comes from the Introduction, usefully signal two debates within children’s poetry. First, I would argue, the fact that the title for what was probably the first single poetry collection for children in England should locate itself in the countryside is not a coincidence; most verse for the young was set in either a rural landscape or a magic space (such as the land of make-believe) until the advent of social realism in poetry in the second half of the twentieth century. As for ‘fingle-fangles’,

I do’t to show them how each fingle-fangle,
On which they doating are, their souls entangle

these are the pretty gewgaws of life which Bunyan wished to show his readers were worthless snares and delusions in comparison to the bigger, spiritual scheme of things and the good of their immortal souls. Some critics would argue that contemporary poetry for children is dominated by material which could be characterised as frothy and shallow, featuring fingle-fangle fripperies rather than quality verse of substance to cherish. There is, indeed, a great deal of lightweight verse for children published today. But wasn’t it ever thus? In the end, the cheap and tawdry will sink by the wayside and only poetry with lasting qualities will survive, although some of it, like A. A. Milne’s verse, Lear’s songs and nursery rhymes themselves, is certainly quite ‘light’.

Anthologists – the gatekeepers of the canon

I am tempted to say that there is no such thing as poetry for children. There is plenty of poetry *about* children and some of the best poetry ever written is about *childhood*. In addition, a significant proportion of the so-called ‘canon’ of children’s verse was never intended for the young at all, but was poetry for adults which was considered suitable for children. The gatekeepers of the canon are the anthologists.

Of course, many poets *have* written specifically for children, some choosing to divide their time between different audiences (Robert Louis Stevenson, Christina Rossetti, Ted

Hughes, Charles Causley, Roger McGough, Carol Ann Duffy, Jackie Kay to name but a few); others specialise in poetry for the young (for example, Michael Rosen, Allan Ahlberg, Tony Mitton). Both groups have, however, been marginalised by influential editors. Coventry Patmore, for example, writing in *The Children's Garland* (1862, subtitled 'From the Best Poets') firmly states, 'I have excluded nearly all the verse written expressly for children and most of the poetry written about children for grown people' (Patmore 1862: n.p.). In the preface to *A New Treasury of Poetry* Neil Philip wrote in 1990: 'I have also been cautious with poems written specially for children, preferring on the whole work which makes itself available to a young reader without any sense of talking or writing down' (Philip 1990: 15).

Such views are not uncommon. Until recently, poets of the past who did not choose to write for children (such as Burns, Wordsworth, Cowper, Goldsmith, Keats, Pope and Scott) have been collected more frequently in anthologies for children than work by the Taylor sisters, Lear or Rossetti. Look at prestigious anthologies of the nineteenth and twentieth century and consider the omissions. Where are the poets writing for children? Where are the women? And, until very recently, where are black and Asian poets? Many anthologies of the past are testimonies to the preferences of elite groups of academically educated men.

The tension between the improving instincts of adults and what children choose to read is nowhere more keenly demonstrated than in the anthologising of verse for the young. A large body of the poetry actually favoured by children (so the evidence would suggest) has been ignored by anthologists. On a more positive note, some of the poetry for adults which has an established place in the children's canon appears to have been adopted by young readers themselves, a healthy trend which shows the powerful drive children have to shape their own literature. Kaye Webb's *I Like This Poem* (1979), a collection of the declared favourite poems of children (although, perhaps, a privileged group), includes much that was written before the twentieth century. Traditionalists do not have much to worry about; children today simply seem to like a varied diet. See, for example, Michael Rosen's video, *Count to Five and Say I'm Alive* (Rosen 1995), where children from a wide range of ethnic groups in schools all over the British Isles perform raps and gutsy playground rhymes in standard English, various dialects and other languages; read out poems they have written themselves; enjoy performances by published poets; and recite from memory their favourite poems by Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, Tagore *et al.*

Poetry about childhood

Some of the most popular themes for children remain fairly constant: nature, magic, weather, the sea, school and family life, adventure – and anything that makes them laugh. However, one of the most powerful topics has always been the exploration of childhood itself. It seems probable that many poets write for children partly because they want to understand the 'child in themselves', looking back with some longing at their own youth and coming-of-age. At worst, this can be self-indulgent and nostalgic; at best, it reaches the gentle self-scrutiny of Stevenson; Causley's occasional, but revealing, unsentimental allusions to his parents' lives and his own changing view of time as he gets older; Duffy's moving exploration of childhood from the vantage point of a mother loving a young daughter; or Rosen's funny and unpretentious accounts of everyday life based on observations of his children, as well as reflections on his own past. Adults will always view children

through the ‘distorting lens’ of their own dreams, hopes, memories and prejudices: this has led to some of the most tender, deep and rewarding poetry ever written.

Changes over time

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, most poetry (indeed, most literature) for children was didactic and severe, expressed through lessons, fables, improving verse and hymns, although the latter also included some of the most lyrical literature available to the young. For those who could get their hands on it, what a contrast the rude, crude and sensational literature (including verse) available in the chapbooks to the widest possible audience must have made.

By the early nineteenth century, significant numbers of poets writing for children aspired to entertain rather than simply educate young readers. Harsh moral tales in verse began to develop into the extravagances of cautionary verse; light-hearted poems about the imaginary doings of insects, birds and small animals also became popular; nonsense verse started to flourish and the first child-centred poetry began to emerge. A sea-change occurred in the 1970s when poetry for children moved into the city, and the earlier gentle and often rural lyricism turned into something more earthy, harking back, perhaps, to the bawdiness of the chapbooks. Gone are descriptions of neat nurseries, rolling countryside and sweet fancies. Nature may still be central, but it is more likely to come in the shape of muscular poetry about animals by poets like Hughes, or hard-hitting descriptions of how human beings have destroyed the environment. Humour is widespread, but serious concerns are not neglected. John Rowe Townsend called it ‘urchin verse’: ‘Here is family life in the raw, with its backchat, fury and muddle, and instead of woods and meadows are disused railway lines, building sites and junkheaps’ (Townsend 1987: 303).

As for content, there are few unmentionables left. The twenty-first century’s attitude to childhood in poetry is refreshingly robust – too much so for some tastes. Iona Opie’s work (for example, *The People in the Playground* (1992)), should convince more tender-hearted commentators that children are by and large hardy and resilient and require a literature which takes account of that fact. Contemporary poetry for children also favours the vernacular and tends to be informal. All the popular forms of the past are still evident; but children’s poetry also features raps, song lyrics, dub poetry, haiku, concrete verse, dialect poetry, dramatic monologues and realistic conversation poems, as well as other more traditional verse forms with regular rhyme and metre.

Another recent development is the recognition of children’s own writing. Contemporary poetry is accessible to children and encouraged by teachers, poets, community events and competitions. Publication of this poetry demonstrates the high standards that can be achieved, despite the limited stamina and developing skills of the writers.

Poetry for children, then, is defined by the age: contemporary poetry emphasises the need to love, value, amuse and protect the young, and has a liberal tolerance of their private brand of humour, whereas poetry of the Puritan age believed its function was to save the souls of children by admonishing them to virtue, godliness and obedience. Romantic ideas led to a welcome shift in perspectives on childhood, some of which are still with us today. At best, it encouraged adults to value childhood, lightened some of the worst excesses of moralistic literature for children and ushered in new ways of thinking and writing about and for children; at worst, there lingers still a desire to idealise child-

hood and equate it with innocence which can lead to unhealthy and unrealistic expectations of the young. Let us examine more closely the journey of children's poetry from the 'garden' to the 'street'.

The history of children's poetry

Poetry for children before and during the eighteenth century

At the heart of the Puritan attitude towards childhood lies a rock-hard belief in original sin.

(Leader 1981: 6)

Its faith [Puritanism] was an argument as well as an emotion.

(Darton 1932/1982: 65)

Before the eighteenth century most published poetry relating to the young is about how children should behave or what was considered to be good for them, rather than to entertain or feed their imaginations. There are, however, some exquisite exceptions in the shape of lullabies written, perhaps surprisingly, by men. Thomas Dekker's (1570?–1632) 'A Cradle Song' is tender and loving, 'Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,/Smiles awake you when you rise'; so is George Withers' (1588–1667) 'Rocking Hymn':

Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep,
Be still my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Popular culture in the form of chapbooks provided those children and their parents who had access to print with a more robust diet of rhymes, jokes, ballads, heroic tales and extracts from contemporary writing.

Writing in the preface to *Country Rhimes*, however, that most influential Puritan writer for the young, John Bunyan, showed that, as well as having a nice sense that everyday things would interest children, he was also aware that they needed to like the taste of the medicine, if they were to imbibe it:

Wherefore good Reader, that I save them may,
I now with them, the very Dottrill play.
And since at Gravity they make a Tush,
My very Beard I cast behind the Bush.
And like a Fool start fing'ring of their Toys,
And all to show them they are Girls and Boys.

Even so, there was little light relief in Puritan poetry, though children could find some aesthetic pleasure in the work of both nonconformist and Anglican hymnists.

The hymnists

Isaac Watts (1674–1748) published *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* in 1715. As Pafford, a recent editor, makes clear, this was 'an early and

outstanding attempt to write verses for children which would give them pleasure, but at the same time point and urge to the paths of virtue' (Watts 1971: 1). Watts believed in kindness in education and understood the power of verse in learning: 'what is learnt in Verse is longer retained in Memory, and sooner recollected'. Although he is little read today, Watts was extremely popular in his own lifetime and for two centuries after his death: *Divine Songs* had run to 550 editions by 1918. One of his most famous songs was notably parodied by Lewis Carroll in the mid-Victorian period, a testament to its longevity.

How doth the little Busy Bee
Improve each shining Hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening Flower!

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

Charles Wesley (1707–88), *Hymns for Children* (1763), followed in the same tradition by writing some of the most beautiful hymns in the English language, including 'Hark! The Herald-Angels Sing'. Christopher Smart (1722–71), best known now for 'My Cat Jeoffrey' (from *Jubilate Agno*), wrote some joyful *Hymns for the Amusement of Children* (1771), while in prison for debt:

A lark's nest, then your playmate begs
You'd spare herself and speckled eggs;
Soon she shall ascend and sing
Your praises to the eternal King.

Smart's verse displays a sweetness of touch that was singularly lacking elsewhere, although his hymns never deviate from praising God. Anna Barbauld (1743–1825) was one of the most interesting writers for children of the late eighteenth century. Her work conformed to the standards of her day: anything too fanciful was repressed, and moral tales were her forte. However, her *Lessons for Children* (1778) demonstrated a new approach to the teaching of reading, and her *Hymns in Prose* (1781) made her deservedly famous:

Come, let us go forth into the fields; let us see how the flowers spring; let us listen to the warbling of birds, and sport ourselves upon the new grass. The winter is over and gone, the buds come out upon the trees, the crimson blossoms of the peach and the nectarine are seen, and the green leaves sprout.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818–95), devoted wife to the Archbishop of Armagh, wrote hymns which still have worldwide popularity, such as 'Once in Royal David's City' and 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. Her publications include *Hymns for Little Children* (1848) and *Moral Songs* (1849). Her maxim for writing hymns (reported by her husband), was simple: 'It must be *sung*, it must be *praise*, it must be *to God*' (Alexander 1896: xxv).

'In a book, that all may read': the poetry of William Blake

The first poet of genius to write for children was William Blake (1757–1827), though it could be argued that he was really more interested in writing for adults about childhood and other social and spiritual issues in order to challenge the prevailing ideology of his day.

Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

(from 'Holy Thursday')

However, a glance at the title poem of *Songs of Innocence* (1789) makes it clear that, whatever else Blake was trying to achieve in his poetry, he was keen to communicate with the young: 'And I wrote my happy songs/Every child may joy to hear.' The subject matter of Blake's poetry was consistent with that of other children's writers of his day: hymn-like poems glorifying God through nature, cradle songs, references to children's games, birds and animals, even social comment. But, as Heather Glen suggests in *Vision and Disenchantment* (1983), what Blake was doing in these poems was initiating a debate on eighteenth-century morality. He did not go along with the didactic purposes of his contemporaries and his poems frustrate the notion that there should be an unequivocal moral line presented to children. Deceptively simple, they hide complexities of irony, and the expectations of the reader are frequently subverted. For example, the child leads the adult in 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard' and the sheep lead the shepherd in 'The Shepherd'; the adult acquiesces with youth's desire for freedom and experience in 'Nurse's Song'; the child finds school a cruel diversion from the joys of nature in 'The School Boy': 'But to go to school in a summer morn,/O! it drives all joy away.' Unlike almost all the juvenile literature of this period, there is no clear authorial voice instructing the reader what to think. *Songs of Innocence* can be seen as cunningly contradicting adult dominance and replacing it with the wisdom of innocence and naturalness, qualities which, in Blake's mind, were associated with the state of childhood; and although his enlightened ideas were too advanced for his age, his work has had a profound influence on poetry for children. As soon as Blake's poetry became readily available to the public in printed form in the 1830s, it became a stalwart in children's anthologies.

Romanticism and poetry for children in the nineteenth century

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream
The earth and every common sight
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light
The glory and the freshness of a dream.

(Wordsworth, 'Ode' (1807))

The visionary and humanising influence of the Romantic movement (seminally expressed by Wordsworth and Coleridge in *Lyrical Ballads* 1798) also exerted a huge impact on writing for children, if not immediately. Romantic ideas took some time to percolate into mainstream culture. For example, although Lucy Aikin probably knew Wordsworth personally and had certainly read his poetry, she did not include any of his work in the first edition of one of the earliest anthologies, *Poetry for Children* (1801). Perhaps, like many of her contemporaries, she considered Wordsworth's 'experiment' too radical for a text for children?

Be that as it may, the first decade of the nineteenth century certainly ushered in a new liberalism in juvenile poetry. William Roscoe's (1753–1831) *The Butterfly's Ball and Grasshopper's Feast* (1807) and its many imitators were intent on fun, though there is a

lesson or two on natural history contained therein. Catherine Ann Dorset (1750–1817), one such imitator, wrote *The Peacock at Home* (1808), at least as good as the original, though few know her name today. This extract could be said to anticipate Lear's 'The Quangle Wangle's Hat':

Worms and frogs en friture for the web-footed fowl,
 And a barbecued mouse was prepared for the Owl;
 Nuts, grain, fruit and fish, to regale every palate,
 And groundsel and chickweed served up in a salad.

Roscoe and Dorset sold 40,000 copies of their two books within the year. Ann Taylor (1782–1866) and Jane Taylor (1783–1824), best known for *Original Poems for Infant Minds* (1804), were equally successful and even more significant in the development of children's poetry:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star.
 How I wonder what you are!
 Up above the world so high,
 Like a diamond in the sky.

As Percy Muir observed: 'Here, at last, were books that children surely chose for themselves, albeit with the undoubted approval of their elders' (Muir 1954: 91). The originality of the Taylors did not lie in their willingness to abandon admonitions to virtuous behaviour in children; in fact, the Taylors were keen adherents of the moral tale in verse, and their poetry, for all its gentleness, still demonstrated unswerving moral conviction. Even so, there is more levity in *Rhymes for the Nursery* (1806) and the invitation to dream and wonder in poems like Jane Taylor's 'The Star' must have come as light relief to many children. Carroll's parody suggests that 'The Star' was still popular more than fifty years later. Indeed, it has deservedly become one of the classic texts of children's poetry.

Twinkle twinkle little bat.
 How I wonder what you're at.
 Up above the world so high,
 Like a tea-tray in the sky.

Charlotte Yonge gave credit to the Taylor sisters for what she called their astonishing simplicity without puerility. Indeed, this may be one of the hallmarks of women's voices for the young; nursery rhymes also share that distinction. Certainly, many women tried their hands at writing in the Taylors' style. Other successful examples from this period are Sarah Martin's (1768–1826), *The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog* (1805), and the rather insipid *Poetry for Children* (1809) by Charles Lamb (1775–1834) and Mary Lamb (1764–1847). Charlotte Smith (1749–1806) wrote *Conversations Introducing Poetry to Children Chiefly on the Subject of Natural History* (1804), where a mother and her son and daughter discuss poetry, nature and manners. It is hard going for the contemporary reader, but there are moments of sublime, if world-weary, poetry:

Where poppies hang their heavy heads,
 Or where the gorgeous sun-flower spreads
 For you her luscious golden beds,
 On her broad disk.
 To live on pleasure's painted wing,
 To feed on all the sweets of spring,
 Must be a mighty pleasant thing,
 If it would last.

Like Smith, Felicia Hemans (1793–1835) has suffered from the declining popularity of poems such as 'Casabianca' with its once-famous opening, 'The boy stood on the burning deck', although plenty of lesser nationalistic verse has survived. Hemans was one of the most prolific, popular and highly regarded poets of her day; her verse for the young includes *Hymns for Childhood* (1833). She had five boys herself whom she brought up on her own; Charlotte Smith supported *her* twelve children by writing – just two examples of women who were successful writers against the odds and whose poetry on its own merits deserves to be better known today.

Sara Coleridge (1802–52) devoted much of her life to collating the work of her famous father, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, but she also wrote a collection of poetry for children, *Pretty Lessons in Verse for Good Children* (1834), including the delightful 'Months of the Year': 'January brings the snow,/Makes our feet and fingers glow.' Although she criticised the Taylors for their 'morbid sentiments', her title exemplifies the continuing current of didacticism in books for children at that time: even a Romantic poet's daughter speaks of '*lessons for good children*', although they are at least '*pretty lessons*'.

Mary Howitt (1799–1888) was another prolific writer who wrote dozens of books for children including *Hymns and Fireside Verses* (1839) and *Sketches of Natural History* (1834) which contained the famous, 'Will you come into my parlour, said the Spider to the Fly'. The jolly Jane Euphemia Browne (1811–98) was the real author of the much-loved *Aunt Effie's Rhymes for Little Children* (1852):

Oh, where do you come from
 You little drops of rain
 Pitter patter, pitter patter
 Down the window pane?

The Taylors' influence is also evident in the work of one of the greatest Victorian poets, Christina Rossetti (1842–97). *Sing-Song* (1872) is the best of a sub-genre of poetry where sensuous affection between mothers and babies could be tenderly expressed:

Mother's arms under you,
 Her eyes above you
 Sing it high, sing it low
 Love me, I love you.

If Christina Rossetti was to make the cradle song her own, it was the Taylor sisters who opened the nursery door nearly seven decades earlier. Here was poetry that was deeply in tune with little children. A noticeable feature of the Taylors' work, which Rossetti also employed to advantage, was the use of loving, inconsequential language – the sort of

affectionate, rhythmic talk, often quite close to nonsense, that adults tend to use with babies.

Dance, little baby, dance up high,
 Never mind baby, mother is by;
 Crow and caper, caper and crow,
 There little baby, there you go.

(1806)

There is a direct line, I would suggest, from the Taylors' Kind Mamma to Rossetti's 'little son':

Come, dear, and sit upon my knee,
 And give me kisses, one, two, three,
 And tell me whether you love me,
 My baby.
 I'll nurse you on my knee, my knee,
 My own little son;
 I'll rock you, rock you, in my arms,
 My least little one.

Rossetti employs an impressive range in her 'nursery rhyme book' – there are ditties, nonsense, riddles, colour and counting rhymes, as well as sad poems of grieving mothers and motherless babies (at a time of high infant mortality rate). *Sing-Song* is a collection of distinction and it is to be regretted that it has not stayed regularly in print.

Kate Greenaway (1846–1901) is known for her charming illustrations, but she wrote some slight verse in *Under the Window* (1879) which is perhaps most notable for encouraging R. L. Stevenson to try his hand at writing poems for children. Edith Nesbit (1858–1924) is famous for her fiction, but her poetry, such as *Songs of Two Seasons* (1891) and *A Pomander of Verse* (1895), is also worth reading:

Sweet chestnuts droop their long, sharp leaves
 By knotted tree roots, mossed and brown,
 Round which the honeysuckle weaves
 Its scented, golden, wild-wood crown.

('The Way of the Wood')

Victorian nonsense verse

The impulse towards nonsense seems to be universal, and is certainly a feature of the lives of young children, but it was 'between 1865 and 1875 [that] the entire course of juvenile poetry was altered by two bachelor writers who had little in common except an elfin light-someness and a love of other people's children' (Shaw 1962: 431). Actually, 1846 was the year when Edward Lear (1812–88) published *A Book of Nonsense*: the other bachelor was, of course, Lewis Carroll (1832–98) whose *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was to prove a watershed in children's literature in 1865.

Lear was first and foremost an artist who struggled all his life to earn a precarious living as a professional painter (he even gave some painting lessons to Queen Victoria). The

nonsense verse came about as a refuge from the trials and irritations of his life – epilepsy, lack of funds, an eccentric personality and regular bouts of severe depression. Like many of those writing after him who chose to express themselves primarily in nonsense, Lear felt somewhat alienated from society. The urge to comment sardonically on the conventional world and escape from its restrictions is evident in his verse: ‘My life is a bore in this nasty pond/And I long to go out in the world beyond.’ Friendship with children and writing for them gave him a welcome respite from his problems.

Lear made the limerick form his own, though it really began life some time before in the oral tradition and in written form by writers such as Richard Scafton Sharpe (1775–1852) with his *Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen*. Nonsense verse was already a thriving form in chapbook culture, and there were talented humorists with verbal facility before Lear’s time, like the exuberant Thomas Hood (1799–1845):

Ben Battle was a soldier bold
 And used to war’s alarms;
 But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
 So he laid down his arms.

Hood was a popular humorist of his day with a strongly developed social conscience. After his death, his children collected his poems for the young in *Fairy Land* (1861). He is perhaps best known for his *Comic Annual* (1830–9), and the poem which begins ‘I remember, I remember,/The house where I was born.’ His robust humour works perfectly in his parody of Ann Taylor’s loving but sentimental poem, ‘My Mother’. The original reads:

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
 And hushed me in her arms to rest,
 And on my cheek sweet kisses prest?
 My Mother.

And the parody (‘A Lay of Real Life’):

Who let me starve, to buy her gin,
 Till all my bones came through my skin,
 Then called me ‘ugly little sin?’
 My Mother.

But it took a poet of Lear’s originality to bring nonsense verse to a wide audience and explore its possibilities with an inventiveness, playfulness and melodiousness which was equalled only, perhaps, by Lewis Carroll in a limited number of poems. Lear was also a talented musician and this ear for musical language is one of the reasons why the verse is so good. He also drew gloriously quirky pictures to accompany many of his poems. ‘The Owl and the Pussycat’ was voted the nation’s favourite children’s poem in the UK in 2001. Lear’s *Nonsense Songs*, his finest collection, was published in 1871, the same year as the brilliant ‘Jabberwocky’ and ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter’ appeared in *Through the Looking Glass*. Most of Carroll’s best verse is contained in the two *Alice* novels and *Sylvie and Bruno*; his verse collection, *Rhyme? and Reason?*, is surprisingly dull and ‘The Hunting of the Snark’ (1876) does not seem to have much appeal to children.

Cautionary verse

As we have seen, the main concern of most eighteenth-century writers for children was didacticism. However, Dorothy Kilner's (1755–1836) *Poems on Various Subjects for the Amusement of Youth* (1785) offered some amusement as well as admonitions, and she is an early exponent of something close to cautionary verse in this account of a young glutton ('The Retort to Master Richard'):

How with smacks he each mouthful seem'd eager to taste,
 And the last precious drop was unwilling to waste.
 But ye Graces! how can I the sequel relate?
 Or tell you, ye powers! that he lifted his plate?
 And what must have made a Lord Chesterfield sick,
 Why his tongue he applied the remainder to lick.

Elizabeth Turner (1775–1846) seems to nod towards the cautionary in her tales in verse, such as *The Daisy* (1807), but it was the German doctor Heinrich Hoffman who wrote the terrifying and wonderful *Struwwelpeter* for his small son in 1845. This collection of gruesome verse has excited controversy as to its suitability for children over the years, but has appeared in thousands of editions, even enjoying a popular run in a London theatre in 2003. Cautionary verse found its master in Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953) who wrote *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* in 1896 – it sold out of its first print run in four days. Belloc has been a favourite on nursery shelves ever since: children still enjoy the tale of Jim being eaten by a lion today!

His Mother, as she dried her eyes,
 Said, 'Well – it gives me no surprise,
 He would not do as he was told!
 His Father, who was self-controlled,
 Bade all the children round attend
 To James's miserable end.

('Jim and the Lion')

The appeal lies in the tongue-in-cheek, extreme, over-the-top quality of Belloc's verse. *More Beasts for Worse Children* followed in 1897 and *Cautionary Tales for Children* in 1907. Harry Graham (1874–1936) writes in the same genre in books like *Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes* (1899), although he is more callous than Belloc:

Father heard his children scream,
 So he threw them in the stream,
 Saying, as he drowned the third,
 'Children should be seen, not heard.'

A later exponent of this art is the American humorist Ogden Nash (1902–71), as in *Parents Keep Out* (1951).

Three poets for children stood out in the UK as the nineteenth century drew to a close, but only one has lasted the test of time. William Brighty Rands wrote lively and amusing verse in *Lilliput Levee* (1869) and *Lilliput Lyrics* (1868). There is also plenty of fun in William Allingham's (1824–89) *Rhymes for the Young Folk* (1886) – 'January/'

Bitter very/February damp, Sir./March blows/On April's nose,/May has caught the cramp, Sir' – while *The Fairies* (1883) and the gorgeous picture book *In Fairyland* (ravishingly illustrated by Richard Doyle) is typical fairy fantasy. But it was Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) who changed children's poetry for ever.

A Child's Garden of Verses

At evening when the lamp is lit,
 Around the fire my parents sit;
 They sit at home and talk and sing,
 And do not play at anything.
 ('The Land of Story Books')

Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* first appeared as *Penny Whistles* in 1885. John Rowe Townsend identifies a 'shifting perspective ... between the author as a child and the author as a man' (Townsend 1987: 122). Indeed, it is clear that Stevenson himself was aware of this and spoke to Edmund Gosse of his unusual ability in remembering what it felt like to be a child. The collection made a strong impression on E. V. Lucas, a contemporary of Stevenson's, writing one of the earliest essays devoted to poetry for children in 1896:

It stands alone. There is nothing like it, so intimate, so simply truthful, in our language, in any language ... he has recaptured in maturity the thoughts, ambitions, purposes, hopes, fears, philosophy of the child.
 (Lucas 1896: 394)

Some later critics have taken a different view. John Goldthwaite:

No-one has ever lied up a stereotype so sweetly or at this artistic level before ... He enshrined his age for his readers by detailing his own childhood as an habitual daydreamer creeping about behind the furniture, climbing a cherry tree, studying the passing scene through the window of a railway car. The lilting verses are all as beautifully laid out as toy soldiers parading across his sickbed covers in 'The pleasant land of counterpane' ... but the seduction is sweet, and generations of parents took Stevenson's book to heart as the gospel truth of who they thought they had been and wanted to see in their own children.
 (Goldthwaite 1996: 28)

Readers must make up their own minds. I believe Goldthwaite is too severe and the fact that generations of children like the verse must count for something. F. J. Harvey Darton, comes closest perhaps in getting to the heart of Stevenson's appeal:

A Child's Garden of Verses contains its warranty and a criticism of itself in its title. It is a garden, full of natural flowers growing from wind-borne seeds. It is a child's garden. Metrically, its verse is deliciously modulated for its purpose. But the title as a whole phrase has something of grown-up after-thinking invention in it; not perhaps an excuse, but a touch of conscious description. Yet it is true that 'every poem in *A Child's Garden of Verses* was a bit out of his own childhood'.
 (Darton 1932/1982: 314)

Perhaps it was because Stevenson's Edinburgh childhood was dogged by poor health and confinement to house and bed, a lonely life cut off from normal activities much of the time, that he had such empathy for the young. Certainly, one of the most powerful impressions that comes out of *A Child's Garden of Verses* is the sense of a child's absorption in the world of play and how it is intimately bound up with the imagination. Michael Rosen has pointed out how Stevenson published in succession three essays on children's play – 'Notes on the Movements of Young Children' (1874), 'Child's Play', (1878), and 'Memoirs of Himself' (1880) – in the period leading up to *A Child's Garden*. Here is an extract which could almost be taken from a developmental psychology manual:

We grown people can tell ourselves a story ... [a child] works all with lay figures and stage properties. When his story comes to the fighting, he must rise, get something by way of a sword and have a set-to with a piece of furniture, until he is out of breath. When he comes to ride with the king's pardon, he must bestride a chair ... Nothing can stagger a child's faith; he accepts the clumsiest substitutes and can swallow the most staring incongruities ... He is at the experimental stage; he is not sure how one would feel in certain circumstances; to make sure, he must come as near trying it as his means permit ... play is all. Making believe is the gist of his whole life.

(from 'Child's Play'; quoted in Styles 1998: 175)

Stevenson made no great claims for himself as a poet: 'These are rhymes, jingles; I don't go in for eternity' (quoted in Styles 1998: 182). He was wrong. *A Child's Garden* has never been out of print.

American poetry for children of the Victorian–Edwardian period

In the same period, Eliza Follen (1787–1860), a prominent abolitionist and magazine editor, produced *New Nursery Songs for All Good Children* (1832) and *The Lark and the Linnet* (1884), while Clement Clarke Moore, a Hebrew scholar (1779–1863), established his place in history by publishing *A Visit from St Nicholas* (often known now as *The Night before Christmas*) in 1823, although doubts have been raised recently about how genuine his authorship of the poem actually was. Sara Hale (1788–1879) wrote a poem that most English and American children still recite today – 'Mary had a little lamb/Its fleece was white as snow.' Like Hale, Eugene Field (1850–95) was a journalist and literary columnist who wrote poems of modest accomplishment, some of which are still anthologised today or available in the beautifully illustrated *Poems of Childhood* (1934). It was his poem 'Wynken, Blynken and Nod' which most caught children's imaginations and it has been published in many editions:

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night.
Sailed off in a wooden shoe
Sailed on a river of misty light
Into a sea of dew.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807–82) *The Song of Hiawatha* appeared in 1885 and still enthral children in Britain and America over a century later, though they usually encounter it in a shortened version; its metre and content lends itself to merciless parody.

'The ordinary rituals of life': the first half of the twentieth century

Slowly, silently, now the moon
 Walks the night in her silver shoon;
 This way and that, she peers and sees
 Silver fruit upon silver trees.

(Walter de la Mare: 'Silver')

Walter de la Mare's (1873–1956) *Songs of Childhood* (1902) gave the key to his poetry and his life; the creed by which he lived was based on the premise that childhood holds the key to life and that age brought stupidity, not greater wisdom. Whistler:

He not only kept, spontaneously, the childlike vision, but also continued deliberately to exercise the special faculties of childhood – day-dreaming, make-believe, questioning that takes nothing for granted ... The greater part of all he wrote is either the recreation of experience through the eyes of childhood, or else the absorbed lifelong investigation of how such eyes work.

(Whistler 1993: 10, 11)

This childlike quality in his poetry is very appealing to some, but not bracing enough for others, but most critics agree that de la Mare's gift was to write exquisite verse with a wonderful eye for detail. He was also the teller of a fine tale:

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
 Knocking on the moonlit door;
 And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
 Of the forest's ferny floor:
 And a bird flew up out of the turret,
 Above the Traveller's head:
 And he smote upon the door again a second time;
 'Is there anybody there?' he said.

('The Listeners')

His poetry, though a little out of vogue at present, has timeless qualities. As Whistler put it: 'sometimes in verse, the sentiment [is] dated [and yet] it stands time and trouble, it carries the tang of authentic experience – however elusive, fantastic, fine-spun and minor-keyed the stuff in which de la Mare may deal' (Whistler 1993: x). His best-known collection is *Peacock Pie* (1913), but most of his work for children can be found in *Collected Rhymes and Verses of Walter de la Mare* (1944). He also put together one of the finest and most innovative anthologies 'for the Young of all ages', *Come Hither* (1923).

Rudyard Kipling is better known as a writer of fiction and poetry for adults, but some of the verse in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910), such as 'If', are part of our culture, though the stalwart principles of character enumerated in that poem are true to their period and directed only at boys.

After the First World War, perhaps as a reaction, light verse became popular. Rose Fyleman (1877–1957), whose many fairy books include *Fairies and Chimneys* (1918), is still anthologised today, although her verse is cloyingly sweet. The charming poetry of Eleanor

Farjeon (1881–1965) first appeared in *Nursery Rhymes of London Town* (1916). *The Children's Bells* (1957) contains her personal selection gleaned from the many books of verse she wrote during a long life. 'Morning Has Broken' is versatile enough to be a popular hymn still sung in primary schools today, as well as a famous rock lyric. Farjeon is deservedly much anthologised today, and some of her lesser-known poems have been collected by Anne Harvey in *Something I Remember* (1987).

A. A. Milne (1882–1956) published *When We Were Very Young* (1924) and *Now We Are Six* (1927) to huge sales and mostly rave reviews. There is no doubt that Milne's depiction of childhood is still full of delight for many young readers, but it must also be admitted in the early twenty-first century that some of his verse comes across as precious and dated. Milne was an excellent craftsman of light verse with a talent for prosody. He was also very funny and sometimes looked at the world from a child's point of view almost as convincingly as Stevenson did. He created unforgettable characters like that dreadful three-year-old bully, James James Morrison Morrison Wetherby George Dupree; or Bad Sir Brian Botany who 'had a battleaxe with great big knobs on;/ He went among the villagers and blipped them on the head'; or the 'two little bears who lived in the wood/ And one of them was bad and the other was good'; or Mary Jane who loathed rice pudding and Emmeline whose hands were 'purfickly clean'. Milne was a master within a limited canvas. Children may enjoy the pure nonsense and can relate to the telling interchanges between young and old or the child alone, sometimes even the lament of the neglected child: 'If I'm a little darling, why won't they come and see?'

I think to myself,
I play to myself,
And nobody knows what I say to myself;
Here I am in the dark alone ...
There's nobody here but me.

There is also, at worst, arch, adult knowingness and sentimentality. If the impetus for Stevenson's poetry was capturing moments of his childhood, rendered as faithfully as it is possible for an adult to do, Milne's came from a different source. As his son, Christopher Milne put it:

Some people are good with children. Others are not. It is a gift. You either have it or you don't. My father didn't ... not with children, that is. My father was a creative writer and so it was precisely because he was not able to play with his small son that his longings sought and found satisfaction in another direction. He wrote about him instead ... My father's most deeply felt emotion was nostalgia for his own happy childhood.

(Milne 1974: 36)

Children can be cruel. Yet Milne has stood the test of time because the poetry *is* good. Years of writing for the magazine *Punch* trained a facility for well-crafted light verse which he combined winningly with genuine concerns of childhood.

Outstanding among poets who wrote in the period after the Second World War and before the 1970s watershed is James Reeves (1909–78), with collections such as *The Wandering Moon* (1950) and *The Blackbird in the Lilac* (1952); his work is now available in a single volume, *James Reeves: Complete Poems for Children* (1973). No longer in vogue and mostly out of print are his near contemporaries, publishing for children in the 1960s,

such as Leonard Clark (1905–81) (*Near and Far* (1968)); Edward Thomas (1878–1917) (*The Green Road; Poems for Young Readers* (1965)); Robert Graves (1895–1985) (*The Penny Fiddle* (1960)); E. V. Rieu (1887–1972) (*The Flattered Flying Fish and Other Poems* (1962)); Ian Serraillier (1912–95) (*Happily Ever After* (1963)), John Walsh (1911–72) (*The Roundabout by the Sea* (1960)), and Russell Hoban (b. 1925) (*The Pedalling Man* (1968)). Poets of an earlier period who often get anthologised for young readers include Edmund Blunden, W. H. Davies, Thomas Hardy, John Masefield and R. S. Thomas. T. S. Eliot produced one whimsical book for children, which is still in print, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). Elizabeth Jennings published a highly regarded collection for the young shortly before her death, *A Spell of Words* (1997).

Out of the garden into the street: contemporary poetry

Before the sweeping changes that were about to take place in children's poetry in the 1970s, two very significant poets produced their first collections for the young: Ted Hughes (*Meet My Folks* (1961)), and Charles Causley (*Figgie Hobbin* (1970)).

Both are equally well known for their adult writing. *Figgie Hobbin* established Causley as a major writer for children, and his stature grew with every new collection: *Jack the Treacle Eater* (1987) is one of his best and he has both a *Selected Poems* (1997) and *Collected Poems* (2000) for children – a mark of distinction. He was also one of the finest twentieth-century anthologists: *The Sun, Dancing* (1984), the *Puffin Book of Magic Verse* (1974) and *Puffin Book of Salt-Sea Verse* (1978) are already considered classics by many. Causley's range is wide, but he is most admired for his work in the ballad tradition. His poetry is difficult to pin down as it is subtle and varied. There's the ring of the story-teller, the feel for musical language, often a hint of something mysterious or even sinister that is left unexplained. It is rooted in folklore, often deriving from his native Cornwall, and steeped in the oral tradition and the ancient magic of words.

Ted Hughes was Poet Laureate in England, an honour reserved for someone widely felt to be the most distinguished poet of his generation. He was essentially a nature poet with a numinous instinct who turned his back on Romanticism by making his readers face realities about the animal world – cruelty, harshness, sex and death, as well as beauty and awe. Hughes doesn't compromise for the young: he gives them an honest account, as he sees it, with little held back, but delivered with 'affection'.

Writing for children one has a very definite context of communication. Adult readers are looking for support for their defences on the whole ... One can communicate with children in a simple and whole way – not because they're innocent, but because they're not yet defensive ... Providing one moves with affection.

(quoted in Paul 1986: 55)

Although there is a relentless realism in much of Hughes's poetry, some of his work is set in a mystical landscape and at times his tone can be as visionary as Blake's. Some of his finest poetry is for children; *What is the Truth?* (1984) is his masterpiece, but titles like *The Iron Wolf* (1995) and *The Mermaid's Purse* (1999) are also accessible for, or written specifically for, young readers, whereas *The Thought-Fox* (1995) (whose title poem is one of the most popular Hughes has ever written) is perfect for teenagers. Hughes also wrote a most original book on reading and writing poetry which has influenced many teachers – *Poetry in the Making* (1967). His poetry is too strong for some tastes, particularly those who

prefer to apply rose-tinted spectacles to childhood, but he offers poetry of power and potency to readers who can rise to the challenge.

In 1974 a new type of poetry hit the market in the rumbustious form of Michael Rosen's *Mind Your Own Business*; as a review put it at the time, 'Here, at last, is a real book of poems for modern children.' Employing a form of free verse close to the natural rhythms of speech, Rosen's poetry is certainly a departure from the past. It centres on the everyday experiences of children, sometimes exaggerated, written in apparently (deceptively) ordinary language, peppered with jokes, insults and the vernacular of the street. A flurry of collections by a talented group of poets using similar subject matter to Rosen quickly followed his debut.

It is useful to consider this contemporary verse for children in the light of Bakhtin's notion of *carnivalesque* texts which playfully satirise official culture in ways comparable to the work of Rabelais. John Stephens talks about *carnival* as: 'grounded in a playfulness which situates itself in positions of nonconformity. It expresses opposition to authoritarianism and seriousness, and is often manifested as parody of prevailing literary forms and genres' (Stephens 1992: 121.)

Rabelais's mock-heroic addresses to his readers – 'worthy people', 'illustrious boozers', 'precious poxy fellows' – matches in tone the cheeky way that contemporary poets often address their readers, as if they were sharing a joke at the way of the world. Most contemporary poets write predominantly playful verse pitched at children's *own* sense of humour, located in city streets, yet willing to explore difficult areas of life. The poetry itself is various; some writers are steeped in the traditions of English poetry, while others experiment radically with more oral, vernacular forms in free verse. Crucially, most children seem to recognise themselves and their lives in the poetry written for them now.

Michael Rosen was the first and remains one of the most popular of the 'vernacular' poets; the best of his many collections include *You Can't Catch Me* (1981) and *Quick, Let's Get out of Here* (1985), both books either commended or winners of the *Signal* Poetry Award. Roger McGough comes from the performance tradition of the radical Liverpool poets of the 1960s. So did Adrian Henri, with *The Phantom Lollipop Lady* (1986), and Brian Patten with *Gargling with Jelly* (1985). All use humour convincingly, but the pain and tenderness associated with their adult work is there too; so is irony. McGough's inventive imagination and skilled word-play is on full display in *You Tell Me* (1979) (with Michael Rosen), *Sky in the Pie* (1983) and *Bad, Bad Cats* (1997); the last two collections are *Signal* award-winners.

Adrian Mitchell is also well known on the performance circuit: his combination of compassion, social concern and the comic touch makes for memorable poetry, as in *Nothingmas Day* (1984) and the more recent *Balloon Lagoon* (1997). Gareth Owen was interested in the street life of children in *Salford Road* (1979) and *Signal* award-winning *Song of the City* (1985); his inspiration came from having worked in education. Allan Ahlberg, also an ex-teacher, used contemporary school life in the highly successful *Please Mrs Butler* (1983), and equally outstanding sequels *Friendly Matches* (2002) and *Heard It in the Playground* (1990) which won the *Signal* award. So did Jackie Kay's excellent debut, *Two's Company* (1992), which was followed by *Three Has Gone* (1994) and *The Frog Who Wanted to Be an Opera Singer* (1998). Helen Dunmore also won the *Signal* award for her first collection for children, *Secrets* (1994), and followed it with the equally strong *Snollygoster* (2001). Tony Mitton's first collection, *Plum* (1999), is his best so far. Sandy Brownjohn followed her popular book for teachers, *To Rhyme or Not to Rhyme* (1994), with her own collection, *In and out of the Shadows* (2000).

Most of the poets mentioned above are equally well known for their adult poetry. So are Gerard Benson (*To Catch an Elephant* (2002)), John Mole (*The Wonder Dish* (2002)), Wendy Cope (*Twiddling Your Thumbs* (1992)), Kit Wright (*Great Snakes* (1994)), Matthew Sweeney (*Up on the Roof* (2001)) and many other gifted poets who seem able to write effectively for both audiences.

As we move into the early twenty-first century, Carol Ann Duffy is one of the most interesting new voices for children in *Meeting Midnight* (1999) and *The Oldest Girl in the World* (2000).

Children have never had it so good in terms of accessible, amusing, racy poetry, but it is not all light-hearted. There's often a dark undertone in McGough which he describes as 'the shadow round the corner', and he is prepared to deal with child abuse, depression and death in his poetry. The skill lies in delicate yet honest treatment of harrowing issues. Wright also feels that children 'can take some stiffening' and tenderly explores mental handicap, bereavement and the cruelties of whaling in amongst the laughter. Agard, Berry and Kay touch on racism in their poetry. Rosen and Mitchell tackle bullying, sexism, rejection and loss. Henri reflects on a wartime childhood and Patten considers the aftermath of a nuclear war.

Poetry and illustration

The late twentieth century saw the flowering of picture books as a genre, and many talented illustrators have turned their attention to poetry. Outstanding pictorial texts include versions of *A Child's Garden of Verses*, for example by Brian Wildsmith (1974) and Michael Foreman (1985). Charles Keeping produced dramatic versions of Noyes's *The Highwayman* (1981) and Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* (1984) and his illustrations for many Causley collections are outstanding. Fruitful collaborations between poets and artists have emerged recently: for example, Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake, Ted Hughes and Leonard Baskin, Kit Wright and Posy Simmonds, John Agard/Roger McGough and Satoshi Kitamura – reminding us of famous double acts of the past, such as Christina Rossetti and Arthur Hughes, or A. A. Milne and Ernest Shepard. William Blake was the first great artist/poet whose *Songs of Innocence* is a master class in the symbiotic union of word and image.

There is a clutch of humorists on both sides of the Atlantic who sell well and whose artwork is interesting. William Cole (editor) teamed up with Tomi Ungerer for the popular quartet of dark humour which begins with *Oh Such Foolishness* (1980); Roald Dahl was accompanied by Quentin Blake at his most exuberant in *Revolting Rhymes* (1982); Spike Milligan produced his own quirky images for most of his comic verse, including *Unspun Socks from a Chicken's Laundry* (1981); Colin McNaughton produces gloriously funny illustrations in collections such as *There's an Awful Lot of Weirdos in Our Neighbourhood* (1987); while Dr Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham* (1960) and many other titles are now considered classics for their delightfully anarchic rhymes and pictures. None would be called, or perhaps call themselves, poets, but their verse and illustrations are much appreciated by children.

Poetry for children internationally

Poetry written specifically for children is not a particularly widespread phenomenon. In some countries, children's poetry borrows from accessible adult work and the oral tradition,

rather than having a tradition of separate poetry publishing for young readers. Certainly, most children encounter poetry from cultures not their own through edited anthologies rather than single-poet collections.

Canadian poets like Anne Corbett and Dennis Lee, and Australian poets such as Max Fatchen, Norman Lindsay and Doug MacLeod follow roughly parallel tracks of light verse for children to their American counterparts, whereas the Australian Steven Herrick shares the same robust humour and honest eye for contemporary life as many British poets. For the last twenty years or so, there has been more sympathy for and interest in Aborigine, Maori and Native American/Canadian literature, including poetry for children. Their poetry is represented in anthologies such as Mary Alice Downie's *The Wind Has Wings: Poems from Canada* (1984) and Celia Heylen's *Someone Is Flying Balloons: Australian Poetry for Children* (1986). Ethnic minorities and underprivileged groups, including Latino culture in the USA, often follow a different path in their poetry, choosing themes that explore identity, the struggle against oppression and racism, and the fight for equal rights and decent living conditions.

In Japan there is keen interest in children's literature and a great deal of British fiction and picture books are translated into Japanese, though sadly not the reverse. Children's poetry is a less well-established genre, though the poet Michio Mado won the international Andersen Prize in 1994. Although he has written more than a thousand poems over a period of sixty years, only a small handful have been translated into English by Empress Michiko.

'Little elephant,
Little elephant,
What a long nose you have.'

'Sure it's long,
So is my Mommy's.'

'Little elephant,
Little elephant,
Tell me who you like.'

'I like Mommy,
I like her the most.'

As well as poetry written for children, simple (often deceptively simple) forms like haiku and tanka are accessible to young readers. Indeed, there is a great deal of Japanese (and Chinese) poetry in the adult canon whose clarity and lucidity make it easily intelligible to young readers.

The popular poets of continental Europe are rarely translated into English. For example, in France one of the most respected poets for the young is Claude Roy with *Enfantasques* (1974) and *Nouvelles* (1964). A rare exception recently was the Gagenlieder (1922) of Christian Morgenstern which have been beautifully translated by Anthea Bell and gloriously illustrated by Lizbeth Zwerger in *Lullabies, Lyrics and Gallows Songs* (1995).

Twentieth/twenty-first century children's poetry in the USA

Some of the most popular American poets for children in the twentieth century remain firm favourites: Arnold Adoff, Harry Behn, John Ciardi, Eloise Greenfield, Mary Ann

Hoberman, David McCord, Eve Merriam, Jack Prelutsky, Nancy Willard and Charlotte Zolotow; Laura Richards's *Tirra Lirra* (1913) draws on her many collections. Their poetry tends to be amusing, gentle and less robust in flavour than the British poets cited above, with the exception of Shel Silverstein, *A Light in the Attic* (1982), Karla Kuskin, *Any Me I Want to Be* (1972) and Nikki Giovanni *Spin a Soft Black Song* (1971), whose verse is anything but tame. 'Urchin verse', which does so well in Britain, is hardly known in mainstream America, which is interesting as American fiction can be more hard-hitting and depict grimmer social realism than even the British variety. Some of the most distinguished and most often anthologised poetry for the young is by poets whose writing is mostly directed at adults – Elizabeth Coatsworth, e. e. cummings, Emily Dickinson, Rachel Field, Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, Myra Cohn Livingstone, Edna St Vincent Millay, Carl Sandburg, Theodore Roethke, May Swenson, John Updike and William Carlos Williams are notable examples. Frost and Sandburg made selections of their poems for children, *You Come Too* (1959) and *Wind Song* (1960) respectively; while Emily Dickinson (*A Letter to the World* (1968)) and Langston Hughes (*Don't You Turn Back* (1969)) have had selections published for the young. A lively new generation of poets is producing more challenge and variety, though some of it, produced by small presses, does not yet have a wide audience. Some of the most interesting include Janet Wong (*A Suitcase of Seaweed* (1996)), Gary Soto (*Canto Familiar* (1995)) and Naomi Shihab Nye (*Varieties of Gazelle* (2002)). Nye is also editor of an excellent anthology, *The Flag of Childhood: Poems from the Middle East* (2002).

Caribbean-British

It has been exciting to note the growing popularity of Caribbean-British writers in the UK since the 1980s. When I published my own first anthology, *I Like That Stuff: Poems from Many Cultures* in 1984, it was almost the only book on the market which explored international verse for children and the first, I believe, to anthologise poets like Agard, Berry, Bloom, Nichols and Zephaniah for the young. It is satisfying to note that, twenty years on, these poets are now firmly established with both adult and juvenile audiences and regularly anthologised for the young.

Valerie Bloom has been described as the Louise Bennet of British letters and is an electrifying performer as well as a gifted poet; recent titles for children include her *Selected Poems: Let Me Touch the Sky* (2001). Benjamin Zephaniah, who also writes highly praised fiction for children, is another acclaimed performer of his own verse; his well-designed collections for the young include *Funky Chickens* (1997). John Agard produced *I Din Do Nuttin* in 1983; a subsequent collection, *Say It Again, Granny* (1986), uses Caribbean proverbs as the basis for poetry which is both witty and wise, whereas *Get Back, Pimple* (1987) is a deceptively light title for some very assured poetry for older readers. Grace Nichols has gone from strength to strength since she published her first collection for children in 1988, *Come on into My Tropical Garden*:

Me mudder chase bad-cow
 with one 'Shoo'
 she paddle down river
 in she own canoe
 Ain't have nothin
 dat me mudder can't do.

James Berry, who had spent many years working in inner-London schools, made an impressive debut for children with *When I Dance* (1988) (followed by *Playing a Dazzler* (1996) and *A Nest of Stars* (2002)), demonstrating fine writing, an empathy for young people's feelings and a lively sense of humour, in both Creole and standard English. Agard, Berry and Nichols have also compiled ground-breaking anthologies, particularly in terms of introducing young readers to poetry from other cultures, especially the Caribbean. *No Hickory No Dickory No Dock* (1995) edited by Agard and Nichols, brings together new and traditional Caribbean nursery rhymes, whereas James Berry's *Classic Poems to Read Aloud* (1995) contains many of the English poems you would expect in a treasury of poetry, enriched by a wider range of cultures than normally included. Grace Nichols's *Can I Buy a Slice of Sky?* (1991) contains well-chosen poetry exclusively by Asian and black poets. *A Caribbean Dozen* (1994), featuring thirteen poets edited by Agard and Nichols, was followed by *Under the Moon and over the Sea* which won the first CLPE Poetry Award in 2003.

All the poets mentioned above have touched on racism and identity, Caribbean memories and life in multi-ethnic Britain today, as well as the fun and frivolity typical of children's poetry. There are some talented younger poets following in their wake, such as Lemn Sissay, who asks in his poem of the same name, 'Rhythm/ rhythm/ Can you hear the rhythm?' All of these poets use rhythm, humour and language with exuberance and vitality, though some write just as well in standard English.

I have privileged British poetry for children in this essay because it is probably more versatile, varied and vigorous than anywhere else in the world at the moment. (This is not true of fiction, fairy tales or picture books.) These comments are not intended to be disrespectful of some wonderful poetry being produced for children in different parts of the world, but simply to reflect the current state of poetry publishing internationally. There is now more interest in poetry in translation from many different cultures, but there is still a long way to go before we reach a genuinely international outlook or a proper representation of poetry in all its voices.

Recent poets have in their various ways 'tuned in to childhood' with intimacy and honesty, reflecting a basic respect for and recognition of young readers in all their complexity. One reason for this is the regular contact with children they gain through school visits and performances. These are poets who know what children enjoy, who are close to their audience, most of them dividing their time between writing for adults and children – something that certainly is much less common in the world of children's fiction.

The current climate of popularising poetry may lead to a wider audience: yet, despite the huge range available, poetry remains a minority interest and only a small number of people read, write and buy it. Equally, although poetry for children has come a long way, how much of it still consists of the well-meaning preferences of adults foisted on to children?

William Blake was 'the first great poet to draw on the oral traditions of the eighteenth-century nursery, capturing the gentle child-centred rhetoric of mothers singing and talking with their children' (Watson 2001: 662). Blake understood that successful poetry for children needs a careful blend of make-believe and reality, delight and wisdom, in equal doses. If poets today are less likely to go 'knocking at the gates of heaven', they can still, like Blake, encourage children to 'play among the tangled stars' (Darton 1932/1982: 179).

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3 | Animal stories

Simon Flynn

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that a ban were to be imposed upon all books that featured anthropomorphised animals. Classics such as *The Wind in the Willows*, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Magic Pudding* and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* would be instantly suppressed. Animal autobiographies such as *Black Beauty* and *Beautiful Joe* would be withdrawn. And, finally, even the least anthropomorphic products of scrupulous naturalist observation such as Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known* and Henry Williamson's *Tarka the Otter* would be pulped. Of course, there would be some equivocal cases. Would humanised toy animals count? Would we have to wave goodbye to Winnie-the-Pooh, Mary Plain, Paddington and all the other teddy bears? And what of fabulous beasts? The gryphons, unicorns, phoenixes and the dragons that still populate the myths and legends that we give our children? I start with this scenario both to indicate the diversity of animal stories and to suggest that animal stories have become so integral to children's literature that the form is nearly unthinkable without them.

The uses of animals in fiction for adults and children

The animal story has not, however, always been the preserve of the nursery. Indeed, like the fairy tale, it was an adult genre that gradually entered the children's domain when the boundaries between literature for children and literature for adults were being redrawn. There is a long cross-cultural tradition of anthropomorphic animal stories, or 'beast-fables', in which animals are given human speech and reason, that stretches back in Greece at least to that legendary figure, Aesop (c. 550 BC) and, in India, to the stories of the *Panchatantra*. Fables use animals as metaphors in order to teach lessons about moral and social behaviour. In the stories attributed to Aesop, for example, various ideas about industry, perseverance, gratitude, moderation and prudence are being taught.

The artfulness of this kind of tale is that although, as Tolkien noted, the 'animal form is only a mask upon a human face' (Tolkien 1964: 20), the figures we encounter retain just enough of what we recognise discursively as animality to distance them from us (and so make the instruction more palatable). Whether such stories 'work' via displacement, through readerly 'identification' or perhaps by a combination of the two, is something I will discuss later. Yet the characteristics that the animal figures exhibit are always culturally mediated. Although the fox has a long tradition of being associated with cunning and deceit, such symbolism is just that, a projection of human attributes on to what we then recognise as the 'instinctive behaviour' of the animal. At the same time, the arbitrariness of such characterisation can be illustrated by the Brer Rabbit stories, in which Brer Rabbit

and Brer Terrapin demonstrate cunning that we do not commonly associate with rabbits and tortoises (Pittock 1994: 164–5).

After Aesop, many cultures developed their own animal heroes; one of the most enduring was the epic cycle of stories about Reynard the Fox and Ysengrin the Wolf. These anonymous tales were designed for an adult audience and, unlike Aesop's fables, they used animals primarily in a satiric rather than a moral fashion. The writers attacked the major institutions of feudal French society. The beast-fable provided the perfect vehicle for such a satire, because the animal disguises gave the satirists immunity from censure. Writers such as Chaucer, Henryson, Dryden, Swift, Krylov, Orwell and Thurber have continued the satiric animal tradition.

If animals have generally been portrayed as instruments of satire in adult fiction, in books for children they have also been used to educate children both linguistically and socially. The pragmatist and educationalist John Locke, in his influential *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), maintained that Aesop offered just enough entertainment to repay the efforts of young readers. Locke believed that the stories were 'apt to delight and entertain a Child [and] afford useful Reflections to a grown Man' (Locke in Axtell 1968: 259).

Distance and 'identification'

If anthropomorphic stories 'delight and entertain ... [and] afford useful Reflections', how are readers thought to respond to such texts? There are two main theories. The first stresses the distancing effect and the second the 'identification' between reader and animal protagonist. For Elliot Gose, reading about animals allows us a degree of psychological detachment. Gose writes:

Perhaps most important, an author who chooses to write about animals can project through them psychological concerns that his readers either cannot or do not wish to experience directly in human terms. Much heroic fantasy is still written about human beings, of course. But a literary fantasy that chooses non-human creations for its focus not only demands more of an imaginative leap; by that very fact it more easily ensures that many readers will be able to leave behind the internal moral censor that will otherwise cause some readers not to begin a similar tale with human characters.

(Gose 1988: 5)

If we accept Gose's psychoanalytic approach, it is possible to argue that distancing has particular relevance for child readers. Received wisdom has it that animals can be used to present children with difficult emotional issues in a displaced and indirect fashion. The death of the spider in E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* could be read as using the distancing effect of anthropomorphism to circumvent a difficult experience.

The second major theory about the appeal of animal stories for readers and writers is that they offer the promise of vicariously experiencing animal consciousness. This mode, based on 'identification' and empathy, is evident in animal autobiographies such as *Black Beauty*, where the reader is asked at times to imagine inhabiting the horse's position (Cosslett 2003: 6). For child readers such 'identification' may also be invited by the way that animals are often presented as 'children' in the text, for example in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. But this alignment of 'animal' and 'child' is problematic. It rests not, as I will discuss shortly, on some innate animistic affinity between children and

animals, but on an extension of the way that children are taught to ‘identify’ with characters. Such a concept is, as John Stephens notes, ‘a product of our tendency to encourage children to situate themselves within the book by identifying with a principal character’ (Stephens 1992: 4). ‘Identificatory’ models of reading have, in recent years, been the subject of a number of critiques. Martin Barker notes that those that use this concept fail to appreciate that readers or viewers do not ‘identify’ passively with characters, because their relation with the character is always mediated by the point of view from which s/he is presented (Barker 1989: 106). Finally, Karín Lesnik-Oberstein summarises the limitations of this concept in children’s literature when she notes, ‘“identification” cannot account for reading which is not a perpetual reading of the self’ (Lesnik-Oberstein in Hunt 1996: 28).

Animal stories are probably best seen, therefore, as encouraging a combination of distancing and empathy, frequently switching back and forth between the two modes. It is, however, impossible to say how individual readers engage with texts, given the volatile and unpredictable nature of the reading experience. In terms of ‘identification’, as Fred Inglis notes, ‘we do not “identify” with the characters, we respond in complex ways with, to, and for them out of the framework of all our prior experiences, literary or not’ (Inglis 1981: 185).

Animism

Despite the complexities of the reading situation, the belief still seems to persist in much critical writing on animals in children’s literature that when children read such stories they invariably ‘identify’ with the animals (Townsend 1976: 120–1). This ‘identification’ between ‘child’ and ‘animal’ is believed to be the result of animism. Children are said to have some innate sympathy or connection with animals and to imagine that they can communicate with them (Baker 1993: 123). Such an idea rests on a number of *a priori* assumptions. First, it depends on the idea of an essential, knowable ‘child’ (see Lesnik-Oberstein 1994). Second, it also relies on a certain construction of the animal. In relation to the ‘child’, following the work of Ariès (1962/1973), the ‘child’ needs to be seen as an ‘identity which is created and constructed differently within various cultures, historical periods and political ideologies’ (Lesnik-Oberstein 1998: 2). In the eighteenth century, as Keith Thomas observes, far from having sympathy for animals, evangelical writers were preoccupied with how cruel children, particularly boys, could be to animals and birds (Thomas 1983/1984: 147–8). The animistic connection between ‘animal’ and ‘child’ is, therefore, part of a specific Romantic construction of childhood. But such ideas are still, arguably, deeply ingrained in ways of thinking about childhood, with the animal–child relationship fulfilling different functions depending on the discourse that is applied to it (Kenyon-Jones 2001). These definitions of childhood, as Tess Cosslett observes:

carry along with them (or proceed from) complementary implied definitions of the adult ... So the adult becomes a person who is divorced from nature, rational, logical, and scientific. This is also an adult who knows what the differences are between animals and humans, how our species is defined. The child, by contrast, has still to learn these markers and rules, and exists in a space of play in which boundaries could potentially be transgressed.

(Cosslett 2002: 476)

In more pragmatic terms, one could also question the claims of animism and note with Malcolm Pittock that even young children do not make the mistake of attributing speech to 'proper animals'. Clearly, this suggests that at an early age they recognise that the talking-animal story is a literary convention that has no basis in 'reality' (Pittock 1994: 167). Another problem with the animistic view of childhood is that it fails to take into consideration that the connection between 'child' and 'animal' is one made by adults, not children. After all, just as with all other children's literature, it is adults who write, distribute (and probably buy) such stories (Blount 1974: 15; Rose 1992: 2).

Boundaries

But if the case for animism needs to be viewed with some scepticism, it is still important to recognise that animal stories are vitally concerned with the relationship between the 'human' and the 'animal'. Indeed, they can be seen as the space in which we think through our relationship with/to 'animals'. As Lévi-Strauss famously declared, 'Animals are good to think with' (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 89). Animal stories are particularly concerned with the border between the 'human' and the 'animal'. If much human cultural activity has been expended trying to define what it is to be 'properly human', then such 'uniqueness' can only be defined in relation to the 'natural' or the 'animal' (Kenyon-Jones 2001: 1). Traditionally it is argued, however, that in beast-fables like *Reynard the Fox* we are not really concerned with 'animals' at all. In linguistic terms we could say that in such a fable, if the 'animal' is the signifier, the 'human' is the signified. The problem with such a predictable model is that it fails to account for the slipperiness of many animal stories. The genre unsettles rather than reinforces the boundaries between the 'human' and the 'non-human animal'. Much of its energy can be seen to come from the intermingling of human and 'animal' levels of meaning. Beatrix Potter's stories provide excellent examples of this combination. In *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*, as Roger Sale has noted, Jemima's character does not clearly fit into the human or the animal worlds. Sale describes her as 'not quite natural, not part of the farmhouse or barnyard life' (Sale 1978: 153).

But such ambiguity is not just a feature of Potter's skilful ironic play, it is, as Steve Baker suggests, potentially a feature of all talking-animal stories:

The animal story's invitation to pleasure is invariably an invitation to a subversive pleasure. It is the simple fact that everyone, including quite young children, knows that animals don't really talk which prompts such genuine delight in the anomalous convention of the talking animal ... it is the very instability of the anthropomorphized animal's identity which can make contact or even proximity with it so hazardous.

(Baker 1993: 159)

Baker illustrates this assertion in his reading of 'Rupert the Bear'. In one particular story, Rupert travels back to the time of Noah and, finding himself on the Ark, is mistaken for one of the Ark's bears. As he is about to be put with the other animals, Rupert 'has little choice but to make an uncharacteristically clear declaration of his ambiguous identity: "But – but I'm not that sort of bear!"' (Baker 1993: 128). There are several ways of reading this statement. Does it mean that he is not a 'real bear' but merely a teddy bear (Baker 1993: 129)? Or, perhaps, he is a boy rather than a bear? These possibilities draw attention to the undecidability of his identity, a feature that is emphasised further in stories in which he encounters non-talking animals that threaten him by their very animality.

If Rupert's story was just a prose narrative, Baker believes that a reader, familiar with the conventions of anthropomorphic narratives, would quite possibly miss these inconsistencies. What cannot fail to emphasise his difference are the text's visual images. In these stories, Rupert and also his parents and friends are marked out by their 'whiteness'. This lack of colour contrasts with both the human characters and the 'proper' animals in the Ark. 'Whiteness', apart from its racial connotations, signifies the 'inbetweenness' of Rupert and his kin. For Baker, this colourlessness also marks a 'blankness', a refusal on the part of the writers to commit themselves to the precise form of Rupert's identity (Baker 1993: 134). Although this could be seen as fixing a category on to the talking-animal story, Baker's reading is important because it draws our attention to the way that 'figures' like Rupert seem to occupy a potentially subversive, interstitial state between 'animal' and 'human'. They are unstable, hybrid figures who are threatened by other figures in the text that signify a different sort of animality. Baker's reading is also useful because it makes us re-evaluate the talking-animal story as not simply one in which animals are substituted for humans, but as an often complex meditation on boundaries and difference. It is also a diverse genre in which, if some writers use animal stories as a mode of reassurance and 'identification' for children, others seem aware of what we might call the uncanniness of the animal/human figures with which they populate their children's stories.

Intertextuality

As a very ancient genre, animal stories owe a great deal to their antecedents. Indeed, like all genres, its 'elements and conventions ... are always *in* play rather than being simply *re*-played' (Neale 1990: 56). An obvious example is Aesop's tale of 'The Country Mouse and the City Mouse', which was reworked by Beatrix Potter in *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse* (1918). But such intertextual connections need not be conscious. Lavon Fulwiler has shown that a modern film like Chris Noonan's *Babe* (1995), based on Dick King Smith's novel *The Sheep Pig* (or *Babe: The Gallant Pig* in the USA), can be profitably read in relation to Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (Fulwiler 1996: 93–101). However, in looking at animal stories, we also need to be aware of the effect of competing discursive claims made by historical, scientific, legal and cultural attitudes to animals. It is significant that books which seek to address the issue of our inhumane treatment of animals, for example Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), follow in the wake of the formation of movements such as the RSPCA (formed in 1824 as the SPCA). Alternatively, such texts can be seen as actively contributing to changes in the way people treat animals. In one celebrated example, copies of *Black Beauty* were given out free to cabmen as a guide on how to treat their horses. Hence, although animal stories can be related to generic antecedents, they also need to be seen as part of a dynamic genre that responds to both literary and socio-cultural shifts in attitudes to animals.

As both Carpenter and Prichard's *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (1984) and Victor Watson's *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English* (2001) provide broad reviews of the animal story genre, I have decided to take a less comprehensive but more detailed approach. In the survey that follows, while mapping the major types of animal story I want to consider how writers use 'animals' in these stories and the ways that readers might respond to them. At this point, I must emphasise that, in everything that follows, we only see various constructions of non-human animals: there is no 'real' or 'actual' or 'non-textual' animal which could ever be recuperated outside of discourse (Lesnik-Oberstein *et al.* 1999: 8; Walsh 2001).

The eighteenth century

Animal stories have, as we have seen, a history distinct from that of children's literature. But, with a few exceptions, a genre of animal stories written specifically with children in mind does not really appear until the late eighteenth century. In the 1740s, the period that is generally recognised as marking the start of publishing for children, animal books are fairly scarce. Exceptions would be John Newbery's use of animals in his volumes *A Pretty Book of Pictures for Little Masters and Misses* or *Tommy Tripp's History of Beasts and Birds* (c. 1748), *Goody Two-Shoes* (1765) and *The Valentine's Gift* (1765). There was also the emblematic use of animals in the pious works of Bunyan and Watts. Beyond this, perhaps the most influential fictional animals, for nearly fifty years, were those in *Aesop's Fables* and the fairy tales of Perrault and Mme D'Aulnoy, both published in 1697.

Perhaps the first major children's writer of the eighteenth century to use animals in her work was Mrs Trimmer. As the editor of an influential journal, *The Guardian of Education*, Trimmer was concerned with children's pedagogical and moral development. She consistently used a position of some authority to oppose fairy tales and the fantastic as lacking in the requisite moral instruction. Ironically, her reputation was made by her most significant work, entitled *Fabulous Histories Designed for the Instruction of Children Respecting Their Treatment of Animals* but more popularly known as *The History [or Story] of the Robins* (1786). This book consists of a dual narrative, as we follow the daily life of the Benson family. Mrs Benson, a saintly proxy for the authoress, endlessly lectures her children, particularly her thoughtless but well-meaning son, Frederick, on the correct treatment of other species. A parallel strand to the novel is offered by the adventures of a family of talking robins who come under the patronage of the Benson children.

Given Trimmer's ambivalence towards fantasy, it is perhaps not surprising that she prefaced the first edition of the novel with a declaration to her readers reminding them that the book was not meant to be read as 'containing the real conversations of Birds ... but as a series of FABLES' (Trimmer quoted in Darton 1932/1982: 158).

The History of the Robins fully exploits the possibilities of its dual narrative in order to deliver a double dose of moral guidance. Both the Benson children and the young robins provide possibilities for 'identification'. Parallelism is evident throughout, as scenes in which Frederick is censured for gluttony are echoed by similar instructions to Dicky Robin. The explicit identification of child and animal (or bird in this case) is established when Mrs Benson, in order to condemn children who maltreat animals, equates their equal degree of dependency. But such moral parallelism is also used in a more subtle way in regard to the possibilities of anthropomorphism. The lessons from the bird world, for example, the fate that befalls the eldest nestling, Robin, when he fails to heed his father's advice and seriously injures his wing, sends out a much graver warning than anything that could be included in the human narrative.

Christine Kenyon-Jones usefully sums up the messages from the book's narratives, when she notes:

Trimmer's *History of the Robins* ... alternates between twin animal themes: one, concerned with how children should be brought up to treat animals – 'neither spoil[ing] them by indulgence nor injur[ing] them by tyranny' ... and the other using a story of animals (or, bird) life as a fable to teach children how to behave correctly in life in society at large.

(Kenyon-Jones 2001: 56)

But although the novel sets out to teach its reader to be more humane to animals, its moral agenda encompasses a good deal more than this. At a number of points, Frederick's mother reminds him that feeding birds is all very well, but 'it is not right to cut pieces from a loaf on purpose for birds because there are many children who want bread, to whom we should give the preference' (Trimmer n.d.: 4). Trimmer's novel is underpinned, therefore, by a hierarchical structure that sees animals as less worthy of our benevolence than fellow humans. Such a consideration even extends to the moral lesson the book teaches about kindness to animals. In the novel, the fate of the Bensons' friend, Master Edward Jenkins, who spends his childhood cruelly torturing animals and birds, is used to provide a cautionary example for young readers. In an epilogue, we learn that the grown-up Jenkins is eventually killed by being thrown from a horse that he has been beating. But the lesson of Edward Jenkins is only partly about compassion for animals; it can also be seen as a matter of social responsibility. As Harriet Ritvo argues:

In stories of this genre kindness to animals was a code for full and responsible acceptance of the obligations of society, while cruelty was identified with deviance. The need for compassion was intertwined with the need for discipline.

(Ritvo 1987: 132)

Trimmer's writing needs to be seen, therefore, as part of competing discourses about children's educational and moral development at the end of the eighteenth century. Her ideological agenda is one in which humanity's superiority and the need to care for animals is partly a displaced lesson for middle-class children about their responsibilities in the existing social order. At both the animal and the human levels, Trimmer's book offers a social model that endeavours to maintain the hierarchies, distinction and ranks of that order. With such a view of society, it is no wonder that she was staunchly opposed to calls at the end of the eighteenth century for 'the rights of animals' (Jackson 1989: 168). For her, such a view could only seem like an affront to the divine order of creation.

The nineteenth century

One book that Sarah Trimmer would probably have condemned as maudlin and over-sentimentalised was a novel entitled *The Biography of a Spaniel* (1806) in which, 'a master and loyal pet expire together [and] the dog is immensely gratified to hear his master breathe, "Bury us together"' (Jackson 1989: 168). This book was part of the animal autobiography genre that was popular from the end of the eighteenth century and through much of the nineteenth century. Dorothy Kilner's *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1783) is usually credited as starting the trend, but its most famous example is Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty, His Grooms and Companions. The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877) nearly a hundred years later. The genre was particularly popular in the early part of the nineteenth century with a succession of mainly domestic animals, cats and dogs, queuing up to tell their stories. However, the success of Sewell's novel prompted almost a second wave of such autobiographies that carried on into the twentieth century, with books like Kipling's *Thy Servant, a Dog* (1930). There was, it appears, no 'animal' too large or too small to 'write' such a story. Indeed, in size order, these 'authors' range from Dr Ernest Candeze's *The Curious Adventures of a Field Cricket* (1881) up to Arabella Argus's *The Adventures of a Donkey* (1815) and Sewell's *Black Beauty*.

In terms of anthropomorphism, the attraction of this sub-genre is believed to be the space it allows for vicarious ‘identification’. Margaret Blount, for example, praises Kilner’s book as a feat in imaginative verisimilitude, noting that although it is ‘a parable about filial obedience ... there is a real feeling of what it might be like to be a mouse and record one’s feelings’ (Blount 1974: 47). Yet, as with *The History of the Robins*, it is important to recognise that these texts are not just sustained exercises in imagining animal experiences, but are also used as part of a more general critique of human behaviour.

But judgements on human conduct may or may not be related to the treatment of animals. As Hunt notes, in *The Rambles of a Rat* (1857) by A.L.O.E. (A Lady of England, the pseudonym of Charlotte Maria Tucker), the focus is ‘not on the plight of the rats, but on the conditions of the human poor’ (Hunt 2001: 147). The picaresque form these books adopt certainly lends itself to such a didactic function. As Tess Cosslett observes, ‘the domestic animal’s movement between various owners, up and down the social scale, can give a comprehensive picture of society and its failings’ (Cosslett 2003: 1). But beyond critique, the animal autobiography is a genre that, even after accepting its basic premise of ‘giving speech to the speechless’, tends to prompt more questions than it can plausibly answer (Blount 1974: 250). How, for example is the narrative being recorded? Or, to put it more bluntly, how do they hold the pen?! It is, as Steve Baker notes, not the idea of an animal narrator that is the problem – that is accepted easily by anyone familiar with the conventions of the genre – but the ‘mechanics’ of the situation. Questions arise, Baker writes, ‘*within* the story once the fanciful reader steps back from the narrative flow’ (Baker 1993: 126). Some ingenious authors do, however, anticipate such queries and, as with Nimble the mouse in Kilner’s *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse*, suggest that the animal is dictating its story to a human amanuensis. There are, however, too many other cases – for example, Argus’s Jemmy the donkey in *The Adventures of a Donkey*, with his ‘writing foot’ – where pasterns and paws seem to be plying pens with consummate ease!

Perhaps we should not worry about such matters, if we are prepared to accept the idea of a communicating animal in the first place. Indeed, Sewell evades such a question altogether, as the only clue to the status of her novel is that the title page declares it to be ‘Translated from the equine by Anna Sewell’. Cosslett notes that ‘translating’ ‘is a very apt metaphor for the way that Sewell imagines a human voice for animal experiences’ (Cosslett 2003: 5). The latter point is, perhaps what readers find both attractive and also disturbing in this sub-genre. As Blount observes, animals like Beauty and others have an unnerving omniscience married to a human consciousness (Blount 1974: 52). Although Argus and Sewell draw attention to the limits of their narrators’ understanding or knowledge, others, such as Mrs Pilkington’s cat narrator, Grimalkin, in *Marvellous Adventures, or the Vicissitudes of a Cat* (1802), are allowed considerably more liberty. As Blount notes, with his extensive knowledge of the contents of letters, ‘Grimalkin becomes rather more omniscient than a cat should be’ (Blount 1974: 50).

It is, however, not the omniscience that is the most startling aspect of this genre, but the ‘humanness’ of the voice that speaks. The voice of Black Beauty, as Nicholas Tucker notes, is one that seems most reminiscent of a ‘refined, sensitive’ young man (Tucker 1981: 159). It is this blurring of the animal/human identity that unsettles because it rhetorically uses a human consciousness to appeal for the better treatment of animals. Nonetheless, as Blount has observed, for all of its sentimentality and emotional manipulation, the book was credited with helping to abolish the dreadful inhumane bearing rein (Blount 1974: 251).

Another effect of the humanising of animal consciousness in these autobiographies is that it allows them to be read in ways that suggest various analogies between animals and types or classes of humans: slaves, women, children, servants, workers (Ferguson 1994; Cosslett 2003: 8). *Black Beauty* has been particularly receptive to such readings. Its analogies with slavery were evident to its original readers and were in fact exploited in the marketing of the book in the USA.

Tess Cosslett's recent work on *Black Beauty* considers the effect produced by the book's ambiguous address. She notes: 'It is never made clear to whom Black Beauty is talking, and it is this unspecificity of the narratee that allows the reader to slide in and out of horse consciousness, blurring the animal/human divide' (Cosslett 2003: 5).

To demonstrate the way in which the reader 'slide[s] in and out of horse consciousness', Cosslett cites Beauty's description of the 'breaking in' experience. Here the book's shifting address can be read as 'push[ing the reader] to identify with horse experience' (Cosslett 2003: 6). Such 'identification' is, however, divided, because at other points the reader is also asked to identify with the book's human role models, those good grooms and owners whom Beauty encounters. The shifting of subject positions that the text invites, added to its strange marriage of animal and human consciousness, once again indicates the complexity of such a story and its ability to challenge the boundaries between 'human' and 'animal'.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century, the impact of Darwinism can be seen in animal stories that either satirise such theories or take them as the *raison d'être* for a more 'realistic' animal story. As Harriet Ritvo writes, the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) 'eliminated the deity who had created the world for human convenience; it also eliminated the unbridgeable gulf that divided reasoning human beings from irrational brutes' (Ritvo 1987: 39). In many ways the culmination of years of speculation and theory by others rather than a radical break, Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection was, however, profoundly unsettling for those who still wanted to keep God at the centre of the world. Christian writers and scientists such as Mrs Gatty and Charles Kingsley were committed to pursuing scientific interests but making them compatible with their religious beliefs. If Darwin's work was a threat, their response was to parody it. Perhaps the best example of the use of the animal story as a vehicle for parody is provided by Mrs Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (1855–71).

The animal story as parody

Mrs Gatty has been rather overshadowed by her more famous daughter, the writer Mrs Ewing. Gatty was a scientist and a writer for children who, subscribing to Paleyan Natural Theology, 'resisted interpretations of nature that were not grounded in the divine' (Rauch 1997: 140). In her series *Parables from Nature* she brilliantly fused her two occupations in order to use children's literature as a means for confronting the controversies of the theory of evolution. In the piece 'Inferior Animals', she presents a counsel of rooks debating the question of man. In a parody of both Darwinian ideas and rhetoric, one of the rooks declares:

My friends, man is not our superior, was never so, for he is neither more nor less than a degenerated brother of our race! Yes, I venture confidently to look back thousands of generations, and I see that *men* were once *rooks*!

(Gatty 1899: 30)

Here, Gatty's rook notes that although man has degenerated from his original rook-like form, there are signs of an atavistic urge in his increasing construction of tall buildings and, in an age of coal-mining, the observation that, although many men start the day pale, they return home later covered in soot, which indicates a desire to return to their natural colour. Gatty's is, as Cosslett notes, an exceptionally complex and self-conscious parody of Darwinian thought (Cosslett 2002: 484–5). In a book written for children, Gatty took advantage of the satiric possibilities of the beast-fable. But her choice of genre is significant in two other respects. First, it acknowledges that by operating in a children's book, it can target both children and the adults who read stories to them (Rauch 1997: 147). Second, children's literature was a medium that was open to women writers who were, in the main, excluded from scientific discourses at this time.

The twentieth century

Wild animal stories

Although Christian writers such as Gatty and Kingsley parodied Darwinian ideas, there were other writers at the end of the century who found in Darwinian science the justification for a new genre of wild animal stories. Jack London and Ernest Thompson Seton set out to write a 'realistic' type of story that appeared to react against the sentimentalism and humanisation of earlier animal stories. In London's novels *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1905), there is a brutality that is far removed from the pathos evoked by writers such as Sewell. Nevertheless, the images of wild animals in these narratives, although they eschewed the explicit humanisation of books such as *Black Beauty*, merely presented readers with a different type of anthropomorphism. London's half-St Bernard, half-Scotch shepherd dog, Buck, in *The Call of the Wild* is clearly not a young man in disguise! He is merely a different construction of animality. In the case of Seton-Thompson, the critic Marian Scholtmeijer has described his animals as 'models of virtue' (Scholtmeijer 1993: 99). The claims for realism made by the writers of wild animal stories prompted debates over the veracity of the behaviour of the animals in the stories. Labelled a 'Nature faker', Seton-Thompson's work was challenged on the grounds that his animals were too calculating (Scholtmeijer 1993: 96). His 'Springfield Fox', for example, who manages to lead a pack of hunting-dogs on to a railway line in the path of a train, was felt by some critics to have more affinity with the fabulist hero, Reynard the fox, than 'actual' fox behaviour (Scholtmeijer 1993: 96–7).

Another problem with the claim that this type of story was more 'realistic' was that, as many critics have noted, London's novels seemed too obviously structured by moral contrasts between domesticity and wilderness or dog and wolf. But Sue Walsh's recent work on London, particularly her reading of *White Fang*, problematises the distinctions that earlier critics have made between 'wolf' and 'dog'. By doing so, she demonstrates the proliferation of meanings that circulate around the concepts of 'dog' and 'wolf' in London and his critics' texts (Walsh 2001: 218).

The realistic animal story remained periodically influential in Britain, North America and Australia throughout much of the twentieth century. Later fiction, for example that by Henry Williamson and Jean Craighead George, developed more explicit ecological concerns. However, as Hunt notes, such narratives have had an uncertain position and have often fallen into the limbo between adult's and children's fiction (Hunt 2001: 149).

The return of talking animals

Although, as we have seen, there are many pre-twentieth-century examples of animal stories, the common assumption that, as Julia Briggs suggests, ‘the widespread use of animal characters in children’s fiction is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon’ seems an odd assertion (Briggs in Hunt 1996: 179). This is a valid view in the sense that it is in the period since the late nineteenth century that many of the most famous talking-animal characters were created, by writers such as Joel Chandler Harris, Rudyard Kipling, Beatrix Potter, Kenneth Grahame, E. B. White and Richard Adams. Furthermore, it is the work of these authors that became virtually the blueprint for later writers such as Alison Uttley (the Little Grey Rabbit books), Margery Sharp (the Miss Bianca novels), Brian Jacques (the Redwall books), William Horwood (the Dunton Chronicles) and Colin Dann (The Animals of Farthing Wood series). In the final part of this chapter, I will focus on some of the themes that have constituted critical discussions of children’s animal stories in the twentieth century.

Adult/child

The issue of whether animal stories are for children, adults or allow a confluence of interests runs through much criticism of the genre (Keenan 1987; Hunt 1994). No doubt part of the confusion arises from the way the animal story has shifted between adults’ and children’s literature. Such debates over the implied reader appear in one of the most influential late nineteenth-century animal tales, *The Tales of Uncle Remus*, starting with *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880). The majority of the stories concern the adventures of Brer Rabbit and his adversaries. The narratives are, for the most part, told by a former slave, Uncle Remus, to a little white boy. Collected by the book’s author, Joel Chandler Harris, on the plantations of southern America, the stories are thought to have derived from the trickster legends of Anansi and Wakaima that originated in West Africa. Brought to America with the slave trade, Anansi morphed into Brer Rabbit and a new stock of folk tales about trickery and survival took root. Written in a phonetic approximation of Remus’s speech, the stories have, since the middle of the twentieth century, been subject to criticism for their racial stereotyping and cultural appropriation (Moore and MacCann 1986). Recently, however, scholars writing from specifically African-American perspectives have begun to reappraise the plantation stories collected by Harris and others. Joyce Hope Scott, for example, suggests that they can be read as works in which the inversions of power encode the resistance of slaves to their masters (Scott 1989: 73).

If African-American criticism has been concerned with the stories as racial allegories, recent children’s literature criticism has tended to focus on whether these tales of murder, butchery and possibly prostitution are intended for children at all. Clearly relevant to such a discussion is the issue of whether children’s literature can ever address the ‘child’ (Rose 1992). In the case of the Uncle Remus stories, the folk tales upon which Harris drew were directed to an adult audience (with some children present). It was Harris who provided the frame narrative in which Uncle Remus tells them to the little boy, thus effectively redirecting them towards child readers. Thematically, however, the animals in the stories are competitive ‘men’ obsessively devoted to one-upmanship. Furthermore, several recent critics have noted that, although Harris, or an earlier source, may have tried to expunge the more troubling references from the narratives, they remain in the margins. Tales like ‘The Sad Fate of Mr Fox’, in which, through Brer Rabbit’s scheming, Brer Fox is

beheaded and the Rabbit subsequently presents his head as a meal for his widow and family, still has the power to shock. Elsewhere, close attention to the pronouns of the famous 'Tar Baby' story reveals unpleasant connotations of sexual violence (Keenan 1987: 123). Finally, John Goldthwaite has written at length about the implication of the Brers' trips to the house of Miss Meadows and the gals (Goldthwaite 1996: 272–81). Although Goldthwaite assures us that these days the house, in its present textual form, connotes nothing more than sociability, in an earlier version it seems likely that Miss Meadows was meant to be interpreted as the Madam of a local brothel. Understood as a 'sporting house', a whole level of meaning is opened up which is elided in the text.

The Wind in the Willows (1908) is another animal story of the period which foregrounds questions of implied readership. As Peter Hunt notes, the book

sits ambiguously on the boundary between literature for children and literature for adults. But in doing so – and this may be the secret of its success – it defines areas where the child's and adult's imaginations coincide. Without doubt, the idyllic, irresponsible riverbank is an ideal playground for children, but it is also a nostalgic escape for the adult.

(Hunt 1994: 10)

Although it has been argued that there is something 'childlike' about characters such as Mole and Toad, at the same time Grahame's text arguably addresses adult interests more than it does children's. Indeed, Hunt suggests that the use of animals in the book might be seen as a way of creating characters who can effectively fuse the 'dual role of child *and* child-in-adult' (Hunt 1994: 53). Talking animals are not then to be regarded as merely child substitutes: they are complex figures that frequently call into question the binary distinctions between adult and child. As such, they can allow for a confluence of the interests of different readers.

Defamiliarisation

As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, there is a long tradition of using talking-animal stories to comment on political and social abuses. Readers who would not dream of reading political critique might still read Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The humanisation of anthropomorphic fictions allows itself to be read as an indirect reflection on human society. As Margaret Blount suggests, 'all [of the] numerous creators who start by dressing animals and giving them human voices end up by saying more than they intended' (Blount 1974: 17).

Perhaps the best example of the animal story being used to attack human civilisation is Richard Adams's best-selling *Watership Down* (1972). In the book, Adams develops something approaching an animal secondary world which both reflects aspects of our world – General Woundwort and Efrafa are an obvious echo of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century – and uses the perceptions of the rabbits to defamiliarise aspects of human society.

Although direct contact between the rabbits and humans in the book is rare, the rabbits do encounter evidence of humanity and its technologies throughout their travels. At such points, we get a rabbit's-eye view of them. Common human objects are defamiliarised when described by rabbits who are trying to comprehend their purpose in their own terms. Letters on a noticeboard become for Fiver the 'wedge-shaped little heads [of a] nestful of

young weasels' (Adams 1972/1974: 235). Perhaps the best example of the use of the rabbits to estrange aspects of human culture is Holly's description of the terrifying encounter with what he takes to be a supernatural messenger from the deity, Lord Frith, but which the human reader recognises as a description of a speeding train.

In his essay 'Art as Technique' (1917), Victor Shklovsky noted that Tolstoy uses a horse's perspective in 'Kholstomer' to defamiliarise human experience. What such a technique does is force us to confront the limits of the contemporary world, or what Inglis sees as the '*interestedness* of our systems of concepts' (Inglis 1981: 206), by seeing that world from the perspective of the 'other'. For other examples of the use of an animal point of view to estrange human culture, we only need to look back to the narrations of *Black Beauty* and the other animal autobiographies or, indeed, to the equine perspective explored in Adams's later novel, *Traveller* (1988). In *Watership Down*, Adams extends such defamiliarisation by creating a special Lapine language, words from which punctuate the text and serve to further underline the 'otherness' of the rabbit perspective. Hence, in a book that attacks the technologies of modernity, it seems especially suitable that the Lapine word for a motorised vehicle is the ugly onomatopoeic 'hrududu'.

Natural history

We can stay with *Watership Down* as we pass to the next theme: the use of natural history in animal stories. As noted earlier, since at least the wild animal stories of the late nineteenth century, there has been a tendency on the part of some writers to try to 'authenticate' their constructions of animal characters by either adopting a type of quasi-scientific discourse or by citing authoritative sources on natural history matters. The problem with such a move is that natural history itself does not present the 'truth' of a particular animal, but is merely another a discursive framework with its own force, history and regulations. In *Watership Down*, Adams tries to authenticate his characters' actions using quotations from R. M. Lockley's natural history study, *The Private Life of the Rabbit* (1964). Critics have praised Adams's restriction of the rabbits' actions to what has been observed of their behaviour in the wild. Ann Swinfen writes:

Every action which the rabbits perform in *Watership Down* is physically possible, and most are part of their regular behaviour. Certain deductions about the mental life of rabbits are made in Lockley's book, on the basis of his observations of their behaviour, and Adams uses these as the starting point for his depiction of the characters and cultures of his rabbits.

(Swinfen 1984: 38)

Swinfen's admiration for the book is notably tempered here by the steady increase in her use of qualifiers. When we read *Watership Down* we need to recognise that the natural history of rabbits is supplemented at every turn by fantasy and speculation. For all its attempt to ground its descriptions and actions in 'science', Adams's novel, as Inglis observes, is 'up against the structural difficulty of any anthropomorphic storyteller. He gives rabbits consciousness, which they do not have, but keeps them as rabbits' (Inglis 1981: 208). Furthermore, operating from a position that rabbit consciousness is similar to human consciousness or that human consciousness can serve as a metaphor for animal consciousness, Adams's novel makes a number of what now seem to be problematic analogies between rabbits and 'primitive people' (Adams 1972/1974: 28, 169, 301).

Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books* have also been related to natural history. John Goldthwaite asserts that the animals in the books are 'real, if reasoning, creatures inhabiting a real and not make-believe jungle' (Goldthwaite 1996: 325). Here the 'real' is being invoked to authenticate Kipling's texts. Although the animals are not 'real', rhetorically Kipling's text does set out to produce a different construction of animality. In the story 'Tiger! Tiger!', Mowgli rejects the superstitious type of animal stories told by the human hunter, Buldeo. As Cosslett notes, at this point 'Kipling implicitly claims that his stories about Mowgli and the jungle are "grown-up", demystified, accurate' (Cosslett 2002: 477).

Beatrix Potter is another writer who prided herself on the accuracy of her observations of the natural world. In one of the most persuasive readings of Potter in recent years, Peter Hollindale sees her stories as setting up a conversation between her naturalist interest in animals (apparent in her meticulous and anatomically correct illustrations) and her satirical commentary on human foibles, most evident in tales such as *Johnny Town-Mouse* or *Ginger and Pickles* (Hollindale 1999: 120). In the case of the former, if *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse* is a satire of town and country values, an appreciation of natural history opens the text up to further meanings. Hence, Timmy Willie is different from Johnny Town-Mouse not simply because he lives in the country, but also because Potter has drawn him as a field vole, not as a mouse. This species difference allows both for visual contrast and 'a distinct and accurate environmental contrast' (Hollindale 1999: 121).

In contrast to the work of Potter, *The Wind in the Willows* infamously disappointed one misguided reviewer from *The Times*, who declared that 'As a contribution to natural history, the work is negligible' (Hunt 1994: 15). Indeed, Beatrix Potter took Grahame to task for what she regarded as his rather cavalier attitude to matters of natural history when he describes Toad as having hair in the last chapter of the book. Hunt notes that this charge can be countered by the fact that by this stage in the novel, Toad's 'animalness' has effectively vanished. But perhaps such distinctions are difficult to make in what is such an unstable text. While on his earlier adventures and still an 'animal', Toad is described as 'comb[ing] the dry leaves out of his hair with his fingers' (Grahame 1983: 108). The other animals retain something of their 'animalness', but their animal characteristics remain rather vague. As Hunt observes, 'There is something Moleish about the Mole, something Badgerish about the Badger' (Hunt 1994: 51). In other cases, however, the animals exhibit entirely arbitrary characteristics; as Hunt asks, 'are toads ebullient, or rats artistic?' (Hunt 1994: 51).

Clothed and unclothed

Humanity's use of clothing is often regarded as one of the markers of the difference between humans and animals. In anthropomorphic stories, the wearing of clothes by animal characters can, therefore, be seen as an extension of their humanisation. It is, however, a conceit that a writer such as Beatrix Potter tended to exploit in her little anthropomorphic dramas. Potter employs the clothing motif in a variety of ways. First, it can be used as a means of differentiation. At the start of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Peter is indistinguishable from his sisters as they nestle next to their mother under the tree. By the next page, however, the rabbits have become clothed and Peter is marked out as different by his blue jacket contrasting with the uniformity of his sisters' red cloaks. Second, as Carole Scott has shown, in *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* it is the sartorial elegance of the 'ginger-whiskered gentleman' that allows him to seduce the naive Puddle-Duck. Notably, it is only the reader that sees the fox 'undisguised by his clothes', not Jemima (Scott 1992: 193). Dress in this story becomes an index of class and power.

In other tales, for example that of Jeremy Fisher, clothes actually save the main character. Alternatively, in *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, Tom and his sisters are forcibly dressed by their mother and thus clothing here seems to be associated with parental control. But these negative connotations are balanced by a book such as *The Tailor of Gloucester* where the fashioning of a garment provides an opportunity for kindness and co-operation between the tailor and the mice. As a result, although Potter's books undoubtedly exploit the conceit of the clothed animal, they do not develop a coherent position. They seem resistant to critical attempts to fix this theme within a single allegorical framework, for example in biographical or social terms, as a displaced comment on the constraints on the author's own life or on that of women in general in Victorian and Edwardian society (Scott 1992; 1994).

Other writers and illustrators of this period also exploit the wearing of clothes by their animal characters. In *The Wind in the Willows*, E. H. Shepard's illustrations depict the Riverbankers as clothed but the threatening mass of stoats and weasels as nude and undifferentiated. Hollindale suggests that 'class difference is implied by [this] differential humanizing' (Hollindale 1999: 129). Readings of the book which stress its reactionary class politics and fear of the mob are well known. Here, the illustrations seem to reinforce this interpretation.

Hybrids

I have left to last one of the most intriguing themes in animal stories, namely the hybrid and unstable nature of animal characters – the sense that they are presented as a confusing mix of 'animal' and 'human' and seem to exist in a liminal space in between the categories. As Hunt notes, in *The Wind in the Willows* 'Badger is one second a real badger, rooting under a hedge and trotting forward, the next an elderly gentleman who "hates society"' (Hunt 1994: 52). Such oscillations are also evident in the work of Joel Chandler Harris and Beatrix Potter. In the *Jungle Books*, Kipling's Mowgli is an unsettling hybrid figure. Despite appearing in only eight of the fifteen stories, Mowgli's presence is significant because it constructs the division between human and animal produced in the text as both necessary and arbitrary (Walsh 2001: 31). But Mowgli's presence is ambiguous. As Sue Walsh argues, 'As a human child raised by wolves, Mowgli "*the Frog's*" amphibious identity can be read as initiating a destabilising questioning of the relationship of the human to the animal' (Walsh 2001: 31–2).

In *The Wind in the Willows*, it is Toad who best illustrates a similar ambiguity. Like Mowgli, Toad is another 'amphibian' figure (literally) that seems to slide between and trouble categories. Toad's slipperiness is even apparent in the uncertainties of his social position (Hunt 1994: 69). It is, however, his encounters with the gaoler's daughter and later the barge-woman which seem to trouble the boundaries between human and animal, in terms of the difference between how he sees himself and how he is seen by them (Hunt 1994: 71). In these episodes, Toad is a volatile mix of human and animal that does not fit into either category.

If *Charlotte's Web* has become a modern classic of children's literature, White's earlier novel, *Stuart Little* (1945), has, despite being turned into a successful film and sequel, a more uncertain position. *Stuart Little* follows the adventures of the eponymous hero as he experiences life in New York and later as he embarks on a quest to find his beloved, the bird Margalo. Episodic and light-hearted in tone, from this synopsis it would be difficult to see why this book seems to cause disquiet among critics. It is, however, Stuart's uncer-

tain identity, not quite human and not quite 'animal', that seems to unsettle many readers. The book's opening sentence informs us in a matter-of-fact way:

When Mrs Frederick C. Little's second son was born, everybody noticed that he was not much bigger than a mouse. The truth of the matter was, the baby looked very much like a mouse in every way.

(White 1984: 7)

Notably, White's tricky prose does not say Stuart is a mouse, merely that he 'looked' very much like one. Anne Carroll Moore, the head of the New York Public Library and a powerful influence on publishers, even tried to prevent the book's publication on the grounds that it was 'non-affirmative, inconclusive, unfit for children' (White 1966 quoted in Sampson 1974: 98). Although its lack of closure certainly contributed to its notoriety, there has been speculation that Moore's objections were primarily to do with the 'monstrosity' of Stuart's birth. In his letters in 1945, White seemed to enjoy the consternation that his hero's liminality caused, protesting at one point, 'Nowhere in the book ... is Stuart described as a mouse,' only to note a few lines later, '(I am wrong, Stuart is called a mouse on page 36 – I just found it. He should not have been)' (Guth 1976: 270).

Interestingly, in the recent film version, the ambiguity of Stuart's identity was clarified by making him the adopted son of the Littles. Despite this, there are reports on the film's database that even this measure does not entirely reassure viewers, who still found his centrality in a human family disturbing. *Stuart Little* provides yet another example of the undecidability of talking-animal figures. As a potentially subversive, boundary-straddling figure, he unsettles categories. As such, he joins a long line of strange animal/human hybrids that inhabit the popular, but always somewhat uncanny, genre of the talking-animal story.

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32 High fantasy

C. W. Sullivan III

The literary or compound term ‘high fantasy’ is enormously evocative and, like most evocative terms, it is pluralistic in meaning and therefore difficult to pin down with a neat or precise definition. ‘High’ can refer to style, subject matter, theme or tone. It can also refer to the characters themselves – their elite or elevated social status or the moral or ethical philosophies which they espouse or exemplify. It can even refer to the affective level of the story itself. ‘Fantasy’, as a literary term, refers to narrative possibilities limited, at least initially, only by the author’s own imagination and skill as a story-teller. When combined, ‘high fantasy’ identifies a literary genre which includes some of the most universally praised books for young readers.

Fantasy, or the fantastic element in literature, has been most usefully defined by Kathryn Hume. In her book, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, Hume argues that any work of literature can be placed somewhere on a continuum, one end of which is mimesis and the other fantasy. All literature, Hume suggests

is the product of two impulses. These are *mimesis*, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and *fantasy*, the desire to change givens and alter reality – out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience’s verbal defences.

(Hume 1984: 20)

Fantasy itself, she continues, ‘*is any departure from consensus reality*’ (21, italics in original). The relative proportions of the two elements – mimesis and fantasy – in a specific work will determine that work’s place on the continuum.

The departure from consensus reality, or the inclusion of what most critics have referred to as the ‘impossible’, in high fantasy places books in that sub-genre quite close to the fantasy end of Hume’s continuum, because high fantasy contains a great deal of material which is not a part of contemporary consensus reality. Unlike science fiction, however, which departs from contemporary consensus reality by extrapolating that reality into the near or far future where it has been significantly changed by discovery, invention and development, high fantasy departs from contemporary consensus reality by creating a separate world in which the action takes place. In *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy: A Glossary and Guide to Scholarship*, Gary K. Wolfe defines high fantasy as that fantasy ‘set in a secondary world ... as opposed to Low Fantasy which contains supernatural intrusions into the “real” world’ (1986: 52).

J. R. R. Tolkien was one of the first critics to articulate the importance of the secondary world; in 'On Fairy-stories' (1947), he delineated the concept and stressed the importance of its cohesiveness.

What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful 'sub-creator'. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside.

(Tolkien 1966b: 37)

Tolkien realised the importance of the reality and cohesiveness of the secondary world, not from writing *The Hobbit*, which is, along with *The Lord of the Rings*, certainly an excellent example of the secondary world taken seriously, but from his study of ancient epic, especially *Beowulf*.

In 'Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics' (1936), published a year before *The Hobbit*, Tolkien defended the reality of the monsters against those who would see them only as symbolic or metaphoric constructs. The *Beowulf* poet, Tolkien argues, 'esteemed dragons ... as a poet, not as a sober zoologist' (1966a: 11). 'A dragon is no idle fancy', he continues (15), and 'the monsters are not an inexplicable blunder of taste; they are essential, fundamentally allied to the underlying ideas of the poem, which give it its lofty tone and high seriousness' (19). Tolkien the academic scholar knew that, before *Beowulf* could be taken seriously as a poem, the monsters had to be taken seriously as monsters, monsters which actually existed within the world created by the artist; Tolkien the high-fantasy writer knew that, before a work of high fantasy could be taken seriously, the author had to create a world that was real, a world of logical internal cohesiveness, within the pages of the story.

Writers and critics since Tolkien have, consciously or unconsciously, echoed his sentiments on the need for the author and the reader to take seriously the fantastic elements of the secondary world. Ursula Le Guin has asserted:

I think 'High Fantasy' a beautiful phrase. It summarises, for me, what I value most in an imaginative work: the fact that the author takes absolutely seriously the world and the people which he has created, as seriously as Homer took the Trojan War, and Odysseus; that he plays the game with all his skill, and all his art, and all his heart. When he does that, the fantasy game becomes one of the High Games men play.

(Cameron 1971: 137)

And it is not coincidence that Le Guin, like Tolkien, draws upon ancient epic for analogues by which to explain high fantasy.

The secondary world of high fantasy cannot be totally fantastic, however, or the reader would not be able to understand a word of what was written. There have to be elements of the secondary world which the reader can recognise and understand, and no small amount of critical effort has been expended over the years in enumerating the traditional sources on which high fantasy has drawn for its reality. The roots of high fantasy, and the literatures which continue to be a source of everything from general inspiration to specific character names, can be traced back to the most ancient of traditional literary impulses in Western

Europe: myth, epic, legend, romance and folk tale. To date, little high fantasy has come from the Eastern countries but, given the structural, stylistic and thematic analyses that follow, there is no reason why there could not be more books like R. R. MacAvoy's *Tea with the Black Dragon*, a high fantasy based on Chinese rather than Germanic dragon lore.

Some of the most imaginative aspects of modern high fantasy have come from the oldest of stories. The continuing battles between the dragon and the dragon slayer can be traced through the St George legends and Sigurd's slaying of Fafnir in the *Volsunga Saga* to the battles between Thor and the Midgard Serpent in the Norse myths; and the avuncular magician/tutor who guides the young prince or hero to manhood and triumph has his origins in the stories of Merlin, himself based on the Celtic druids. The contemporary fantasy hero looks back through a myriad of folk-tale and legendary heroes to the epic heroes: Beowulf, Achilles and Odysseus; and the 'larger than life' aspects of the hero's task or quest and those supernatural powers which are effective in the fantasy world come from myth and epic as well.

If much of the content and many of the concrete items come from myth, epic and legend, the essential structure of high fantasy is taken from the magic tale, the *Märchen*.

The *Märchen* is, in fact, an adventure story with a single hero ... The hero's (or heroine's) career starts, as everyone else's, in the dull and miserable world of reality. Then, all of a sudden, the supernatural world involves him and challenges the mortal, who undertakes his long voyage to happiness. He enters the magic forest, guided by supernatural helpers, and defeats evil powers beyond the boundaries of man's universe. Crossing several borders of the Beyond, performing impossible tasks, the hero is slandered, banished, tortured, trapped, betrayed. He suffers death by extreme cruelty but is always brought back to life again. Suffering turns him into a real hero: as often as he is devoured, cut up, swallowed, or turned into a beast, so does he become stronger and handsomer and more worthy of the prize he seeks. His ascent from rags to riches ends with the beautiful heroine's hand, a kingdom, and marriage. The final act of the *Märchen* brings the hero back to the human world; he metes out justice, punishes the evil, rewards the good.

(Dégh 1972: 63)

Although not all high fantasies contain each and every element in Dégh's outline, each tale contains most of them; and sometimes, as in the case of the death and rebirth of the hero, the action may be metaphoric rather than realistic.

The society of high fantasy is drawn from medieval romance as is much of the material culture and technology. The people live in castles and manor houses, the transport (unless magical) is by horse on land and by sailing ship at sea, both the domestic and military technologies (except for wizardry) are essentially frozen at a level which would be recognisable to a medieval Briton, and the ideals are a distillation of those which have come down to the twentieth century as the Arthurian tradition – the dream of Camelot. And although most of the main characters are from the upper classes – kings and queens, princes and princesses, wizards, knights and ladies – there is always the chance that the orphan will prove himself worthy (in which case, he, too, will join the elite at the end of the tale). In addition to these rather concrete materials, medieval romance also provides high fantasy with something more abstract, its style.

What separates the good from the bad in high fantasy has less to do with the material on which the writer draws than it does on how he or she tells the story. Ursula Le Guin

argues that the 'style is, of course the book ... If you remove the style, all you have left is a synopsis of the plot' (1982: 84). Style is especially important in high fantasy, Le Guin continues, because to

create what Tolkien calls a 'secondary universe' is to make a new world. A world where no voice has ever spoken before; where the act of speech is the act of creation. The only voice that speaks there is the creator's voice. And every word counts.

(1982: 85)

The elevated and sometimes formal style of the medieval romance is certainly appropriate to the actions being described. As Dainis Bisenieks comments, 'There is no pretending, as in some modern novels, that inconsequence is the rule of life; the tales of Faerie are of those who walk with destiny and must be careful what they are about' (1974: 617). Chronologically more recent than myth and epic, medieval romance may be the most observable ancestor of and influence on high fantasy.

It was, in fact, the interest of the English Romantics in the medieval which led directly to the writing of high fantasy. Whereas myth, epic, legend, romance and folk tale contain most of the elements which are found in modern high fantasy, they are traditional narrative forms from ages in which the distinctions between the mimetic and the fantastic were less formalised than they are now. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the scientific method, with its emphasis on rationalism and experimentation, began to take hold; and the literary world, like the scientific and technological worlds, attempted to ban the fantastic as unsuitable for modern, educated tastes. The prose which grew during that period – history, biography, newspaper reporting and the essay – reflected the interest of the times in things factual.

The Romantics, rejecting or bypassing the rational orientation of the previous centuries, looked to the medieval and beyond for their inspiration, bringing back to popularity the vast resources of the fantastic in the Celtic and Scandinavian literatures as well as reinvigorating classical pieces such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Reawakened interest in pre-Renaissance literatures, along with the popularity of gothic fiction and a century of tales imported from the Middle East, the Far East and South America, contributed to the conditions in which high fantasy could be created. In addition, other intentionally fantastic literature was appearing in Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century. John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* and George MacDonald's numerous books, among other works, while not high fantasies themselves, certainly helped set the stage for the creation of that form. That creation began with William Morris.

Morris, well known for his interest in all aspects of the medieval and especially his literary inclinations toward the Arthurian materials and his interest in the Icelandic sagas, is generally acknowledged to be the first to have brought the elements of traditional narrative together in novel form to create a secondary world within which to set a fantastic tale told in a high style (Carter 1973: 25). There were certainly tales which a modern reader would call fantastic written and told before Morris wrote *The Wood Beyond the World* (1895), but they were not deliberate attempts to create a logically cohesive secondary world.

We have no way of knowing what cultures previous to the Renaissance thought was mimetic and what they thought was fantastic; those categories were not then the mutually

exclusive categories we consider them today. In fact, they may not have been mutually exclusive for British culture (and by extension American culture) until some time in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The novel, developed from the factual prose of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was initially mimetic, if at times certainly exaggerated; and Morris was the first to consciously break from that realistic tradition and create the world in which the action of *The Wood Beyond the World* is set.

The Wood Beyond the World illustrates the difference between content and intent, a difference that many fantasy critics and historians have ignored. Certainly there appeared in myth, legend, and folk tale all of the paraphernalia of high fantasy – dragons, witches, wizards, shape-changers, magic spells and rings, cloaks of invisibility and the like; but having any or all of those elements in the content of a story does not necessarily mean that the author was intending to write high fantasy. At one time, people did believe in witches, wizards and magic spells and would have thought them mimetic, not fantastic, elements in a story. By the late nineteenth century, consensus reality no longer included those items; and Morris's intent in including them in the content of *The Wood Beyond the World* was to create a story that was, in fact, a departure from consensus reality – that is, a high fantasy.

Morris's story begins in Langton on Holm, certainly an English-sounding place name, with a hero named Golden Walter who is, we are told, the son of Bartholomew Golden of the Lineage of the Goldings. Walter, following a disastrous first marriage, decides to depart on one of his father's ships and see something of the world. After seven months of travel and several encounters with a mysterious trio – a woman, a young girl and a dwarf – Walter receives word that his father has died and sets out for home. The ship is blown off course, and Walter leaves a world at least objectively like our own for a secondary world in which he will encounter aspects of the fertility goddess. Having seen the old goddess destroyed and having himself slain the dwarf, Walter will marry 'the maid' (a goddess as well), descend from the wilderness to the secondary world's major city, and become king.

The Wood Beyond the World contains elements from all of the traditional sources. The old goddess's sacrifice so that the young goddess can marry and assume her role as fertility figure is a variant of a pattern common in ancient mythology. Golden Walter's taking his father's last name as his first is evidence of Morris's interest in Scandinavian traditions. The journey across the ocean to a vastly different world is based on voyage literature from a variety of Western European literary traditions, including the legend and the folk tale. The technology of wooden sailing ships, the descriptions of clothing, and the swords, knives, and bows and arrows are all found in medieval romance. The language of the novel, including such words as 'mickle' for 'much' and 'wot' for 'know,' has a late-medieval ring to it, and Morris's overall style is reminiscent of the medieval romances he is known to have studied. Although he wrote many other books, William Morris and *The Wood Beyond the World* deserve their initial place in the development of high fantasy.

The possibilities for fantasy broadened considerably in the late years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, Beatrix Potter's various animals and their adventures, J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, A. A. Milne's *Pooh* books, and L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books, to name but a few of the most famous, opened the door wide for fantasy written and marketed for the young reader. Another major publishing series was undertaken by Howard Pyle; his most famous works, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883) and *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights* (1903), reinvigorated traditional British legends. It was also during this time that the educational system began to reach children at almost all socio-economic levels and to teach them to read; simultaneously, the publishing industry developed faster and cheaper

printing techniques, ensuring that the enlarged reading public would have books and magazines to read. Almost simultaneously, the next steps in the development of high fantasy were taken by a reteller, T. H. White, and a creator who made high fantasy his own domain, J. R. R. Tolkien.

White's *The Sword in the Stone* (1939), the first section of what was to become *The Once and Future King*, is a high-fantasy novel written for young readers. In that book, White tells the story of the child Arthur, covering those years between his birth and his drawing the sword from the stone to become King of England. Unlike the *Märchen* pattern or *The Wood Beyond the World*, there is no transition in White's book from the ordinary world to the secondary world; when the reader opens the book, the story begins with the orphan, Arthur, in what is both the ordinary world, for him, and the secondary world in which both he and the reader will discover the existence of the impossible. Merlin is there in both his specific role, as Merlin the Magician, and in a generic role as the avuncular guide and wisdom-giver who superintends the Hero's growth. At the end of *The Sword in the Stone*, Arthur emerges from his protective isolation, having conquered the challenges of growing up, to become the High King.

White's retelling of the Arthurian materials signalled important developments in high fantasy. First, as there is very little of the youth of Arthur preserved in medieval manuscripts, White tells the story of Arthur's youth from his understanding of the traditional tale; that is, White's invention or rendition of Arthur's early years is patterned after the early years of all the heroes in all the tales known. Second, White makes the Arthurian materials fantastic. Instead of merely retelling the stories in modern prose, White augments descriptive passages and action as the novel framework allows, but also adds a larger component of the impossible to make his telling 'more fantastic' (especially to a modern audience) than the original. Third, White adds humour to the high-fantasy novel, but while he has fun *with* the magic, he never makes fun *of* the magic; the characters who do make fun of the magic are the 'dolts' of the book, and White makes fun *of them*. By rounding out the Arthurian materials in these ways, White transformed them from medieval romances into high fantasy and made both the Arthurian materials and high fantasy accessible to young readers.

As White was finishing the first steps in the reinvigoration of the Arthurian legends begun by Pyle, J. R. R. Tolkien was beginning to map the boundaries of the secondary world. Although not Arthurian, Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, like White's fantasy, is a large book written for children which tells a fantastic tale full of gentle humour, genuine danger and serious magic. It is also a book which displays a carefully crafted secondary world. Bilbo Baggins's front porch, where the action of *The Hobbit* begins, is in an even less familiar world than Arthur's foster home in *The Sword in the Stone* (even if it superficially resembles an idealised Merrie England) and Bilbo undertakes a *Märchen*-like journey not through a fantastic and legendary Britain but into a Middle Earth of wizards, dwarves, elves, trolls, giants, shape-changers and dragons, in which even he only half-believed and understood very little of when the story opened. By the end of the novel, with the dragon slain, the treasure recovered and order restored, Bilbo knows a great deal more about the secondary world than he did at the beginning – and so does the reader.

The Hobbit was published in 1937 as a children's book and was an immediate success. Allen and Unwin, the book's publishers, soon began urging Tolkien to write 'another Hobbit', even though he had a greater interest in the mythological materials which would be published as *The Silmarillion* some years after his death (Helms 1981: ix). In 1953 and 1954, however, Tolkien completed and Allen and Unwin published, in their regular listings

and not as a children's book, *The Lord of the Rings*. That enormous book, usually presented in three volumes, drew *The Hobbit* into its own tremendous aura, and the earlier, smaller volume became, as the Ballantine paperback's cover announces, the 'enchancing prequel to *The Lord of the Rings*'. Today, the two are stocked together in the fantasy or even the Tolkien section of most bookstores and are read by virtually all age groups; this is true of much high fantasy, that whatever age group it might have been written for, it is, in fact, read by all.

It is important to remember, however, that Tolkien began his career in high fantasy with a book that he thought of – as did his publishers – as a children's book. Picking up on the idea that *The Hobbit* was a 'prelude' to *The Lord of the Rings*, a number of critics have suggested, as Randall Helms does, that *The Hobbit* can be seen as a 'midwife' to the birth of *The Lord of the Rings* out of the material that was to become *The Silmarillion* (1981: 80). Elsewhere Helms states:

Taken in and for itself, Tolkien's children's story deserves little serious, purely literary criticism. But we cannot take *The Hobbit* by itself, for it stands at the threshold of one of the most immense and satisfying imaginative creations of our time, *The Lord of the Rings*.

(Helms 1974: 80)

But relegating *The Hobbit* to prelude status allows critics to ignore that book's value as a children's book and as high fantasy, and it could lead them to miss some of its influence on Tolkien's later fiction and on fantasy literature in general.

The Hobbit contains three major characteristics which help identify it as a children's book: intrusions by the author, a plot about growing up, and word or language play. These characteristics, as Lois Kuznets notes in 'Tolkien and the Rhetoric of Childhood', are found not only in *The Hobbit* but are a part of the general rhetoric found in various classics of children's literature (1981: 150–1). Tolkien, however, may have drawn on sources other than children's literature for those characteristics. Authorial intrusion was certainly a part of the ancient literatures he studied; there are numerous incidents of authorial intrusion in *Beowulf* and in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, two poems with which Tolkien was very familiar. The plot about growing up could also have come from those sources; both Beowulf and Gawain learn from their experiences and return home, as does Bilbo, significantly changed. And Tolkien, as a student of language, was himself delighted by words and word play and, as a student of Scandinavian and Celtic traditions, he knew how highly those peoples valued words, stories and songs. Moreover, Tolkien did not begin with a list of characteristics of children's literature; he began with a story he was telling his son at bedtime.

Thus Tolkien began with the tale itself. Numerous critics have commented on the structural similarities of the plots of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* as if that were a defect in Tolkien's writing (see Helms 1981; Nitzsche 1979; and Petty 1979); but what they usually fail to note is that Tolkien's plot structure is the structure of the *Märchen* or magic tale, the legend and the epic. Folklore and mythology scholarship has repeatedly shown that traditional stories share traditional characteristics, and Tolkien wanted to tell a traditional story. As T. A. Shippey remarks,

[I]like Walter Scott or William Morris before him, [Tolkien] felt the perilous charm of the archaic world of the North, recovered from bits and scraps by generations of

inquiry. He wanted to tell a story about it simply, one feels, because there were hardly any complete ones left.

(1983: 54; see also Sullivan 2001)

Unlike the tales he had studied, which were in existence in oral tradition long before they were written down, the tales he published, with the exception of the early parts of *The Hobbit*, were written down without a specific pre-existing orality.

Some of Tolkien's sources, however, lie in the traditional stories from pre-Christian Northern Europe and are easily traceable. The names of the dwarves come directly from Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, wherein the inquisitive reader will discover, among other things, that Gandalf means 'sorcerer elf'. The dragon, Smaug, with his soft underside, is very like the Midgard Serpent, the dragon in *Beowulf*, and Fafnir, in *The Volsunga Saga*; and Bilbo's theft of Smaug's cup is reminiscent of a similar scene in *Beowulf*. Beorn, the shape-changer, also comes from Scandinavian legend and folk tale. Dain's reputation as a generous lord and Fili and Kili's death protecting Thorin can both be traced to Scandinavian prototypes. Gandalf's role as wizard and guide for Bilbo may be patterned after Merlin's similar role in the Arthurian stories and more generally based on the Celtic druids. The traditional hero of the story, Bard, certainly takes his name from Celtic sources and his role in the novel from the traditional hero tale. And there is much more.

Tolkien's use of these obvious Scandinavian and Celtic materials does not make his tale derivative, however. In *The Celts*, Gerhard Herm describes the education of a Bard or Druid and notes that the Bard had to learn 'all of the old stories circulating that the public invariably wished to hear again and again, in the same traditional form' (1979: 239). Tolkien would have known, from his own studies of the ancient tales, that the traditional story-teller was not inventing new stories but retelling old ones, that the art of the story-teller was not, like that of the modern novelist, in inventing something new but in retelling something old and retelling it very well. Tolkien took the traditional materials he knew, including the dragons which had held his attention since childhood, and retold them as *The Hobbit*. What Tolkien was able to do was to call on a lifetime's study of Northern European languages, histories, legends, mythologies, literatures and the like; to simmer them together until the whole was distinct from the origins as well as greater than the sum of its parts; and to synthesise a cohesive secondary world for his high fantasy which was both original and resonant with the echoes of hundreds of years of pre-Renaissance European culture – especially the Celtic and Scandinavian sources which have influenced so much post-Tolkien high fantasy (Sullivan 1989).

The reader who moves from *The Hobbit* to *The Lord of the Rings* moves from a novel with a single plot and a limited number of characters to a novel with several plots and an enormous number of characters; from a novel which follows the folk-tale format quite closely to a novel which has the folk-tale format as its base but also contains much of the structure and content of legend as well as elements of myth; and from a novel in which there is a finalising conclusion to a novel which points to events both previous and subsequent to the story told within its pages and whose conclusion is, at best, a temporary victory for the main characters. In short, *The Lord of the Rings* is written for a more mature and experienced reader who can deal with its complex and highly textured story.

If the initial publication of *The Hobbit* and, later, *The Lord of the Rings* were important steps in the development of high fantasy, their paperback publication was crucial to high fantasy's current status. That publication of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* in the mid-1960s created a popular market for high fantasy, and for fantasy in general, which

continues to this day. As Ruth Nadelman Lynn's *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography* (1989) illustrates, there are many books which might fall under the general heading of fantasy. Her chapter entitled 'High Fantasy (Heroic or Secondary World Fantasy)' runs approximately eighty pages and is divided into three sections: alternate worlds or histories, myth fantasy, and travel to other worlds.

All three sections contain books immediately recognisable as children's or young adults' books as well as books usually considered adult reading. The first section contains Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Lloyd Alexander's Prydain books as well as Richard Adams's *Shardik* and Gene Wolfe's Torturer series. The second section contains Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* and White's *The Sword in the Stone* as well as Terry Bisson's *The Talking Man* and Evangeline Walton's Mabinogion tetralogy. And the third section contains L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* and Andre Norton's Witch World series as well as Greg Bear's *The Infinity Concerto* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

Not only is Lynn's definition of high fantasy more inclusive than most, the second set of works mentioned for each section includes books written and marketed for an adult audience. The reader who moves easily and naturally from *The Hobbit* to *The Lord of the Rings* moves just as easily from any of the obvious children's or young adults' books in Lynn's bibliography to many if not most of the adult books also listed there. The fact that adults read *The Hobbit* and young readers work their way through *The Lord of the Rings* points up a major feature of this kind of writing: high fantasy appeals to a kind of reader rather than a reader of a certain age. High fantasy's reliance on traditional form and content makes it accessible to the younger readers and, at the same time, invests it with thematic significance for the older readers who will appreciate it on a different level.

The popularity of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* not only created a popular interest in high fantasy, it also created an academic interest in fantasy. That interest supports a major scholarly organisation, the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, as well as dozens of fantasy subgroups within other scholarly organisations. The fantastic is the subject of articles appearing in a variety of academic journals, and there are fantasy literature courses on most university campuses in the USA and at universities across the world.

But the most important thing that Tolkien did in those two books was to set the standard by which other high fantasy would be judged. Numerous book covers pronounce this or that offering to be 'in the Tolkien tradition' or 'the next *Lord of the Rings*' or the author to be 'the next Tolkien', but in truth few even merit comparison and the vast majority fall far short. Even C. S. Lewis's Narnia series, which is itself a classic high fantasy and must be ranked with Tolkien's books, seems, at the very least, a bit too obviously didactic when compared to the more subtle ethics and morality in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Two prominent inheritors of Tolkien's legacy are Ursula K. Le Guin, who considers herself a writer in the Tolkien tradition, and Philip Pullman, who sets himself apart from it. In the original Earthsea trilogy, Le Guin presents the education, maturation and triumph of the male wizard, Ged; and although the books are heavily influenced by Eastern philosophies, the product is very much a traditional high fantasy. In the two books she has recently added to the series, Le Guin reverses her orientation and discusses the role of women in such a society, speculating about their power and how it is different from men's power. Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, somewhat reminiscent of writings by Mark Twain and Harlan Ellison, challenges traditional Western notions of spirituality, salvation and especially God. Pullman intentionally rejects the traditional

happy ending (Tolkien's 'consolation') for most of the main characters; and their journey of self-discovery, which has changed both them and the cosmos, does not lead to the typical *Märchen* ending described by Dégh (above). Both Le Guin and Pullman build upon the Tolkien tradition, using its solid foundation as a platform from which to create, as Le Guin aptly puts it, a 'revised' story.

Any listing of books by genre opens the doors for debate, and a category as narrow as high fantasy has very disputable borders. Still, some of the following books, in addition to the ones mentioned above, may well be listed among the twentieth-century classics of high fantasy when literary history passes judgement: Peter Beagle's *The Last Unicorn*; John Bellairs's *The Face in the Frost*; Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*; Gillian Bradshaw's Arthurian trilogy; Emma Bull's *The War for the Oaks*; Joy Chant's *Red Moon and Black Mountain*; Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* series; Jane Louise Curry's *The Sleepers*; Charles de Lint's *Moonheart*; Stephen R. Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*; Kate Elliott's *Crown of Stars* series; Alan Garner's *The Owl Service*; Barbara Hambly's *Dragonsbane*; Guy Gavriel Kay's *Tigana*; Louise Lawrence's *The Earth Witch*; R. R. MacAvoy's *Tea with the Black Dragon*; Patricia McKillip's *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*; Kenneth Morris's *The Fates of the Princes of Dyfed* and *Book of the Three Dragons*; Rosemary Sutcliff's Celtic and Iron Age novels; and Roger Zelazny's *Amber* series.

The current popularity of high fantasy and the quality of the best books in that genre today are due in large part to Tolkien's being in the right place at the right time – twice. From the 1920s to the early 1950s, he was in the right place and time to acquire the education and interests that inform *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In the 1960s and after, he, in the person of his books, was in the right place and time to influence a whole generation of readers and writers who took his works as the model for high fantasy. What Tolkien had succeeded in doing, as reading the books aloud clearly demonstrates, was wedding the oral tale's style and content to the novel's format, creating an epic every bit as large as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Those who would be Virgil to his Homer are fortunate to have a climate hospitable to high fantasy.

The most recent developments in high fantasy have not been in the adult literature department but in film and in young adult literature. Although perhaps not technically high fantasy, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books share much of their structure and content with traditional high fantasy, as does a newer series, the Artemis Fowl novels of Eoin Colfer. The popularity of these two series, especially the Harry Potter books, may well be creating a readership for high fantasy that will be moving on to other books by other authors. Similarly, the film series made from the Harry Potter books and the films of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* have both been extremely popular, also creating a readership that might not have been aware of this literature without them; this is particularly true of the Tolkien films, for they have returned *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* to the best-sellers' list for the first time in many years.

The future of high fantasy lies in the past. Because it is a form that draws so heavily on the past for virtually all of its context, content, and style, there can be little literary innovation in the genre. This lack of room for innovation has led many writers to produce formulaic fiction with plenty of action but little thematic content beyond a basic good-wins-over-evil 'lesson'. But within the flood of such books, truly thoughtful, well-crafted, and thought-provoking fiction, like Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* books and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, will shine out. And in the end, the best high fantasies will be written by those authors who, like Tolkien, can most successfully synthesise their knowledge of the traditional narratives and the cultures in which they were popular, and who can also tell a story well.

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33 Domestic fantasy

Real gardens with imaginary toads

Louisa Smith

So the Boggart looked ahead in happy anticipation, not knowing that he was living now in a world which no longer believed in Boggarts, a world which had driven out the Old Things and buried the Wild Magic deep under layers of reason and time.

(Cooper 1993: 67)

Thus Susan Cooper, an author noted for her works of high fantasy, presents the Boggart destined to plague the lives of today's children: indeed, they have few resources available to explain the perplexing happenings in their logic-centred lives.

If reason and time are not successful explanations for events, then authors can use the genre of domestic fantasy, with its introduction of a touch of magic – a magic that appears in a realistic setting within a realistic family. Frequently, children face a problem common to those experienced in realistic fiction – a broken family, problems at school, a move to a new home. The addition of magic (in its broadest senses) helps both child characters and child readers to a new vantage-point. The essence is that, in domestic fantasy, that magic stays only briefly. For example, by the end of E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Fern has become friendly with Henry Fussy and no longer needs to spend her time in the barnyard, listening to the animals talking.

Children's literature of the fantastic suggests either high drama – battles between the powers of lightness and darkness – or stuffed animals capering about a nursery world after hours. Generally the chief human actors in these fantasies are children imbued with the key attribute of being parent-free; parents, after all, would get in the way by providing cautions which would inhibit the child characters from stepping through wardrobes or time-travelling. An intact family unit almost defeats the concept of fantasy, but it commonly points out the fundamental conflict between fantastic and rational views of the world, or between (stereotypically) the child's view and the adult's.

Domestic settings have been traditional in wonder tales, where 'magic' operates in everyday life to right a wrong. Parents – or, frequently, step-parents – in such tales can be the cause of the problem; usually a young person with limited capacities – no money, no position – is rewarded because of virtues regarded worthy by the culture, such as kindness, wit or beauty. However, when a book is set in an actual place and in an actual time, with a real family, then those virtues may not be enough. Despite the fact that the suspension of disbelief is harder to achieve, the intervention of the person with special powers or a magic object may be the catalyst that solves the problem and brings a satisfactory resolution.

When the fantasy occurs largely or completely in a 'secondary' world, such as C. S. Lewis's *Narnia*, or L. Frank Baum's *Oz*, or A. A. Milne's *Hundred Acre Wood*, where links with normality are relatively insignificant or irrelevant, or make their point peripherally, the

author has the luxury of creating a world complete with its own rules, borrowing only that reality necessary to relate the action to children. Fantasy set more solidly in 'reality' has to be more circumspect; it may be given an ambiguous status, as in Mary Norton's *Borrowers* sequence (from 1952) with its complex frame of hearsay evidence; or it may simply be discounted as a dream, as in John Masefield's *The Box of Delights* (1935), or it may take on a mystical status as in Lucy Boston's *The Children of Green Knowe* (1954). Only by great ingenuity can it be integrated into normal life, as in E. Nesbit's *Five Children and It* (1902), or Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), in which the oldest spirit in England brings to the children characters from the past, and their presence is deftly hidden from the adults who carry on their lives around them.

The fantastic mode in domestic life can be employed to solve real problems imaginatively or to provide an escape (as in William Mayne's *A Game of Dark* (1971)), or to confront child protagonists with situations which require brave and intelligent responses. However, rather than being a means of imaginative liberation for the child, it can be, and frequently is, the vehicle for moral teaching, made all the more relevant by fantasy's proximity to reality.

The conventions of the 'realistic' domestic story are family, home life and a recognisable setting; Nesbit gave readers a family of five children, a London or rural home with servants, a mother and father (often absent), and then added the Psammead, the Phoenix or an enchanted ring. Rudyard Kipling added Puck to his Sussex home of Bateman's in *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). At the end of the twentieth century, David Almond has his child characters discover a fallen angel in the most mundane of urban settings in *Skellig* (1998).

Domestic fantasy is central to children's books in many countries, relating as it does the imaginative to the well known, either allowing children imaginative freedom within a safe framework or defamiliarising that framework. There are two very broad categories of domestic fantasy: first, where parents provide and/or accept the magic, and second, where children discover a magic being or thing which has the power to change their lives, but which parents fail to notice. Within these, we can distinguish the didactic and the problem-solving uses of fantasy.

Five books, each with a different approach to fantasy, will be discussed, to stand for hundreds of others of the same type: *A Bear Called Paddington* (1958) by Michael Bond; *Mary Poppins* (1934) by P. L. Travers; *The Ogre Downstairs* (1974) by Diana Wynne Jones; *Vice Versa* (1893) by F. Anstey; and *Freaky Friday* (1972) by Mary Rodgers.

The parents who are the most aware and accepting of the fantastic being are Mr and Mrs Brown in *A Bear Called Paddington*. Almost immediately upon the discovery of a small talking bear on the platform at Paddington Station in London, they agree to take him home to live with them: as Mrs Brown observes at the end of the first book, 'It's nice having a bear about the house' (Bond 1958: 128). As Margery Fisher suggests:

the central absurdity works simply because it is taken completely for granted. Though Paddington remains an animal in appearance and movement, he is more like another child in the family, whose peccadilloes are excused because he is different. Incongruity is the moving force of the stories.

(Fisher 1975: 269)

The premise, according to Paddington, that 'things are always happening to me. I'm that sort of bear' (Bond, 1958 *et seq.*) has sustained the fantasy through more than fifty books.

Humour is important too, as is the case with *Mary Poppins*. Left abruptly without a nanny for their four children, Mr and Mrs Banks engage Mary Poppins, who arrives without references because, as she observes imperiously, it isn't fashionable to give them. In quick succession, Jane and Michael observe her flying in on the wind, sliding up the banister, pulling items out of an empty carpetbag and ladling different tasting medicines out of the same bottle. In contrast, the adults appreciate her orderliness and her matter-of-fact managing of the nursery.

On their first outing with her, Michael and Jane visit Mary Poppins's Uncle Wigg and find him bobbing around on the ceiling, buoyed up by his own good humour. On the bus ride home, Michael and Jane try to talk about the experience. Mary Poppins responds,

What, roll and bob? How dare you. I'll have you know that my uncle is a sober, honest, hardworking man, and you'll be kind enough to speak of him respectfully, and don't bite your bus ticket! Roll and bob, indeed – the idea.

(Travers 1934/1945: 46)

This establishes the pattern of subsequent outings – something out of the ordinary happens, and Mary Poppins denies it and takes offence at the suggestion that it did. The parent Banks are kept in the dark; when Jane tries to tell her mother about shopping with the Pleiads, for example, Mrs Banks replies: 'We imagine strange and lovely things, my darling' (193).

The appeal of the books, beyond the humorous situations, may also lie in what Patricia Demers identifies as Michael and Jane's attachment to Mary Poppins.

The bond between her and the children is cemented as much by her brusqueness as by her firm yet sympathetic adult presence. Neither bored with her charges, nor infantilised by their demands, Mary Poppins is clearly at home in the nursery, and entirely capable of dealing with their curious questions.

(Demers 1991: 86)

Certainly the fantasy, often unexpected, enlivens their lives, but it is coupled with the assurance that they will return home, that Mary Poppins will remain unchanged, every hair in place, vain, curt and reliable. The only threat is her possible departure, which is softened when it occurs by her promise of a return.

Although both books are clearly comedies, the incongruence between the fantasy and the 'reality' is emphasised in both *A Bear Called Paddington* and *Mary Poppins* by the setting – a real London. In Diana Wynne Jones's *The Ogre Downstairs*, the setting of a rural market town has a similar effect, and there is further displacement because the book reads like a realistic 'problem' novel and the fantasy merges into realistic problem solving.

This book features a combined family, three children of the mother and two sons of the father. The step-father is referred to as 'the Ogre' by the mother's three children. The joining of the two families has not gone smoothly; daily battles and small indignations occur. The mother's children are sloppy, the father's neat. The father is reduced to bellowing for silence; he frequently retreats to his study. The mother has headaches. In an attempt to pacify the children, the father gives two chemistry sets, one each, to the younger boys.

They are magic sets. First the children fly. The second experiment reduces the size of one of the father's children; this is followed by a transformation of one boy into the other:

each literally learns what it is like to be in each other's shoes; then one child becomes invisible, and inanimate objects come alive. Finally, the mother departs in desperation, and the children are left to explain the chemistry sets to the ogre. At this point, Wynne Jones links fantasy and reality, for, against the conventions of the genre, he believes them, and together they set about righting their living conditions. The children learn to like each other, to understand the father, and he them; the mother returns, and the last use of the chemistry set turns certain household objects into gold which sell for huge amounts of money at auction, allowing the family 'to move into a larger house almost at once, where, they all admitted, they were much happier. Everyone had a room to himself' [*sic*] (Jones 1975: 191).

The technique of transformation is also used in *Vice Versa* and *Freaky Friday* to accomplish similar ends as in *The Ogre Downstairs*, an understanding of what it is like to be someone else – focusing particularly on the adult–child divide. In *Vice Versa*, the emphasis is on the father learning how awful it is to be a child attending a public (that is, in Britain, a private boarding) school; in *Freaky Friday*, the mother actuates the transformation so that the daughter can understand how difficult she is making her mother's life.

Vice Versa is subtitled 'a lesson to fathers'. The father, Paul Bultitude, is pompous and overbearing. He finds his son Dick a trial and can hardly wait for him to return to his school, appropriately called Grimstone. On their parting interview, Paul tells his son: 'I only wish, at this very moment, I could be a boy again, like you. Going back to school wouldn't make me unhappy, I can tell you' (Anstey 1893: 22). He gets the wish, and (as Dick) is hauled off to school where he is roundly mistreated by the staff and other boys, and learns what it is like not to have money. Meanwhile, Dick, in his father's body, thoroughly enjoys himself, treats his younger brother and sister to pantomimes and plays with them. When the transformation is reversed after a week, the father has a whole new view on Dick's education and reflects that 'his experiences, unpleasant as they had been, had had their advantages: they had drawn him and his family closer together' (366).

While Dick learns that being an adult with money is desirable, the opposite occurs in *Freaky Friday*. Annabel Andrews thinks it is hard being thirteen, but after a day in her mother's body is happy to remain herself. Only at the end of the book does the reader learn that the mother was, in some unexplained way, responsible for the change. While the book focuses on the daughter struggling to cope with her mother's appointments and chores, the mother has gone out and had her hair cut and bought new clothes, and had the braces taken off her teeth. Much of the humour in this book is based on what Annabel doesn't know, just as in *Vice Versa* Paul, the father, has problems with school friends and school codes and classroom material.

Perhaps the most persuasive modern British example is William Mayne, who in *Earthfasts* (1967) and its sequels has a Napoleonic drummer boy, Nellie Jack John, move to the twentieth century, where he is accepted into a local society that accepts such vagaries of time and nature (once he has been washed, and his skin conditions have been treated). Mayne's bold acceptance of the supernatural into the real world (the book also contains a house-spirit, the Boggart) is an important variation on the normally confrontational nature of domestic fantasy.

Some major classic writers fall within my second category of domestic fantasy, in which the children are responsible for discovering the magic being or thing, a good number of which are dug out from the past.

For example, the children in E. Nesbit's *Five Children and It* unearth the Psammead in a sand pit in a realistically described Kent where the children are spending the summer. A

survivor from the Neolithic age, the Psammead is described as ‘old, old, old, and its birthday was almost at the very beginning of everything’ (Nesbit 1902: 11). The Psammead has the magical ability to grant a wish a day; each chapter presents another wish gone wrong. They retain the knowledge of the adventures and are, it is assumed, wiser about what is essential to happiness. The fantasy is kept well in its place; magic effects wear off at sunset, and both parents are absent; when they return at the end of the book, truthful Jane tries to explain: “We found a Fairy,” said Jane obediently. “No nonsense, please,” said her mother sharply’ (288). As in *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904) and *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), the children know better than the adults.

Roger Lancelyn Green has cited the influence on Nesbit of F. Anstey’s *The Brass Bottle* and *Vice Versa*, and of Mrs Molesworth’s novels, especially *The Cuckoo Clock*. Published in 1887, *The Cuckoo Clock* is characteristic of the way in which domestic fantasy developed. It features a magic cuckoo crafted by Griselda’s great-grandfather which introduces her to various adventures. As Rosenthal has observed:

Far from separating her from reality, Griselda’s forays into the world of fantasy have a direct and immediate impact on her daily life; her two worlds begin to interlock as in ‘real’ life she begins to obey her aunts’ instructions and do her lessons despite her distaste for ‘musting’.

(Rosenthal 1986: 190)

The Psammead and the Phoenix and the Cuckoo are all argumentative ‘adult’ characters who moralise, but the day of the adult openly moralising to the child (and expecting to have an effect) was over. Thus Puck, called forth by accident by Una and Dan on Midsummer Eve in Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, is intended to educate more subtly.

Linking past with present has also been achieved ingeniously in the USA. Nina, in Eleanor Cameron’s *The Court of the Stone Children* (1973), also meets the physical presence of a child from the past, Dominique, who has been transported to a San Francisco museum which has reconstructed the period rooms of her chateau. Displacement is more common, as with Nancy Bond’s *A String in the Harp* (1984). An American family, mourning the unexpected death of the mother, moves to Aberystwyth in west Wales, and the father buries himself in his work. His three children adjust to living in a foreign country with varying degrees of success; Peter, who is most unhappy, discovers a harp key which starts to show him life from the Arthurian period.

He had thought he’d be safe with other people around – it had always come when he was alone before – but he was helpless to stop it ... The study vanished. In its place, Peter saw the country called the Low Hundred lying flat under the hammering rain ... The Key sang a wild and ominous song that wove through the gale inexorably, showing Peter a series of painfully vivid images.

(Bond 1984: 66)

Bond uses the intrusion of the supernatural into everyday life as both threat and challenge, as Susan Cooper (using similar materials) did in her *The Dark Is Rising* sequence (from *Over Sea, under Stone* (1965)). Here, Peter’s sisters first notice that he is drifting off, going blank; eventually, they can see some of what Peter is seeing, and the links to the Welsh epic *The Mabinogion* and specifically to Taliesin, whose harp key Peter has found, are made explicit.

Once again, the fantasy has a direct effect on reality. By the end of the book, Peter is not reluctant to spend another year in Wales even it means 'another year of rain and freezing cold houses and a language that's got no vowels and a bunch of kids who don't know how to play football' (Bond 1984: 256). Because the children have had to confide in their father and because he has taken time to re-examine his children, the newly configured family is on stronger footing. As C. W. Sullivan suggests, 'without the traditional Welsh materials, *A String in the Harp* would be just another adolescent problem novel; the traditional materials make it a novel about understanding on many levels, levels which would not be present without those traditional materials' (Sullivan 1986: 37).

Possibly the most subtle and complex use of mythological elements in a modern setting has been by Alan Garner, who had used the device of an intrusive other world in *The Weirstone of Brisinghamen* (1960), *The Moon of Gomrath* (1963) and *Elidor* (1965) before writing *The Owl Service* (1967). Based on Welsh mythology and set in modern Wales in Llanymawddwy, a valley near Aberystwyth, this book would also fit Sullivan's description of just another adolescent problem novel without the fantasy. Alison, Gwyn and Roger, brought together by circumstance, are fated to live out the triangle myth of Llew Llaw Gyffes in the Fourth Branch of *The Mabinogion*. As Neil Philip states in *A Fine Anger*: 'As often in Garner's writing, children must learn to cope with their parents' failure to confront their problems' (Philip 1981: 67). Philip sees Garner's use of the myth as a symbolic alternative to the weighty pages of psychological analysis which would be necessary to straighten out the complex relationships among children and adults in the book. As Garner has said:

A prime material of art is paradox, in that paradox links two valid yet mutually exclusive systems that we need if we are to comprehend reality: paradox links intuitive and analytical thought. Paradox, the integration of the nonrational and logic, engages both emotion and intellect ... and, for me, literature is justified only so long as it keeps a sense of paradox central to its form.

(Garner 1983: 5)

Reality needs a touch of the fantastic.

Throughout the domestic fantasy books which deal with the older child, choices are made, and one of the most difficult confronts Winnie Foster at the age of eleven in a book by an American author with an American setting, *Tuck Everlasting* (1975) by Natalie Babbitt: she has the choice of living for ever in the company of an enchanting young man, or of remaining ordinary. The story is set in 1880 in New England; the Tuck family drank from a spring, which Winnie has also discovered, eighty-seven years before and have not aged a day since. They kidnap Winnie to stop her from drinking or telling anyone, and then set about convincing her of the importance and necessity of death. Winnie makes her decision: when she returns home with a bottle of water from the spring, instead of drinking it and gaining eternal life she pours it on a toad. When the Tucks return eighty years later, they find Winnie's gravemarker and the live toad.

There are many variations on these themes and devices, from Susan Cooper's electronically aware spirit *The Boggart*, to the seventeenth-century alchemist *The Ghost of Thomas Kemp* (1973) with his irascible views on modernity. But the potential complexity of the device is demonstrated by Philippa Pearce's classic *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), which moves far beyond social comment on a changing, post-war world to consider large issues of time, religion and sexuality. The fact that only *certain types* of adult understand as

reality what the reader interprets as fantasy makes the point that fantasy, as part of our psychological makeup, is neglected at our peril. Notable more recent variants on this theme have been Margaret Mahy's *The Changeover* (1984), Theresa Breslin's *Whispers in the Graveyard* (1995) and David Almond's *Skellig* and *Kit's Wilderness* (1999).

In domestic fantasy, then, some of the books, such as *Earthfasts* and the Paddington series, retain the magic, in others the magic is undone – sometimes remembered, as in *Mary Poppins*, sometimes forgotten, as in *Puck of Pook's Hill*. But it remains as a possibility in everyday life, a chance of escape, a method of coping with or transforming the everyday world. In domestic fantasy, both the tensions and the possibilities of children's fiction, the benefits of imaginary toads, are at their most potent.

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34 The family story

Gillian Avery

It is a curious fact that few authors of juvenile domestic tales have felt equal to depicting a complete family. In American books of the last century it is the mother (or perhaps a spinster aunt) who holds the home together. A happy home circle with both a Pa and a Ma as shown by Laura Ingalls Wilder has always been exceptional. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, domestic security is seemingly unknown, and children struggle to survive against a background of problem parents.

In Britain, Victorian writers ostensibly set great store by family values, but nevertheless preferred to keep mothers in the background, while fathers were distant and often feared; children were shown leading a tightly knit existence in nursery and schoolroom. This remoteness from the adult world continued into the second half of the twentieth century, with parents relegated to the background while children enjoyed their own adventures. By the 1980s adults pose the same threat that they do in the American book.

Nevertheless the Victorians produced some excellent writing. But its appeal was limited. For this the elaborate English social stratification must be blamed. The early and mid-Victorians felt bound to draw attention to class difference, to the duties which fell upon the privileged, and the need for the lower orders to stay in their own station. The late Victorians were more relaxed, but liked to describe prosperous nurseries where the young lived in isolation. It resulted for a long time in class-conscious children's books aimed at specific sectors of society.

One book, however, did step out of the usual English mode and circulate more widely. It was also unusual in presenting family life with parents who both play an equally active part in their children's upbringing. This was *The History of the Fairchild Family* by Mary Martha Sherwood (1775–1851), the first part of which was published in 1818, and which was the first realistic domestic tale for the young. The book was designed to show 'the importance and effects of a religious education'. The Calvinistic doctrine that is imparted in Mr Fairchild's lengthy homilies and prayers, and the methods he uses to bring his children into a state of grace, make it a curiosity now. Nevertheless it remained part of juvenile culture in well-conducted families for at least eighty years and was read in homes that were certainly not Calvinist.

Underlying the religious instruction is an attractive account of family life and of likeable, frequently naughty children. Indeed, the forbidding chapter head, 'Story of the Constant Bent of Man's Heart Towards Sin' is a prelude to an entirely convincing story of mischief. The little Fairchilds, with their squabbles and attempts to resist authority, are in fact far more lifelike than the two children in Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* (1839), a book expressly written to show 'that species of noisy, frolicsome, mischievous children, now almost extinct'. Harry and Laura Graham are boisterous tearaways, but they are more

like engines of destruction than children. Besides, this is no normal family; their parents are dead and they live with their grandmother but are brought up by a ferocious nurse, with a houseful of servants to clear up after them.

There were several capable early and mid-Victorian writers of domestic fiction, among them Harriet Mozley, sister of John Henry Newman, who wrote *The Fairy Bower* (1841) in reaction to the stereotypical characterisation of the moral tales prevalent in the early decades of the century. She was, she says in the preface, trying to show families as they really were. Elizabeth Sewell (1815–1906) used fiction with some skill to convey religious instruction in a family setting, as in *Amy Herbert* (1844) and *Laneton Parsonage* (1846). Annie Keary (1825–79), less solemn than either Mozley or Sewell, wrote a handful of vigorous stories about families, including *The Rival Kings* (1857), which powerfully describes the implacable hatred that children can feel for each other – a theme which few juvenile authors have cared to investigate.

But it was Charlotte Yonge (1823–1901) who was regarded as the doyenne of the domestic writers at the time. Family chronicles such as *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and *The Pillars of the House* (1873) were intended for the schoolroom girl. She loved to create vast families, often with a complicated cousinhood, from a background such as her own – upper class, devoutly Anglican, high principled, bookish. Her characterisation is nearly always convincing, unexpectedly so when she describes unruly boys or boisterous girls, such as the turbulent young Merrifields of *The Stokesley Secret* (1861) or the rebellious Kate Caergwent in *Countess Kate* (1862). But for all her concern for the sanctity of the family, Miss Yonge did not often choose to show a complete one. In *The Daisy Chain* the mother is killed early in the story in a carriage accident; in *Magnum Bonum* (1879) it is the father who has been removed, and the mother, too young and immature for the role, has to bring up her brood alone. In *The Pillars of the House* the thirteen Underwood children are orphaned. The dying father lives long enough to bless the newborn twins: ‘My full twelve, and one over, and on Twelfth-day’. The mother, her mind gone, dies a year later, and the eldest brother takes on the role of father. The immensely high standards of behaviour that Yonge expected of her young characters, the lofty idealism, the crises of conscience, are to be found in much mid-Victorian fiction.

Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841–85) was one of the best of the later Victorian writers of family stories, though her style was too subtle and leisurely to be generally popular. (Like Charlotte Yonge, she delineated characters better than she constructed plots.) Brought up in a well-born, well-read but penurious clerical family, she wrote for readers who understood that sort of background. G. M. Young, in *Victorian England* (1936) recommended *Six to Sixteen* (1875) as containing one of the best accounts of a Victorian girlhood. *A Flat Iron for a Farthing* (1872) and *We and the World* (1880) describe equally well the early years of very different boys: in the first a rather ‘precious’ only child is depicted with affectionate humour, in the second two rumbustious Yorkshire brothers. In shorter stories such as *A Great Emergency*, *Mary’s Meadow* and *A Very Ill-Tempered Family*, all written in the 1870s, she anticipates E. Nesbit’s style.

Mary Louisa Molesworth (1839–1921) was more preoccupied with social status than either of the two former writers. She was always careful to stress that her characters were the children of gentlefolk, and dwelt much upon the marks that identified them as such. She wrote over a hundred books, and is remembered for stories such as *Carrots* (1876), about sheltered and protected children, very young for their age. All that is required of them is that they should be happy and contented, and above all childlike. Fathers and mothers lead their own lives downstairs; it is nurse and the other siblings who impinge on

young lives. (Americans tended to view this arrangement with amazement if not abhorrence. Eleanor Gates's *The Poor Little Rich Girl* (1912) describes how the seven-year-old daughter of a wealthy New York couple suffers at the hands of her nurse, and longs only to be with her parents.)

The turn of the century brought a new development, a view of children preoccupied with their own imaginative games in a world where adults are, with a few exceptions, uncomprehending aliens. In the wake of Kenneth Grahame's nostalgic essays *The Golden Age* (1895) and *Dream Days* (1898), there was a torrent of verse and prose proclaiming that it was children alone who held the key to the universe. The ideal child was the imaginative child. E. Nesbit (1858–1924) made her adults shadows in the wings while her child characters, centre-stage, played out their fantasies. The child like Albert-next-door who does not want to dig for buried treasure is dismissed with contempt. In *The Story of the Treasure-Seekers* (1899) and its sequels, the six Bastable children have no mother, and a father so broken by business failure that he plays very little part in their life. They are genteelly poor, but there is always a presence in the kitchen to bring them meals and to clear up the mess. In *The Railway Children* (1906) Father has been wrongly imprisoned, Mother writes feverishly to support them all, while the three children devise more practical schemes than the Bastables' to rescue the family fortunes. The neatly happy outcome to everyone's troubles has always made this book popular.

'I think it would be nice,' says one of the Railway Children, 'to marry someone very poor, and then you'd do all the work, and see the blue wood smoke curling up among the trees from the domestic hearth as he came home from work every night.' But this was much more the American style. English writers for many years to come assumed a middle-class background free from domestic responsibility. In Enid Blyton's Famous Five stories (1942–63) the children can be certain that everything will be provided for them – the picnic baskets will always be filled by a kindly retainer – while they solve mysteries and capture international gangs of criminals. Nesbit provided even the struggling Railway family with someone to cook and clean.

This was also to be the case with Noel Streatfeild (1895–1986). Her talented children come from middle-class backgrounds and, however straitened the circumstances, there are loyal and loving servants to prop up the often scatty mothers. The great difference is that her best-remembered juvenile characters do not play; with single-minded purpose they are inching their way forward in their chosen sporting or artistic careers; Sebastian, the musical prodigy in *Apple Bough* (1962), for instance, can rarely be persuaded to put down his violin. Streatfeild's first book, *Ballet Shoes* (1936), was published in an era when the holiday adventure story reigned (Arthur Ransome's *Pigeon Post*, Joanna Cannan's *A Pony for Jean* and M. E. Atkinson's *August Adventure* were published in the same year). Holiday adventures certainly involved families, but in these books fathers are abroad or invisible, and if there are mothers they are merely a source of supplies. Parents and guardians have a far larger presence in Streatfeild stories, and the children are in touch with reality. In *Ballet Shoes* the three Fossil girls (all foundlings, none of them related) contribute to the household expenses through stage earnings at an age when the Swallows and Amazons and their kind are still absorbed in a play world. The happy optimism, the warmth of the home background, the glamour of the stage world which the author could still see through naive, teenage eyes, made it an instant best-seller, the first book about an English family to be popular with American readers.

Until at least the 1960s, a middle-class viewpoint was taken for granted in the English family story. To the authors it represented normal life; working-class characters occasion-

ally stray in, but they are a different species. Enid Blyton gave them names like Sniffer and Nobby and made them exclaim 'Cor!' and 'Coo!' The three boat-builders' sons, the 'Death and Glories', in Arthur Ransome's *Coot Club* (1934) are called Joe, Pete and Bill, which to a 1930s reader would subtly convey their origins (as, for example, the names Tamzin, Rissa, Roger, Meryon and Diccon would to 1950s readers of Monica Edwards's stories about adventures with ponies). Eve Garnett's *The Family from One End Street* (1937) was initially rejected by eight publishers who felt the setting was unacceptable. It was indeed a new departure to show a happy family where the father was a dustman and the mother a washerwoman. Seventy years before, there had been a fashion for street waif stories, such as *Jessica's First Prayer* (1867), but these had a strong religious message and such homes as the waifs knew were certainly not happy. Garnett did not dwell on the darker aspects of poverty; this is a cheerful book where the struggles of a chronically hard-up family are material for picturesque comedy; it is not an exercise in realism.

The 1960s saw the beginning of social realism and a new theme, the child alone in the world. John Rowe Townsend's *Gumble's Yard* (1961), while in effect a watershed, has curious echoes of the holiday adventure story, though one with an urban setting. Here are children foiling a criminal gang, and a fifteen-year-old narrator from the same officer mould as Arthur Ransome's John Walker and his kind – articulate, authoritative, responsible. But these children have been abandoned by the people supposedly in charge of them, their uncle Walter, a loutish petty criminal, and his feckless, almost mentally defective girlfriend. To avoid being taken into care, they try to make a home for themselves in a derelict building. In the new style, the book lacks a happy ending; Walter comes back, but there is no expectation that he can hold down a job for long. In the sequel, *Widdershins Crescent* (1965), Walter returns to crime, and the children are left to bring themselves up.

There were still to be some books where the family circle was unbroken, and the parents properly concerned for their young. In Philippa Pearce's *A Dog So Small* (1962), Ben, who yearns for a dog with such passion that he creates an invisible one, is surrounded by a family who are affectionate and anxious for his happiness, but uncomprehending. Only his grandfather understands a little of the longing that he conceals. One of the most poignant and deeply felt books of its time, it is also remarkable for its classlessness. The background in fact is similar to *One End Street*, but for almost the first time an English writer succeeds in presenting it from within and not as a phenomenon which has to be explained to readers.

The later twentieth-century authors increasingly saw books with divided and often alienated families. Brian Fairfax-Lucy, drawing on memories of his own childhood, and Philippa Pearce in their joint *The Children of the House* (1968) showed a tyrannical father, a weak and passive mother and four neglected, unloved children in a great Edwardian country house, whose sole friends are pitying servants. Edward and Jane in Penelope Lively's *Going Back* (1975) are only happy when their father is far away and they are alone with the servants. Donald in William Mayne's *A Game of Dark* (1971) hates his sick father with an obsessive intensity that comes to take complete possession of him. Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1981) describes how a half-starved, terrified child, sent out of London with other evacuees at the beginning of the Second World War, finds a proper home at last. His crazed mother has beaten and abused him; it is only when he is evacuated from London that he encounters affection.

In contrast, Nina Bawden's families in *Carrie's War* (1973) and *The Peppermint Pig* (1975) have separation forced on them by war and by misfortune. In the first book, Carrie and her brother Nick are evacuated from London in 1939 and sent to a Welsh village

where they have to adjust to a very different life with a local shopkeeper, the bullying and irascible Mr Evans, and his downtrodden sister. In the second, set some fifty years earlier, four children and their mother go to live with the latter's aunts in Norfolk when their father decides to try his luck in California after being obliged to give up his job in London. Joyfully the family is reunited in the final chapter. In Bawden's *Kept in the Dark* (1982), Noel and Clara and Ambrose are sent to stay with grandparents they have never met and who disapprove of the marriage their mother has made with an actor, now out of work and in hospital. They learn to adjust to each other, but bullying and emotional blackmail by David, an irresponsible ne'er-do-well cousin, cowers them all and destroys the harmony they have built up. Nevertheless, the mood when he goes is one of pity. 'Poor fool,' says the grandmother, 'so unhappy, so lonely' – for the feeling in the Bawden novels is of the blessing of family affection.

Helen Cresswell's seven-book saga of the Bagthorpes (1977–89) is different from all the foregoing in that it presents a united family of the earlier twentieth-century sort – literary father, talented children, jolly uncle, attendant dog – but always involved in farcical adventures. Like Lucretia Hale's American Peterkin family of a century before (*The Peterkin Papers* (1880) seems to have been Cresswell's starting point), the Bagthorpes are clever but totally lacking in common sense and lurch from one zany domestic dilemma to the next.

In the closing decades of the twentieth century a bonded household with two presiding parents became so rare as to seem eccentric. The rules changed dramatically. In 1924 an editor had deleted from one of Ethel Turner's Australian novels a reference to the first marriage, followed by divorce, of the heroine's father: 'marital unfaithfulness and divorce ... by general consent are absolutely banned from books for the young'. Fifty years later, families disintegrated and social problems loomed large. Writers such as Anne Fine and Jacqueline Wilson tackled one a year. Anne Fine, whose first four books have been described as twentieth-century comedies of manners for adolescents, moved into divorce with *Madame Doubtfire* (1987). She followed it up with *Crummy Mummy and Me* (1988), about the difficulty of coping with an irresponsible single-parent hippie mother; then *Goggle Eyes* (1989) where a teenager deeply resents mother's new boyfriend. In *The Book of the Banshee* (1991) the teenage daughter makes the house such a hell on earth that Mum is reduced to sneaking in furtively to avoid her. Jacqueline Wilson has followed much the same formulae. In *The Bed and Breakfast Star* (1994) an assortment of children are moved into bed and breakfast accommodation. 'We've all got the same mum. Our mum. But I've got a different dad. My dad never really lived with mum and me.' In *The Suitcase Kid* (1992), Andy shuttles between A and B, one week with Mum, one with Dad. *Bad Girls* (1996) features an adopted child and unsuitable friends.

American family stories, certainly in the nineteenth century, had a far wider appeal than their English counterparts. They were not bedevilled by class considerations, and there was a sense of the domestic circle gathered round the hearth (even if the father in fact was often missing). Children in the American home were not segregated from adult life, they had responsibilities, and if it was a farming family their help was vital. The books are often full of practical detail; frequently, life centres round the kitchen – represented as the source of warmth, comfort and food, but a region unknown to the inhabitants of Victorian nurseries. There are lavish descriptions of food, which the austere reared British children brooded over with intense pleasure.

The earliest writer to celebrate American domesticity was Catharine Maria Sedgwick (1789–1867) in whose *A New-England Tale* (1822) we find the charismatic female

orphan who was to become so popular with American writers. We also find the granite-hewn spinster, a miracle of domestic skills (another very popular character). In *Redwood* (1824) we can note the start of an American tradition of portraying fathers as insignificant, if not far worse. Mr Lenox, a New England farmer, is in fact industrious and frugal. But his wife is much his superior. She is the driving force in the home, and this is how it was to be in the majority of American books. Sedgwick wrote several books for children, all remarkable for degraded fathers. 'He a father!' says a son in *The Boy of Mount Rhigi* (1847), 'He makes me lie for him, and steal for him; and if I don't he tries to drown me.' Huckleberry Finn's father, it will be remembered, is much the same.

The fathers who show up best are the pioneers and the farmers. William Cardell (1780–1828), of whom little is known except that he was a schoolmaster, wrote two books which are among the earliest to describe the life of settlers. *The Story of Jack Halyard, the Sailor's Boy, or The Virtuous Family* (1825) begins on a New Jersey farm. 'Of all men, I think,' said Mr Halyard, 'the American farmers are the most independent, and the most happy.' (For years to come writers were to express the same view.) But Mr Halyard dies, and Jack has to make his own way in life; we leave him prosperous enough to buy back the farm. *The Happy Family; or Scenes of American Life* (1828) describes with much practical detail a family's trek over the mountains from Massachusetts to Ohio. Here they build a log-house and become self-sufficient. Cardell takes his family beyond this, to the point where they are comfortably wealthy, with a fine house and a horse and carriage, but for many the log-house and the farm represented the perfect life, where families could live in harmony and godly simplicity. Writers were often to use farm life to bring about conversion and a proper sense of values in spoilt city children. Later examples include Dorothy Canfield Fisher's *Understood Betsy* (1917). Here an over-protected nine-year-old is sent to a Vermont farm where she becomes, in the words of her relations there, both smart and gritty. In Betsy Byars's *The Midnight Fox* (1968) Tom, initially terrified by even the cows and chickens on Aunt Millie's farm, gradually learns to love animals.

The orphan theme was also to be very popular with American authors. Susan Warner (1819–85), who wrote what she supposed was Sunday School fiction under the name of Elizabeth Wetherell, specialised in these. Her first book, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), clearly derives from Sedgwick. It is an immensely long account of the moral development of an orphan, readable for its descriptions of domestic life. The father is discarded without regret at an early stage; the mother dies, and Ellen (given to outbursts of stormy weeping) is brought up and taught domestic skills by her flinty-hearted Aunt Fortune, a paragon housewife. (There was a similar scenario in *A New-England Tale*.) The book was very popular with girls; not only was there highly charged emotion, there was also between thirteen-year-old Ellen and her spiritual mentor – the young man she calls her 'brother' – a romantic if not erotic relationship, never hitherto found in a Sunday book. In *Queechy* (1852) the author (never good at controlling a plot) succeeds in bringing her heroine to a nubile age so that she can melt into the arms of a wealthy English aristocrat. Warner did not often introduce parents into her fiction; but when she did they could be harsh instruments of oppression as in *Melbourne House* (1864), where little Daisy Randolph is the only God-fearing member of a worldly but also cruel family.

The Warner style had a profound effect on Martha Finley (1828–1909), who wrote as Martha Farquharson. Her *Elsie Dinsmore*, the first of a long series which went on until 1905, appeared in 1867, and would seem to be modelled on *Melbourne House*, though the setting is a never-never-land in the ante-bellum South, where the protagonists, all plantation owners, live in sumptuous luxury. Apparently disapproving of the freedom with

which Warner heroines allowed themselves to be caressed by male strangers, Finley keeps it within the family. In the Dinsmore books it is the father (only seventeen when he begot Elsie) who is the lover. He is insanely possessive, violent and tender by turns, and though he eventually and painfully allows Elsie to marry, readers insisted that the husband should be shed so that she could return to Father.

Orphan stories continued into the twentieth century. In Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903) the fatherless heroine is sent to live with two spinster aunts. Her Aunt Miranda is a termagant spinster in the Aunt Fortune mould, and indeed the book has more than a passing likeness to *The Wide, Wide World*, though Rebecca is lively and literary rather than tearful and godly. Jean Webster's *Daddy Long-Legs* (1912) places its heroine (literary, like Rebecca) in an orphanage, whence an unknown benefactor (later to fall in love with her) sends her to college. Eleanor Hodgson Porter's *Pollyanna* (1913) is a ray of sunshine, again afflicted with a vinegarish aunt, who sees good everywhere and transforms the lives of those around her. Frances Boyd Calhoun's *Miss Minerva and William Green Hill* (1909) is a curious variant, with Tom Sawyer and Pollyanna rolled into the person of one small boy, a wrecker but a charmer, also saddled with an aunt.

The prolific Jacob Abbott (1803–79) wrote about more normal family life. From his accounts of country children, English readers first learnt about such New England pleasures as maple sugaring, sleigh riding, camping in the woods. His books are an American version of Maria Edgeworth's Harry, Lucy, Rosamond and Frank tales, and like her he aimed to produce sensible, alert and independent children, though as this was America he expected more in the way of work from them. However, it is not the parents who are so influential in the moulding of character as the older children whom he shrewdly introduces as mentors. In the Rollo series which began in 1834, Jonas the hired boy teaches little Rollo useful skills; in the ten Franconia stories (1850–3) there is a Swiss boy whom the children call Beechnut, with a wonderful talent for planning unusual games and amusements. There are also ingenious punishments, for Abbott was a schoolmaster, albeit a benign and enlightened one.

Rebecca Clarke (1833–1906) who wrote under the name of Sophie May, continued in the Abbott style. Her stories have more religious content, and show children (the younger of whom talk in winsome baby fashion) being gently and rationally guided into good behaviour. Female influence here is dominant; there are mothers, aunts, sisters, grandmothers, but fathers rarely appear. *Little Prudy* (1863) was followed by a steady stream of stories about Prudy (who grows up and has children of her own), Dotty Dimple and Flaxie Frizzle.

Far less didactic and never sentimental, but also with something of the Abbott flavour, is *Doings of the Bodley Family in Town and Country* (1876) by Horace Scudder (1838–1902). This gentle saga of Nathan, Philippa and Lucy Bodley, their father and mother, the hired man, and various household animals including Mr Bottom the horse, contained much from Scudder's own childhood. Later Bodley books became travelogues and have fewer domestic events. Lucretia Hale's *The Peterkin Papers*, first published in book form in 1880, brought a new element of farce into the family story. The Peterkin family muddle everything, and are unable to bring common sense to the smallest domestic problem.

The febrile atmosphere created by Warner and Finley for girls' reading gave way to the straightforward good sense of Louisa Alcott (1832–88). 'I do think that families are the most beautiful things in all the world,' she makes Jo exclaim in *Good Wives*, and the quartet of books about the March family, beginning with *Little Women* (1868), is the supreme cele-

bration of family affection. 'It seems as if I should be homesick for you even in heaven,' says the dying Beth. It would be impossible to guess from *Little Women* that Alcott's own childhood had been overshadowed by the irresponsibility of her father, who at one stage had contemplated abandoning his family. Mr March is revered, though he is superfluous to the story and is rarely seen even when he returns from the Civil War. It is 'Marmee' upon whom the whole household depends. (It was to be the same in *Eight Cousins* (1875) where no fathers are ever seen; they are either too busy, or, as in the case of Uncle Mac, dare not open their lips.) *Little Women*, dashed off in six weeks, brought Alcott instant fame, and also money to prop up the needy family. But she came to resent having to provide what she termed 'moral pap' for the young. *Little Women* and *Good Wives* were written from the heart; in her other books we can often detect a note of weariness.

What Katy Did (1872) and *What Katy Did at School* (1873) by Susan Coolidge (Sarah Chauncey Woolsey (1835–1905)) have been kept continuously in print in Britain since their first publication. (The third book in the cycle is an unmemorable travelogue.) But they are almost unknown to American children. The first may have been inspired by Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, in that a widowed father, also a doctor, is left to bring up a large brood of children. But the Carr children are far more absorbed in play than is usually the case in American books, and the heroine's metamorphosis, via a spinal injury and 'the School of Pain', from a self-willed tomboy into a serious-minded adolescent, is again in the English style. The second book is about boarding-school life, one of the earliest examples of a genre to become very popular in Britain, but always a rarity in America.

The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew (1881) and its sequels by Margaret Sidney (Harriet M. Lothrop (1844–1924)) were far better received by American readers. Though the Peppers are poor, they are a 'noisy happy brood' and make their little house 'fairly ring with jollity and fun'. The widowed Mrs Pepper 'with a stout heart and a cheery face' holds the home together. Good things come winging to them, and a rich family, enraptured by their spirit, carries them all off to live in a mansion. *Mrs Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch* (1901) by Alice Hegan Rice (1870–1942) is a more serious account of poverty. Mrs Wiggs is another widow who holds the family together (Mr Wiggs having 'traveled to eternity by the alcohol route'); like Mrs Pepper her philosophy lies 'in keeping the dust off her rose-colored spectacles'.

Booth Tarkington's *Penrod* (1914), followed by two sequels, shows the Bad Boy (a favourite character with American authors) in a prosperous middle-class setting with unlimited leisure for play and make-believe. The *mise-en-scène* and characterisation in Richmal Crompton's *Just William* (1922) and subsequent volumes follow *Penrod* too closely to be merely coincidence. Penrod Schofield is well-meaning but is a powder keg who wrecks every occasion – dancing-classes, parties, pageants, his grown-up sister's flirtations. And as William was to do, he crumbles when faced with the femininity of little girls.

The Little House books of Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867–1957) which began with *Little House in the Big Woods* (1932) and finished with *Those Happy Golden Years* (1943) are remarkable for their portrayal of the parents. This pioneer family of the 1870s and 1880s is seen uncritically through a child's eyes. Even so, the character of Pa emerges – restless, reluctantly held back from further adventuring by the greater prudence of Ma. The journeys, the joyful triumph when a new home is established, the sense of security when they sit round the fire with the door safely barred against the dangerous world outside, the strength of the family's love for each other, all described without a trace of sentimentality, make this series the most satisfying of all accounts of happy family life.

The search for a home has always been a favourite theme with American writers. Gertrude Chandler Warner's *The Boxcar Children* (1942), which describes four orphans setting up house in an abandoned railway truck, was so successful that the author followed it with eighteen more. Cynthia Voigt's *Homecoming* (1981), far more sophisticated, describes the weary trek made by four abandoned children to find the grandmother who may take them in. Dicey, the resolute sister who leads them, is a heroine of a particularly American sort: strong-willed and independent.

Such girls have been a feature of family stories. In the previous century there were heroines like Elizabeth W. Champney's *Witch Winnie* (1889), a high-spirited though fundamentally serious prankster; or like Gypsy Breynton in the series by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844–1911) – an engaging tomboy whose skills win the admiration of even her brother. There is something of Gypsy in Leslie of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), a girl who can outrun all the boys. This girl is also imaginative, and with her special friend Jesse she creates a secret kingdom.

American heroines can be craggy or cussed. There is the single-minded Harriet of Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964), or Claudia in E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967) who runs away with her brother and successfully camps out in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. On a more serious level is the fourteen-year-old Mary Call Luther in Vera and Bill Cleaver's *Where the Lilies Bloom* (1969), who holds the family together when the father dies. Here is the flinty spinster in embryo: 'I sure would hate to be the one to marry you, Mary Call ... You're enough to skeer a man, standin.'

Middle-class families leading stable, secure lives, their doings described in episodic fashion as in *Penrod*, featured in many authors' works before the 1960s. Beverly Cleary's chronicles of life in Portland, Oregon, began with *Henry Huggins* in 1950 and continued through the 1980s. Cleary's most famous character, Ramona the Pest, who first appears in *Henry and Beezus* (1952), is the archetypal awful little sister. (Dorothy Edwards's *My Naughty Little Sister* (1952) was the English counterpart.) Elizabeth Enright's books about the Melendy family began in 1941 with *The Saturdays*. Here there is no mother, but a devoted old retainer in the Streatfeild style. Eleanor Estes, beginning with *The Moffats* (1941), described New England village life of a quarter of a century before. The Moffats' father is dead; Mama is a kindly and efficient, though unobtrusive presence. In Madeleine L'Engle's *Meet the Austins* (1960) there are two wise and loving parents; the sweetness is cloying.

These were writers from a generation where it was the usual convention to write – as far as children were concerned – about tranquil family life. While accepting this as a starting point, their successors could see the difficulties that might lie within the family unit. Many of the stories of Paula Fox (1923–) touch on children's emotional confusion as they try to make sense of the adult world. But the main theme of her *Lily and the Lost Boy* (1987) is the relationship between Lily and her younger brother. The family is a closely bonded one on an extended holiday in Greece, and Paul has become a good companion until, to Lily's chagrin, he finds a new friend, the 'lost boy' of the title. The forlorn life of the latter, with his hippie father, a remittance man financed by his wealthy ex-wife in Texas, is contrasted with Lily and Paul's secure existence. Another hippie father, more satisfactory this time, is the hero of E. L. Konigsburg's *Journey to an 800 Number* (1982: *Journey by First Class Camel* in the UK). He earns a living giving camel rides. 'Yes, you were a flower child,' he tells the toplofty Max, who preens himself over his superior social status and has been sent to stay with him while his mother honeymoones with another husband. 'And your mother was a hippie. A college drop-out, nice middle-class family.' It was he, Max discovers, who had taken her in when she arrived at his ranch pregnant and destitute.

Families can be outwardly united yet seethe within. Thus in *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) Katherine Paterson (1932–) describes the isolation felt by Jesse surrounded by irritating sisters. The plot of her *Jacob Have I Loved* (1980), with a background of a Methodist fishing community on a small island in Chesapeake Bay, turns on the bitter and long-lasting jealous resentment felt by a girl towards her more beautiful and talented twin sister.

Lois Lowry (1937–), writing at a time when so many of her contemporaries presented disunity, in her story series about Anastasia Krupnik and her volatile little brother Sam, succeeded in making a happy family seem credible. But Lowry varied these light-hearted accounts of life in an academic family (father a professor of English, mother a freelance artist, children precocious and dauntingly articulate) with more serious novels. *A Summer to Die* (1977) describes how Meg, who resentfully feels herself to be an ugly duckling, becomes less self-absorbed as she watches her older sister die from leukaemia. In *Autumn Street* (1980) the traumas of the Second World War disrupt Elizabeth's childhood. *Number the Stars* (1989) is set in wartime Denmark where Annemarie's family is trying to help their Jewish neighbours to escape into Sweden. In contrast the Krupnik chronicles deal only with the minor embarrassments of being young. They begin with *Anastasia Krupnik* (1979) when ten-year-old Anastasia is outraged to hear that her mother – without consulting Anastasia – is going to have a baby. That baby – Sam – takes twenty years to reach nursery school (*Zooman Sam*, 1999) by which time Anastasia is through the worst problems of adolescence and mature enough to be protective and motherly.

Mildred Taylor, drawing on her own family history, created the indomitable and resourceful Logan family to evoke black experience in the 1930s and 1940s. She wanted, she said in her Newbery acceptance speech in 1977, 'to show a black family united in love and pride, of which the reader would like to be a part'. The Newbery Award was given for *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), the second book in the chronicle of the Logan family, who cling to the land they have inherited in 1930s Mississippi, suffering hardship, discrimination and injustice. Virginia Hamilton's *M. C. Higgins, The Great* (1974) creates another black family facing hardship but welded together.

The warmth and strength shown in these family relationships come as welcome relief to the descriptions of shattered home life which became common in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Paula Danziger – her usual theme the hostility felt by the young towards authority, and parents in particular, as in *Can You Sue Your Parents for Malpractice?* (1979) – in *The Divorce Express* (1982) spelt out what seems to be the brightest message: 'If you take the letters of the word DIVORCES and rearrange them, they spell DISCOVER.'

Australian writers have played an important part in the family story in recent years, and one element has been the importance of landscape. The waterless desolation of the outback, the ferocious summer heat, the threat of fire and other natural disasters; these lurk frequently in the background. Brenda Niall gives a whole chapter of her book *Australia through the Looking Glass* to survival stories. Apparent security can be so easily shattered, as Ivan Southall showed in *Hills End* (1962), set in a remote mountain community of timber-workers. One hot summer's day when the rest of the inhabitants depart to the nearest town eighty-five miles away, seven children return from an expedition to find that Hills End has been destroyed by a cyclonic storm; there are no adults to come to their rescue. They learn painfully then that the sanctuary of home is an illusion.

The first Australian writer for the young to achieve international distinction was Ethel Turner (1872–58). Born in England, in 1881 she went with her parents to Sydney where most of her novels are set. Only *Seven Little Australians* (1894) and *The Family at Misrule*

(1895) – her first and most famous books, both published in London – have a country background, though it is not until the children visit the cattle station which had been their stepmother's home that the scene becomes markedly Australian. Ethel Turner had warned readers not to expect model children. But she was following the prevailing literary fashion; English writers, reacting against the books of their own youth, were busy peopling their books with scamps, pickles, madcaps, tearaways, harum-scarums. The Woolcot children were only different in having an unsympathetic adult background – a savage, irascible father and a timid young stepmother. This gives the story edge; it has always been difficult to create convincing happy domesticity. The children's misdoings admittedly are on a larger scale than those of their English contemporaries; when the rebellious Judy runs away from school, she walks seventy-five miles home, a week's journey. The other children, afraid of their father's fury, hide her in a shed, raiding the larder to feed her. Ethel Turner, who on her own admission had loved imagining deathbeds as a child, creates one for Judy, killed by a falling tree: the episode became a favourite recitation piece at Australian literary gatherings.

A near contemporary, Mary Grant Bruce (1878–1958), was also a favourite with English children and, though none of her stories about Billabong Station achieved the best-selling status of *Seven Little Australians*, with its international reprints, her popularity was more evenly sustained, and the series lasted for over thirty years, ending in 1942. She supplied the adventurous outdoor life that had great appeal for a population that was becoming increasingly urban. She was Australian-born, and had spent childhood holidays on her grandfather's cattle station on which Billabong was partially based. Norah Linton, whom we first meet as a resourceful, independent twelve-year-old in *A Little Bush Maid* (1910), her widowed father and older brother Jim are 'mates', closely bonded and working together. 'A big station is a little world in itself, and the Bush teaching makes for self-control and self-reliance, and a simple, straight outlook on the world that is not a bad foundation for character.' It was easier to imagine this sort of family life as idyllic. The Lintons live in some style, surrounded by devoted servants and stockmen. But even here the Bush threatens, as does fire, and in *Norah of Billabong* (1913) there is a dramatic account of a lost child rescued and restored to its mother. 'It's so big and lonely and cruel ... Why, it scares men to get lost in the Bush.'

As in so many Australian stories and in American ones with a farming background, urban characters make a poor showing when they visit. The very name Cecil given to a Linton cousin in *Mates at Billabong* (1911) shows the author's contempt; Colin Thiele in *February Dragon* (1966) similarly bestows the names Cuthbert and Angelina on despised town cousins; their empty-headed chattering mother through wanton carelessness unknowingly begins the terrible fire – the February dragon – that devastates the whole area she has been visiting.

Nan Chauncy (1900–70) also wrote of tightly knit, self-contained rural families, this time in Tasmania. She came to Australia with her parents when she was twelve; *Half a World Away* (1962) gives some account of what the move meant. To exchange the Home Counties for Tasmania, sedate middle-class comfort for primitive simplicity in a remote valley, was for her a wonder that never palled. The early books are written from the point of view of the newcomer establishing a home. In *Tiger in the Bush* (1957), *Devil's Hill* (1958) and *The Roaring 40* (1963) she portrays the Lorenny family, living in a primitive slab-and-bark house in a hidden valley. The two older children go off to school in Hobart happily enough; for Badge, the youngest, it is anguish to leave home and have to mix with scornful contemporaries.

Colin Thiele in *The Sun on the Stubble* (1961), based on his memories of childhood in a South Australian German Lutheran community, evokes the same desolation at having to leave home. The book begins with Bruno's despair: 'After twelve years in the warmth of home, he was being thrust out, torn up by the roots, sent off to school in Adelaide.' As in Chauncy's Lorenny family, the presiding presence is the mother. 'Her strong instinct of motherly protection, inherited from her Silesian ancestors, was something she had brought to South Australia, along with the Lutheranism, the gregariousness and the astonishing capacity for hard work.' We find the same sort of mother in Eleanor Spence's *The Green Laurel* (1963), where Dad earns his living at fairgrounds driving a miniature train. Mum shares all the work 'but still found time to transform two rather battered tents into a cosy and welcoming home'. But twelve-year-old Lesley longs for a real home, 'a home with roots'. This she gets when Dad has to go into a sanatorium and Mum and the two girls are given accommodation in a housing settlement on the outskirts of Sydney, a huge expanse of huts where immigrants are housed temporarily. Lesley's dismay at these bleak surroundings tempers when she finds friends. 'With all of us together, a home can be any sort of place.' In *The Left Overs* (1982) some twenty years later this still holds good, though with changing fashions in scenario: 'any sort of place' is this time a children's home where five assorted children of mixed race live happily with a house mother, feeling strongly that they are a family.

Hesba Brinsmead's first and best-known book, *Pastures of the Blue Crane* (1964), was one of the first to move out of the convention of a united family. Ryl is the child of separated parents, and 'from the age of three she was expected more or less to make her own way in the world'. The father in New Guinea whom she barely knows dies when she is thirteen, and she learns from a solicitor in Melbourne that his money has been left to her and her grandfather, Dusty, whom she has never met. A run-down banana farm in north-east New South Wales is part of their joint inheritance. 'These two stubborn and arrogant people', as the solicitor sees them, succeed in settling down amicably together and reclaiming the farm.

By the late 1960s the themes of misfits and social problems were standard, and the settings increasingly urban. L. H. Evers had already written *The Racketty Street Gang* (1961), set in a run-down district of Sydney where the well-ordered family life of recent immigrants from Germany is contrasted with the violence and squalor experienced in their various homes by the German son's three friends. Reginald Ottley's *The War on William Street* (1971), also set in Sydney, is in the same vein. Hesba Brinsmead's second novel, *Beat of the City* (1966), features four adolescents in Melbourne pursuing what the author describes as instant plastic substitutes for happiness.

Many writers have chosen to examine the plight of the misfit, the outsider in a family or community. Patricia Wrightson in *I Own the Racecourse!* (1968) uses a very light touch in her treatment of Andy, who, as she puts it, 'lived behind a closed window'. His friends are fond of him, and are protective, but cannot persuade him that he doesn't own the Sydney racecourse that an old tramp offers to sell to him for three dollars. The kindness with which all around him treat him is in great contrast to the unhappiness usually inevitable in stories of misfits, as in Ivan Southall's *Josh* (1971), Michael Dugan's *Dingo Boy* (1980) or Simon French's *Cannily, Cannily* (1981).

Like their British and American contemporaries, Australian writers have extended the idea of the family story to cover a wide range of problems that the young may face in modern society; in the twenty-first century, there are signs that they and their readers are turning their interest to fantasy.

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35 School stories

Sheila Ray

Attendance at school for some years between the ages of five and eighteen is a common experience, and one well within the comprehension of readers of children's books. Many books written for children have scenes set in, or references to, school, but the term 'school story' is generally used to describe a story in which most of the action centres on a school, usually a single-sex boarding school. In his essay, 'Boys' Weeklies', first published in 1940, George Orwell suggested that the school story is peculiar to England because in England education is mainly a matter of status (Orwell 1962: 182). It is certainly true that the genre is dominated by British writers, who are responsible for most of the examples quoted in this essay.

The world of school is a microcosm of the larger world, in which minor events and concerns loom large and older children, at least, have power, responsibilities and an importance they do not have in the world outside. Despite the rules and regulations, children enjoy a certain kind of freedom. A school story offers a setting in which young people are thrown together and in which relationships between older and younger children, between members of the peer group and between children and adults can be explored. Events and relationships can be imbued with an air of excitement and the possibilities for humour are never far away. Through reading an entertaining story, children can 'test the water', learn how people may react in specific situations and see what lies ahead.

School stories for girls differ from those for boys. Even before the advent of feminism, writers must have realised, albeit subconsciously, the advantages of setting a story in an all-girls' school, where females are leaders and decision takers. In the boys' school story, there are few references to home life, but the story for girls usually reflects close links between home and school. The boys' story and the girls' story have developed in parallel, but separately, partly because they have reflected educational developments in the real world.

In Britain, the Education Act of 1870 marked the first official step towards education for all, but even before this schools catering for every level of society were being established in increasing numbers. Two early, full-length books for children, Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) and *Mrs Leicester's School* by Charles and Mary Lamb (1808), each used a small girls' school as a framework for a collection of short stories, but the first genuine story of school life, which looks at the experience from the child's point of view, is, according to Mary Thwaite, Harriet Martineau's *The Crofton Boys* (1841) (Thwaite 1972: 153). Hugh finds learning difficult and thinks that life will be easier when he joins his older brother at Crofton School; alas, his high expectations are disappointed. These school stories by Fielding, the Lambs and Martineau are still remembered because of their distinguished authorship; there were others, now long forgotten.

As Beverley Lyon Clark shows in *Regendering the School Story* (1996/2001), early stories about boys' schools could be written by women (Harriet Martineau and Louisa Alcott) and vice versa (Charles Lamb and Richard Johnson). After the publication of Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), which set the pattern for what came to be regarded as the traditional school story, stories about boys' schools were generally by men, those about girls' schools by women. *Tom Brown's Schooldays* grew out of Hughes's admiration for Dr Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School, an important figure in the development of the English 'public' (that is, private) school system. Preaching the doctrine of muscular Christianity, in vogue in the mid-nineteenth century, the book follows Tom Brown and his friends through their schooldays: Tom arrives as a new boy, passes through a period when he makes the headmaster 'very uneasy' and eventually becomes the most senior boy, a credit to the school. The book has survived because of the fresh, lively style, its concern with everyday school activities, the convincing characters, including the archetypal bully, Flashman, and the still relevant themes.

Published in the following year, Dean Farrar's *Eric, or, Little by Little* (1858) was based on the author's own schooldays at King William's College on the Isle of Man, but it has dated badly. The author was more interested in his hero's moral development, and Eric, through a series of disastrous misunderstandings, gradually changes from an appealing, basically honest schoolboy to a sad runaway approaching death. Happily for the school story, Hughes proved to be the more influential writer of the two.

The 1870 Education Act, as well as marking the start of the move towards 'universal' literacy in Britain, helped to create a larger market for children's books and magazines; the latter, being cheaper and more accessible, were widely read. Most famous of the many launched in the late nineteenth century were the *Boy's Own Paper* (*BOP*) (1879) and the *Girl's Own Paper* (*GOP*) (1880).

Talbot Baines Reed, whose story, 'My First Football Match', appeared in the first issue of the *BOP*, quickly established himself as a successful writer of school stories; his most famous, *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's* (1887), was serialised in the *BOP* in 1881–2. Although the world it portrays has long since disappeared, the characters, their feelings and attitudes still ring true. Baines Reed was an excellent story-teller; he even manages to make the Nightingale Scholarship examination, described in great detail, sound as exciting as a football match. The themes and incidents which he used were to become the staple ingredients of school stories: the arrival of the new boy and his adjustment to school ways, school matches, the school magazine, conflict between juniors and seniors, concerts, friendships and rivalries, and villainies and blackmail.

The *GOP*, although it contained stories set in girls' boarding schools, did not produce a woman author of the status of Baines Reed. The female equivalents of Rugby's Dr Arnold were Miss Beale and Miss Buss, whose ideas on the education of girls led to the foundation of schools such as Cheltenham Ladies' College (1853) and Roedean (1885), which were modelled on boys' public schools, and the high schools, which provided a good, academic education for girls on a daily basis. It was, however, some time before fictional versions of these schools appeared in print. Late nineteenth-century writers for girls wrote from their own experience, which was of girls being taught at home or in small schools which were an extension of home. Fictional versions of the latter can be found in Charlotte Yonge's *The Pillars of the House* (1893); Mrs Molesworth's *The Carved Lions* (1895), in which Geraldine is sent to Green Bank, a small school of twenty to thirty girls, while her brother goes to Rugby; and *Pixie O'Shaughnessy* (1903) by Mrs George de Horne Vaizey. Most of these schools were established in ordinary houses in urban

surroundings, a far cry from the gracious stately homes and turreted castles which later became the norm. The plot of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905) hangs on the fact that the school attended by Sara Crewe is situated in a house in a London terrace. In all these books, however, school is just a small part of the heroine's experiences, and the authors of them were not attempting to write school stories.

The first woman writer who can be compared to Talbot Baines Reed is L. T. Meade. Like Baines Reed, she was a very prolific writer; she edited a magazine, *Atlanta*, and wrote many kinds of fiction, but it was in her stories about girls at school that she found the best outlet for her talents, and she paved the way for her twentieth-century successors. At first glance, it is difficult to see why L. T. Meade is not regarded as the first major writer and populariser of girls' school stories, a role usually ascribed to Angela Brazil; a closer examination of her work, however, shows that, although she uses some of the plots and characters associated with the typical girls' school story, there is a difference between her work and that of the writers who flourished in the 1920s and 1930s. Although Lavender House in *A World of Girls* (1886), Briar Hall in *A Madcap* (1904) and Fairbank in *The School Favourite* (1908) are similar to some of the small schools created by Angela Brazil soon afterwards, Meade is much more concerned with the moral development of her characters. The girls who belong to the secret society in *The School Favourite* are bound by a code of honour which requires them to be obedient, to work hard, to love each other and to do 'a little deed of kindness to some one every day'. In *A World of Girls*, although the heroine, Hester, is clever and hardworking and one of the main themes is the prize essay competition, much of the story is taken up with emotional relationships and with questions of honesty and truthfulness.

Evelyn Sharp's *The Making of a Schoolgirl* (1897) shows the prevailing attitudes to girls' schools, particularly those of the brothers whose sisters attended them, but it puts much more emphasis on the fun side of school, with humorous and sometimes ironic descriptions of school activities and academic achievement. Beverly Lyon Clark rightly describes it as 'brilliant' (Clark 1989: 6).

Between 1899 and 1927, a number of books set in boys' schools, written for adults as much as for children, gave a status to the school story for boys which has never been enjoyed by that for girls. These were usually based on the author's own schooldays and included Rudyard Kipling's *Stalky and Co.* (1899), Horace Annesley Vachell's *The Hill* (1905) and P. G. Wodehouse's *Mike* (1909); later, in the same style, came Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth* (1917) and Hugh Walpole's *Jeremy at Crale* (1927). Of these, the most famous is *Stalky and Co.*, of which John Rowe Townsend says, 'After the knowingness of *Stalky* it was difficult ever again to assert the innocent values of the classical school story' (Townsend 1987: 100). Kipling turns the traditional formula on its head: Stalky, M'Turk and Beetle are three natural rebels who have no respect for the school spirit. The irony is that, while they are smoking, breaking bounds, collaborating on their prep and generally setting themselves up against authority, they are clearly in the process of becoming just the kind of resourceful and self-disciplined young men that the public schools aimed to produce.

The only similar books by women writers, drawing on their own experiences and writing mainly for adults, are *The Getting of Wisdom* (1910) by Henry Handel Richardson (despite her name, a woman) set in Australia, and Antonia White's *Frost in May* (1933). These were not of enough status to give the girls' school story a more positive image: if Virginia Woolf or Ivy Compton-Burnett had gone to one of the newly emerging girls' public schools and subsequently used her experience in her writing, critical attitudes to girls' school stories might have been very different.

Authors of children's books elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon world showed little interest in writing school stories: two of the exceptions are very different in spirit from the stories being published in Britain at the same period. Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did at School* (1873) describes Katy and Clover Carr's adventures at the New England boarding school to which they are sent for a year to be 'finished'; much of the interest centres around the silliness of the other girls in their relationships with the students at the nearby boys' college, a topic ignored by British writers. In Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* (1894) lively Judy Woolcot is sent to boarding school as a punishment. However, the schools described by Coolidge and Turner are sufficiently like those in stories by British writers for the books to be meaningful and of interest to British readers. The small day school to which the Carr girls go in *What Katy Did* would have seemed quite familiar to young British readers some sixty years after it was written, while the non-boarding high schools attended by the American Peggy Raymond in Harriet Lummis Smith's *Peggy Raymond's Schooldays* (1928), and by the Australian Lennie Leighton in Louise Mack's *Teens* (1897) are shown to be very much like the high schools attended by British girls up to the 1950s. The American books about Katy and Peggy formed part of series, and readers could go on and find out what happened to the girls when they left school, married and had children of their own. Adopting a similar pattern proved to be the secret of success for British writers such as Elsie J. Oxenham, Elinor Brent-Dyer and Dorita Fairlie Bruce.

The heyday of the girls' school story in Britain was in the 1920s and 1930s. It came in various forms, in serials and short stories in magazines, annuals and miscellaneous collections as well as in books, all of which were published in great quantities for the growing and apparently insatiable market. Like most popular fiction, school stories emphasised what were seen as middle-class virtues such as good manners, the need for self-discipline, a sense of responsibility and a respect for authority.

By far the most popular girls' writer before 1940 was Angela Brazil (1869–1947), whose name is known to many who have never read her books. She published her first school story, *The Fortunes of Philippa*, in 1906, her last, *The School on the Loch*, in 1946. Although her books reflected events in the outside world – the two world wars, for example – her underlying attitudes changed very little during forty years. Her fictional schools range from small day schools to large boarding schools; her stories are episodic, describing everyday school activities, but are usually underpinned by plots about missing heiresses, the restoration of family fortunes or the successful achievement of some important goal. Her books contain a lot of information about literature, geography, history, botany, music and the visual arts (Freeman 1976: 20). Schoolgirl readers of Angela Brazil and her successors do not seem to have demanded an exciting plot; rather, they were fascinated by the minutiae of school organisation and a lifestyle which was probably somewhat different from their own experience. Readership surveys of the period show that Angela Brazil was a favourite author among girls from all kinds of backgrounds. In 1933, *The Bookseller* described her as a 'juvenile bestseller' (McAleer 1992: chapter 5). In 1947 she was still the most popular writer for girls according to a survey carried out in north-west England (Carter 1947: 217–21). However, her popularity waned after the Second World War, and her place was taken by Oxenham, Bruce and Brent-Dyer.

Elsie Jeanette Oxenham, the daughter of the journalist and author John Oxenham, may have had ambitions to write for adults. Her early stories were mildly romantic family tales, but in 1913 she published *Rosalys's New School*, which has a strong school interest, and, in the following year *Girls of the Hamlet Club*, the first story in the long sequence of

Abbey stories, into which most of her books eventually linked. The mainly day school in *Girls of the Hamlet Club* has recently opened its doors to less wealthy girls who live in the nearby hamlets. Cicely Hobart comes to the area to be near her maternal grandparents, who had not approved of their now dead daughter's marriage, goes to the school and is appalled by the snobbery and the way in which the hamlet girls are outsiders. She befriends them, organises them into the Hamlet Club, with the motto, 'To be or not to be', and arranges country rambles and folk-dancing sessions for them. Cicely meets, and is accepted by, her grandparents, and also unites the school by persuading the Hamlet Club to provide a programme of dances when the official school play has to be cancelled because of illness. In *The Abbey Girls* (1920), the Hamlet Club members visit the Abbey, where Mrs Shirley is caretaker; they meet her daughter, Joan, and Cicely arranges for Joan to have a scholarship to the school. Joan sacrifices this to her cousin, Joy, whom she feels needs the discipline of school. Fortunately, Joy is eventually reconciled with her grandfather (he too had disapproved of his daughter's marriage), and both girls are able to go to the school, join the Hamlet Club and in due course become May Queens. In Oxenham's last book, *Two Queens at the Abbey* (1959), Joy's twin daughters are crowned joint Queens. In many of the Abbey books, school is peripheral to the main interest, which centres on the Abbey and the girls who come to live with Joy in the house which she has inherited from her grandfather. However, they were clearly enjoyed in much the same way as school stories.

Dorita Fairlie Bruce, undoubtedly the best writer among what have become known as 'the big three', wrote a number of interlinking series. Her best-known character is Dimsie, who first appeared in a supporting role in *The Senior Prefect* (1920), later retitled *Dimsie Goes to School*. Dimsie (her name is a nickname drawn from her initials (Daphne Isabel Maitland)) proved to be such an attractive personality to both author and readers that she is followed through school and into marriage and motherhood, and appears as an adult in the series of books about Springdale School, set in a thinly disguised Largs on the west coast of Scotland. Bruce also wrote a series featuring Nancy Caird, who was asked to leave her Scottish boarding school and went to live with her grandmother and attend a day school. Bruce's Scottish roots were very strong, and some of her earliest books are historical novels. Her Colmskirk books trace the fortunes of families living on the west coast of Scotland from the seventeenth century through to the period after the Second World War. All her novels throw an interesting light on the period at which they were written.

The books of Elinor M. Brent-Dyer survived best of all, and were still in print in paperback, sometimes slightly abridged and revised, in the 1990s. Her first book, *Gerry Goes to School*, appeared in 1922, but it was *The School at the Chalet* (1925) that launched her on the road to success. In this, a young Englishwoman, Madge Bettany, establishes a school in the Austrian Tyrol, with her younger sister Jo as its first pupil. The school flourishes, evacuating to the Channel Islands and then the English/Welsh border during the Second World War, and returning to Switzerland afterwards. In the final book, *Prefects of the Chalet School* (1970), Jo's own daughters are senior pupils, looking forward to university and adulthood.

Brent-Dyer also wrote other school and family stories, but it is the Chalet School that captured popular imagination and, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are two magazines devoted to discussion of her work, conferences are held, and several sequels by other hands have been published, filling in gaps or continuing the story. Some of these, it must be said, are rather better written than Brent-Dyer's own later books.

Although the school story is generally thought of as being set in a boarding school, there were also stories about day schools. Winifred Darch (1884–1960) concentrated on these; her books, from *Chris and Some Others* (1920) to *The New Girl at Graychurch* (1939), are all free-standing. Some of her fictional schools are the newly established county high schools, in one of which she taught, which educated both children who passed the eleven-plus examination and were given scholarships, and those whose parents could afford modest fees. Most of her books have strong plots, and many contain detailed accounts of school plays; they are also fascinating social documents, reflecting the snobbish and class-conscious attitudes of the period. In *The New School and Hilary* (1926), for example, Hilary, who has to leave her expensive independent school on the death of her father, and Judith Wingfield, a successful ex-pupil of the same school, both arrive at a new county high school for girls, Hilary as a pupil, Judith as a young teacher. The school is rather despised in the town but, through their combined efforts and a successful production of *As You Like It*, it is established as a real asset among the local people.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a high proportion of British girls joined the Girl Guide movement, which recruited from all sections of society. It offered girls some of the same opportunities as an all-girls' school, an environment in which friendships and competition flourished, and in which they could develop skills and interests and experience leadership. Many of the fictional schools had Guide companies; Catherine Christian, editor of *The Guide* magazine in the 1940s, specialised in Guide stories, and in at least two of her books, *The Marigolds Make Good* (1937) and *A Schoolgirl from Hollywood* (1939), the plot develops from the fact that schools which have grown slack or fallen on hard times are brought up to standard with the help of the Guides in their midst.

There were many popular stock characters, such as the 'wild' Irish girl; another was the Ruritanian princess who, sent to an English boarding school for safety, was frequently kidnapped (Trease 1964: 107). Elinor Brent-Dyer's *The Princess of the Chalet School* (1927) and F. O. H. Nash's *Kattie of the Balkans* (1931) both use this theme; a typical set-piece has the brave English girl who has rescued the princess riding in state to receive the grateful thanks of the Ruritanian citizens. In some cases, English schoolgirls were required to substitute for Ruritanian princesses, and in others the princesses, whose dearest wish had been to attend an English boarding school, discovered that life was not quite as enjoyable as they had expected. Authors were well aware of their readers' fantasies and did their best to fulfil them.

The Ruritanian theme was also used by boys' writers. In A. L. Haydon's *His Serene Highness* (1925), Prince Karl of Altburg arrives at Compton Prior, a famous boys' public school, and earns the respect of his fellow pupils by beating up one of the school bullies. He is kidnapped and it then transpires that he is only a look-alike cousin of the real Karl and has been sent to Compton Prior as a decoy. However, the real Prince Karl does visit the school to thank both his cousin, and the English schoolboys who had saved his life. Apart from this, the book is typical of its time, with a subplot concerning two rival gangs of younger boys, each trying to make the other believe that the school is haunted.

Harold Avery, Richard Bird, Hylton Cleaver, R. A. H. Goodyear, Gunby Hadath and Michael Poole were the most prolific among the many authors who supplied the steady demand for stories set in boys' public schools, but none of them achieved the popularity of the writers for girls already mentioned, with the exception of Frank Richards (1876–1961), whose work appeared in *The Gem* (1907–39) and *The Magnet* (1908–40). It is estimated that Charles Hamilton, using over twenty pseudonyms, of which 'Frank Richards' is the best known, wrote over sixty million words (Richards 1988: 266). As

Martin Clifford, he created Tom Merry and St Jim's for *The Gem*; as Frank Richards, writing in *The Magnet*, he launched Greyfriars and the Famous Five of Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, together with the boulder, Herbert Vernon-Smith, and the famous fat boy of the Remove, Billy Bunter.

In 1919, as Hilda Richards, he introduced Billy's sister, Bessie Bunter, to Cliff House in the *School Friend*; the Cliff House stories were then taken over by other writers and the characters developed into more realistic personalities, with Bessie herself becoming a still fat but loyal and popular friend. The other famous girls' school in magazine fiction was Morcove, a boarding school on Exmoor; the Morcove stories, which appeared in *Schoolgirls' Own* (1921–36), were also written by a man, Horace Phillips, using the pseudonym of Marjorie Stanton.

Many school stories in the 1920s and 1930s were badly written with banal and carelessly constructed plots, unconvincing characters and situations, and a lack of attention to detail. It is not surprising that the genre was poorly regarded by adults who cared about what children read. There were few outlets for the criticism of children's literature and the fact that some school stories might be better than others was easily overlooked in view of the amount of material that was being published.

The years of the Second World War provided a watershed, after which the gaps between school, domestic and adventure stories began to close. The changes are well illustrated by looking at the work of Geoffrey Trease, who is both a critic and a writer of children's books. He paid tribute to A. Stephen Tring's *The Old Gang* (1947) as a 'good story about Grammar School day-boys which broke new ground' (Trease 1964: 111) and he himself began a series of books about day schools with *No Boats on Bannermere* (1949). He wrote this because two girls whom he met when he gave a talk to a group of schoolchildren in Cumberland in 1947 at a 'book week' asked him for stories about real boys and girls going to day schools (Trease 1974: 149). Later, beginning with *Jim Starling* (1958), E. W. Hildick published a series of books set in and around Cement Street secondary modern school, in which school is seen as an integral part of the boys' lives.

The boarding-school story was not dead, even for boys. Anthony Buckeridge's schoolboy, Jennings, first appeared in a radio play on the BBC's *Children's Hour* in 1948; *Jennings Goes to School* (1950) followed, the first in a series of books about the pupils of Linbury Court, a preparatory school for boys. The humour of these, which sometimes borders on farce, made them very popular and Buckeridge shows a good understanding of how small boys talk, and very shrewdly invented his own, dateless, slang. In 1955, William Mayne, educated at a choir school himself, published *A Swarm in May*, the first of four books set in a cathedral choir school. In most of his books, however, the children attend day schools.

In school stories published after 1950, the day schools continued to be largely single-sex for some time, but there was more communication between boys and girls and sometimes co-operation is important to the plot, as in Trease's *Bannerdale* books and in William Mayne's *Sand*. There were few examples of mixed boarding schools in fiction. Enid Blyton set her first series of school stories about the 'Naughtiest Girl' in the mixed Whyteleafe School with its two headmistresses, Miss Belle and Miss Best (an echo of Miss Beale and Miss Buss or, more probably, names which lend themselves to the nicknames Beauty and the Beast?). Whyteleafe is also a progressive school with a School Meeting at which all the children are involved in making rules and deciding on appropriate awards and punishments. It seems likely that Enid Blyton was aware of the existence of progressive, mixed, independent boarding schools such as Dartington, Bedales and Summerhill,

but almost certainly she chose to set her first school stories in one because they first appeared as serials in *Sunny Stories*, a magazine intended to appeal to both sexes.

However, the girls-only school was far more popular with the girl readers (who were in the majority), and by the early 1940s Blyton's own daughters were at boarding school, so after Whyteleaf came St Clare's and Malory Towers, both girls' schools. Beginning with *The Twins at St Clare's* (1941) and *First Term at Malory Towers* (1946), the careers of the O'Sullivan twins and Darrell Rivers respectively are chronicled, from the time they arrive as new girls until their final term. Darrell is one of Blyton's most attractive and convincing characters, and the Malory Towers books are some of Blyton's best work. Despite the general belief that Blyton's work was ephemeral, her school stories have stayed in print, and in the 1990s Ann Digby, author of the Trebizon school stories, produced new titles about Whyteleaf, while Pamela Cox filled gaps in the career of the twins at St Clare's. In 2002, *A Treasury of Enid Blyton's School Stories*, compiled by Mary Cadogan and Norman Wright with a foreword by the then Children's Laureate, Anne Fine, was published. This included excerpts from all three series, a full-length story about St Rollo's, a co-educational boarding school, written for younger children, and a selection of short stories that had appeared in annuals and magazines. As Anne Fine wrote in her Foreword: 'What is it about boarding schools that so enchants even the child who walks fifty yards down the road for lessons, and is back home by tea-time?' (Cadogan and Wright 2002: Foreword).

If Enid Blyton was influenced largely by the demands of her market, Mabel Esther Allan was genuinely interested in the theories of A. S. Neill, who founded Summerhill, when she created several co-educational boarding establishments among her numerous fictional schools. She acknowledges his influence: 'All my schools were progressive ones, where pupils relied on self-discipline and not imposed discipline. Many of them were co-educational' (Allan 1982: 16). *The School on Cloud Ridge* (1952) is about a co-educational school, *Lucia Comes to School* (1953) about an equally progressive (but all-girls) school, where potholing, walking and cycling take the place of organised games. Lucia, half Italian, arrives at Arndale Hall to find that it is nothing like the schools described in the English school stories she has read but, although the rules are made by the girls themselves and school work is done on a flexible learning basis, she still has to learn to fit in with the other girls.

Although Blyton and Allan use many of the conventions and situations pioneered by earlier writers, their style and attitudes are very different. Their schoolgirls have more freedom and their outlook is more modern. This is also true of Nancy Breary who, between 1943 and 1961, and writing about more traditional schools, produced a succession of humorous stories, skilfully ringing the changes on standard plots and characters.

Three outstanding writers for girls in this period were Mary K. Harris, Antonia Forest and Elfrida Vipont. Mary Harris specialised in school stories; her first, *Gretel at St Bride's* (1941), is a fairly conventional boarding-school story although Gretel is an unusual heroine, a refugee from Nazi Germany. Her last, *Jessica on Her Own* (1968), is centred on a secondary modern day school.

Elfrida Vipont's work included a sequence of five novels about an extended Quaker family. In *The Lark in the Morn* (1948), Kit Haverard goes to 'the great Quaker school for girls at Heryot'. In a later book, Kit's niece, Laura, fails to pass the eleven-plus examination for the local grammar school, refuses to be sent to Heryot and settles in well at the nearby secondary modern school for girls, where her acting talent flourishes. In both books Elfrida Vipont, who won the Library Association Carnegie Medal for the second book in this sequence, *The Lark on the Wing* (1950), uses their school experiences as an

important element in the careers of her central characters, but their family and out-of-school life are not excluded.

Antonia Forest's sequence of novels about the Marlow family began with a school story, *Autumn Term* (1948), in which twelve-year-old twins Nicola and Lawrie arrive at Kingscote, a traditional girls' boarding school, in the wake of their four sisters, the eldest of whom is head girl. The sequence includes three more school stories and five books set in the school holidays, giving a rounded picture of the lives of the twins as they grow from twelve to fourteen.

By 1960 it seemed that the boarding-school story, even for girls, had run its course. Publishers were rejecting manuscripts, saying that the demand for such stories had ceased, and librarians no longer stocked them in great numbers. Elsie J. Oxenham's last book was published in 1959, Dorita Fairlie Bruce's in 1961, while Elinor Brent-Dyer's last Chalet-School title appeared posthumously in 1970. Their later works, however, are so weak that they seem to provide an appropriate death knell.

But, despite the views of most publishers and librarians, there were signs of a continuing demand. Enid Blyton's school stories and the Chalet-School books, which began to appear in paperback in 1967, sold in their thousands for another thirty years, while the Dimsie books were updated and published in the 1980s.

Some major children's writers found that the enclosed world of school provided an ideal framework within which to explore matters of concern to young people. Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) marks the beginning of this revival; in a satisfying time-travel story, the author explores the question of identity through the eyes of Charlotte, who goes to school some time in the 1960s and wakes up one morning to find that she is in the body of Clare who was a pupil in 1918. How, Charlotte wonders, can the schoolgirls and teachers in 1918 accept her as Clare, and why is Clare so readily accepted in the 1960s?

Barbara Willard's *Famous Rowena Lamont* (1983), Michelle Magorian's *Back Home* (1985) and Ann Pilling's *The Big Pink* (1987) were all to use the conventions of the boarding-school story to explore the problems of growing up and adjustment, but they also break away from the accepted pattern. Rusty, the heroine of *Back Home*, for example, is one of the few schoolgirl heroines to be expelled. In Frances Usher's *Maybreak* (1990) the boarding-school conventions are essential to the fast-moving plot.

Two books published in the USA in the 1970s contrast with the British school story, where, despite the developments in the genre, integration and the triumph of good over evil continued to be the norm. Robert Cormier's controversial book *The Chocolate War* (1974) is set in the all-boys Catholic day school, Trinity. It is a sad, pessimistic story; Brother Leon, in charge of the annual fund-raising event, which involves the selling of 20,000 boxes of chocolates, is helped by The Vigils, a powerful secret society led by the corrupt bully, Archie Costello. Jerry Renault, a new boy with hidden strengths, refuses to participate and is trapped into a fight which he cannot win, his downfall and humiliation brought about with the compliance of Brother Leon. The school setting is essential to the story and makes the triumph of evil over good all the more horrifying.

Rosemary Wells's *The Fog Comes on Little Pig Feet* (1972) is based on the author's experiences. Rachel lasts two weeks at North Place, a private New England girls' boarding school, where she is appalled by the lack of freedom, the snobbery and the corruption; favourable treatment can apparently be bought by rich fathers for their rebellious or under-achieving daughters. Instead of settling down in time-honoured fashion, Rachel is allowed to return home.

In the 1970s, British authors set stories for younger children in primary schools, which offer an environment in which children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds come together naturally; against this background, racial attitudes and sex roles can be examined, and both these topics were of new importance in the 1970s. Gene Kemp's *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* (1977), set in a state primary school, won the Carnegie Medal; the reader assumes from the evidence that Tyke is a boy and only at the end of the book does it become clear that she is a girl. In the late 1970s Mabel Esther Allan began a series of books about Pine Street primary school. Samantha Padgett, bright and intelligent, a natural leader at Pine Street, moves on to a secondary comprehensive in *First Term at Ash Grove* (1988) and has to prove that she can cope with the new challenges. The setting may be different; the message is the same.

In 1976 Anna Home, in charge of children's drama programmes at the BBC, was looking for a series which would reflect contemporary school life rather than 'the traditional worlds of Bunter and Jennings' (Home 1993: 102). Grange Hill School, created and peopled by Phil Redmond, proved an ideal vehicle for looking at contemporary issues such as bullying, serious illness, death, broken homes, teenage pregnancy, smoking and drugs, while presenting a rounded picture of school life. When *Grange Hill* was first shown, it was seen as anti-authoritarian by adults; skilfully crafted, its underlying purpose is to look at school from the child's viewpoint and, while reflecting the real world, it supports traditional values. The popularity of the first series led not only to its continuation but also to books, based on the series, by Phil Redmond and Jan Needle, while Robert Leeson used the characters in original stories.

Since the 1970s, writers of school stories have had to take account of the fact that children mature earlier and are more worldly-wise, but they continue to use school as a setting where the problems that face young people can be aired. In *Goggle-Eyes* (1989) Anne Fine uses the framework of a girls' day school to examine contemporary problems such as divorce and conservation; in *Flour Babies* (1992), she challenges accepted gender roles in a humorous account of boys engaged in a school science project. Allen Sadler's *Sam's Swap Shop* (1993) finds boys raising money for essential school equipment rather than charity as would have been the case in the past, but some problems are perennial. *The Present Takers* (1983) by Aidan Chambers and, a decade later, Jan Dean's *Me, Duncan and the Great Hippopotamus Scandal* (1993) both show that bullying, a theme which provided a memorable scene in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, still looms large in the lives of many schoolchildren.

Series books are popular with young people and commercially successful for authors and publishers. Jean Ure's Peter High books and Mary Hooper's School Friend series make good use of traditional themes while showing awareness of the realities of life in the 1990s. In stories about older children, school may provide a background for light romances as in the popular American series such as Sweet Valley High.

Between 1978 and 1994, Ann Digby published fourteen titles about Rebecca Mason of Trebizon School, which constitute the most significant girls' boarding school series to be published in Britain in the latter part of the twentieth century. This illustrates the way in which the genre has had to change to reflect contemporary society and to meet the new needs of young readers. Rebecca goes to boarding school reluctantly – her father has been promoted to a post in Saudi Arabia; in the fourth book, *Boy Trouble at Trebizon* (1980) Rebecca, despite her opening line: 'I'm not interested in boys ... I'm going to stick to tennis', acquires a boyfriend.

Rebecca goes to Trebizon because her parents are going abroad. In *The School from Hell? Here for a Year? Forget It!* (1997), Yvonne Coppard creates King Arthur's, a co-

educational boarding school, to which rock stars and lottery winners send their children for a 'proper English upbringing'.

Adèle Geras's Egerton Hall trilogy, although set in the 1960s, faces the problems of growing sexuality head-on. Three friends have gone through the school together and, now in the sixth form, are preoccupied by sex and impending adulthood. Each of their lives parallels that of a fairy-tale heroine (Geras 1990: 20–1). Megan, heroine of *The Tower Room* (1990) is the Rapunzel figure; Alice in *Watching the Roses* (1991) is Sleeping Beauty, while Bella of *Pictures of the Night* (1992) is Snow White, complete with wicked step-mother and the apple which nearly chokes her to death. The trilogy is a significant literary achievement which shows how far the school story has come since its first manifestation over 200 years ago.

Crazy (2001) by the German author Benjamin Lebert, is an autobiographical novel based on the author's experience as a sixteen-year-old who arrives at Castle Neuseelen boarding school, his fifth school, where his parents hope he will improve his grades. Although the focus is on the comradeship and new experiences, the latter include climbing into the girls' dormitories, having sex and running away to Munich.

That the concept of the traditional boarding-school story is by no means dead is reflected in the Harry Potter phenomenon, which has manifested itself world-wide. Admittedly, J. K. Rowling's Hogwarts is co-educational, but there are many features of the typical school story. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) Harry is offered a place at Hogwarts, assembles his kit with enthusiasm, travels by the school train from King's Cross, is allocated to a house, attends lessons, plays the school game, makes good friends – and enemies – and is, like almost all school-story heroes and heroines, keen, upright, truthful and brave.

Rowling was not the first children's writer to use the school-story format for a story about magic. Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* (1974) introduced Mildred Hubble and her adventures at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches. This and its successors, written for younger children, are still extremely popular, and follow the school-story conventions quite closely. The buildings have gloomy grey walls and turrets, usually half-hidden in the mist. The girls wear black gymslips, grey shirts, black and grey ties, black stockings and hob-nailed boots. Halloween and Sports Day are celebrated during the school year of two terms. There is a school song – 'Proudly on Our Brooms We Fly' – and there is a strict code of honour. Miss Cackle is kind and friendly, a contrast to her deputy, Miss Hardbroom, who terrifies the girls. Mildred has the best of intentions, but is an incompetent trainee witch, and each book chronicles her accidents and mistakes, although she comes through triumphantly at the end.

And what of St Sophia's? Lyra Silvertongue, at the end of the three substantial volumes that make up Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995–2000), comes back to Jordan College in Oxford where it all began, to the suggestion that she should go to the boarding school in north Oxford set up by St Sophia's, the women's college. It is thought that she needs 'the friendship of other girls' of her age – another reflection, perhaps, of the place which single-sex boarding schools hold in the British imagination?

School stories were largely ignored by critics until nearly the end of the twentieth century. Books such as Isabel Quigley's *The Heirs of Tom Brown* (1982), P. W. Musgrave's *From Brown to Bunter* (1985) and Jeffrey Richards's *Happiest Days* (1988) deal with boys' stories but have little or nothing to say about those for girls. The standard work on girls' stories is Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig's *You're a Brick, Angela* (1976).

In the 1980s, women from a wide range of backgrounds confessed that they still reread the stories they had enjoyed as schoolgirls. Although there have long been societies for specific authors, the period from 1989 onwards saw the establishment of magazines devoted to writers who had written for girls in the twentieth century and who had been either ignored by critical studies, or disparaged. *The Abbey Chronicle* (1989) and *The New Chalet Club Journal* (1995) both covering the writings of Elinor Brent-Dyer, *Serendipity* (1996) for fans of Dorita Fairlie Bruce and *Folly (Fans of Light Literature for the Young)* (1990), which has somewhat wider coverage, have all flourished, publishing articles ranging from the scholarly to the just-interested-but-with-something-worth-saying, and compensated for the critics' neglect. Unaware of these activities, Rosemary Auchmuty published *A World of Girls*, the first scholarly study of girls' school stories, in 1990. Written from a strongly feminist viewpoint, this included detailed studies of the work of Blyton, Bruce, Brent-Dyer and Oxenham.

Although the magazines provide an important focus for discussion of school stories, there are spin-off publications, and local and national meetings and conferences, all reflecting the debt which many women, with more money to spend, feel they owe to those authors who provided strong female role models, showing that women could be positive, take on responsibility beyond the immediate family, pursue successful careers, and demonstrate qualities of leadership.

In 2000, a two-volume *Encyclopedia of School Stories*, edited by Rosemary Auchmuty and Joy Wotton, was published. The first volume, mostly the work of Sue Sims, one of the *Folly* editors, and Hilary Clare, covers girls' stories; the second, by Robert Kirkpatrick, deals with stories for boys.

Why does the school story figure so strongly in British children's literature while scarcely seen elsewhere? It may be partly due to the way in which education developed in Britain, with the 'public' schools leading the way. It may also owe something to the island mentality of the British; a boarding-school setting is a useful way of bringing together a group of young people who have to learn to get along with each other while adults hover in the background, providing some kind of disciplined framework.

However, the boarding-school setting also appeals to young people elsewhere. Eva Löfgren (1993: 39) points out that the boarding-school story for girls was so popular in Germany that not only were all Blyton's stories about St Clare's and Malory Towers translated between 1960 and 1972, but sequels were produced by German writers to meet the demand. Löfgren's own interest was aroused by her reading of English stories translated into Swedish.

The French writer Paul Berna recognised the usefulness of the boarding-school setting in *La Grande Alerte* (1960) [*Flood Warning* (1962)]. When the rivers rise and flood in the area of Anjou, some boys and masters at Château-Milon School are cut off. They include a new master, Monsieur Sala, whose ability to keep order has been so poor that he has just been sacked. In the story of their survival and eventual escape, the characters, their attitudes and relationships change radically. M. Sala emerges as a hero, while boys who were hitherto rebellious and disaffected become valuable members of the community. As in Benjamin Lebert's *Crazy* and Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did at School*, a period spent at boarding school is seen as a time during which a rite of passage can take place.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, school, whatever its nature, remains an attractive setting for a story for young people, providing a stable and safe environment in which children from different backgrounds can meet, develop relationships and share experiences. School stories continue to appeal to children at the age when the peer group

is all important, when they are seeking independence and curious about what lies ahead. The genre has a special appeal for girls, who enjoy stories and series in which the characters are seen to mature; boys are more likely to read for the enjoyment of the moment – Jennings is always eleven, Bunter forever in the Remove.

School stories have been criticised for their unreal picture of school life, but authors have responded to changes in society, and time-honoured themes are adapted to new circumstances. School stories, with a few exceptions, provide a positive picture of one of the almost universal experiences of childhood and, perhaps most important of all, show a respect for intellectual and personal achievement, preparing readers to play a responsible role in society.

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36 Pony books

Alison Haymonds

The pony book continues in the long tradition of literature celebrating the love affair between humans and the horse, yet it has always been relegated firmly to the sidelines. Like all popular fiction with mass appeal, the quality of the stories is variable, but there are pony books which merit comparison with any books in the canon of children's literature.

The genre, which first appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, and then developed and flourished during the post-war boom in riding, is part of a much wider range of horse stories, which can be divided into four categories:

- 1 The anthropomorphic horse story in which the horse replaces the human hero and tells the story or is the centre of consciousness. The most famous examples are *Black Beauty* (1877) and *Moorland Mousie* (1929). This type of story has almost died out, but can still be found in the Australian writer Elyne Mitchell's Silver Brumby series (from 1958).
- 2 The wild horse story, mainly American, which owes much to the influence of Western movies and generally features a boy taming a horse. It has many examples, including Will James's *Smoky* (1926), *My Friend Flicka* (1943) and the long-running Black Stallion series (from 1941).
- 3 The adventure story which includes ponies – Mary Treadgold, Monica Edwards and Monica Dickens are key names in this category.
- 4 The pony story which is realistic, domestic, and based in Britain; the humans are of equal importance to the horses, and the relationship between girl (or occasionally boy) and pony is the driving force. Joanna Cannan, Primrose Cumming, the Pullein-Thompsons, K. M. Peyton and Patricia Leitch are among the major writers.

This final category is the one commonly perceived to be 'the pony story'. As a genre, it lacks the universality of school stories or family stories. It ignores the world outside the stable yard, and most of the traditional conventions of story-telling – love and villainy, conflict and mystery. Its readership is as limited as its scope – mainly female, adolescent, and pony mad – for the passion for ponies and pony books seems to be a uniquely female phenomenon. In the formula pony book, the girl is the central character with the pony filling an ambiguous role, which is closer to the traditional heroine both as victim and object of desire. Ponies are not completely personified but they are treated as three-dimensional characters and their physical appearance and personality are described in great detail.

Pony stories, like other types of formulaic fiction – school stories, Westerns and romances – have certain narrative conventions. The following sequence of situations can

be found in almost all formulaic pony books: a young girl, lacking in confidence and self-esteem, longs for a pony but cannot afford one; she finds a special pony and acquires it by chance or by saving money; she discovers the economic problems of keeping a pony, learns to ride and look after it properly and, in the process, gains confidence and a skill; something threatens the status quo, often lack of money, and it seems the girl may lose the pony; however, in the end, she rides it to success in a show.

The books contain detailed advice on horsemanship and riding and also come complete with a set of situations, values and assumptions: the setting is British and rural – the female hero and her family have often moved to the country from the town; country life is ‘better’ than city life; the heroine’s family is short of money, or has lost money. There is a strong code of behaviour attached to horses and horse riding which mirrors the traditional English code of fair play, sportsmanship and good manners.

Books like *A Pony for Jean* (Joanna Cannan 1936), *Wish for a Pony* (Monica Edwards 1947) *A Pony of Our Own* (Patricia Leitch 1960), *Dream of Fair Horses* (Leitch 1975), *Jackie Won a Pony* (Judith M. Berrisford 1958), *A Pony in the Family* (Berrisford 1959), *Jill’s Gymkhana* (Ruby Ferguson 1949), *Fly-by-Night* (K. M. Peyton 1968) and *For Love of a Horse* (Leitch 1976), though written over a period of forty years and quite different in tone and quality, are all formula stories. There is also a vast amount of literature which, though not adhering to that rigid formula, can still be classified as pony books: books which describe children running or helping at riding stables, pony trekking, rescuing ponies, and taking part in other pony-centred adventures. Very often a series of books about a particular girl rider starts with the formula novel then progresses to less pony-centred stories, such as Monica Edwards’s *Romney Marsh* and *Punchbowl* books.

The growth of this new phenomenon was noted by Geoffrey Trease in his groundbreaking book on contemporary juvenile fiction, *Tales out of School* (1949). He wrote later that ‘the spate of pony books for hippomaniac schoolgirls was then at its height. In those days you could have sold *Richard III* if you had given it the right wrapper and called it *A Pony for Richard*’ (Trease 1974: 155). He could not have guessed how long ‘hippomania’ would last despite the unanimous criticism of the genre as narrow, middle class and unchanging: Elaine Moss observed that ‘Horse and pony books ... tend to be thought of by trendy journalists as middle-class, static, irrelevant to today’s social pattern’ (Moss 1976: 30). Marcus Crouch complained: ‘Pony stories were from the beginning middle-class. Young riders owned their ponies by unchallenged right; there was no vulgar show of money, and Pony Club subscriptions were paid by some unseen and disembodied daddy’ (Crouch 1972: 152).

Yet the pony story succeeds in what it sets out to do and remains popular because it stays within the small, highly specialised society of horse lovers. Although the world of horses is perceived as upper class and privileged, the families in these stories are not always middle class – less so in recent books – and seldom well off (which is why the children long hopelessly for ponies). Pony books are obsessed with the costs, care, riding and love of horses – and these concerns are as relevant in the twenty-first century as they were in the 1940s.

Pony stories owe a good deal to traditional fairy tales with their stories of the transformation of gauche girls and neglected ponies and the recurring pattern of motifs and conventional events. They also bear a resemblance to the novel of ‘education’, the *Bildungsroman*, for the female hero gains confidence and a purpose in life by acquiring a pony. Perhaps they are even closer to the formula love story – girl meets pony, girl loses pony, girl gets pony – for these stories are about intense emotional relationships in which

the object of affection happens to be a pony. They are also books of instruction for they are crammed with closely detailed information about equitation.

This didactic streak has descended directly from the forerunners of the genre. Although *Black Beauty* is generally regarded as the first in the field, there were many moral books told from the animals' point of view written earlier in the nineteenth century. One of the first was *Memoirs of Dick, the little poney: supposed to be written by himself; and published for the instruction and amusement of little masters and mistresses*, published in 1799. Dick's story – he is stolen by gypsies and passed between cruel and kind owners until he ends his days in a 'fertile field' – was the pattern for many autobiographical pony stories, which remained popular for a century and a half.

The greatest of these, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, was intended for simple working folk who had daily contact with horses 'to induce kindness, sympathy, and an understanding treatment of horses' (Chitty 1971: 187), but from the first was read enthusiastically by children. Exciting, dramatic, with its strong style, and memorable characters, the 'autobiographical' *Black Beauty* set a standard which future pony books found hard to match, but its values and attitudes to animals still influence the genre. Thousands of children have wept over the death of Ginger and learned about compassion to animals through this story.

For the next fifty years, pony stories tended to be labelled as nature-study books, like *Skewbald the New Forest Pony* (1923), one of the publisher Black's animal stories series told from the animal's point of view, sober books which concentrated on accurate country lore rather than exciting plots. (*Skewbald* was written by Allen W. Seaby (1867–1953), Professor of Fine Art at Reading University (1920–33), and was the first of his stories about British native ponies.)

The wider category of horse stories has never been exclusive to Britain but has reflected the character of the country of origin. For instance, horses were a natural part of life in the famous Billabong books by Australian writer Mary Grant Bruce. Starting with *A Little Bush Maid* (1910) and finishing with *Billabong Riders* (1942), the fifteen titles are set on an idealised station north of Victoria and Norah Linton, the Bush Maid, who grows to womanhood through the series, is a fine rider like her father.

In America, one of the most influential horse books, published in 1926, was also about a native horse – this was *Smoky*, a horse of the Wild West. Will James's classic Newbery winner tells the story of the mouse-coloured cow horse and his relationship with Clint the cowboy. Like *Black Beauty*, it follows the vicissitudes of the horse's life until he is rescued by Clint from the rodeo and finishes his days in peace on the home range. It also supplies detailed information about breaking-in cow horses. Like Sewell, Will James judges men by their treatment of horses.

I've never yet went wrong in sizing up a man by the kind of a horse he rode. A good horse always packs a good man, and I've always dodged the hombre what had no thought nor liking for his horse or other animals.

(James 1941: 7)

Written in the rough-and-ready prose of the Western, it is told from both the horse's and the human's point of view, and Smoky always remains a horse without human characteristics. Its influence was felt for many years in American horse stories.

There was a growing interest in native breeds in Britain but, because these are ponies rather than horses, they are more closely linked with the young children who rode them.

One of the great pony classics, *Moorland Mousie*, is the story of an Exmoor pony, autobiographical, full of tips on horsemanship and horse management and memorably illustrated by the great horse artist Lionel Edwards. It was a direct imitation of *Black Beauty*, but was written specifically for children by 'Golden Gorse', the pseudonym of Muriel Wace.

Perhaps it was no coincidence that *Moorland Mousie* was published in the same year that the Pony Club was established, with the express aim of 'interesting young people in riding and sport and at the same time offering the opportunity of higher instruction in this direction than many of them can obtain individually' (*The Pony Club Year Book* 1994: 68). This started a trend for stories of instruction thinly disguised as fiction, with young riders being taught the finer points of horsemanship, such as Golden Gorse's *Janet and Felicity, the Young Horse-Breakers* (1937), and *Riders of Tomorrow* (1935) by Captain J. E. Hance.

It was adolescent girls who were most receptive to this new obsession for horses and the emergence of the girl rider changed the character of the pony book. The focus of attention shifted from the pony to the pony owners and early books, like *The Ponies of Bunts and the Adventures of the Children Who Rode Them* (1933), illustrated with black-and-white photographs, reflected the new trend. One of the most influential books was a classic story originally intended for adults by its author Enid Bagnold. Despite this, *National Velvet* (1935) has always been read by children, particularly after the enormous success of the film version in 1944. The plot has all the motifs which became familiar in countless pony books: the pony-mad girl who cannot afford a pony wins an unmanageable horse in a raffle, trains it and eventually wins the Grand National. Although it has been criticised for its caricature of a working-class family, *National Velvet* was among the first books to put into words that passionate yearning for horses by adolescent girls which characterises the genre:

'I tell myself stories about horses,' [Velvet] went on, desperately fishing at her shy desires. 'Then I can dream about them. Now I dream about them every night. I want to be a famous rider, I should like to carry despatches, I should like to get a first at Olympia, I should like to ride in a great race, I should like to have so many horses that I could walk down between the two rows of loose boxes and ride what I chose.'

(Bagnold 1935: 71)

Another pony-mad girl echoed these sentiments more prosaically in a book published in the following year. Joanna Cannan's *A Pony for Jean* (1936), now regarded as the pioneer of the new type of pony novel, was written specifically for children, and owed much to E. Nesbit in tone and humour. Like *National Velvet*, it concentrated on the pony-owner rather than the pony, telling the story of Jean Leslie, 'nearly 12', who moves to the country when her father loses his money, and is given a neglected pony, 'The Toastrack'. She learns to ride by trial and error, nurtures the pony (romantically renamed Cavalier), and wins the jumping class at the local gymkhana. It is the prototype for hundreds of pony books and is still one of the best of the genre. It had the benefit of an experienced author, Joanna Cannan, who passed on her love of horses and her writing talent to her three daughters and started a pony-book dynasty. Josephine Pullein-Thompson and her twin sisters Diana and Christine began writing books in their teens and have continued for almost half a century, selling 11 million books all over the world. The name Pullein-Thompson has become synonymous with pony stories and this family, above all other writers in the genre, can be credited with popularising the pony book.

The early Pullein-Thompson books had an innocent ebullience and lively style missing in the later ones. They bear the influence of Victorian children's writers, showing their human characters receiving a moral education from animals. This was the theme of Josephine Pullein-Thompson's first and best stories, *Six Ponies* (1946), *I Had Two Ponies* (1947) and *Plenty of Ponies* (1949). Josephine ran a riding school with her sisters, and her zeal to instruct is clear, but her books are still readable and full of lively and believable children. In later years she concentrated on adventure stories and a Pony Club series but returned to more straightforward stories of horsemanship, like *The Prize Pony* (1982).

Diana and Christine have not confined themselves to pony stories. Diana, who has written adult fiction and non-fiction, has found it hard to match her early books, such as *I Wanted a Pony* (1946), *A Pony for Sale* (1951) and *Janet Must Ride* (1951), although one of her last pony stories, *Cassidy in Danger* (1979), is a satisfying return to form. Christine, who is the most prolific of the three, has endeavoured, more than most, to keep her books abreast of the times, notably in the series featuring the self-made show-jumper David Smith. Her hunting trilogy starting with *We Hunted Hounds* (1949) is also noteworthy, but has suffered, like other books with a hunting theme, from the sharp decline in public support for the sport.

With such a huge output, the sisters' standard is variable, but their love and knowledge of horses is undeniable. They have joined forces since their first book written together, *It Began with Picotee* (1946), to write a series of sequels to *Black Beauty*.

Another pioneer of the pony book was Primrose Cumming whose first book *Doney* (1934) was published when she was still in her teens. Her fantasy, *Silver Snaffles* (1937), in which the heroine, Jenny, passes Alice-like through the wall of the stable into a Utopian world of talking horses who teach her horsemanship, successfully bridged the gap between the talking-horse story and the new type of pony book. Primrose Cumming experimented with the genre, and her best books have a strong sense of the English countryside. *The Wednesday Pony* (1939), based on real characters, tells the story of a butcher's children and Jingo, the high-stepping harness pony, who turns out to be the horse of their dreams. *The Silver Eagle Riding School* (1938), and its sequels, in which the three Chantry sisters discover the problems and pleasures of running their own stables, was one of the first of many 'working' pony stories which proliferated in the 1950s with the arrival of careers books for girls.

The flood of pony stories was temporarily stemmed by the Second World War. Mary Treadgold's Carnegie Medal winner, *We Couldn't Leave Dinah* (1941), an adventure story rather than a pony book, was one of the very few books to acknowledge the war, with its exciting story of children trapped on an occupied Channel Island. In the same year, in America, two horse books were published which heralded two of the most popular series in the genre: Walter Farley's Black Stallion novels and Mary O'Hara's Flicka trilogy.

Farley, influenced by *Black Beauty* and *Smoky*, started writing as a teenager. His first novel, *The Black Stallion* (1941), was published when he was twenty-one, and he continued writing horse stories until his death in 1989. A. B. Emrys has described 'the Farley formula', which combines elements of boys' adventure stories, Westerns, the supernatural, realistic animal tales, and self-help stories (Emrys 1993: 187). Alex, the young hero, develops as a skilled rider through hard work, courage and his passionate attachment to the wild black stallion and its progeny. Farley's growing knowledge of horses meant the books, with their racing background, were full of practical information. His desire to pass on his enthusiasm directly to his young readers, without didacticism, was as responsible for their lasting popularity as their exciting but formulaic plots.

Mary O'Hara's fame rests on her much-loved trilogy, *My Friend Flicka* (1941), *Thunderhead* (1943) and *Green Grass of Wyoming* (1946). Using her own experience of life on a Wyoming ranch, she follows the development of Ken McLaughlin from the ages of ten to seventeen, as he tries to tame the strong-willed mare Flicka and her son Thunderhead. Again influenced by the Wild West, the books are sensitively, often lyrically written. The intensity of Ken's feelings for his horses and the realistic family relationships lift these books into a different category from the formulaic fiction.

Another American writer of this period, Marguerite Henry, dubbed 'the Queen of the children's horse story', was that rarity in the genre, a writer loved by children and critics. Her books are carefully researched, non-formulaic, historical stories which skilfully blend fact and fiction, like *Justin Morgan Had a Horse* (1945), about the origins of the Morgan breed. *Misty of Chincoteague* (1947), about the wild ponies of Virginia, and its sequels, were her biggest sellers and can be mentioned in the same breath as *Black Beauty* and *National Velvet*. *King of the Wind* (1948), her story of the Godolphin Arabian, won the Newbery Medal.

In Britain after the war there was an avalanche of pony books to meet the growing demand fuelled by the resurgence of popularity in riding. This interest was encouraged by the flourishing Pony Club and whetted by the new phenomenon, television. In 1947, the BBC televised the Royal International Horse Show at White City for the first time and soon Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Llewellyn, Pat Smythe and their famous horses, Foxhunter, Prince Hal and Tosca, became household names. Any book with 'pony' in the title would find thousands of eager readers and, in the 1950s, a large number of mediocre pony stories were trotted out, like the Crown Pony series published by Lutterworth Press.

Anthropomorphic stories had lost their popularity in Britain but were kept alive by the Australian writer Elyne Mitchell, whose Silver Brumby books were read worldwide. The books, starting with *The Silver Brumby* (1958), were inspired by the wild horse of the Australian Alps, where Mitchell lived on a cattle station. With their strong sense of place, mystical overtones and high-flown style, they are something of an acquired taste, but have their passionate advocates. The equine dialogue disappears in the later books and humans play more of a part. Another Australian, Mary Elwyn Patchett, also wrote about Brumbies, starting with *The Brumby* (1958), but did not confine herself to horses.

In Britain, the most lastingly popular books were the Jill series, by a successful adult novelist, Ruby Ferguson, starting with *Jill's Gymkhana* (1949), and concluding with *Jill's Pony Trek* (1962). They were constantly in print for half a century although regarded with some disdain by more knowledgeable readers. The nine books, narrated by Jill, about her ponies and her pals, have the jolly, middle-class tone more typical of school stories and lack any didactic streak. They appealed to a wider range of young readers because they have an endearingly simple humour and tell lively stories, following Jill's career from schoolgirl to seventeen-year-old training for a 'proper' job. Jill's successes are relatively modest, she is not well off, and she keeps the same ponies throughout the series, so she is someone to whom her readers can relate.

At this time, these pony books were unique to Britain but reflected a universal love for horses, so the best-known writers in the genre, like Ferguson, sold worldwide and were particularly popular in Scandinavia. Josephine Pullein-Thompson said that 'every child in Finland must have bought every copy of our books' (in conversation with Haymonds, 6 June 1993). In Sweden, two best-selling series that followed the British formula, were the fourteen Britta and Silver books by Lisbeth Pahnke, and the Annika books by Anna Lisa Almqvist. Horses also figured in the popular Puk series from Denmark, written by Lisbeth

Werner, the synonym of two men, Carlo Andersen and Knud Meister, who was well known for writing and translating horse books.

Many writers tried their hand at pony books, lured, perhaps, by the deceptive simplicity of the genre. Some were famous riders like Pat Smythe, or equestrian experts like Pamela Macgregor-Morris; others were writers of adult books, like Catherine Cookson, Rumer Godden and Monica Dickens (with her popular Follyfoot series); who produced fine children's books in which horses feature. Kitty Barne, better known for more serious children's fiction, wrote a classic pony book, *Rosina Copper* (1954), based on the true story of an Argentine polo pony. M. E. (Mary Evelyn) Atkinson, author of the popular Lockett family holiday adventure books, and Lorna Hill, who wrote the Sadler's Wells series, both produced indifferent pony stories.

Many young riders felt a compulsion to write as well as ride and joined the growing ranks of pony book authors. This large number of young writers is unique to the genre and seems to be part of the pony-mad phase. Primrose Cumming and the Pullein-Thompsons were not the only early starters. Among the youngest published writers were Moyra Charlton, who was eleven when she wrote *Tally Ho, the Story of an Irish Hunter* (1930), and Daphne Winstone, who wrote *Flame* (1945) when she was twelve: others included Mary Colville (thirteen), who wrote and illustrated *Plain Jane* (1945), April Jaffe (fourteen), who wrote *Satin and Silk* (1948), and the fifteen-year-olds Lindsay Campbell (*Horse of Air* (1957)) and Bernagh Brims (*Runaway Riders* (1963)). In 1936, fifteen-year-old Shirley Faulkner-Horne wrote a book of instruction, *Riding for Children*, and schoolgirls Katharine Hull and Pamela Whitlock, fifteen and sixteen respectively, sent the manuscript of a book they were writing together to Arthur Ransome. With his encouragement, *The Far-Distant Oxus* was published the following year (1937). A sub-*Swallows and Amazons* with ponies, this book and its two sequels were the forerunner of the adventure plus pony stories in which the ponies were incidental.

Arguably the finest writer in the genre, K. M. (Kathleen) Peyton started writing at the age of nine and her first story was published when she was fifteen. *Sabre, the Horse from the Sea* (1948), written under her maiden name Kathleen Herald, was followed by *The Mandrake* (1949) and *Crab the Roan* (1953). Although she went on to greater things, including a Carnegie Medal, and other kinds of books, she never lost her all-consuming interest and continues to write pony stories. Even her admired *Flambards* novels (from 1978), though by no stretch of the imagination pony books, are permeated with her love of horses. Her best pony book, *Fly-by-Night*, was written in 1968 when the popularity of the genre was losing its impetus. If *Fly-by-Night* marked the end of the golden age of pony books, it also demonstrated how it was possible to transform the old formula without flouting the conventions. The plot is almost identical to *A Pony for Jean* – but heroine Ruth Hollis's family is not wealthy and middle class; they live on a housing estate and they are plagued by money worries. In this and other books by Kathleen Peyton, like *Darkling* (1989), the responsibilities as well as the pleasures of owning horses are stressed, and in *Poor Badger* (1990), a classic 'pony rescue' story, the ethics of taking someone else's pony, however badly treated, are seriously discussed.

Another writer who started young was Helen Griffiths, whose first books were published in her teens. Like Peyton, she can hardly be classed as a pony writer; as a children's novelist, she has written about animals, principally horses, and their relationship with children, many with a Spanish setting. One of her best, *The Wild Horse of Santander* (1966), was a runner-up for the Carnegie Medal. The wild filly, which cannot be broken in,

has a special bond with the blind boy Joaquin. Through her he learns to accept his blindness but, while he is away regaining his sight, the mare runs wild again and has to be shot.

Another exponent of the more realistic pony stories of the 1960s was Vian Smith; one of the few male writers of pony stories, he was as knowledgeable about human behaviour as he was about animals. He, too, used the disability of a child to reveal the healing power of contact with animals in *Martin Rides the Moor* (1964), about a deaf boy who learns to ride. *Come down the Mountain* (1967), the story of a girl's determination to save a neglected racehorse and the effect it has on her family and the community, is an exceptional book by any standards.

The downward trend in pony stories continued in the 1970s, enlivened only by the first of the twelve Jinny books by Patricia Leitch. Her earlier books had followed in the tradition of the Pullein-Thompsons, although *Janet – Young Rider* (1963), with its working-class family, reflected far more accurately the preoccupations of its period. *Dream of Fair Horses* (1975), heavily influenced by *National Velvet*, is still a remarkable work of imagination with serious things to say about the dangers of trying to possess living beings. But Leitch set her own seal on the genre with the series about Jinny and her Arab horse Shantih (starting with *For Love of a Horse* in 1976). Still deservedly popular, these books, set in the Scottish Highlands, follow the growth and development of Jinny through a continuous series of adventures linked together by the mysterious Red Horse, which represents the life-force.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a resurgence of interest in pony books but a shortage of new writers like Caroline Akrill with her lively trilogy – *Eventer's Dream* (1981), *A Hoof in the Door* (1982), *Ticket to Ride* (1983) – about aspiring eventer Elaine and the eccentric Fane family. Established writers, like the Pullein-Thompsons, were in demand again, but a brave attempt in the 1990s by publishers J. A. Allen, of London, to launch a paperback series, Allen Equestrian Fiction, did not succeed. In America, there were also fewer horse books, but some good writers like Jean Slaughter Doty, Lynn Hall and Glen Rounds who kept the genre alive.

The trend in recent years, particularly in America, has been towards series books. One of the longest-lasting is The American Saddle Club, started in 1986 by the tireless Bonnie Bryant. They appear once a month and have little to commend them except ubiquity. Bryant also produces a Pine Hollow series and the Pony Tales series for younger readers. The long-running Thoroughbred series was created in 1991 by Joanna Campbell, starting with *A Horse Called Wonder*. These books with their racing background were better written and more knowledgeable than the norm and used that well-tried plot device, the special relationship between girl and horse. However, after fourteen titles in five years, Campbell gave up the gruelling task and the series was taken on by numerous other writers with a considerable diminution in quality.

These books are 'teen' reads but the series that proliferated in Britain in the 1990s tended to be aimed at younger readers, including the Pony Club series by Diane Redmond, Kestrels by Patricia Leitch, and Hollywell Stables by Samantha Alexander. Even K. M. Peyton is following the vogue with her superior Swallow Tales series.

However, there will always be fine children's books about horses, like the New Zealand author Joy Cowley's award-winning Shadrach trilogy. In the first book, *Bow Down Shadrach* (New Zealand Children's Book of the Year 1991), Hannah and her brothers try to rescue old Shadrach from the dogfood factory. The sequels, *Glady Here I Come*, and *Shadrach Girl* (New Zealand Post Junior Fiction Award 2001), concern Shadrach's daughter. With books of this quality, in which the relationship between owner and horse affects both child and animal, the genre will survive.

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37 Historical fiction

Janet Fisher

Historical fiction, paradoxically, must be based on fact, which makes it different from other fiction. Its task is more difficult because of that mixture; having said that, it must be like other fiction by creating a world into which the reader can be drawn, a credible world with characters he or she can relate to, the only difference being that the world is the past.

It is not enough to know the facts to write such a story; the difficulty is to place them in the plot, so that the historical background is clear, the place is evident, and any unfamiliar terms are self-explanatory. There is the great problem of the language the characters speak; modern idioms cannot be used, neither can ‘gadzookery’; both can easily destroy a carefully created atmosphere. Many writers overcome this by a rearrangement of the words, which has the effect of making the prose sound authentic without being incomprehensible; for example Joan W. Blos in *A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl’s Journal, 1830–1832* (1979):

I Catherine Cabot Hall aged 13 years 6 months 29 days, of Meredith in the state of New Hampshire, do begin this book. It was given to me yesterday, my father returning from Boston Massachusetts, where he had gone ahead to obtain provisions for the months ahead. My father’s name is Charles, Charles Hall; I am daughter also of Hannah Cabot Hall, dead of a fever these four long years.

(Blos 1979: 5)

The field can be divided into two categories: those books which use real historical figures and those whose characters are wholly imaginary. A device often used is to tell the story of a real figure, for example King Alfred (King of England 871–99), through the eyes of an invented character such as in C. Walter Hodges’ *The Namesake* (1964). Other stories contain glimpses of real figures, for example Lord Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell (generals in the English Civil War 1642–9) in *Simon* (1957) by Rosemary Sutcliff. In the early years of the genre, real figures appeared frequently, but increasingly, as the emphasis has moved from political to social history, lives of ordinary and imaginary people have been told.

Some writers, for example Cynthia Harnett, used a wealth of detail to make the story live; others, such as Gillian Avery, use characterisation and leave an impression of the period; a few like Rosemary Sutcliff paint so vivid a picture with words that the reader can almost inhabit the past. A sense of place is vital and it is notable that the great writers in this genre have made a particular place their own: in the UK, Rosemary Sutcliff – Hadrian’s Wall and the Sussex Downs; Barbara Willard – Ashdown Forest; Hester Burton

– Suffolk; and in the USA, Laura Ingalls Wilder – the prairies. Political views can colour a book, often to its advantage, witness Geoffrey Trease's stories of revolution. Illustrations are more important than in most other genres, adding as they can to the period flavour, and in many books a map is vital (although often missing!).

There are writers, and Leon Garfield is the best example, who write of the past but not in a way that can be considered as pure historical fiction. Anthea Bell in *Twentieth Century Children's Writers* states that 'history sits lightly on these novels' (Kirkpatrick 1978: 313). Garfield's characters inhabit a world lightly drawn from the eighteenth century, but his chief concern is with them and not the period. He has set his own standards and defies categorisation.

Historical fiction is a genre in which many of the best stories in English for children have been written; for example, *A Thousand for Sicily* (Geoffrey Trease, 1965), *The Little House in the Big Woods* (Laura Ingalls Wilder, 1932), *The Bronze Bow* (Elizabeth George Speare, 1962), *The Machine Gunners* (Robert Westall, 1975), *The Eagle of the Ninth* (Rosemary Sutcliff, 1954), *The Stronghold* (Mollie Hunter, 1974) and *Viking's Dawn* (Henry Treece, 1955).

Most historical fiction for children has so far been written in English but other countries have produced notable books in the genre, many of which have been translated into English, thus reaching a wider audience who may well be unaware of their origins. As early as 1837 Aleksandra Ishimova was writing stories of Russian history for children.

In Britain before the 1930s, historical novels were written largely for adults, with one or two noticeable exceptions, such as Captain Marryat's *The Children of the New Forest* (1847). Sir Walter Scott, Charles Kingsley and Robert Louis Stevenson wrote historical adventures much enjoyed by adults and children alike. G. A. Henty wrote adventure stories for boys from 1881 onwards which were intensely patriotic and full of daring deeds. They read stiffly now and some of the political sentiments expressed are no longer fashionable. Rudyard Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) was and still is much admired. Rosemary Sutcliff freely admitted her debt to Kipling and his influence on her writing can be seen in the rich prose she used. These early books were in the main adventures or historical romances, rather than attempts to create a living past.

In 1934 Geoffrey Trease wrote *Bows against the Barons* and changed the nature of the genre. He painted a picture of a man fighting injustice and oppression, not the swash-buckling Robin Hood of legend but a revolutionary character, a real living person who just happened to be from the past, full of colour and vigour. Many of Trease's stories are historical adventures, but this title and several others of his vast output are much more than that. Trease's left-wing views permeated his writing and his best stories burn with revolutionary zeal. It is difficult not to rush out and join Garibaldi (1807–82, liberator of Sicily from Naples) after reading *Follow My Black Plume* (1963)! Trease's considerable output was always well researched; a great many of his stories involve a journey by a young man, usually accompanied by a girl who is often disguised as a boy. The best of these is *The Red Towers of Granada* (1966), which has a bold dramatic opening and a journey from Nottingham to Toledo, full of detail and colour against the background of the treatment of Jews and lepers.

In the USA at around the same time (1932), *The Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder was published. This first book of a magnificent series told the story of Wilder's family's move west in the late nineteenth century. The stories are full of the details of everyday life, the fight for survival in which the provision and preparation of food dominate. *The Long Winter* (1940) makes the reader see the snow on the bedcovers

and feel the lethargy the long intense cold of the prairie winter brings. The children grow as the series progresses, which makes the series even more realistic. Elizabeth Coatsworth also wrote of settlers, but *Away Goes Sally* (1934) is a more comfortable story of a house being moved on runners in a Maine winter. Although there are other stories about Sally they do not have the sweep of the Wilder stories.

The Newbery Medal, awarded to the best children's book published in the USA each year, had already been awarded to historical fiction in 1929 to Eric P. Kelly for *The Trumpeter of Krakow*, telling in stately prose of an episode in Polish history, and in 1936 it was awarded to Carol Rylie Brink for *Caddie Woodlawn*, another pioneer story. (It is interesting to compare this book with the Wilder stories and note the same preoccupation with food, in this case turkeys.) In 1943 Elizabeth Janet Gray won with *Adam of the Road*, a lively tale of Chaucerian England (late fourteenth century), which today lacks a period feel, and Esther Forbes won in 1944 with *Johnny Tremain*. Like Trease's *Bows against the Barons*, this book dealt with revolution, in this case the American War of Independence (1774–81), and the complex background is slowly drawn behind the story of Johnny's gradual involvement in the conflict.

In Germany, the 1950s saw the publication of Hans Baumann's carefully researched historical novels, including *Son of Columbus* (1951), *Sons of the Steppe* (1957) and *The Barque of the Brothers* (1958). In Britain the 1950s saw the flowering of different talents who were to dominate the scene, and during this period three authors won the Carnegie Medal awarded by the Library Association (now CILIP, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals). Cynthia Harnett won for *The Woolpack* in 1951, Ronald Welch for *Knight Crusader* in 1954 and Rosemary Sutcliff for *The Lantern Bearers* in 1959.

Cynthia Harnett's interest was in the everyday life of ordinary people and it is this wealth of detail which make her books so interesting, if at times a little indigestible. *The Writing on the Hearth* (1971) has witchcraft and sorcery, as well as politics, and the reader also sees the growth of the colleges of Oxford University. William Caxton (c. 1421–91) appears in *A Load of Unicorn* (1959), a story of resistance to change by the scribes to his newfangled printing methods. Rosemary Sutcliff began her writing career with *The Queen Elizabeth Story* (1950), followed by *The Armourer's House* (1951) and *Brother Dusty-Feet* (1952), the first of her stories to deal with the friendship between young men. *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954) is based on two episodes of Romano-British history, using which she constructed her picture of the British tribes under a Roman army of occupation, and in which the greatness of her talent emerges. There is another portrait of a friendship, this time between Esca, the freed slave, and Marcus the legionary, who together go north to find the lost eagle of Marcus's father's regiment; there is also what becomes from this point on a recurring theme, that of a young man coping with some kind of handicap. *The Silver Branch* (1957) and *The Lantern Bearers* (1959), linked stories, continue these themes, the latter being almost an adult book in which Aquila overcomes the bitterness at his father's murder and the abduction of his sister, and comes to maturity alongside the beginning of Britain.

Rosemary Sutcliff had a talent for making the past come alive through her descriptions, dialogue and a sense of place. In a few words she painted the landscape for the reader, for example, 'the wind from the east laying the moorland grasses all over one way' (1959: 133). Many of the books are set in the north of England, on Hadrian's Wall, but she also memorably used the Sussex Downs in *Warrior Scarlet* (1958) and *Knight's Fee* (1960). Carolyn Horowitz talks about Rosemary Sutcliff's

acute sense of place ... a feeling of belonging to a certain landscape becomes a vital part of the plot structure. By the time the novel is finished the reader feels homesick, not only for a certain essence of country and climate, but for another time.

(Horowitz 1969: 142)

The brotherhood of men fighting a common enemy features in *Blood Feud* (1976) and *Frontier Wolf* (1980); a rare heroine appears in *A Song for a Dark Queen* (1978), Boadicea's (or Boudicca, fl. c. AD 60) story told in subtly singing story by her harper. Often from a few known facts Rosemary Sutcliff created a past so vivid that she stands head and shoulders above the rest.

Ronald Welch also wrote of battles but as a military historian. In his best book *Knight Crusader* (1954), the complicated political background of the Crusades (1096–1270) is well set, but it is the scorching heat of the Middle East on knights in full armour that the reader remembers. Welch wrote a number of stories of young men under fire, from bows and arrows to tanks.

Henry Treece made the Vikings very much his own field. This is a subject no one else of stature has tackled. In three books covering the life of Harald Sigurdson, *Viking's Dawn* (1955), *The Road to Miklagard* (1957) and *Viking's Sunset* (1960), the ethos and brotherhood of the Vikings is expounded in a style especially evolved for the series. It is a little stiff to read until the reader is used to the rhythm of the prose. In *The Queen's Brooch* (1966), he wrote a powerful and dramatic story of a Roman tribune involved in Boadicea's uprising and subsequent defeat by Suetonius. This stands well alongside Rosemary Sutcliff's stories of Roman Britain, although Treece's is a less romantic view.

Gillian Avery chose a more recent period for her domestic comedies set in Victorian England (1837–1901), using the narrow confines of the lives of middle-class children to make sharp observations on their life. There is no wealth of detail in these books but a strong impression of what it was like to be a Victorian child. *The Warden's Niece* (1957), in which Maria runs away to join her uncle who is warden of an Oxford college, and *James without Thomas* (1959) show her gifts to the full, her dialogue being particularly entertaining.

In 1956 Ian Serraillier was the first to use the Second World War and its aftermath in a story which has since become a classic, *The Silver Sword*. Based on fact, it tells of a journey across post-war Europe by four Polish children searching for their parents; a stark and heart-wrenching tale.

From the USA in 1950s came *Rifles for Watie* (1957) by Harold Keith, the story of Jeff, drawn into the American Civil War (1861–5) by high ideals, only to find that good, bad, right and wrong are more subtle concepts than he supposed. *Across Five Aprils* (1964) by Irene Hunt looks at the same subject from a different viewpoint, that of an Illinois farming family waiting for letters from the front. Both are moving accounts of the horror and muddle of war. Elizabeth George Speare won the Newbery Medal twice; first in 1959 with *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, a portrayal of an independent girl in the fiercely Protestant New England of 1687, who befriends a Quaker accused of being a witch. It gives a fair picture of the bigotry of the time and the less-than-just rule from England. It was among the first and is still one of the best books on this subject. The second medal was won by *The Bronze Bow* in 1962, in which the author used the unusual setting of Israel at the time of Jesus, making it easy to understand the impact of Jesus's teaching on a boy who is bitter at the death of his father at the hand of the Romans.

The 1960s and 1970s became known as the golden age of children's literature in Britain, particularly for historical stories, but they also saw notable stories emerging from other countries. An Rutgers Van der Loeff's stark story *Children on the Oregon Trail* (Netherlands 1961) spared no details of the hardships endured by the early settlers in the USA.

In the UK, Frederick Grice was one of the first to use twentieth-century history when he took the northern England of the 1920s for *Bonnie Pit Laddie* (1960), an episodic tale of a pit strike which brought a community to its knees. It tells of the ordinary working man, his poverty and hunger, with a raw sense of injustice reminiscent of Trease's early work. Hester Burton took earlier injustice for *Time of Trial* (Carnegie Medal 1963), which tells of the trial and imprisonment of a bookseller in eighteenth-century London for his political views. It is a thoughtful book requiring maturity from the reader. *No Beat of Drum* (1966) is a sombre, harsh story of a labourer deported to Australia for his part in a demonstration to get better wages. As with Rosemary Sutcliff, a special countryside is important in Hester Burton's work, in her case Suffolk with its vast skies. Her most vivid book is *Castors Away!* (1962). Although the focus is the Battle of Trafalgar (1805), it is above all a family story in which Tom goes off to war, and Nell is left to cope at home.

Barbara Willard made the Ashdown Forest in Sussex her own in the Mantlemass novels (set in between the end of the Wars of the Roses (1485) and c. 1700), taking women as her main characters, although as Margaret Meek states:

This is a period which seems to offer them only dependent roles. Dame Elizabeth, in the first book *The Lark and the Laurel* (1970), established the Mantlemass fortune and makes a woman of Cecily who becomes a legend in her turn. Catherine insists on choosing where her heart is. Ursula holds the family together when its fate is doubtful, and finally Cecilia rejects the New World and stays in the ruins with the prospect of a different kind of rebuilding. They are a formidable tribe expecting no pity or excuses, tender and loving and much more clear-sighted than the men. Above them towers Lilius, a Master of iron, more than a match for the men she works with and commands.

(Meek 1980: 805)

Through all the stories, the reader senses life driven on by the seasons, despite the great events going on outside the forest, which occasionally touch their lives like the ripples on a pond.

Scottish writer Mollie Hunter wrote graphically of her country's history in *The Ghosts of Glencoe* (1966) and *The Pistol in the Greenyards* (1965), rearranging the words to give the rhythm of the Scottish tongue without the use of dialect. Her finest book is *The Stronghold* (Carnegie Medal 1974), in which she went back further in time to create her idea of how a broch, a stone fortress found only in the Orkney Islands, came to be built. Peter Hollindale points out that this book covers a moment when 'history is altered by a single original mind' (Hollindale 1977: 112). The hero, a crippled member of an early tribe, finds his distinction not in the traditional warrior field, but in the design of the stronghold which saves his tribe from the Roman invaders. The hold of the old religion of the Druids is powerfully described and the sacrificial scene is a high point in the story.

K. M. Peyton also began to write at this time and published three powerful stories of the sea and the Essex coast. Mrs Peyton won the Carnegie Medal for *The Edge of the Cloud* (1969) (the second of her Flambards trilogy), a romantic story of an Edwardian

family (c. 1901–10). *Windfall* (1962), *The Maplin Bird* (1964) and *Thunder in the Sky* (1966) share a background of coastal waters and of the hand-to-mouth existence this life means. The third of these novels uses the transport of ammunition in the First World War as its backdrop. The sea and naval history do not seem to attract many writers for children and Mrs Peyton herself moved away from this subject to horses.

From Australia came a pioneering story, *The Switherby Pilgrims* (1967), in which Eleanor Spence tells of Arabella Braithwaite taking ten orphans from England to New South Wales in the 1820s. The hardships of the ‘better’ life are well drawn.

The Second World War also became a prominent subject. Hans Peter Richter’s chilling trilogy of life in Nazi Germany was published first in German in the 1960s and subsequently translated into English. *Friedrich* (1971), *I Was There* (1973) and *The Time of the Young Soldiers* (1976) tell the story of Hans, a German boy who first observes anti-Semitism, then joins the Hitler Youth and serves in the army. These outstanding stories are told in a cold stark style which suit the subject exactly and are almost alone in dealing with this subject matter. The Second World War was also a constant theme for Austrian writers in the 1960s. Karl Bruckner in *The Day of the Bomb* (1961) told of the events of Hiroshima, and Winifred Bruckner in *The Dead Angels* (1963) and Kathe Recheis in *The Net of Shadows* (1965) wrote of the Warsaw Ghetto and concentration camps respectively.

From the other side of the English Channel, Jill Paton Walsh wrote of British experience during the war in *The Dolphin Crossing* (1967), about two boys from different backgrounds brought together by the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk; and *Fireweed* (1969) set in the London Blitz (1940), again examining class differences which separate a young couple. (Paton Walsh also wrote of other periods, memorably of the Plague in England in 1665, in *A Parcel of Patterns* (1983), in which the difficult language suits the period of the tragic true story of the village of Eyam.) *The Machine Gunners* (Carnegie Medal 1975), by Robert Westall, showed the effect of war on a group of youngsters in Newcastle in northern England. It is a raw, gutsy story about Chas, who finds a machine gun in a wrecked German aeroplane and decides to ‘have a go’ at the Germans. In a calm but no less telling style, David Rees recreated a night of bombing in Exeter in 1942 in *The Exeter Blitz* (Carnegie Medal 1978), in which Colin Lockwood is separated from his family and witnesses the destruction of the city from the cathedral tower. The low-key writing makes it all the more horrific. Susan Cooper also wrote realistically of the tension caused by the bombing and its effect on three children in *Dawn of Fear* (1972).

Carrie’s War (1973) was based on Nina Bawden’s own experience as a child evacuated from London in 1940, and paints a picture of an uncomfortable and unforgettable time. Other novels have a similar theme: *In Spite of All Terror* (1968) by Hester Burton and *A Certain Courage* (1975) by Gordon Cooper show different experiences of evacuation. *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971) and its sequels *The Other Way Round* (1975) and *A Small Person Far Away* (1978) by Judith Kerr draw on her own experience as a refugee from Germany, in France, Switzerland and England. Elliot Arnold in *A Kind of Secret Weapon* (1970), with its passionate plea for resistance against tyranny, and *Bright Candles* (1974) by Nathaniel Benchley tell of the courage of Resistance workers in occupied Denmark. From the Netherlands and for a younger age group, Gertie Evenhuis showed Dirk’s endeavours to be part of his father’s work in the Resistance in *What about Me?* (1974). In Austria, Christine Nostlinger used her own childhood experiences for *Fly Away Home* (1973), telling of a child in Vienna at the end of the war, and of a girl who went to help a Jew in *Guardian Ghost* (1979).

In the 1970s, other subjects included Shakespeare's theatre, which featured in two deep and literary stories by Antonia Forest, *The Player's Boy* (1970), and *The Player and the Rebels* (1971) which make the plays and theatre of the time come alive. In Canada, Barbara Smucker wrote movingly of the underground railway for slaves using real historical figures in *Underground to Canada* (1977). In the UK, Gillian Cross dealt with the effect of the building of the railway on a small Sussex village where the hostility between the villagers and the navvies flares into violence in *The Iron Way* (1979). Peter Carter's stark tale of the Peterloo Massacre (when a reform meeting in Manchester was attacked in 1819), *The Black Lamp* (1973), lacks the warmth to make it a rounded picture but clearly shows the resistance to change. American writer Paula Fox told in a series of economically worded episodes of one boy's experience on a slave ship between Africa and America in *The Slave Dancer* (Newbery Medal 1974). The Suffragette movement of the early twentieth century was the topic of *A Question of Courage* (1975) by Marjorie Darke, a powerful and emotional story of a working-class girl caught up in it. Mildred C. Taylor wrote of her family's life in Mississippi of the 1930s in her trilogy *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981) and *The Road to Memphis* (1990). The dignity of the Logan family in the face of the bigotry they faced is magnificently drawn.

The 1980s saw a falling off in the writing of historical fiction; although Rosemary Sutcliff, Geoffrey Trease and Barbara Willard were still writing in the UK, there were few names coming along behind: an exception was Geraldine McCaughrean with *A Little Lower than the Angels* (1987), a rare look at medieval times. The Second World War still dominated subject-matter both in Britain and Europe. Michelle Magorian showed promise in *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1981), a story of an evacuee and his relation with the old man who took him in. A raw book, based on the last few months of Dr Janus Korczak in the Warsaw Ghetto, is Christa Laird's *Shadow of the Wall* (1989), a quite outstanding recreation of courage. Elsie McCutcheon wrote *Rat War* (1985), a perceptive story of a boy conquering his fear, set in the stringencies of post-war Britain. Joan Lingard also wrote of the war in *File on Fraulein Berg* (1980), showing how easily fear leads to suspicion, and specifically of refugees in *Tug of War* (1989), and *Between Two Worlds* (1991), based on family history. Austrian Renate Welsh wrote of resistance to war in *Thrown into the Scales* (1988). In France, Claude Gutman wrote of David, a Polish Jew escaping the Nazis in Paris in *The Empty House* (Prix Sorcieries 1989). Uri Orlev, an Israeli, wrote in Hebrew *The Island on Bird Street* (1981), a story based on his own experiences in the Warsaw Ghetto.

American writers found subjects other than war; Pam Conrad's *Prairie Songs* (1985), a book which minces no words in telling of the tragedy of the doctor's wife in pioneering times who could not adjust to life in a 'soddy'. Patricia Maclachlan wrote of another woman's arrival in the American West in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (Newbery Medal 1986), the story of a mail-order bride whose arrival is observed by Caleb and Anna in beautiful spare prose.

In the 1990s, Irish writer Marita Conlon-Mackenna told of the effects of the potato famine (1845–9) in *Under the Hawthorn Tree* (1990). Another Irish writer, Eilis Dillon, turned to the Second World War for a story of Jews fleeing Hungary in *Children of Bach* (1993), while Joan O'Neill wrote the first of a trilogy about experiences in Ireland during and after the war in *Daisy Chain War* (1990). Gudrun Pausewang's *The Final Journey* (published in Germany in 1992) is a harrowing account of a journey to a death camp. The whole story is set within the confines of the railway truck. The Second World War continues to be a source of stories from writers around the world as it passes from living

memory into history. Kit Pearson, a Canadian, in her trilogy *The Sky is Falling* (1989), *Looking at the Moon* (1991) and *The Lights Go on Again* (1993), about two English children who are evacuated to Canada, shows clearly the difficulties faced by the young boy on his return to England to the family he hardly knows. Michael Morpurgo in *Waiting for Anya* (1990) tells of how Jo's village in the Pyrenees conspires to save the Jewish children hidden in the mountains around it, an exciting accessible story.

Other writers chose widely differing periods about which to write. Judith O'Neill, an Australian, wrote of emigration to Australia in the nineteenth century in *So Far from Skye* (1992), while Katherine Paterson, an American, went back to the Industrial Revolution in Massachusetts in her portrayal of a girl's fight for better working conditions in *Lyddie* (1991). Also from the USA is Karen Cushman's story of a feisty medieval girl trying to escape arranged marriages in *Catherine Called Birdy* (1996). Another American, Caroline Cooney, better known for contemporary stories, used fact in *Mercy* (2001), an outstanding story based on the trek by a group from the village of Deerfield, through the cold North American winter to Montreal, after being captured by the Indians.

Jamila Gavin also used fact in her book *Coram Boy* (2000), set in the eighteenth century and telling of the fate of illegitimate children. Gavin also wrote a trilogy about the partition of India, beginning with *The Wheel of Surya* (1994). Henrietta Branford's unusual *Fire Bread and Bone* (1998), is a deceptively slight story set in 1381 at the time of the English Peasants' Revolt, told through the eyes of a female dog. Kevin Crossley-Holland went back to the legends of King Arthur for his projected trilogy which begins with *The Seeing Stone* (2001). Frances Mary Hendry used the slave trade for *Chains* (2000), and Celia Rees turned to the Salem witch trials for *Witch Child* (2001).

There has been a distinct falling off in the number of historical stories published since the 1980s and in the UK the genre has been dominated by the perceived needs of the National Curriculum, resulting in short novels about the Victorians and Tudors, two of the periods covered at primary level. Many of the books mentioned in this essay could well be republished and introduced to a wider audience to meet this need.

However, there is cause for optimism, as writers all over the world are still telling stories which potentially illuminate the past for young people today.

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38 War

Carol Fox and Peter Hunt

Given that there is a tradition in children's literature of protecting children, it is perhaps surprising that war books currently constitute such a popular genre. The reasons that writers and critics give for this preoccupation are straightforward, and focus on realism and knowledge. Edward Ardizzone – both a portrayer of idyllic childhood and a war artist – said:

I think we are possibly inclined, in a child's reading, to shelter him too much from the harder facts of life. Sorrow, failure, poverty, and possibly even death, if handled poetically, can surely all be introduced without hurt ... If no hint of the hard world comes into these books, I'm not sure that we are playing fair.

(1980: 293)

War is one of 'the harder facts of life'; war is all around us; war infuses, directly or indirectly a large proportion of the books on children's shelves. As Barbara Harrison in her pioneering study of books about the Jewish holocaust wrote: 'war is an ever-present reality for vast numbers of children; we who can choose to keep our children ignorant are a minority' (1987: 87).

The editors of a collaborative selection of reviews, *War and Peace in Children's Books*, put it this way:

We do not think it is accidental that so many children's books on the Second World War are being published now at the close of the twentieth century. There is a feeling that records need to be set straight and passed on to the generations that will grow up in the twenty-first century, and perhaps an even stronger feeling that it is not too late to educate children about war and its consequences.

(Batho *et al.* 1999)

The emphasis by critics is very often on the educative virtues of war books. Barbara Harrison, writing about war books published in the USA, sums up a common attitude:

The books are important documents for historians and for social and political scientists ... But we must acknowledge at the outset ... the quintessentially moral nature of these books. They instruct: they seek to make people better than they are ... A tragic work of art deals with human aspiration and suffering, and it examines with profound seriousness the place of the individual in the universe.

(1980: 68)

Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox are similarly optimistic:

In the treatment of the two world wars in recent novels and picture-books ... young readers are invariably urged to examine the nature of violence and suffering, persecution and endurance, hatred and loyalty, selfishness and sacrifice. They are asked to share the writers' condemnation of war and the repugnant beliefs which lead to conflict, and to feel compassion for the anguish imposed upon the innocent many by the powerful few.

(2001: 53)

The opposing argument might be that not all books about war are so high-minded, and many countries have published, and publish, propagandist and jingoistic materials, very often in the form of comic books. The fact of the subject-matter being war does not automatically imbue the texts with virtue. It is also interesting to note the slight ideological myopia in what Agnew and Fox call the 'repugnant beliefs' which lead to conflict: whose repugnant beliefs are we talking about? We do not have to look back very far to find, in nineteenth-century Britain, for example, novels for boys about the British wars, which were instrumental in building the Empire and promoting a concept of British boyhood and British codes of behaviour (see Butts 2000; Richards 1989) which would be scarcely sustainable today. Indeed it is generally agreed that the portrayal of war over the last fifty years in children's books across the world has changed radically, and is far more inclined to take a revisionist, often postcolonial, balanced view of conflicts. There is no doubt that, generally, there has been what Agnew and Fox call 'the gradual shift – especially in the United Kingdom – from the cultural certainties of 1914 to the pluralism and ambiguities of 2000' (2001: 1; and see also Fox 2001; Girouard 1981: 290; Butts 2000: 138).

Equally, it can be argued that war is not an appropriate subject for children's literature: as Eric Kimmel wrote, 'To put it simply: is mass murder a subject for a children's novel?' (Harrison 1987: 70). For some writers, the answer to that question is yes: Gudrun Pausewang's *The Final Journey* ([*Reise im August*] (1992/1998)) is a book that ends in the gas chamber:

The heavy iron door slammed shut.

Alice tipped back her head. Soon, soon, water would pour down over her from the nozzle up there. The water of life. It would wash her clean of the dirt and horror of the journey, would make her as clean as she had been before. She raised her arms and opened out her hands.

(1992/1998:154)

Is this kind of writing pushing at the boundaries of fiction? Should fictions be made of such harsh realities? Are books such as Anne Frank's *Diaries* (of which a new edition, with previously unpublished material, appeared in 1995) so powerful that fictionalised imitations are unnecessary or demeaning?

There is also a fundamental problem, as Barbara Harrison points out: books on the subject of war go against a basic principle of children's literature:

...although there is now greater candour in literature for the young than ever before, the one characteristic which adults are reluctant to see diminished in any way is hope,

traditionally the animating force in children's books. Many adults cannot endure the thought that during the Holocaust, hope ... was swept into the ovens.

(1987: 69–70)

In most children's books, writers are giving the disempowered, the weakest members of society – the children – a form of power through fiction, through both fantasy and a kind of realism. If 'realism' in fiction is seen as relating in a direct way to the real world, writers are usually dealing with topics where the child at least has a chance of being *actually* empowered. But in the case of war, it might be argued, adults are disempowered too: and if children are given a story in which even the adults are disempowered, what hope of power is there for the children? The harsh realism is such that there can be no escape in real life, and no retreat into fantasy in fiction. As Ursula K. Le Guin put it,

To give the child a picture of ... gas chambers ... and say, 'Well, baby, that's how it is, what are you going to make of it?' – that is surely unethical. If you suggest that there is a 'solution' to these monstrous facts, you are lying to the child. If you insist that there isn't, you are overwhelming him with a load he's not strong enough yet to carry.

(Haviland 1980: 112–13)

There is another problem associated with this: in practical terms, should books which deal with war be freely available to the youngest and (possibly) most impressionable readers? Should, for example, a picture book such as Junko Morimoto's *My Hiroshima* (1987), which depicts an idyllic life before the dropping of the atomic bomb and a horrific life (and graphic deaths) immediately after it, be given to children without mediation, introduction or policing by adults? (At the least, some expansion of the bald statements of fact inside the back-cover of that book: 'At 8.15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped' might be thought to be necessary.)

It is, however, widely assumed that fiction can say the unsayable, increase our response, and add metaphorical depth or symbolic coherence.

Events on a grand scale, mass sufferings, catch the imagination and arouse compassion only incompletely and in an abstract way. We need a specific example to arouse our love or fear. We are so made that the face of a weeping child touches us more than hearing that a whole province has died of starvation.

(Joseph Kessel quoted in Gutman 1989/1991: 5)

Many of these questions have been examined in a project, 'War and Peace in Children's Books', funded by the Comenius Programme of the European Community. Among other things, this collaborative project looked at how war is represented in the children's books of Belgium, Portugal and the UK; it produced a tri-lingual catalogue (Batho *et al.* 1999), three anthologies *Kom Vavavond Met Verhalen* (Leysen *et al.* 1999), *In Times of War* (Fox *et al.* 2000), and *Lá Longe, A Paz* (Fonesca *et al.* 2001), in-service teaching materials, and a symposium held at Ypres in 2000.

In Belgium and the Netherlands there had been a flood of literature about the Second World War, as opposed to Portugal, although the project did include some historical material from Portugal, where the past of colonial voyages of exploration is still very dominant in the way war is represented for children. The books looked at came from most

European countries – Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, Latvia and Italy – as well as from Japan, China, the USSR and Indonesia. (It is worth mentioning here that the English books collectively tended to under-represent the role of the armed forces in books about the Second World War, which tend to be located on the ‘home front’.) Other conflicts represented included the partition of India, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, Israel and Palestine, South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Kurdistan and Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia, Northern Ireland, the Falklands/Maldivas, the Gulf, East Timor and the former Yugoslavia.

It is interesting that the least stereotypical examples that were found were in adult books, notably Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986) and Tardi’s *C’était la guerre des tranchées* (1993), one of the few places where the international contributions to the First World War were acknowledged.

The research showed the immense popularity of war books, finding that they used a wide range of genres, including some, such as time-slip fantasy and comedy, that might not appear to be appropriate. Some themes emerged strongly. The first was the mythologising of war; there are many images that have become iconic in both general and specific ways. In books about the First World War, there are instantly recognisable images – for example, poppies, no-man’s land, the story of the Christmas fraternisation between German and British troops (as in Michael Foreman’s *War Game* (1993) – and these iconic forms do their work on 11 November each year in many European countries. There are more specific examples, such as the way in which Roberto Innocenti copied famous photographic images from the holocaust (notably a frightened small boy with his hands in the air) in *Rose Blanche* (Gallaz 1985).

The images in British books about the Second World War tend towards mythologising such concepts as ‘our finest hour’, and the tone of Dutch, Flemish and French stories tends to be much grimmer. A rare and classic example of a British appreciation of the situation of the occupied countries occurs in Robert Westall’s *The Machine Gunners* (published, perhaps significantly, in 1975, long after the war). Some Polish officers, stationed in the north of England, encounter the misguided children; there is a brief exchange of fire.

A scarecrow figure, waving a dirty white flag on a twig, was walking out from between the trees ...

‘Ah, see [said Major Koslowski], typical Nazis – cowards and improperly dressed too. I have a mind to shoot him as a spy.’

‘You can’t shoot a man who’s carrying a white flag [said the local policeman]. It isn’t fair.’

‘Ah, the English Gentleman – always so bloody fair. Perhaps if your homes had been burned to the ground you would not be so concerned to be bloody fair.’

(Westall 1975/1994: 179)

Similarly, there is a lot of stereotyping both of national characteristics and of individuals; the fact that a characteristic book that does this, Michelle Magorian’s *Goodnight Mr Tom*, is now regarded as one of the hundred favourite books in English, demonstrates the continuing appetite for simplification. Although there has been a good deal of questioning of recent wars, for example in Robert Westall’s *Gulf* (1992), it would seem that in the UK the Second World War has remained sacrosanct, as it encapsulates so many national myths of independence.

The holocaust features extensively in European books for children, and there is a notable Australian example in Margaret Wild's *Let the Celebrations Begin* (1991), with the controversially colourful and eccentric illustrations by Julie Vivas.

Across the world, authors have tried to deal with the small and large horrors of war, from Josephine Feeney's *Truth, Lies and Homework* (1996) about the dilemma of an Irishman refusing to fight for Britain, Yoko Kawashimi Watkins's *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* (1986), about a Japanese family forced to leave Korea when the Koreans regain control, Theodore Taylor's *The Bomb* (1995) about the aftermath of the war on Bikini Island, Graham Salisbury's *Under the Blood Red Sun* (1994) on the backlash against Japanese Americans after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and perhaps the most famous example from the USA, Bette Green's *Summer of My German Soldier* (1986), about an escaped prisoner of war in Arkansas.

The treatment of war as entertainment goes back to the earliest oral tradition, but the commodification of real war, and its packaging on television, has led to a problem in explaining to young readers what war is actually like. Among the few books that address this very difficult problem are Terry Pratchett's Johnny Maxwell trilogy (*Only You Can Save Mankind* (1992), *Johnny and the Dead* (1993), *Johnny and the Bomb* (1996)) which deals with the reactions of contemporary teenagers to war – and in doing so makes the point (to them) that they do not, and perhaps cannot, understand.

Only You Can Save Mankind is a peace parable. Johnny Maxwell is drawn into a computer game in which he finds that the aliens he is supposed to eliminate have feelings too. Meanwhile, in 'real life', the first Gulf War is being reported on the television, but it only impinges on Johnny very obliquely:

There was a film on the News showing some missiles streaking over some city. It was quite good.

(Pratchett 1992/1993: 22)

And, later

There was an extended News ... There were the same pictures of missiles streaking across a city that he'd seen the night before, except that now there were more journalists in sand-coloured shirts with lots of pockets talking excitedly about them ... There was some History homework about Christopher Columbus. He looked him up in the encyclopedia and copied out four hundred words.

(29)

The children discuss the war in adult terms, but it is only Johnny, who thinks differently about things, who sees the problem: one boy says

'I mean – the whole world seems kind of weird right now. You watch the telly, don't you? How can you be the good guys if you're dropping clever bombs right down people's chimneys? And blowing people up just because they're being bossed around by a looney ...'

[and another says]

'... There was a man on [the television] saying that the bomb-aimers were so good because they all grew up playing computer games ...'

‘See?’ said Johnny. ‘That’s what I mean. Games look real. Real things look like games ... We always turn [war] into something that’s not exactly real. We turn it into games and it’s not games. We really have to find out what’s *real!*’

(115, 116, 117)

The modern war story takes several forms. The heroic adventure, the genre hero story set in war, featuring such fictional heroes as the British airman ‘Biggles’ by W. E. Johns, are books that make war a game and killing an incidental piece of fun, and they are on the decline. Otherwise war can be a backdrop to the characters’ actions, as in possibly the most famous British example, Nina Bawden’s *Carrie’s War* (1973). This is about evacuee children – children who were moved out of the cities to save them from bombing raids in the Second World War – a subject highly susceptible to pathos and sentimentality (for a documentary account, see *No Time to Say Goodbye* (Wicks 1988)). But Bawden makes it into a novel *for children* by concentrating on human relationships. The war may have brought about this situation, but it is off-stage. On the children’s last day in the secluded Welsh valley to which they have been sent, Carrie, the teenaged female hero

thought of bombs falling, of the war going on all this year they’d been safe in the valley; going on over their heads like grown-up conversation when she’d been too small to listen.

(Bawden 1973/1988: 134)

Alternatively, characters can be directly involved in war; or it can be a fact that the story has to fit into, or it can be manipulated to fit the story, as David Rees’s *The Exeter Blitz* (1978) – where history is slightly bent for the convenience of the plot – to produce a dramatic climax. Those stories where children participate in historical events can be unconvincing, because of the need to manufacture heroism as in Jill Paton Walsh’s *The Dolphin Crossing* (1967) which deals with the Dunkirk evacuation.

The most successful books are perhaps those where children are involved in war almost obliquely, as in Judith Kerr’s *Out of the Hitler Time* trilogy, beginning with *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971) where a family moves from Germany to France and to Britain at the beginning of the Second World War. A similar trilogy by Irene Watts, who was a child rescued from Nazi Germany by the *Kindertransporten*, begins with *Goodbye Marianne* (1998).

If war is a fact of human existence, then writers will write about it. It may be, as the British adventure-writer Henry Rider Haggard wrote in his autobiography (published in 1926), the lesser of two evils:

Personally, I hate war, and all killing ... but while the battle-clouds bank up I do not think that any can be harmed by reading of heroic deeds or of frays in which brave men lose their lives.

What I deem undesirable are the tales of lust, crime, and moral perversion with which the bookstalls are strewn by the dozen.

(Rider Haggard 1926: 105)

But, positively, a faith in fiction as an instrument of good clearly remains strong, and as Agnew and Fox said of the authors they had read in preparing their critical work, *Children at War*, they all

share a passionate belief that children must be made aware of the evils of the past and the courage with which that evil has often been met; and also that young readers need narratives which explore the nature and experience of war if they are to make sense of the world they have inherited and the future they confront.

(2001: 79)

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39 Horror

Victoria de Rijke

Be afraid. Be very afraid.

(R. L. Stine: title from The Nightmare Room series, 2000)

In public, the horrors of the world are increasingly centred around but kept from children; in private, children are (over)protected from imagined risk but most at risk in the home. Now more than ever, children need to read horror.

Whilst the range of reference in this chapter attempts to be as international as possible, it is inevitably limited to titles available in English. Of South American, African, Middle Eastern, Indian, Russian, Japanese and Chinese horror fiction I have attempted to find out what children are reading from asking colleagues to survey children, libraries or bookshops, and have found to my horror that, from Athens to Amsterdam, from Sao Paolo to Sydney, Beijing to Benin to Bombay, just about every child reads R. L. Stine. But perhaps this says most about the horrors of globalisation.

The horror genre has its origins in graphic, repetitive folklore, myth and legend told all over the world: Greek Kronos or Cyclops, Russian Baba-Yaga, or Brazilian Mula Sem Cabeça or Saci Perer stories, many drawn from native or indigenous cultural traditions, depicting child-eating ogres, witches and demons. Marina Warner has traced the Pied Piper story of stolen children from 1240, retold all over Europe. Though not exactly horrific, it speaks of international cultural anxieties related to child loss. After the invention of print in Europe, sixteenth-century carnival grotesque broadsheets depicted graphic 'Child-Guzzlers' and many fairy stories and poems from *Barbe Bleue*, *The Sandman* or *Struwwelpeter* further established a long line of predatory, menacing figures and themes used as threats to children. In the UK at least, classic 'gothic horrors' such as *Frankenstein* (1818), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and *Dracula* (1897) established the crucial link between the production of horror fiction and wider cultural anxieties, such as the rise of evolutionary theory and the development of science and technology – themes which persist to the present in the genre.

Children's horror fiction as a separate genre is relatively recent, especially since (bizarrely) fairy tales are not categorised as horror. The rise of the fairy tale in print during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been argued (by Jack Zipes and others) as a means for 'how script was used to tame the beast in us', though illustrators (such as Gustav Doré) still dwell on the dark and sinister (as is doubtless the case in illustrations to fairy, magical or supernatural stories the world over). Like Doré, artists have produced very serious and horrific picture books for children: the graphic realism of Toshi Maruki's *The Hiroshima Story* (1980) or Raymond Briggs's *When the Wind Blows* (1986) is not easily forgotten. Though intended as consoling, Jean-Michel Basquiat's angry graffiti illus-

trations to Maya Angelou's *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* (1993) have their terrors. The text reads: 'Panthers in the park, Strangers in the dark. No, they don't frighten me at all' (as if). Even in cartoon, David Hughes' *BULLY* has some of children's literature's most evil expressions and shocking lines: "“Hey, Penguin,” Dog called. “Let's kick Teddy”" (Hughes 1993).

Though horror literature for children can be a vehicle for moral lessons – Tatar's 'pedagogy of fear' (Tatar 1992: 22) – censorship of a genre intended to frighten children is perhaps inevitable. Eminent writers have championed horror: Charles Lamb praised 'Witches and Other Night-Fears', Charles Dickens the inspiration of his Nurse's spine-chilling murder tales, and Walter de la Mare said that 'a child who hadn't known fear could never be a poet' (Tucker 1976: 146).

Children's literature is heavily influenced by horror (ostensibly) for adults, and by real-life horrors. The Opies' rich collection includes Jack the Ripper rhymes sung by children from 1905 to 1935, playing out social fears of killers in our midst, whether real or imaginary (Opie and Opie 1959: 111). When you think about it, *Peter Pan* might easily be read as a variant of *Dracula*, flying into people's bedrooms with problematic offers of life everlasting, but that would be no reason to ban it. It has been argued that, since much fearfulness is random, censorship would slide into more frightening stupidities, like banning 'the word "hill" lest it should sound like "hell"' (Tucker 1976: 127). Children, like adults, find different things frightening or compelling: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was apparently Alan Turing and Adolf Hitler's favourite Disney 'horror' film, but many children cannot bear to look at the wicked witch with her eyes red as glowing coals. Why does no one think of banning Disney? Similarly, if horror writing were to compete with levels of explicit digital violence and gore in computer games, it would be banned outright. Parent and (Nanny) state censors seem to respond quite contradictorily to horror in visual or written forms.

Adult fears of gruesome harm to children are a rich source of horror writing: Hilaire Belloc's verse, in lively rhyming couplets (itself a playful satire of nineteenth-century hell-fire writing) dwells on children's horrific deaths by burning, choking or being eaten simply through playing with matches or string or letting go a hand. The awful irony is: 'And always keep a-hold of Nurse/For fear of finding something worse' (Belloc 1896/1993: 12). In his turn, Belloc was surely an inspiration for Edward Gorey's A–Z of gruesome child deaths: *The Gashlycrumb Tinies* whose horror far outstrips the illustrations to Belloc's *Cautionary Tales*. Gorey's illustration 'K is for KATE who was struck with an axe' (Gorey 1963/1998: n.p.) shows large footprints in the snow leading away from the body of a tiny little girl, arms outstretched, an enormous axe embedded in her chest. Her eyes are black pits, her blood spills black, the black of the spindly trees in the distance goes beyond anything in colour. Why has no one ever banned Gorey's books? Because, like all the best picture books, they evade categorisation (and perhaps everyone assumes that his books are not for children).

The horrors of the market

Industries such as the 'penny dreadfuls' in Victorian England no doubt set the pattern for what would later become cheap, popular horror series. In the USA, the Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys stories, with new titles released virtually every month since their inception in 1927, often had titles such as *Ghost at Skeleton Rock* or *Sheer Terror*, but seem tame now. Popular affection for horror *increased* after two world wars (with the fear of the third

ever-present) and many horror, thriller and ghost collections or series (such as the Armada, Fontana, Pan and Penguin books of horror stories in the UK, or the 1980s series Alfred Hitchcock Presents: *16 Skeletons from My Closet* etc.) were cheap and cheerful night reading from the 1950s to the 1980s. Perhaps inspired by the success of the adult market, the 1990s really began the horror trend for children's book publishers. Countless collections of ghost stories and horror series, called variously Are You Afraid of the Dark? (Pocket Book), Chillers (A and C Black), Little Terrors or EEK! Stories to Make You Shriek (Macmillan), Point Horror (Scholastic), Simply Suspense (Longman), Tremors (Hodder Wayland), grew towards the late 1990s to bumper collections such as *The Young Oxford Book of Ghost/Supernatural/Horror Stories*, *Nightmares*, *Scary Tales* or *Nasty Endings*. 'Spin-off' literature from US film and TV series, such as *The X-Files*, *Angel*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *The Blair Witch Files* seem as popular in print in the US and UK. While many of these multiple-author series, including Point Horror, would probably be considered to be for 'young adult' readers, targeted collections also abound, such as *Scary Stories for Seven-/Eight-/Nine-/Ten-Year-Olds* (Macmillan), *Coleção Horripilantes*, a series aimed at ages six to ten (Editora Record) or *Bichos Monstruosos* (Rocco) for the Spanish and Portuguese market. Australian and British writers for children have also written or edited collections of 'dread and delight' (notably Joan Aiken, Roald Dahl and Margaret Mahy). Much horror aimed at younger children is more humorous than frightening. Paul Jennings and Morris Gleitzman's *Totally Wicked!* stories (2000) use comic narrative shifts and devices to deflect the fearful. The aptly named Anthony Horowitz enjoys similarly gory humour in *Groosham Grange* (1995) which, with its plot device of nasty parents sending their child to a boarding school run by vampire teachers, could be read as a grisly precursor to the Harry Potter phenomenon. And horror is accused of being conservative and derivative! Quite the reverse.

By the turn of the century, horror seemed to be going in two directions: the carefully authentic, and the obvious spoof, from picture-book interpretations of traditional ghost tales and poems such as Charles Keeping's spooky sepia illustrations to Leon Garfield's 1985 *The Wedding-Ghost*, or Alfred Noyes's 1913 'The Highwayman' (reprinted 1997 and 2000) to ironic parodies such as Kay Umansky's *Hammy House of Horror* (1998) (with its pun on the British horror-film company, Hammer), a twist on the Dracula story – with an all-rodent cast, Professor Von Strudel (a guinea-pig) and his assistant hamster, staying at the castle of Count Ratula. Perhaps in reaction to criticisms of the 'adult' or explicit writing of some of their series, R. L. Stine's Goosebump titles for Scholastic (from 1992) read like corny jokes: *Revenge of the Garden Gnomes*, *How I Got My Shrunken Head*, *Deadly Experiments of Dr Eeek*, *Creature Teacher* or *The Blob That Ate Everyone*. Tales to read with Mummy.

With the exception of *Fingers on the Back of the Neck, and Other Spine-Chilling Tales* (Mahy *et al.* 1998), which includes a story from Africa, America, Australasia, Asia and Europe, collections for children in the UK do not yet enjoy much cultural diversity or global reach. Individuals seem to have better success. Irish writer Michael Scott's horror books *October Moon* (1992) *Wolf Moon* (1995) and *House of the Dead* (1993) have so far been translated into Catalan, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian and Chinese (Coghlan and Keenan 2000: 134). Anthologies such as the *Oxford Book of English/Canadian/Australian Ghost Stories* (1986, 1990 and 1994), or the *Penguin Book of Chinese/Indian Ghost Stories* (1982, 1993) include excellent Saskatchewan and sixth-century Chinese 'avenging' ghost or vampire tales, written very simply, thus presumably accessible to children.

Outstripping even Stephen King's output in the adult international horror market, R. L. Stine is the best-selling children's author in history. Originally writing for a humorous children's magazine, he specialises in 'thrillers, chillers and killers' series, including *Fear Street*, *Goosebumps* and most recently, *The Nightmare Room*, marketed aggressively in many countries around the world. A 1996 UK survey revealed that out of 410 votes for R. L. Stine's books, 78 were from boys, loosely suggesting that girls read more horror fiction, contrary to the stereotype (Reynolds *et al.* 2001: 9). Categorised by its enemies as 'trash horror', 'pulp' or 'splatter' fiction, Stine's output far exceeds the Blyton, Dahl or Rowling publishing phenomena: his numbered volumes attract loyal readers who consume entire series like so much fast food. Celia Rees, writer of vampire stories such as *Blood Simister*, cites Stephen King saying, 'if he can't terrify the reader he will try and horrify the reader – and if he can't horrify, he'll go for gross-out. So terror is the highest level.' She defends series like *Goosebumps* as not being 'formulaic rubbish, a low grade form of literature' but as having many 'emotional rewards' where 'you the reader are in control' and ultimately 'safe' (Carter 1999: 214). Stine's work certainly offers the security (to translator and reader!) of easily recognisable, luridly coloured embossed covers, a strong authorial or narrative voice, high frequency predictable vocabulary, likeable humour, elements of familiarity combined with well-prepared shock tactics (ordinary boy/girl/person/thing meets/turns into mummy/monster/werewolf/zombie) plus classic twists or turns of the screw. He favours the 'whipcrack' ending with a grisly or shocking twist (a knowing sales ploy, since it means you can't read that particular story again with as much enjoyment, and therefore have to buy a new book for a new thrill). In a sense, these books, although marketed as horror, are not frightening but consoling (for all concerned, perhaps especially author and publisher's bank balance).

The overriding market trend is for sequenced books, though they do not seem to produce the most memorable horror. The hardcover (ersatz 'traditional/old-fashioned') Lemony Snicket series (*A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2001) and sequels) is odd bedfellows with *Scary Stories for Sleepovers* (Dwight Been and various authors, 1991, 1999), but it all sells. By 2001, publishers were celebrating with triple packs such as *Decayed: 10 Years of Point Horror*, and for 2002 publishers like Macmillan commissioned individual writers to produce stories for the frankly commercial title series *Shock Shop*. Buy your horror here! As a category universally marketed and/or recognised to be popular with children, and given that publishing trends reflect the general cultural anxieties of our times, horror is clearly here to stay.

How to analyse horror

Despite its predictabilities, 'horror' as a category is still a moveable feast, wherever you are in the world. A hybrid form, horror crosses disciplines with the genres of ghost, vampire, suspense, supernatural, thriller and science fiction. I shall approach horror fiction for children from the points of view of the sub-genre or style of writing used and from the kind of dread or fear inspired. The theoretical approach taken throughout is psychoanalytic, and the following five sub-categories are suggested as an analytical framework with which to hold the slippery horror genre, though not to be held too seriously: BOO!-horror, schlock-horror, camp-horror, gothic horror and the Horror. The kinds of dread explored related to these categories will be fear of being eaten, fear of being watched/seeing death/the dead/undead, fear of the Suburban, fear of the inner self/double/being stolen, and fear of the Real.

BOO!-horror, or the fear of being eaten

'PeekaBOO!' or similar is used in children's games all over the world (for example, 'boggart' (England), 'booman' (Scotland), 'bugaboo' (Isle of Man), 'buggane' (Wales), 'buca' (Russia), 'boogeraman' (southern USA), and 'boo-bagger' and 'bullyboo' in Newfoundland (Warner 2000: 43). 'BOO!' is arguably every small child's favourite game, but why? Why do children 'produce their own horror' (Haviland 1973: 104)? 'BOO!' is a fundamental of childhood development. It plays out disappearance (death) and sudden, pleasurable return (life) (as in the '*forþ'/'ða*' (gone/there) game that Freud described seeing his grandson play, and which inspired his theories of the 'death drive' and the 'pleasure principle'). It enacts and alleviates the perpetual anxiety of desertion, but with a twist, a dramatic frisson of shock or fear, as whoever/whatever comes back shouts 'BOO!' Without the 'BOO!' element, the game becomes too predictable, too safe. In a sense, almost all horror has its 'BOO!' element.

Too many (particularly western middle-class) children, if allowed outside at all, climb child-safe equipment over special surfaces in fenced-off playgrounds under bored and controlling adult supervision, rather than roam their backyards, streets, parks, woods and fields, wild and free. We live in what Ulrich Beck calls a 'risk society', or a 'culture of fear'. Beck's concept of a 'risk society' in late modernity places the child centre-stage, partly in reaction to the breakdown of adult relationships. He refers to the 'staging of childhood' where the 'poor over-loved creatures' are protected from imagined risk in all arenas outside the home, despite the fact that statistically children are most at risk there. Charitable bodies such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (in the UK) and sociologists such as Beck point to the (contrary) tendency for public and private spaces increasingly monitored by closed-circuit cameras to contain the threat that unsupervised children are imagined to pose (NSPCC 2000; Beck 1992). The University of Sussex, at a conference in 2000, warned parents of the social and health problems created by raising children in this 'culture of fear' which prevents children from experiencing 'such basic freedoms as unsupervised play and travelling to school independently' (Reynolds *et al.* 2001: 3). In this context, perhaps one of the only ways children can still make protective spaces thrilling is to play at fear – there being a troll under the bridge waiting to eat them up as they go trip-trapping over, and so on. Even asleep you are not safe:

The Wendigo! The Wendigo! Its eyes are ice and indigo!
 Its blood is rank and yellowish! Its voice is hoarse and bellowish!
 ... As you are lolling hammockwise
 It contemplates you stomachwise.

(Nash 1985: 36–7)

Are stories of being eaten representations of selfish parents or, as Bruno Bettelheim (who makes unashamedly orthodox Freudian psychoanalytic interpretations of key fairy tales) would have it, the projections of 'untamed id impulses' – the child's own oral greed (quoted in Tatar 1992: 196)? Cannibalism is one of our oldest realities, thus perhaps our oldest fear. The fear of being eaten has served countless functions in literature since the mythological tales of the god of the underworld, Kronos, eating his own children, or the devouring ogre 'swallow tales' that Marina Warner has traced in *No Go the Bogeyman*. Anthony Browne's picture book *Hansel and Gretel* (1981) implies that the wicked step-

mother starving the children and the witch with the gingerbread house are one and the same person. In *Off with Their Heads!* Tatar reminds us that Freud discovered that the fear of being eaten is associated with the parents – ‘the real ogres in a child’s life’ (191). The patient’s dream of being eaten by a wolf was interpreted by Freud as the fear and desire of being consumed by his father, related to ‘affectionate abuse’ (threatening in fun to gobble the child up). Maurice Sendak’s classic picture book *Where the Wild Things Are* inverts this power relation, when, sent to bed without supper, the child Max retaliates by shouting at his mother: ‘I’LL EAT YOU UP!’ Then Max becomes king of all the wild things. As his revenge, he leaves them as they beg ‘“Oh please don’t go – we’ll eat you up – we love you so!” And Max said, “NO!”’ (Sendak 1981: n.p.). The fear of being gobbled up remains perhaps the greatest auto-erotic fantasy of all. Logically, as soon as the ego recognises danger, it gives off anxiety signals and inhibits through the ‘pleasure–unpleasure’ agency to avoid harm to the id, yet that fails to account for the recurring imaginative pleasures of suspense and fear in literature. Horror is therefore not a pedagogic, moralistic medium, but a pleasurable one.

these cannibalistic fiends in fiction ... inspire in children both horror and delight ... stories about witches who plan to feast on the flesh of small children and about ogres who relish the thought of drinking an English boy’s blood rank among the most popular tales, *perhaps because no-one has ever been able to turn them into stories that preach and teach.*

(Tatar 1992: 191, my emphasis)

Folk and fairy tales, then, are more frightening than contemporary stories because they can point to harsh realities such as the threat to children by abuse and starvation, or psychoanalytically related cultural taboos of incest and cannibalism, as in ‘Baba Yaga’ or ‘The Juniper Tree’. Such tales may have elements of the erotic, bound up in cannibalism, infanticide and sexual power relations. *Fingers on the Back of the Neck* has a story by Charles Mungoshi, ‘The Mountain’, set in Zimbabwe, with two boys walking a lane at night, pretending not to have the ‘heeby-jeebies’. Eventually, one admits: ‘That was a bad place ... That’s where my father met witches eating human bones, riding on their husbands’ (Mahy *et al.* 1998: 44).

Given that children are not literally being eaten, why does the danger of being eaten figure in so much contemporary scare and warning literature (folk and fairy tales were originally called *Schreckmärchen und Warnmärchen*, or ‘scare and warning tales’) other than as a pleasurable literary device? Literal dangers are now mythologised, but fears of forests, wolves, witches and vampires still inform our collective cultural memory of what constitutes danger. In real terms, we are more at risk from the mosquito than the giant, but it is not literature’s job to be literal. The giant is a metaphor: for owning property, expressing power, and seeming dangerous. Like the mosquito, the giant feeds on people:

‘Fee Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman.
Be he alive or be he dead, I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.’

(Who the giant really is, as children recite the text, is their business. I once saw the unforgettable sight of a child literally drooling at the mouth with pleasure as he chanted the ‘Fee Fi Fo Fum’ rhyme in unison with his mother. Who was he planning to eat?)

Typically, horror fiction relishes spare writing and detached description, so that the protagonist (and by implication, reader) is not responsible for finding the motive for evil, but for solving how it works. This comes as a relief to the reader, who does not need to dwell on the horrible realities of different forms of human consumption but can use the text as a form of what Freud would call ‘working through’. This involves taking up, over an extended period of reading (including the picture book) the full implications of detailed interpretations and insights offered within the text, as a way of resolving a painful experience. BOO!-horror uses levels of ironic detachment or questioning motifs so that the reader/viewer is ironically aware of the fictional experience, and can work it through.

Schlock-horror, or the fear of being watched/seeing death/ the dead/undead

‘Shock-Horror-Death-Probe’ the Mitford sisters used to chant in a cupboard under the stairs as children. Though shock-horror is a familiar term from the media, ‘schlock-horror’ is a Yiddish-sounding term generally used to describe badly made 1950s/1960s monster/horror films, now enjoyed ironically. During those years Mexico in particular produced countless mummy, werewolf and vampire films, the US many zombie/alien *The Thing from ...* and low budget sci-fi, *It Came From...* B-type communist-fears-writ-large movies. Cult ‘slasher’ films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* continued the schlock tradition (cinemas even hold ‘schlockfests’ – e.g. Adelaide 1999, Amsterdam 2002).

Many computer games attempt to copy this genre. According to the makers of the game series Scared Stiff, they are unique because they ‘model the INADVERTENCE of the art – poorly executed horror that is accidentally funny’. Not surprisingly (with titles such as *Attack of the 50ft Girl Gang*), the games are ‘written in a light style that causes many people to laugh aloud at the humour every few pages’ (Scared Stiff Misadventure Series 2002).

But even the inadvertently comic can disguise subtexts. In one of the Point Horror series, *The Yearbook*, a sinister kind of octopus drains both the soil and people of calcium and lives in an underground lair, which is described with interesting paranoia as being like those fraternised by communists: ‘some weird germ or virus’ is entering the air everyone breathes, forming mutant calcium growths, and destroying whole communities with ‘a kind of cancer’ (Lerangis 1999: 206). It is fought by pouring Coca-Cola on to it, which perhaps reflects the overtly right-wing politics of the book (enormous capitalist conglomerates like Coca-Cola ‘good’, communists ‘bad’). This would seem to contradict Sarland’s reassurance that children are not exposed to ‘some horrible propaganda’ in reading this genre. In his (and others’) opinion, the characters depicted in Point Horror are ‘shallow, self-centred and represent most of what is worst about modern consumer society’ (Sarland in Styles *et al.* 1996: 71).

Camp-horror, or the fear of the suburban

Camp-horror is invariably comic and disruptive rather than terrifying; full of self-conscious, self-referential theatrical irony and exaggeration, like much performative camp. The Opies’ history of rhyming away horrors and fears, Warner’s study of fairy-tale, carnival and playground games reinventing the ogre, internalising the aggressor in order to stave off fear, all demonstrate that children’s camp-horror literatures share the small but indomitable spirit of comic optimism: ‘terror is conquered by laughter’ (Bakhtin quoted in Morris 1994: 195).

Fear of the suburban is fear of social death. It is possibly the adolescent's worst fear: to be seen to conform (with parents) while wanting to rebel (with peers). The extent that boredom may reach under claustrophobic supervision also has its own dangers, emphasising the psychoanalytic idea that to be at home in the world we need to keep it inhospitable. Too much security does not allow for 'the beast in the nursery' (Philips 1998: title).

Darren Shan's *Cirque du Freak* series begins with the formula of ordinary schoolboy Darren turned vampire to save a friend. When he first meets the vampire who is to convert him, garlic, silver bullets and other stereotypes are exposed as camp props, as the sinister Mr Crepsley crushes the cross, uncorks the holy water and drinks it:

'You know what I love?' he asked. 'I love people who watch lots of horror movies and read horror books. Because they believe what they read and hear and come packing silly things like crosses and holy water, instead of weapons which could do real damage, like guns and hand grenades.'

(Shan 2000: 135)

In camp-horror, it is ordinary families who cause most alarm, as in Colin McNaughton's *Have You Seen Who's Just Moved in Next Door to Us?* (1991), when the author's own family moves into a street populated by trolls, aliens, werewolves, witches, Dracula, Frankenstein and King Kong, all living harmoniously in their usual camp roles. Such metafictional ironic self-awareness of suburban horrors can also be seen in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, both in TV and book form, where Buffy and her adolescent friends battle tirelessly with fiends associated with dating, school, addiction and – worst of all – square parents.

Gothic horror, or fear of the self/double/being stolen

Strictly, gothic horror can be characterised by a plot that turns on some threat to civilisation from evil or irrationality; highly dense, or intensely descriptive writing; and the device of the unreliable (or maniacal/homicidal) narrator. Gothic text is often punctuated with disturbing and unanswerable questions to strike fear into your rational self. This is horror that rarely amuses. For example, is American gothic writer Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart' (1843) a story about a real dismembered corpse under the floorboards, or does the narrator go mad as we read, listening to his own heartbeat? As you read, you feel as if you're going mad yourself, though how could a story make you go mad? If ghosts don't exist, why do we fear them? In his famous 1913 ghost ballad 'The Highwayman', Alfred Noyes described Bess 'the landlord's black-eyed daughter', sacrificing her life by bloody gunshot to save her lover the highwayman, which results in his ghost repeatedly keeping his promise, after death.

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
A highwayman comes riding-
Riding – riding –
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

(Noyes 1913/1981)

The picture book, illustrated by Charles Keeping and winner of a Kate Greenaway Award, is both seductive and visually terrifying, in scratched, intense sepia and black pen-and-ink drawings.

The apparition of the inapparent is gothic horror's key device. Lesley Howarth's *Paulina* (2000) offers a child a twin, like herself in every respect, except dead (and mad) as hell. Peter Dickinson, in *Touch and Go* (1997) describes the psychological horrors of being held ransom and saved by a ghost, or pulling your own dead brother out of your reflection. Freud points out, in his essay '*Das Unheimlich*' [The Uncanny] that the word in German means the opposite of 'homely'. 'I'll show you what horror means,' says Frederic March in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, since he knows it double. The 'doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self' in uncanny terms is more than a *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* scenario; it calls up fear of the multiple self in the face of what seems most familiar. 'Man goes constantly in fear of himself,' said Bataille (Morris 1994: 7). There is no solution to this human predicament, only endless questions.

Gothic-horror fiction may end without closure, maintaining suspense, and not necessarily happily. Sabine Büssing, in her study of the child in horror fiction, goes so far as to say the genre is 'determined by a pessimistic attitude ... which is not meant to provide the reader with a "way out" of the horrible events'. This is a vital part of what Büssing (quoting Charlotte Brontë) calls the 'heretic narrative', the oppositional tradition of gothic writing: where old is pitched against young, tiny against huge, and so on. 'Social criticism plays an important role in connection with the child ... in horror literature' (Büssing 1987: 137–8). There has even been a suggestion that the child, once absent from the gothic genre, is now indispensable to it, as a kind of replacement figure for God. The struggle between man and God is central to fiction like *Frankenstein*, but where God was alive in the nineteenth century, for the *X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* generation God is dead, and aliens, demons or government conspiracies are out there instead. The fact that the demons are oddly like aspects of oneself and one's suburban life is part of what Franco Moretti calls 'the dialectic dated from all nineteenth century literature of terror' (Moretti 1982: 67–85), that which links terror and civilisation together, expressive of each social climate of its time, where horror actually edifies readers. 'All work and pleasure are protected by the hangman' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1973: 217). If gothic-horror fiction reflects inner tension or conflict in society, and celebrates the punishment and/or transgression of the individual, often mirroring the struggle of the parent to 'unmake' the child, where will it go next? Into the Real ...

'The Horror', or fear of the Real

'The Horror! The Horror!' is all Kurz can gasp in Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*. What has he seen or – worse – done? The 'unspeakable rites' in Conrad's story of 1902 hint at horrors that the narrator is unable to describe, leaving the reader to imagine actions that lie outside civilised human behaviour. This is the 'Real' as Lacan named it, neither symbolic nor imaginary, but some trauma beyond the language to express it, 'represented by the accident, the noise, the small element of reality, which is evidence we are not dreaming' (Lacan 1994: 60).

The 'worst' horrors, or the best horror fiction, confront us with the Real. This fiction is not obviously or theatrically frightening. It is often factual. For example, the human race has produced the H-bomb and has used it. In comic-strip form, Raymond Briggs's *When the Wind Blows* offers the understated routine of a totally ordinary couple preparing for

nuclear attack by getting under the kitchen table. *The Hiroshima Story* states: ‘People are still dying from the after-effects of the bomb. There is no cure for them’ (Maruki 1980: 42). Children react very seriously – as they should – to books like these, and recognise the complexity of horrors manufactured by world politics, just as they understand power politics in the home. Via analogy and metaphor, these are real-life dilemmas real children have to face.

Equally, adult fears (such as losing their children, in particular) haunt texts for children. Edward Gorey’s *Gashlycrumb Tinies* die in accidents adults fear. ‘A is for AMY who fell down the stairs. B is for BASIL assaulted by bears.’ In the picture book *Frog is Frightened* (1994), Max Velthuijs continues a long-held illustrators’ tradition (from Arthur Rackham to Anthony Browne) for hideously animated trees in the dark woods, full of eyes and grasping outstretched branches. ‘Frog and duck ran as fast as they could. They felt there were ghosts and scary monsters everywhere.’ Yet the most fearful of all was Hare (the parent figure among the animals): ‘“I was very frightened this morning when I thought you were lost.” There was a silence. Then everyone laughed. “Don’t be ridiculous, Hare,” said Frog. “You have nothing to fear. We are always here.”’

What greater fear is there than loss? The answer is: nobody caring. In Robert Swindell’s *Stone Cold*, a homeless boy is trapped in the house of a serial killer, who dispassionately shows him what’s under the floorboards: ‘There were seven laid out in a row, like sardines.’ Seven children’s bodies. The most terrifying lines in this novel are implications, not descriptions. ‘He’d done something to their heads’ (Swindell’s 1995/1997: 127).

In a recent examination of ‘frightening fiction’, some consensus is reached about children ‘flirting with the idea of death’ (Reynolds *et al.* 2001: 7) which, however masked, merely serves (via displaced anxieties) to reinforce the status quo and train up young readers in death’s inevitability. ‘The game called death’, as described in David Almond’s novel *Kit’s Wilderness* (analysed by Geraldine Brennan), is, like any game of dare, a way of ‘accessing and challenging fears ... a mixture of dread, adrenalin and conformity’ (Reynolds *et al.* 2001: 92). ‘Driven to the dark’ as he is, what happens to Kit? Nothing ...

‘Just a game, I tried to tell myself. It’s nothing, just a game’ ...

... ‘This is no game,’ he whispered, soft, soft.

‘You will truly die,’ he whispered. ‘All you see and all you know will disappear. It is the end. You will be no more.’

‘This is Death,’ he said.

And I knew no more.

I came to on the damp clay floor.

(Almond 1999: 49–50)

Kit says, ‘It was like being nothing.’ He has opened himself up to the memories of the past, which connects him to living lost souls, such as his dying grandfather, a runaway boy and his impoverished family, and the ghosts of children who died in the coal pit. ‘Small elements of reality’ are the holding device for the horror of *Kit’s Wilderness*: horror at its absolute best, grounded in reality and the Real.

The final horror

Children live under the same shadows of abuse, neglect, over-protection, war, epidemics, economic and environmental crises as adults, and hence share the same cultural anxiety

rituals. By this token, horror is a fear one needs, the price one pays for coming contentedly to terms with a social body based on irrationality and menace. Who says it is escapist? Horror fiction can be a socially responsible outlet.

Given that the child carries hope and fear of the future within it (why else are there so many possessed children in adult horror fiction – such as Stephen King's *Carrie*?) and the experience of being a child is horrific for some children, the idea of horror *for* children is no more or less than a metaphor. BOO!, schlock, camp, gothic or Real categories describe a hierarchy of horror as metaphor, from fairly literal to complex and associative, culminating in the most horrific, almost beyond words.

The last question is: who is in charge? If the reader tries to control the book, by tying it up, sitting on it, keeping it shut, surely it's still there on the bookshelf, and it's coming to get you ... and it's DINNERTIME! The suspension of disbelief required in fairy-tale and horror fiction, where the reader generates an 'intentional reproduction' of anxiety as a signal of danger, ensures that they manage to enjoy it, as a mark of increasing sophistication and maturity. So many adults make the mistake of believing that the surface characteristics of a text are simply and directly imported into the inert minds of child readers, when their responses are every bit as enigmatic as anyone else's. Children know there is more to fiction than meets the eye. Every self-respecting child knows that the reader, not the book, is in charge, whether intertextually parodic or not. There are intellectual pleasures in regression, where the reader can resort to the watchful position of the child, to the 'world of nightmare, impotence and fear', where 'the observation of evil is a fascinating occupation. But this observation implies a measure of secret agreement' (Adorno and Horkheimer 1973: 230). Enjoying horror fiction is a knowing skill. We need to open our eyes to how children's horror literature explores notions of pleasure, fear, nostalgia, repression and desire, linked inextricably with the concept of childhood itself. It is a childish genre, in the best sense. Long live dangerous fiction and the playful spirit of horror which ensures the danger is (more or less) under the reader's control. And if not – as in Sally Grindley and Peter Utton's terrifying picture book *Shhh!* (1999), in which the reader tiptoes through the book/castle trying not to wake the giant, peeping anxiously back under the flaps to check, raising the last hatch to see what they dread most: his horrible, enormous OPEN eye – well then, shut the book!

There he is!
Isn't he UGLY?
Listen to that snore.

I dare you to say 'Boo!'

Quick,
turn the page
in case he heard us!

Do you think we woke him up?
Peek through the hatch
and see if he's still asleep.

He's awake?
Are you SURE?

Quick,
turn the page
before he comes after us!

QUICK!
He's coming!

SHUT THE BOOK!
(Grindley and Utton 1999)

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40 Science fiction

Jessica Yates

Not every genre of children's literature has a corresponding adult genre – school stories being one example – and it is only recently that the horror novel and murder mystery have returned to children's literature. Historical novels for adults and children both have an honourable and independent pedigree; but, while children's fantasy enjoys a far longer and more distinguished tradition than adult fantasy, which only became a commercial genre after Tolkien's success in the 1960s, children's science fiction (SF) is considered the poor relation of both adult science fiction and children's fantasy. In this chapter I shall discuss why this is so and demonstrate how, since the 1950s, writers specialising in children's and teenage science fiction have raised the literary standard of the genre.

The story of the development of children's fantasy is well known (Green 1962/1969/1980: 1–16), and authors choosing a supernatural mode for their children's books would choose fantasy or mild forms of the ghost story, not science fiction. Although the term 'science fiction' was not coined until the late 1920s as an improved version of Hugo Gernsback's first name for the genre – 'scientifiction' (Clute and Nicholls 1993: 311, 1076) – the genre had been recognisably in existence for several decades as 'scientific romance', a term applied to the work of Verne and Wells, and science fiction plots were also familiar in the 'pulp' literature read by adults and teenagers. So just as it can be argued that the first modern science-fiction novel is Mary Shelley's Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818) – not only because of its now-typical SF motif of the artificial man, but because of its theme of the man who desires to rival nature through science – so one might look for protojuvenile SF among the fantasy classics of the nineteenth century.

Science-fictional motifs may appear, therefore, in work whose overriding ethos is magical. Although the story of *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) includes a voyage to the Moon, it remains a children's fantasy; in Kipling's *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) the agency which brings characters out of the past is magical. In general we find that children's fiction employing time travel to and from the past will be fantasy, and to the future, science fiction. Although I would not claim Carroll's Alice books as SF, we can still note the somewhat scientific basis for their events: mathematics, the logical aspects of language, and the challenge to the laws of physics in the looking-glass world.

My candidate for the first modern children's SF novel – the counterpart to *Frankenstein* for adults – is *The Water-Babies* (1863) by Charles Kingsley. The branch of science known as Natural History forms the background, and one of the messages of this deceptively entertaining but highly didactic work is that technology is right, if rightly used. Kingsley, by profession a clergyman and by interest not only a writer but an amateur naturalist, was excited by the controversies of the time, especially Darwinism, and corresponded with Huxley and Darwin. In *The Water-Babies* he attempted a synthesis of

children's belief in fairies, the doctrines of Christianity and the new theories of evolution and the origin of species, and was much more successful in communicating his ideas about the wonder of God's creation in this fantastic form than in his pamphleteering and adult novels.

According to his unique theology, the world is governed by a Goddess who appears in several guises: as Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, embodying the natural and moral law and punishing transgressors; Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby, embodying God's love for Creation; Mother Carey, who supervises the process of Creation; and the Irishwoman who carries out good deeds on Earth, and intervenes in Tom's story to start him on his quest. All four beings share one consciousness and represent Mother Nature; they are also described as fairies: Kingsley says that 'the great fairy Science ... is likely to be queen of all the fairies for many a year to come'. The reverse-evolutionary fable of the Doasyoulikes, and the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus, instruct Tom that humans were meant to use their brains and that technology is better than abstract science, which doesn't improve the quality of life. When Tom has completed his quest he returns to Earth to become 'a great man of science', using technology to improve the state of the world.

Two short stories anticipate SF more directly. Hans Andersen wrote a prophecy of Americans seeing Europe by airship, 'In a Thousand Years' Time' (1853), in which he predicted the Channel tunnel between France and England, an 'electromagnetic cable under the ocean' and the destruction of 'ancient eternal Rome'. It is certainly science fiction, but more a satirical essay than a children's story.

E. Nesbit, who established the fantasy convention that magic must have particular rules, embedded a tiny piece of science fiction in her time fantasy *The Story of the Amulet* (1906). The children have been searching in the past for the other half of the Amulet, and Cyril suggests that they go into the future where they will remember how they found it. Although they do find the whole Amulet in the British Museum, they do not remember how it was united. Walking out of the Museum into a clean and sunny London full of happy people, they find a sad boy expelled for one day from school for throwing litter. The boy's mother shows them her lovely house, and calls their own time 'the dark ages'. Her son is named Wells 'after the great reformer ... We've got a great many of the things he thought of.'

The one pure science-fiction novel by a classic children's author before the First World War, although it has not achieved classic status, is *The Master Key* (1901) by L. Frank Baum, subtitled '“An Electrical Fairy Tale” founded upon the mysteries of electricity and the optimism of its devotees. It was written for boys, but others may read it.' (Baum included scientific devices in his Oz books, and Tiktok of Oz is a robot.)

Baum's son Robert, the dedicatee of *The Master Key*, was an electrical gadgeteer, and inspired this story of how Rob, a teenage experimenter, one day connects all the wires in his bedroom together and accidentally summons the Demon of Electricity, a kind of genie, who offers him a series of electrical gifts in order to move the human race on to the next stage of civilisation. Pseudo-scientific (and thus magical), the gifts include food tablets to do away with food preparation and eating time, a stun-gun for self-defence without killing, a fly-anywhere device strapped to the wrist, and a mini-television to show current world events. Rob is trapped by cannibals and pirates, saves the king of England and president of France from conspirators, and intervenes in a war between Turks and Tatars. Having risked his life several times by failing to realise the dangers caused by his impulsive use of these gadgets, Rob returns them to the Demon and persuades it to wait until mankind is ready to be trusted with them. Sadly, this professional, entertaining novel

has remained out of print for many years, only reissued in a collector's edition in 1974, as its dated political allusions have made it impossible to reprint for children as originally published.

These few books demonstrate that there has been no tradition of children's science fiction comparable to children's fantasy. Kipling and Nesbit could no doubt have written in the genre had they wished: Kipling wrote adult SF, Nesbit adult supernatural stories; perhaps they did not find the Vernian yarn a congenial model, and believed that the Wellsian scientific romance was too pessimistic to import into children's literature. Since children willingly accepted magic, there was no need for a pseudo-scientific explanation for supernatural events – compare Nesbit's treatment of invisibility in *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) with H. G. Wells's in *The Invisible Man* (1897).

Thus the juvenile SF published from the late nineteenth century onwards, comparable in popular appeal to other children's genres like the historical novel or adventure yarn, had no market leaders who combined popularity with quality and whose names are recalled today. The best authors in the developing SF genre had the sound commercial sense to write for the widest possible audience: adults and their teenage children; lesser authors imitated their plots and wrote more directly for youngsters. If Verne, an author for adults who did not exclude younger readers, is the genre's Henty, there are no equivalents to, say, Angela Brazil, Frank Richards or Robert Louis Stevenson.

Jules Verne (1828–1905) rightly takes a pre-eminent place in the early history of children's SF. A professional writer, he published over sixty novels, which he described as '*Voyages extraordinaires*'. The most famous in the SF vein are *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1863), *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865), *Around the Moon* (1870) and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870). Speedily translated into English, they were often abridged for the young, and technical details cut. In their full versions they display awareness of political issues as well as authenticity in the fields of geography and practical science.

H. G. Wells (1866–1946), with Verne the co-creator of science fiction, is more obviously an author for adults, and his early SF novels have become classics recommended to teenagers moving on to adult literature, whatever their genre preferences. These classics are *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898), *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899, revised as *The Sleeper Awakes* 1910), and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). With the horror novel *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), he provided many classic ideas to open up the genre: alien invasion, adventures on other planets, genetic manipulation, future totalitarianism, and naive over-reaching scientists.

Other yarns in the science-fiction area which have become popular classics for teenagers are *The Lost World* (1912) and *The Poison Belt* (1913) by Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Scarlet Plague* (1914) by Jack London; and most memorably the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Burroughs learned from Rider Haggard the plot motif of the unattainable Goddess-Woman, and more practically the way to sell books by writing a series of novels about the same characters, some linked by book-to-book cliff-hangers. Most famous for his Tarzan yarns, Burroughs wrote three sets of planetary romances, the first set on Barsoom (Mars), the second set in Pellucidar, the land 'at the Earth's core', and the third on Venus, and also wrote *The Moon Maid*, set in several future epochs. Clearly a writer for adults, with his recurrent heterosexual theme of the hero in search of his kidnapped lady love, Burroughs's sagas appeal to youngsters who are beginning to be curious about sex.

Here then were the themes which were to be recycled by juvenile publishing in four distinct formats: the dime novel; the boys' paper; the hardback, often in series form; and the comic.

Science fiction was part of the repertoire of boys' thrillers (Turner 1975). Dime-novel SF developed from the American dime-novel Western. Set in the Wild West, a major series featured Frank Reade Junior with his amazing transports such as the Steam Man and Steam Horse, and others like airships and submarines. Written in the 1880s and 1890s under the pseudonym of Noname, they were probably the work of Luis Senarens, who, according to his entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction*, was characterised by 'sadism, ethnic rancour, factual ignorance ... On the positive side, he led the dime novel away from eccentric inventiveness into a developmental stream that culminated in modern Children's SF' (Clute and Nicholls 1993: 1083).

From Frank Reade Junior's status as boy inventor, and a rival series featuring Tom Edison Jr in the early 1890s, Clute named this type of story an 'Edisonade' by analogy with 'Robinsonnade' (Clute and Nicholls 1993: 368–70), and shows that the problem-solving type of SF plot derives from this tradition: the archetypal myth figure of Trickster becomes the Competent Man in the hands of writers like Robert Heinlein. Other story-types featuring in dime novels included the lost-race story, usually involving a hunt for treasure, and the marvel tale of strange peoples and adventures in Antarctica, or on other planets. The dime novel may have influenced Burroughs and Doyle (Clute and Nicholls 1993: 336).

Boys' papers were predominantly a British phenomenon, deliberately set up to provide a higher moral tone than the penny dreadfuls. Several of Verne's novels were serialised in the *Boy's Own Paper*, this being often their first appearance in any English publication. One dominant story-line, an obsession of Lord Northcliffe's, was invasion of Britain in the near future, and it frequently appeared in the boys' papers he published before the First World War (Turner 1975: 176–86). Space adventures, future catastrophe and lost-world themes also appeared (Turner 1975: 187–99). Science-fictional themes turned up in the story papers published by D. C. Thomson, with such characters as Morgyn the Mighty and Wilson the Incredible Athlete.

In 1934 *Scoops*, a newspaper-style boys' magazine devoted solely to science fiction, was launched in Britain, combining new SF with reprints; but it lasted for only twenty issues. To sum up, boys' papers 'played an important role in the history of SF ... by creating a potential readership for the SF magazines and by anticipating many Genre-SF themes' (Clute and Nicholls 1993: 149). George Orwell's critique 'Boys' Weeklies' includes a reference to 'Death-rays, Martians, invisible men, robots, helicopters and interplanetary rockets' which he considered new plot ideas; Frank Richards's riposte corrected him by pointing out the work of Verne and Verne's predecessors (Orwell 1940/1968: 460–93).

Turning now to the conventional hardback format, we find as yet no classic authors, but the genre was paid some significant attention by Edward Stratemeyer, who published two important series of juvenile SF, the Great Marvel and the Tom Swift series (*Fortune Magazine* 1934/1969: 41–61; Donelson 1978). Stratemeyer supplied synopses and then published novels by a stable of writers under his house names. Roy Rockwood's Great Marvel series, the first six written by Howard Garis, describes the adventures of two boys with a professor who invents spaceships and other futuristic travelling devices. Titles included *Through Space to Mars* (1910).

Much better known, and commercially very successful, was the Tom Swift series written by 'Victor Appleton' (mostly by Garis) from 1910 to 1941, in which a boy inventor realises the potential of, and copes with the problems caused by, his futuristic inventions, such as a giant magnet. A second series about Tom Swift Jr written by 'Victor Appleton II' and, including off-planet adventures, ran from 1954 to 1971, and two more series have

appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. They are fast-paced and addictive, packed with science and pseudo-science, and promote an optimistic view of technology and atomic power. The plots generally involve criminals or spies trying to steal Tom's latest invention. Reading *Tom Swift* was thus a formative experience for thousands of teenagers who took their ideas about science and science fiction from the series. There was some stereotyping of female characters and foreigners, although it seems to have been well intentioned.

In Britain, Dr Gordon Stables, a stalwart adventure story-writer in the Ballantyne tradition and regular contributor to the *Boy's Own Paper*, wrote several Vernean yarns: *The Cruise of the Crystal Boat* (1891), *The City at the Pole* (1906) and a future-war novel, *The Meteor Flag of England* (1905). Throughout the first part of the twentieth century, SF juveniles continued to be published in the Burroughs and Verne traditions, featuring survivors from Atlantis, lost worlds and super-criminals. The Burroughsian yarns of American Carl Claudy are especially remembered: two youths under the patronage of an eccentric scientist have rather frightening adventures in stories with such titles as *The Mystery Men of Mars* (1933).

The 'mad scientist' motif also turns up in several fantasies of the period with SF overtones. In Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle in the Moon* (1929) the Doctor is brought to the Moon by a giant moth. The journey was airless but the Moon has an atmosphere to which the Doctor and his friends adapt, enjoying the release from Earth gravity. The Doctor learns to communicate with the Moon plants, and finds that Moon life is a utopia where vegetable and animal life live in harmony, supervised by the one Moon man. The Moon people plan to keep the Doctor with them for ever and, as originally written, Dolittle was intended to stay on the Moon, but Lofting's public would not allow him to 'kill off' the Doctor, so he returned in a sequel.

Norman Hunter's Professor Branestawm books are classics of nonsense humour. Their science-fictional content deserves a mention, as humour is otherwise distinctly lacking in the genre. Hunter wrote *The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm* in 1933, following it with *Professor Branestawm's Treasure Hunt* (1937); there was then a gap of over thirty years until Hunter retired and a new market appeared for the books, whereupon several more Branestawm collections were published. In these short stories the Professor usually invents a machine to solve a problem, and the machine goes wrong, resulting in chaos.

A precursor of British juvenile SF in the 1950s was Professor A. M. Low's *Adrift in the Stratosphere* (1937), with its near-Earth plot and emphasis on problem-solving; its preposterous story and lucky escapes also render it unintentionally quite amusing.

It seems that the first SF comic strip was '*Le Roi de la lune*', published in the early nineteenth century by Jean-Claude Pellerin (reproduced in Gifford 1984: 12). It is a moral tale about naughty children being taken to the Moon for punishment to fit the crime: a cross between *The Water-Babies* and Dante's *Inferno*! In the twentieth century, once comics had developed into adventure stories told in pictures and were no longer 'funny', nor indeed 'comic', the potential for depicting SF's impossible scenarios was relished by artists, writers and readers. Apart from comic-book versions of SF novels such as *The Invisible Man*, there were two main types of SF story: the space opera; and the superhero tale. The latter, in monthly comic-book form, has been the most popular comic-book type in the USA for decades. Because of the indiscriminate distribution of comic strips in newspapers and comic books in shops, SF comics have generally been aimed at a universal audience of juveniles and adults, until the graphic novel became commercially viable in the 1980s.

High points in the SF comic strip were 'Buck Rogers in the 25th Century', which began in 1929 as a daily strip, and then became a Sunday page. An American air-force pilot is transported five hundred years into the future, makes friends with female soldier Wilma Deering, who becomes his regular companion, and has typical space-opera adventures. A serial film (1939), TV serials and a modern film (1979) followed. Other important strips were 'Brick Bradford' (from 1933), who uses a Time Top to travel to the past and future, and 'Flash Gordon' (from 1934) which went on to radio and other spin-offs, including a film (1980). Gordon's girlfriend is always Dale Arden, and his arch-enemy is Ming the Merciless of the planet Mongo. Superman (from 1938) is, of course, the most famous. SF has continued to flourish in comics, and the worldwide influence of Superman, Dan Dare and the Marvel Comics Group superheroes like Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk and the X-Men cannot be overestimated.

As we move into the 1940s, it is obvious that children's SF has made no contribution to the body of 'classic' children's literature. Only writers familiar with the conventions of the genre would have had the knowledge and motivation to write good juvenile SF, such as the writers of adult SF published in J. W. Campbell's *Astounding* magazine. Campbell was an intellectual who constantly challenged his stable of writers with new ideas, and it was one of his men, Robert Heinlein, who took juvenile SF in hand with *Rocketship Galileo* in 1947. Crudely plotted in its snap solutions to chapter-end cliff-hangers and its happy ending, it remains a brilliant transformation of the Tom Swift 'can-do' plots, with fresh colloquial dialogue, varied and exciting episodes, and factual but lucid technical details. From 1947 to 1958, Heinlein published one juvenile a year.

Heinlein's basic plot is the initiation of a teenage male into his adult career as space pioneer, colonist or politician, and the books share a common background with some of his adult fiction – the unrolling colonisation of space. He intended not only to entertain but to educate his readers in citizenship – that is, Heinlein-style, politically of the right, non-pacifist and libertarian, supporting revolution in colonies on planets such as Mars and Venus. But his novels, for all their terse titles – *The Star Beast* (1954), *Between Planets* (1951), *Farmer in the Sky* (1950) – address complex political issues; *Citizen of the Galaxy* (1957) is even a homage to Kipling's *Kim!* Heinlein's view of gender roles is also unexpected – women may be doctors, pioneers, pilots or even soldiers and survivalists.

His *Starship Troopers* (1959) was rejected by his juvenile publisher as being too violent and militaristic; published for adults, it won the Best SF Novel Hugo award.

Heinlein's influence on children's SF (and on the young adult novel) was immense, establishing its literary credentials and establishing classic plot motifs. He co-scripted *Destination Moon*, the first post-war SF film, and his Space Patrol, an ethical organisation run on naval lines, moulded Gene Roddenberry's vision of the cult TV and film series *Star Trek*.

One of Heinlein's early disciples was Lester del Rey, with such books as *Marooned on Mars* (1952), *Attack from Atlantis* (1953) and *Moon of Mutiny* (1961) about a teenage space pilot with the gift of calculating courses without a computer.

In the 1950s, Isaac Asimov wrote a series of short thrillers about David 'Lucky' Starr, a 'Space Ranger'; Asimov's second wife, Janet, who also wrote SF, collaborated with him on the Norby Chronicles in the 1980s. These are humorous tales which are far-fetched even for SF, and might best be called science fantasy.

Arthur C. Clarke, a British author writing for the American market, using American genre conventions, wrote two juveniles. *Islands in the Sky* (1952) describes Clarke's vision of space satellites between Earth and the Moon, but the balance between predicted fact and story is weighted towards non-fiction, and the book is a near documentary. *Dolphin*

Island (1963) is much better, a story enhanced by Clarke's personal experience of underwater exploration. Both books are set during the twenty-first century, a time of world peace. *Of Time and Stars* (1972) is a collection of his short pieces selected for young readers.

Ray Bradbury, another of SF's all-time-great authors, wrote no SF juveniles, but made two selections from his adult short stories for the juvenile market, *R is for Rocket* (1962) and *S is for Space* (1966), the latter including the chilling 'Zero Hour' in which aliens seduce the USA's children into abetting their conquest of Earth with the promise of late nights and plenty of TV.

James Blish made *A Life for the Stars* (1962), the second volume of his *Cities in Flight* quartet, a Heinleinian rite-of-passage story about a teenager press-ganged aboard a city just before its take-off into space. He also wrote *The Star Dweller* (1961) and *Welcome to Mars!* (1967) – both optimistic and rather intellectual.

Harry Harrison, one of today's leading SF writers for adults, has written a few juveniles, such as the very simply written *The Californian Iceberg* (1975) and the humorous *The Men from P.I.G. and R.O.B.O.T.* (1974). With *Spaceship Medic* (1970), however, Harrison produced a book which deserves classic status. When a meteorite holes a spaceship travelling to Mars, nearly all the ship's officers are killed and the ship's doctor assumes command; he appoints new officers, corrects the ship's course, copes with solar storm and mutiny, and works out an antidote for the meteor-borne plague which strikes the ship. All this is done with only knowledge, experience, devotion to duty (and drugs to keep him awake!).

Other noteworthy books of this genre include Alan Nourse's *Star Surgeon* (1960), which innovatively makes an alien the hero, and the book is propelled by a powerful plea for racial equality.

Two characteristics of post-Second World War children's SF are that, compared with children's fantasy, the author needs to have produced a substantial body of work to achieve classic status; second, specialist juvenile SF writers take over from adult SF writers. Some are forgotten, like 'John Blaine', author of more than twenty Rick Brant Science Adventures between 1947 and 1968.

However, the first woman on the scene has remained popular, and has become the *grande dame* of SF. Taking an androgynous pen name, Andre Norton, Alice Mary Norton (who has also written as 'Andrew North') has written prolifically. Norton's SF novels usually share a far-future setting where humans (Terrans) mix with alien races; intergalactic law is enforced by the Patrol in a never-ending conflict with the Thieves' Guild. Norton is uninterested in the nuts and bolts of engineering her faster-than-light ships, and she has imported several fantasy motifs into her SF, especially motifs from the sword-and-sorcery sub-genre: the quest; the magic token; enhanced mental powers such as telepathy (which in Norton's universe may occur between people and animals as well as interpersonally); and archaic dialogue to suggest the lifestyle of less advanced cultures. With her research into anthropology and archaeology, Norton gives depth to the varied cultures in her worlds, as in *The Beast Master* (1959), while scenes in *Android at Arms* (1971) recall Tolkien. Norton's lengthy novels do not suit modern teenage taste, nor does the absence of a love interest, or its delay to the last page (romance, however, flourishes in her Witch World fantasies).

We turn now to children's SF in Britain (and a few French titles) immediately after 1945. These were conventional genre-books with SF motifs added: the most popular type was the space thriller, optimistic in mood, reflecting the feeling that, now the war was

over, Britain, probably co-operating with the USA, would build on wartime rocketry developments and start exploring the Solar System. The most well-known authors of this period were W. E. Johns, Patrick Moore, Angus MacVicar and Hugh Walters, and I should also mention Paul Berna's *Threshold of the Stars* (France, 1954) and its sequel *Continent in the Sky* (1955), about a space station and lunar exploration.

Johns, the creator of Biggles, wrote ten books about a traditional group of explorers – war hero, teenage son, eccentric professor and doctor – who make contact with Martians. Free of the Empire ethos which some have criticised in the Biggles books, the books are ‘ripping yarns’ and are also a vehicle for serious criticism of the arms race: in *The Quest for the Perfect Planet* (1961) the professor searches for a place to shelter refugees if Earth blows up.

Patrick Moore, a popular astronomer, has published over twenty children's SF novels, including *Mission to Mars* (1955); Angus MacVicar, Scottish novelist and scriptwriter, had some of his children's SF, about the Lost Planet serialised on radio and children's television in the 1950s – a series which has obvious messages about the Cold War; while Hugh Walters specialised in children's SF, writing a single series about astronaut Chris Godfrey from 1957 to 1981. With their straightforward plots, incorruptible heroes and internationalist ethos, Walters's SF is the best of its kind and Britain's nearest rival to Heinlein in terms of an unfolding vision of the future. The Tom Swift tradition of improbable technology was continued in E. C. Elliott's Kemlo series published from 1954 to 1963.

During this period some fine literary fantasies, precursors of today's ‘science fantasy’, were published by non-SF-genre authors. The plot of T. H. White's *The Master* (1957) is familiar from James Bond thrillers: a mad scientist with mesmeric powers and a secret weapon plans to rule the world; two children accidentally trapped in his island fortress destroy him, thanks to their pet dog. *The Little Prince* [*Le Petit Prince* (1943)] is a unique classic fable, illustrated by its author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and other examples are Garry Hogg's *In the Nick of Time* (1958) (inspired by J. W. Dunne's *An Experiment in Time*), Meriol Trevor's *The Other Side of the Moon* (1956) and *Merlin's Magic* (1953) by ‘Helen Clare’ (Pauline Clarke) – a family treasure-hunt guided by Merlin and the god Mercury, with clues and adventures from literature and legend. Six children learn that the Tree of Imagination is threatened by hordes of robots, and they need Drake's drum and Arthur's sword to destroy them.

With the most memorable British children's SF of the period being actually ‘science fantasy’, the way of writing genre SF had to change. A radical shift away from ‘space opera’ was driven by new developments in adult SF and world politics. The influence of John Wyndham's four great disaster novels in the Wellsian tradition, *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), *The Kraken Wakes* (1953), *The Chrysalids* (1955) and *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), on British children's SF cannot be overestimated. Another vital influence was George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), which chimed in with Cold War fears about Soviet invasion and gave to children's SF the motifs Escape from the City and the Forbidden Romance. With Nigel Kneale's SF-horror Quatermass trilogy about alien invasions shown on television, the 1950s were an exciting, if doom-ridden time for the genre.

In the new model of children's SF, where some terrible, often irreversible disaster took civilisation back to the Dark Ages, historical, political and religious issues took centre-stage. Donald Suddaby is an important transitional figure, writing space stories (*Prisoners of Saturn* (1957)) and disaster fiction (*The Death of Metal* (1952)). David Severn's *The Future Took Us* (1958) is a vital pivotal work, a chilling vision of post-holocaust Britain in AD 3000, where machines, especially the wheel, are banned by the ruling theocracy of Calculators.

John Christopher was the first British genre writer for children to emerge in the 1960s. His first juveniles, the Tripods trilogy – *The White Mountains* (1967), *The City of Gold and Lead* (1967) and *The Pool of Fire* (1968) – are a tribute to H. G. Wells: suppose the Martians had won? His masterpiece is the Winchester trilogy: *The Prince in Waiting* (1970), *Beyond the Burning Lands* (1971) and *The Sword of the Spirits* (1972), in which man-made geological disasters have returned Britain to a medieval city-state culture guided by the Seers (who operate the remnants of technology pretending it is magic). *The Guardians* (1970) is probably the first to use Orwell's motifs of the Escape from the City and the Forbidden Romance/friendship, in a world divided between the Conurbs and the Country. *Empty World* (1977) is about worldwide plague, and in *A Dusk of Demons* (1993) he reverts to the post-holocaust formula.

Peter Dickinson wrote for adults first, and has written for the young in many genres. The Changes trilogy – *The Weathermonger* (1968), *Heartsease* (1969) and *The Devil's Children* (1970) – is set in a future Britain where people hate machines and have reverted to superstition; *The Devil's Children* is interesting as a positive view of an ethnic minority group (Sikhs) written shortly before educationalists began to make demands for such books. Dickinson has also used biological sciences to back his fiction, as in *Eva* (1988) when, after a car crash Eva's brain is transplanted into a chimpanzee's body. As the human race loses its will to live, the future may lie with the chimps. *A Bone from a Dry Sea* (1992) tells the parallel stories of a sea-ape girl, Li, four million years ago, and a palaeontologist excavating the African desert who finds her relics.

Nicholas Fisk specialises in shorter SF for the under-thirteens: catchy titles like *Antigrav* (1978) indicate his approach. His work can be deceptively light-hearted when dealing with matters of life and death: for example, in *Trillions* (1971) when a fanatical general decides to use nuclear weapons to destroy the alien mineral 'Trillions'. *Grinny* (1973) and its sequel *You Remember Me!* (1984) deal with alien invasion, while in *A Rag, a Bone and a Hank of Hair* (1980) a nuclear accident causes the world's birth-rate to fall, and scientists attempt to clone new humans.

Louise Lawrence is Britain's leading woman SF writer, and she confronts her teenage protagonists with inescapable moral choices, beginning with *Andra* (1971) and *The Power of Stars* (1972). Her next SF novels were published in the USA, and a fresh start came with *Children of the Dust* (1985), a powerful nuclear holocaust novel inspired by her children's involvement with the peace movement. She followed it with a sequence of young adult (YA) SF novels on pollution, feminism, the dangers of technology, and human-alien love. *Ben-Harran's Castle* (1992) is an Earth-on-trial story, and *The Disinherited* (1994) is an Escape/Forbidden Romance between a rich girl and poor boy when Britain is gripped by the ultimate energy crisis and the greenhouse effect. In *Dreamweaver* (1996) and *The Crawlings* (1999) Lawrence shows the culture clashes and potential for disaster caused by humankind settling on other planets.

As we move from the 1970s to the 1980s and 1990s, several new trends are apparent. First, the development of the teenage novel from contemporary realism into other genres, entering children's SF to produce teenage and YASF novels with serious romantic relationships and a more pessimistic view of world politics. Then the revival of anti-nuclear weapons protest in the early 1980s, in response to the fear of a new generation of nuclear weapons, prompted several outstanding prophetic novels about the aftermath of nuclear holocaust. Who, however, would have believed that at the onset of the 1990s we would see the downfall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Iron Curtain and the Cold War, the unification of Germany and development of liberal regimes in Eastern Europe?

Third, authors who had specialised in other genres or for other age-groups, including writing for adults, turned to children's or YASF, or science fantasy, either to play the prophet or simply to tell the story their creative talent demanded. Following the lead of Peter Dickinson, such authors include Lois Lowry, Bruce Brooks (*No Kidding* (1989)), Rosemary Harris (*A Quest for Orion* (1978), *Tower of the Stars* (1980)), Jan Mark (*The Ennead* (1978)), Robert Westall, Diana Wynne Jones, Annie Dalton, Ann Schlee (*The Vandal* (1979)), John Rowe Townsend (*The Xanadu Manuscript* (1977) and *King Creature, Come* (1980)) and Jill Paton Walsh (*Torch* (1987)), with fine trilogies by Jean Ure, Ann Halam and Terry Pratchett, a quartet by Catherine Fisher and a septet by John Marsden. Such quality writing sets a challenge to genre specialists.

Moreover, authors now write about computers to match their real development as PCs, pocket machines and game consoles, instead of the way traditional SF used them, as enormous mainframes or shipboard computers.

British-born Canadian emigrant Monica Hughes took advantage of new freedoms to make girls her leading characters, and did not share the British prejudice against space adventures. Her Isis trilogy (from *The Keeper of the Isis Light* (1980)) is a study in prejudice and superstition with leading roles for girls, and in a lifetime's writing, mainly in the SF genre, she warned against environmental catastrophe (*Ring-rise, Ring-set* (1982) and *The Crystal Drop* (1992)) and preached peace and reconciliation.

Canadian-born Douglas Hill turned in mid-career to juvenile SF, writing new sagas in the Heinlein tradition with comic-book verve. The Last Legionary quintet (1979–82) features a near-invulnerable hero; the Huntsman trilogy (1982–4) is a post-holocaust, alien invasion series; and the ColSec trilogy (1984–5) features teenagers dispatched through space to colonise a new planet.

From the 1970s the mood in the USA has been individualistic, breaking away from Heinleinian space opera. Outstanding examples have been Jay Williams's Danny Dunn series; Laurence Yep's *Sweetwater* (1973) set on a colonised planet; Robert C. O'Brien's *Mrs Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (1971) about laboratory rats with increased intelligence, and his feminist, post-holocaust *Z for Zachariah* (1975); and Virginia Hamilton's trilogy about four children with psychic gifts, beginning with *Justice and Her Brothers* (1978). Sylvie Engdahl explored deep religious and philosophical questions with *Enchantress from the Stars* (1970) among others. H. M. Hoover sets most of her books on alien planets, backing her plots with anthropological research and frequently featuring girls in the lead: *This Time of Darkness* (1980) is an Escape from the City. William Sleator has written quirky tales about the disruption of reality and Pamela Sargent has written YASF novels with strong heroines, such as *Earthseed* (1983) and *Alien Child* (1988). Pamela Service has written in several genres: *Under Alien Stars* (1990) shows humans surviving alien domination.

A powerful anger fuelled the writing of political YASF in Britain, reviving the Wyndhamesque disaster novel. Robert Swindells's *Brother in the Land* (1984) describes survival after worldwide nuclear war; a new final chapter offers hope. Raymond Briggs's graphic novel *When the Wind Blows* (1982) demonstrated the futility of civil defence as an uncomprehending elderly couple die of radiation sickness: it became an animated film. In Germany, Gudrun Pausewang published the grim, post-nuclear *The Last Children* (1988) (*Die Letzen Kinder von Schewenborn* (1983)). Dr Seuss followed up his wonderful graphic eco-fable *The Lorax* (1971) with the brinkmanship of *The Butter Battle Book* (1984).

Civilisation is destroyed by plague in Jean Ure's trilogy *Plague 99/Plague* (1989), *Come Lucky April/After the Plague* (1992) and *Watchers at the Shrine* (1994). The theme

is the sex war and women's vengeance on male aggression which supposedly caused the plague. Robert Westall describes a stratified society in *Futuretrack 5* (1983), an Escape/cross-class Romance, and in *Urn Burial* (1987) Earth is the battleground between Good cat-like aliens and Evil dog-aliens. Swindell's *Daz & Zoe* (1990) varies the Forbidden Romance with its joint narrative, alternate chapters told by an upper-class girl, and a semi-literate boy from the fenced-off city. Robert Leeson tackles social injustice in his optimistic *Time Rope* quartet (1986).

Religion is a frequent theme of adult SF: religious children's SF includes Madeleine L'Engle's series beginning with *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), *Starforce Red Alert* (1983), a temptation story, and the third of Diane Duane's Wizard series, *High Wizardry* (1990), in which Dairine discovers the wizard's oath on a computer and chooses an outer-space mission where, again, the First Temptation is about to happen.

SF motifs turn up in children's picture books: *But Martin!* by June Counsel (1984), the Dr Xargle series by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross, Michael Foreman's *Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish* (1972), and the post-holocaust satirical *Henry's Quest* by Graham Oakley (1986). The ever-popular Tintin had SF adventures: *Destination Moon* (1953), *Explorers on the Moon* (1954) and *Flight 714* (1968), in which the team learn that aliens have observed Earth for centuries.

The particular history of European immigration to Australasia, a continent with its unique fauna and landscape, already inhabited by people with a culture adapted over centuries to their environment, is probably responsible for certain recurring themes in antipodean children's SF – the Uncarthly Child and the Desert Landscape. We also find the perennial theme of the breakdown of civilisation, and remember that the well-known adult novel about the end of the human race after nuclear holocaust, Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957), was set in Australia.

Notable SF novels of the late twentieth century by antipodean authors include Alan Baillie's *Megan's Star* (1988) and *Magician* (1992), Joan Phipson's *Dinko* (1985) and Lee Harding's *Displaced Person* (1979), an original story about a boy who gradually becomes invisible to the rest of the world, losing his senses of colour, hearing and touch until he is trapped in a grey limbo. Robin Klein's *Halfway across the Galaxy and Turn Left* (1985) is rare in its explicitly humorous intent. An alien family on the run from their home planet Zyrgon hide on Earth and are surprised and delighted by aspects of our culture, such as real food instead of 'compressed food slabs'. Margaret Mahy's *Aliens in the Family* (1986) also features aliens researching humankind. A youth is set a test to bring information back to his interstellar school to form part of the great inventory of universal knowledge. Caroline Macdonald's *The Lake at the End of the World* (1988), set in 2025, relates in alternate sections the experiences of a boy and girl after the breakdown of urban civilisation and possibly the near-extinction of the human race.

Gillian Rubinstein has written some outstanding YASF novels. *Beyond the Labyrinth* (1988) tells of an alien researching Earth customs; in *Galax-Arena* (1992) Earth children are kidnapped to perform circus feats on an alien planet; *Space Demons* (1986) begins a fascinating trilogy where sequels *Skymaze* (1989) and *Shinkei* (1996) appeared in response to fanmail. Some Australian teenagers test-drive new computer games from Japan and are drawn into cyberspace, risking being trapped there for ever if they cannot solve the game.

Finally, John Marsden's powerful septet, opening with *Tomorrow, when the War Began* (1993), about a teenage guerrilla group in an invaded Australia, is a passionate, compelling saga.

Science fantasy is a label bookshops use for their adult SF/fantasy section. I am using it to describe SF combining technology with outright magic, in a present, future or alien setting. My examples are entertaining, often raising deep philosophical issues, and finely written, usually by fantasy specialists. Diana Wynne Jones's *A Tale of Time City* (1987) employs the Time Patrol concept, *Hexwood* (1993) role-playing games. Annie Dalton's *The Alpha Box* (1991) combines Greek legends, rock music and an alien threat. Jane Yolen's Dragon trilogy (1982–7) mixes the SF idea of breeding alien creatures to fight in gaming pits with the telepathy the hero and heroine share with their dragons. Ann Halam's Inland trilogy (*The Daymaker* (1987), *Transformations* (1988), *The Skybreaker* (1990)) depicts a future where the scientific way of life has collapsed and humankind has developed complementary magical powers. Women supervise in harmony with nature, but magic only works as long as people don't turn back to machines and electricity.

Finally I list some of the best-received children's and YASF of the last ten years: space opera by Ben Jeapes (*His Majesty's Starship* (1998) *Winged Chariot* (1999) and *The Xenocide Mission* (2002)); environmental disasters from Lesley Howarth (*Weather Eye* (1995) and *Ultraviolet* (2001)) and Julie Bertagna (*Exodus* (2002)); time-travel to AD 2032 from Malorie Blackman (*Thief!* (1995)). We have secret science, thriller-SF: Terence Blacker's *The Angel Factory* (2001) and Malcolm Rose's *Clone* (2002); a space colony from Earth underestimating the small furry-skinned natives in Brian Caswell's *Deucalion* (1995), and various future dystopias. In Melvin Burgess's *Bloodtide* (1999) London is ruined and run by gangs; in Philip Reeve's *Mortal Engines* (2001) mobile cities are predators, at least a thousand years ahead from now. Malorie Blackman's *Noughts and Crosses* (2001) gives the Forbidden Romance a fresh twist: not just class separates the boy and girl, but race, and in this alternative Earth, black people – Crosses – are the dominant race, white people – Noughts – are inferior. Lois Lowry writes of enclosed communities in *Gathering Blue* (2002), about a gifted female artist who needs to express and fulfil herself, and most superbly in *The Giver* (1993), winner of the Newbery Medal, about a totalitarian community which has banned colours, history and memory and promotes a false sense of happiness. Inevitably the teenage hero rebels. Terry Pratchett has written two fine comic trilogies: *Truckers* (1989–90), about tiny people, 'nomes', struggling to survive on Earth, having forgotten they came from space; and the Johnny Maxwell series (1992–5) about a boy who gets caught up inside a computer game and also goes time-travelling. Humour lies in the leading characters' comments on human society seen from the outside.

Children's SF, embracing YASF and science fantasy, presents today a mature body of work both by lifelong practitioners and by authors 'moonlighting' from other genres, and including many award-winners. Typically recycling a small number of plotlines, it is overall more optimistic than adult SF. SF comics and action films continue to be popular, so the genre has the potential to entice reluctant readers, as well as the intellectual content to engage committed readers, and the quality of current writing stands up well against current children's fantasy and history genres.

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41 Series fiction

Victor Watson

A series is a sequence of narratives, published separately, often over a considerable period of time, mostly about the same characters, and usually written by one author. Series fictions have traditionally been loosely grouped generically as ballet stories, pony stories, school stories, holiday adventure stories, family stories, and so on. These groupings are convenient, but their use has been misleading, giving rise to the impression that series fiction is by its very nature formulaic, repetitive and unworthy of serious critical attention. It also fails to take account of the many series which cannot be made to sit comfortably within such groups. For example, in Antonia Forest's Marlow series of twelve novels, four are school stories, two are holiday adventure stories, two are historical novels, and the rest defy categorisation. It would be similarly misleading to label Madeleine L'Engle's series which began with *A Wrinkle in Time* as straightforwardly science fiction, or Monica Edwards' two series as just pony stories.

Towards a taxonomy

There have been at least 300 series for children published in English alone; many of them have been out of print for years, some are entirely forgotten. Nevertheless, it is likely that the most important continuous reading children do on their own is the reading of series – and this is to some extent acknowledged by the thousands of adult readers who continue to belong to societies dedicated to the celebration of the favourite series-writers of their childhood. Yet, in spite of the fact that series fiction played such a major part in children's reading throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the academic world has been mostly content to accept a number of simplistic critical assumptions about its nature and value.

In the face of such a vast and volatile subject, it is helpful to bear in mind that only two formal features distinguish a series from other kinds of fiction – its extended overall length and its composition in separate narratives. The crucial factor for both the writer and reader of series fiction is the relationship between the entire sequence and the individual novels. On that basis, series fictions can be divided into two types, the progressive and the successive. All series fiction is either progressive or successive, though there are a few rare cases where an author has shifted a series from one category to the other.

A progressive series is one in which a continuous and developing story is told in instalments, each book telling a different part of a sequential narrative, with the characters growing older and more mature. The novels in a progressive series have their own place in the developing narrative and should ideally be read in the correct order. The role of the separate books is to provide a readerly and writerly breathing space and to shape the

continuity of experience as a series of significant episodes or stages. The Harry Potter series belongs to this category: it is generally understood that the author's aim is to write an extended narrative in seven separate parts, each corresponding to a year of Harry's experience at Hogwarts School. The Narnia series is another, in which *The Last Battle* is not just the seventh instalment of an extended chronicle but the overall closure. Since a series of novels provides a writer with space, amplitude and extended opportunities for representing the development of character, maturation is often a predominant theme. The North American family sagas popular between around 1860 and 1920 (L. M. Montgomery's Avonlea novels, L. M. Alcott's Little Women quartet, and Susan Coolidge's Katy trilogy) are progressive series, since the main interest is the growth of the protagonists from childhood to parenthood. Another progressive series is Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House series (from 1932): in the first, Laura makes her appearance as a child, and the series tells of her experience at first with her pioneering family and finally as an independent young woman. Similarly, the Australian author Mary Grant Bruce, in the fifteen novels which comprise the Billabong series (from 1910), traces the changes in the life of her protagonists Jim and Norah before, during and after the First World War. However, many progressive series remain open-ended and could, at least in theory, still be developed further; for example, in the Marlow series by Antonia Forest, the last published novel, *Run away Home*, is not a final closure and new titles could be added.

A successive series is one in which the characters show few signs of growing older or changing in any significant way. This does not necessarily mean that there is little authorial interest in characterisation, only that development and maturation are not a primary concern. The characters in a successive series may be subtly represented, with a great sense of depth and complexity: Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons (from 1930) is a successive series and the characters show few signs of sexual or social growth. However, they do change and grow more experienced, and the series is held together as much by them, and by the numerous small dramatic moments which matter to them, as by its themes of boating, exploration and camping. The works in most successive series may be read in any order, since none is critically dependent upon its place in the sequence. There may be brief references in one novel to the events in one published earlier; such references lightly suggest a chronology of events but have little structural significance and serve mainly as signposts (or, indeed, advertisements) for readers unfamiliar with the series. The William Brown stories are a successive series, and so are most of the series by Enid Blyton and Malcolm Saville.

Most of the hundreds of series for younger readers – such as the Thomas the Tank Engine series by the British writer the Reverend W. Awdry (from 1945), and the Topsy and Tim series begun in 1959 by Jean and Gareth Adamson – are successive series. The paradoxical task for their authors is to provide narrative (often domestic) action while at the same time suggesting a world of unchanging childhood security. However, some series which have begun as early readers for very young children have matured along with their protagonists: the eponymous heroine of the Katie Morag picture books (from 1984), by the Scottish author Mairi Hedderwick, grows older as the series progresses, her development mirrored by the changes that take place on the Hebridean island which is her home. Maud Hart Lovelace's Betsy-Tacy series (from 1940) is also progressive: the principal characters meet on Betsy's fifth birthday and the later stories take her through her adolescence in Minnesota to her marriage in the final volume.

Fantasy series whose narratives are tied in with a quest structure are invariably progressive and their extended length enables the author to accumulate incrementally the

geographical, historical and cultural complexity of vast secondary worlds. They should perhaps be thought of as epic series. The *Chronicles of Prydain* by Lloyd Alexander (from 1964) is a distinguished example, as are Catherine Fisher's two series, the *Book of the Crow* series (from 1993) and the *Snow-Walker* series (from 1998). Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (from 1995) and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series seem to have encouraged a number of writers around the turn of the century to begin their own secondary world series – they include William Nicholson's *The Wind Singer* (from 2000), Cliff McNish's *Doomspell* (from 2000) and Katherine Roberts' *Echorium Sequence* (from 1999). However, there are other famous and prolonged fantasy series which are successive – L. Frank Baum's *Oz* series (continued after his death by other 'royal historians' of *Oz*) is shaped not by a single unifying quest but by a sequence of separate visits to the fantasy land of *Oz*; and the *Doctor Dolittle* series by Hugh Lofting (from 1922) is held together more by the Doctor's character and idealism than by a developing quest or single adventure. A variant of the epic fantasy is the eco-series, such as Colin Dann's *Farthing Wood* series (from 1979) and the swashbuckling stories in Brian Jacques' *Redwall* series (from 1986).

There are series in which the main unifying feature is not a character or group of characters but a place or an institution. This – particularly in Britain – is most frequently a school, as in the *Greyfriars* stories by Charles Hamilton, which appeared in comics, annuals and novels from 1908 until the post-war years; or the six *Malory Towers* titles by Enid Blyton (from 1946); or, more famously, the *Chalet School* stories (from 1925) by Elinor Brent-Dyer, comprising fifty-eight volumes about a school which, despite having to change location a number of times during the Second World War, retained its pacifist and non-denominational unity. However, the unifying place might also be a house, as in the *Green Knowe* series by Lucy Boston (from 1954). All these series have a uniquely collegiate quality, and what distinguishes them is a strong sense of a community of people who spend a good deal of their time in this place and whose lives are significantly shaped by its character. A classic example of a collegiate series is William Mayne's *Choir School* novels (from 1955) in which the cathedral is more than just a setting but has its own unique character and history which shapes the children's and teachers' lives; Gene Kemp's *Cricklepit Combined School* series (from 1977) shows that an ordinary contemporary state school, with little history and no glamour, can nevertheless have a collegiate and benevolent character of its own.

Ballet stories – and career stories in general – have a unique celebratory character and appeal mostly to a specific readership. They are mostly progressive series, following the careers of a single character or group of characters from childhood to professional success in adult life; the best-known example is Lorna Hill's *Sadler's Wells* series (from 1950). Ballet stories may also have a collegiate flavour, in that both the action and the ethos are shaped by a dancing school or a group of performers. Like much series fiction, ballet stories not infrequently turn into moral fables, love stories or thrillers; but what unites them is their authentic representation of various kinds of passionate dedication to a personal ideal or ambition. The many British series of pony stories also have a habit of turning into other kinds of fiction, but, like ballet stories, they have their own distinctive flavour – a unique yearning and celebratory quality to which millions of young readers have responded. Horse stories in the United States and Australia, though different from British pony stories in setting and readership, take for granted in their readers a similar romantic interest in animals as well as a passion for wild countryside settings. Two excellent examples of these are the series by Mary O'Hara, set in Wyoming, which began with

My Friend Flicka (1941), and the Silver Brumby series of ten novels (1958–96) by the Australian writer Elyne Mitchell.

Finally, there are the publishers' format series. These consist of works, often written by a syndicate of authors, bound together by theme, characters or genre, and marketed as a recognisable commodity with its own brand features. There are purists who believe that their appeal is ephemeral, that their literary significance is minimal, and that they are not series fictions at all but other kinds of fiction disguised as series. Nevertheless, the disguise is often very effective, for a format series may aspire to the conditions of either the progressive or the successive series, and they frequently take on many of the features of the collegiate series. Format series have a long history: in 1904 *The Bobbsey Twins* were created by Edward Stratemeyer under the pseudonym Laura Lee Hope; in 1927 the first of the Hardy Boys series was published by the Stratemeyer Syndicate, and in 1930 the same syndicate published the first of the phenomenally popular Nancy Drew. Among the most popular current format series are the Point series, covering several genres – Point Horror, Point Crime, Point Romance, Point SF, and others. The British Animal Ark series (from 1994), though written by several different authors, appears under the name of 'Lucy Daniels' and successfully achieves narrative unity by means of its veterinary theme and consistent characterisation. The American Sweet Valley High series (from 1984) is also written by a team of writers, appearing under the name of 'Kate William', the story outlines drafted by Francine Pascal, the series creator. A distinguished forerunner of the format series was Lucy Fitch Perkins' *Twins* series, in which all the stories were concerned with twins in different countries and at different historical periods. This series began in 1911, was continued by other writers after Perkins' death, and remained in print for many decades.

Resistance to taxonomies

However, the difficulty in applying a taxonomy of this kind to such a fluid and volatile phenomenon is the subjects' resistance to categorisation. This is partly because there is an ambiguity of purpose latent in all series fictions: their desire to provide readers with more of the same and simultaneously to tell a new story. Series readers desire closures but fear termination. Furthermore, while they appear predictable, series fictions are often intrinsically volatile. The principal reason for this is that authors, readers and the narratives themselves are uniquely affected by time. A series may be written over a period of many years, perhaps covering most of a writer's professional life. In that time the authorial interest is likely to change direction and the later writing will be done with a consciousness of public feedback. Any series fiction, therefore, might shift from one kind to another in the course of its progress. An example is Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* series: there is a case for believing that the early novels in the series comprise a progressive sequence on the character of George and her relationship with her father, but that the subsequent successive stories were written in response to their enormous popular appeal. Authors after completion have been known to write additional works, either to fill in narrative gaps (as L. M. Montgomery did with the *Avonlea* stories, quite properly calling the new titles 'Chronicles') or as major ideological reappraisals (as Ursula Le Guin has done with the *Earthsea* sequence).

Because a series is written and published over a long period of time, there are consequences for readers too. Reading any completed series from beginning to end provides a sense of prolonged and incremental intimacy with the main characters, and a crucial sense of change and development over an extended period of time, intensified through the slow

accumulation of linear narrative. However, for readers of a current series there is an additional factor: they cannot complete the narrative at their own pace but must wait for further instalments to be provided. This waiting – with its accompaniment of shared and excited anticipation, marketing publicity, literary awards, film adaptations and journalistic speculation – becomes part of the reception process.

A more integral difficulty is the mismatch between fictional time and real time. The twenty titles in Malcolm Saville's Lone Pine series were issued between 1943 and 1978, a period involving considerable social and cultural change; but the fictional time is no more than four or five years. In the foreword to *Not Scarlet but Gold* (1962), the fourteenth title in the series, Saville explained to his readers that he had decided to address two difficulties at once – maturation and the passing of time:

it is now time for the David and Peter [Petronella] of the first story, published nearly twenty years ago, to behave as if they are sixteen today. So now, at last ... these characters are facing their adventures – and indeed each other – as if they were living in the 1960s.

In effect, Saville was changing the series from the successive to the progressive. In practice, though, many authors have a way of sidestepping this difficulty: they allow fictional time to pass extremely slowly and social changes of setting to slip unobtrusively into their narratives. One author explicitly drew her readers' attention to both the difficulty and the solution: Antonia Forest pointed out in a prefatory note to *The Thuggery Affair* (1965) that in the seventeen years since the first in the Marlow series had been written only eighteen months of fictional time had passed; she explained that the only way of dealing with this problem was to give each story a background more or less consistent with the year in which it was written. Alison Uttley's Little Grey Rabbit series for younger readers was written over such an extended period of time (almost half a century, 1929–75) that its details of country life (fetching water, using candles) required in later editions an explanatory historical preface.

Just as much of the best of children's fiction addresses matters without appearing to mention them, some of the greatest series fictions for children have a complex thematic circularity, or a mercurial coherence, while seeming only to fit within one of the accepted categories. Cynthia Voigt's Tillerman sequence, for example, outwits the serial nature of series fiction. Despite the linearity of its progressive narrative in six of the seven novels, the series is expansive and inclusive. Its authorial attention circles around a particular group of people, back in time in *The Runner*, and out into other families and communities; but Dicey remains the centre, the series beginning with her and returning to her at the end. Mary Norton's Borrowers series – while appearing to be a simple linear fiction moving in one narrative direction – in fact constitutes a complex fictional exploration of the loneliness and yearning which lie thematically at the centre of the author's fictional world. Lucy Boston's Green Knowe series is another example: this series is held together by far more than a house or its inhabitants for – despite the elegiac sense of a world in decline and an environment continually being destroyed – the novels convey a celebratory conviction that we are all capable of imaginatively transcending time.

Critical approaches

Critical approaches to children's series fiction have been confused and inconsistent. One view has distinguished series where subsequent works are mainly formulaic and repetitive

from those where from the outset the author perceived and planned the series as an artistic whole. A similar distinction is sometimes made between popular and literary series (between, say, Enid Blyton's Famous Five and Lucy Boston's Green Knowe series); but the two terms are problematic, shifting and culturally loaded, and not necessarily mutually exclusive anyway. Critics with an educational perspective are generally more welcoming, since they regard series fiction in terms of the ways in which it can help young people to become sophisticated readers: familiar and predictable characters ease an inexperienced reader into what might otherwise have been a daunting new narrative, formulaic plots teach prediction skills, and the business of collecting all the titles may well be an important step in becoming a serious reader.

However, series fiction has suffered less from biased criticism than from neglect. Often the first work in a series has been given some critical attention and its sequels merely listed or summarised. Such perfunctory treatment implies that to follow a successful novel with a sequel is a loss of writerly seriousness, a decline into repetitive and formulaic spin-offs. But that is not how a series is experienced by its readers: if they found the sequels less interesting than the first story, they would stop reading them. The best series fictions are not simply strings of pot-boiling sequels; they involve a good deal of serious commitment on the part of both the writer and the reader. Deciding to read all the novels in a series implies a commitment and involves a special relationship which the reader has made a conscious decision to sustain. There is an implied promise made by a series-writer, and a recognition of the readerly desires of young readers. J. K. Rowling's understanding of this desire and of her responsibility to keep the implied authorial promise partly explains the success of the Harry Potter series. And, like the best of the great series-authors, she knows how to keep that promise without being strait-jacketed by it – each sequel taking both her own writing and the reader's reading into deeper narratorial levels of interest and reflection.

In the past, critics and reviewers rarely took the trouble to read an entire series; certainly those who suggested, for example, that the only novel worth reading in the Anne of Green Gables series is the first had probably not themselves read the last – *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), a dark and impressively convincing 'home front' novel set during the First World War. However, there has been an improvement in recent years: David Rudd's exemplary study of the series fictions of Enid Blyton has demonstrated the value of detailed and attentive critical study of such extended narratives.

History

Series fiction began in North America when James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* was published in 1823, the first of the Leather-Stocking Tales. For younger readers there was the monumental Rollo sequence of twenty-eight stories by Jacob Abbott, the first a picture book for three-year-old beginner readers, and later titles taking the young man on a tour of Europe; this progressive series was published between 1835 and 1864 and assumed a readership which would grow up alongside the fictional protagonist.

Family series fiction began in 1864 when Sophie May published the first of the Little Prudy series, and in the following year the first of the Dotty Dimple stories. North American readers were indeed fortunate at that period: in 1867 Martha Finley, under the pseudonym Martha Farquharson, published the first of her Elsie Dinsmore books, a series of twenty-eight titles which, between 1867 and 1905, traced the life of the eponymous heroine from the time she was eight until she was a widowed grandmother. Then, in 1868 and 1869, Louisa May Alcott published *Little Women* and *Little Women Part II* (known in

Britain as *Good Wives*), to begin one of the most famous and influential series of novels (strictly speaking, a quartet) ever written for young readers. Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* and its two sequels followed (1872–86), and then the Five Little Pepper series of twelve family stories (from 1881) by Margaret Sidney (Harriet M. Lothrop); in 1903 the first of Kate Douglas Wiggin's three Rebecca stories was published – *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* – and Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna* appeared in 1913, followed by a number of popular sequels by Porter and, after her death, by Harriet Lumis Smith and others.

A major problem for the authors of the family sagas was to avoid representing growing up as a diminishing of dramatic interest. The limit of their exploration of their characters was sex: they took their heroines to courtship and marriage, then they either left them there, or turned their attention to the next generation of children. The only family saga of the period to address these difficulties was *Anne of Green Gables* and its sequels, by L. M. Montgomery (1908–21). Montgomery faced the challenge directly: would this vivid child, like so many others, vanish into the unspoken mysteries of womanhood? In fact, the series matures into a moving account of Anne's transformation into a wife and mother, representing with considerable power the depth of her love (and grief) for her children. Montgomery was interested in the form and nature of series fiction itself, and its ability to adapt to the changing world: *Rilla of Ingleside*, while not exactly metafictional, does question the assumptions implicit in the earlier novels of the series, especially the value placed upon the centrality of joyous imagination in a world transformed by war into hideousness.

This period also saw the appearance in the USA of other kinds of series fiction. In 1895 Annie Fellows Johnston published the first of the Little Colonel series, and *The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls – and a 'Golliwogg'* appeared – the first of the famous Anglo-American Golliwogg series by Florence K. and Bertha Upton. In 1900 Gelett Burgess' *Goops and How to Be Them* appeared, the first of his series about the balloon-headed Goops, and in the same year L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In 1904 the Bobbsey Twins were created by Edward Stratemeyer, and the first of Joseph Altsheler's popular series about the French and Indian Wars appeared in 1916. In 1918 a book entitled *Raggedy Ann Stories* was issued, first of the Raggedy Ann books written and illustrated by Johnny (Barton) Gruelle.

Series began to appear in worldwide profusion. In Australia, Margaret Sidney's *Five Little Peppers and how They Grew* had appeared in 1881, followed by eleven further titles, and in 1910 Mary Grant Bruce wrote the first of the fifteen novels in the Billabong series. In Britain in 1899, E. Nesbit published *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*, followed by two novels and a related collection of short stories; *Five Children and It* followed in 1902, the first of the Psammead stories. In Britain, a great outpouring of popular school series began in 1919 when Elsie J. Oxenham published *A Go-Ahead Schoolgirl*, and her Abbey School books (around forty titles) began to appear in 1920. *The Senior Prefect* by Dorita Fairlie Bruce (renamed *Dimsie Goes to School*), first of a series of ten, was published in 1921. In 1923 she launched a new series of nine novels with *The Girls of St Bride's*. The most long-lasting of all the school series, however, was the monumental Chalet School series by Elinor Brent-Dyer, a total of fifty-eight novels published between 1925 and 1970. Enid Blyton – queen of series-writers – wrote the first of her St Clare's School stories in 1941 and *Malory Towers* followed in 1946. The first of Anthony Buckeridge's twenty-five Jennings books appeared in 1950. Ronald Searle was involved in two school series of a different kind: the first was his inspired and parodic St Trinians! series (from 1948) and the second was Geoffrey Willans' Molesworth series, illustrated by Searle, which began with *Down with Skool* (1953).

In the period between the wars, many series spilled over into, or from, comics (Billy Bunter) and film (Tarzan). Meanwhile other popular and innovative series began to appear: the first of Hugh Lofting's twelve Doctor Dolittle books appeared in the USA in 1920 and in Britain in 1922; the first of Richmal Crompton's Just William stories was published in 1922; and in 1932 *The Camels Are Coming* – first of what was to become the Biggles series – appeared in an aeronautical magazine, *Popular Flying*, established by the author, Captain W. E. Johns. In 1932 Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House in the Big Woods* was published, Norman Hunter's Professor Branestawm stories began in 1933, P. L. Travers' *Mary Poppins* in 1934, and Margot Pardoe's Bunkle series in 1939. In the USA, the Stratemeyer Syndicate released *The Tower Treasure* in 1927, first of the Hardy Boys series by 'F. W. Dixon'; Nancy Drew made her first appearance three years later in *The Secret of the Old Clock*.

It was a prolific period in the history of children's books. When *Swallows and Amazons* appeared in 1930, the first of a series of twelve, Arthur Ransome's unpretentious and unhurried story of camping and sailing initiated what amounted to a new genre in Britain which expressed for many – both children and adults – a resurgent love of the British countryside and a desire to explore it. Between 1930 and 1960 camping and tramping fiction – alongside school stories – dominated children's reading in Britain, covering between them the whole school year. Their writers caught the national enthusiasm for hiking, cycling, exploring and boating, and created narratives celebrating the appeal of the (mainly) English land- and sea-scape. There were popular series (largely forgotten except by adult enthusiasts) by M. E. Atkinson, Katharine Hull and Pamela Whitlock, Malcolm Saville, Garry Hogg, Aubrey de Selincourt, Elizabeth Kyle, Elinor Lyon, David Severn, Marjorie Lloyd and many others. The pony story – a close relative of the camping and tramping story – made its first significant appearance in series form shortly after the war: Ruby Ferguson's Jill series began in 1949, and Monica Edwards' two related and overlapping series, the Punchbowl Farm and the Romney Marsh series, ran to more than twenty titles, written over twenty years from 1947. These series were predicated on a belief in the intelligence and good nature of children, and their ability to cooperate; when Erich Kästner wrote the series which began with *Emil und die Detektive* (1929), he created an urban equivalent set in the streets of Berlin; after the war, Paul Berna's *Le Cheval sans tête* (1955) began a series set on the streets of Paris.

The 1940s and 1950s were dominated in Britain by two writers, Enid Blyton and Malcolm Saville, who matched each other's output series for series. Blyton – whose work excelled in terms of sales and reputation – is best known for the Famous Five and Secret Seven series (from 1942 and 1949); Saville – whose work showed a more serious interest in both landscape and characterisation – was particularly popular for the Lone Pine series (from 1943). The phenomenal output of both these authors was multiplied by the massive growth in paperback sales that took place at that time. It was partly because of the sheer volume of series production, and its association with cheap paperbacks, that series fiction began to be perceived by teachers, librarians and many parents as formulaic and trivial.

In the USA things were different: short family series of very high quality were appearing which consciously addressed thoughtful and literary readers, not infrequently acknowledging the influence of E. Nesbit. In 1941 Elizabeth Enright's *The Saturdays* appeared, the first of four stories about the Melendy family; in the same year the first of the Moffat series by Eleanor Estes; in 1954 *Half Magic*, by Edward Eager, first of a series of seven; and in 1956 *A Lemon and a Star*, by E. C. Spykman, first of the series about the Cares family. In 1957 Elizabeth Enright began a second series, the Gone-Away Lake books.

Then followed a fruitful period in which new authors began to challenge the perceived blandness of Blyton's overwhelming output. In 1948 the first of Antonia Forest's outstanding Marlow series appeared; in 1949 Willard Price's popular action-packed Adventure series began with *Amazon Adventure*, and Geoffrey Trease published the first of the Bannermere stories; Tove Jansson's Moomintroll books (from 1945) were first translated into English in 1950. It was a time of great innovation, exemplified by C. S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia (from 1950), Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (from 1952), Lucy Boston's *The Children of Green Knowe* (from 1954) and Henry Treece's *Viking's Dawn* (1955), the first of a trilogy. Two popular science-fiction series appeared in the USA – the Lucky Star series under the pseudonym Paul French (Isaac Asimov) in 1953, and in 1954 *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet*, first of a series of tales of space travel by the distinguished author Eleanor Cameron. In 1958, the Australian writer Elyne Mitchell published *The Silver Brumby*, first of a series of ten, and the following year saw the English translation of the first Mrs Pepperpot story by the Norwegian writer Alf Prøysen. Among the many series for younger readers there were Dorothy Edwards' *My Naughty Little Sister* (from 1951) and the *Clever Polly* series by Catherine Storr (from 1955).

In the 1960s several series were initiated which were to dominate children's fiction for three decades, particularly fantasy, science fiction and comic history. In 1959, the first of the Miss Bianca series by Margery Sharp had been released, and in 1960 Madeleine L'Engle published *Meet the Austins*, first of a series which included the award-winning *A Ring of Endless Light* (1980). In 1962, she published *A Wrinkle in Time*, the first of her distinguished and complex series about the Murry and O'Keefe families. In India the first of the thirty-five Feluda detective series by Satyajit Ray appeared in 1961. Joan Aiken's James III series began in 1962 and Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain appeared in 1964. Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* series began in 1965 with the publication of *Over Sea, under Stone*; in Australia, *Bottersnikes and Gumbles*, the first of the series created by S. A. Wakefield, appeared in 1967; and the same year saw the first of the Amar Chitra Katha comics series by Anant Pai, based on Indian culture, mythology and history. *The Wizard of Earthsea* – the first of what was to become Ursula Le Guin's great fantasy, now a quintet – was published in 1968.

In the closing years of the twentieth century there was no lessening of the range and variety of series fiction. K. M. Peyton's Pennington series began in 1970, and in the same year the first of Barbara Willard's historical Mantlemass series was published. More recent history was addressed in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971), first of Judith Kerr's *Out of the Hitler Time* trilogy; in Joan Lingard's Kevin and Sadie series (from 1972) about the troubles in Northern Island; and in *No Gun for Asmir* (1993), first of a series by the Australian author Christobel Mattingley, about a Bosnian boy caught up in civil war. The Diamond Brothers stories – parodic thrillers which defy categorisation – began with *The Falcon's Malteser* (1986) by Anthony Horowitz. Several notable female protagonists made their appearances in series fiction at this time: they include the eponymous heroines of Beverly Cleary's Ramona (from 1968), Helen Cresswell's Lizzie Dripping, originally commissioned by BBC TV for *Jackanory* in 1972, Penny Pollard (from 1983) by the Australian author Robin Klein, Philip Pullman's Sally Lockhart series (from 1985), and – for younger readers – Dick King-Smith's Sophie series (from 1988). Francesca Lia Block's five postmodern *Dangerous Angels* fairy tales (from 1989) – set around Los Angeles about the adolescent Weetzie and her friends – were more controversial.

In the age of Harry Potter and *His Dark Materials*, fantasy currently seems to be in the ascendancy in series fiction. Trilogies abound. However, even before these two remarkable

publishing successes, fantasy had become more subversive, inventive and creatively mischievous, ignoring the boundaries which defined history, fantasy, comedy and science fiction. None better illustrates this than Diana Wynne Jones' Chrestomanci series (from 1977), which triumphantly challenges the usual expectations of series readers. In 1983 Diane Duane's *So You Want to Be a Wizard*, the first of her Young Wizards series, combined in a totally original way elements of myth, fantasy and science fiction. Explanations – and narrative demonstrations – of space travel and relativity were central to Russell Stannard's Uncle Albert series (from 1989). *The Mennynms* (1993), by Sylvia Waugh, introduced a troubling new series in which stories of the adventures of a family of rag dolls allegorically raised deep philosophical and religious questions. The Obernewtyn Chronicles (from 1987), a series of four novels by the Australian writer Isobelle Carmody, are futuristic post-holocaust narratives, and another distinguished Australian series began with John Marsden's *Tomorrow, when the War Began*, a sequence of novels about seven young adults fighting for survival when their country is invaded.

The key to understanding the appeal of series fiction lies in the appreciation of endings. A series is not simply an extremely long serial; it is a sequence of narratives each with its own closure, providing points of completeness while allowing for the renewal of acquaintance with familiar much-loved characters and situations. Writers, however, may not necessarily share their readers' enthusiasm for extended continuity: L. M. Alcott, rounding off the last of her quartet about the March family, famously admitted that it was 'a strong temptation to the weary historian to close the present tale with an earthquake'. Subsequent and contemporary authors, however, have shown no signs of such weariness and the appetites of readers remain unappeased. There is no end to the writing of series fiction.

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42 Teenage fiction

Realism, romances, contemporary problem novels

Julia Eccleshare

The demarcation of reading by age is always a tricky one, perhaps especially so when it comes to teenage fiction. What is at issue is not so much the teenage of the reader as the teenage or ‘young adulthood’ of the characters. The expectation is that teenagers should read about the things that they themselves are doing, or would enjoy doing if only they could, while making sure that they are not ‘corrupted’ by anything too adult or explicit.

Impelled by the widespread anxiety that teenagers may abandon reading in favour of entertainment from other, easier-to-access media, teenage fiction has evolved as the most narcissistic of all fictions as, in its current form at least, it seems primarily directed towards mirroring society rather than asking questions of it. The bulk of what is written for teenagers charts changing social and moral codes and in doing so offers assurance about ways of behaving or being treated. But this can be a narrowing and claustrophobic definition, and the obsession with veracity can all too often mean that teenagers are depicted as demons of destruction and revolt rather than in a more rounded way. It also takes away from the chance for teenagers to read more optimistically and to change their reading tastes so that they shift from childhood perceptions and interests to adult ones. In his recent book, *The Child That Books Built* (2002), Francis Spufford describes some of the changes that occur in the move from children’s to adult books in the following way.

Fiction recomplexates itself for you: you step up a whole level of complexity. Suddenly you are surrounded anew by difficulties and riches commensurate with your state of mind. From an exhausted territory, you have come to an unexplored one, where manners and conventions are all to find, just like the rules of your own new existence in your own new lurch-prone adolescent body.

(2002: 10)

It is in making that shift both as people and readers that teenagers become a particular category. The immediacy of what matters to them is different from what matters to the children they have left behind or the adults they will become.

The concept of young adults as a separate group to be addressed and instructed was put forward by the educationalist Sarah Trimmer as long ago as 1802. She drew a dividing line at fourteen and suggested that ‘young adulthood’ should last until twenty-one. As far as publishing specifically for that readership was concerned no direct action was taken, but writers wrote for them naturally, seeing them as an eager audience and one that needed to be well influenced.

In the absence of a definable teenage culture there were obvious settings or situations which would appeal directly to adolescent readers. School stories like Thomas Hughes’s

Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857) and Talbot Baines Reed's *The Fifth Form at St Dominic's* (1887) were successes at the time of their publication and (particularly *Tom Brown's Schooldays*) have remained classics of their genre. R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Black Arrow* (1889) offered adventure to readers of all ages, but the strength of young male characters such as Jim in *Treasure Island* and David Balfour in *Kidnapped* made them popular with contemporary and subsequent generations of teenagers. Stevenson wrote directly for his twelve-year-old stepson, Lloyd, which may add to his success with the young. Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) are the obvious American counterparts.

The two most recent precursors of the teenage novel, like their nineteenth-century predecessors, were published for adults, but both have had a significant influence on adolescent readers. William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) shatters any illusions about childhood innocence. For this reason it appeals powerfully to readers who have begun to recognise this loss in themselves. J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1954) has made an even greater impact, because the stream-of-consciousness, first-person narrative of Holden Caulfield, with its detached and critical view of the adult world, is not only in itself liberating but has also been imitated in many subsequent novels.

In France, the two novels of the first half of the twentieth century that have had most influence on teenagers were similarly published for the adult market. Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913) is a novel of exceptional poignancy whose message of a first fleeting but passionately felt love is made even more affecting and unfulfilled by Alain-Fournier's subsequent death in 1914. More than a generation later, Françoise Sagan's *Bonjour Tristesse* (1954), the story of a teenage girl's adjustment to her stepmother (a precursor of what was to become a commonplace theme by the end of the twentieth century), spoke directly to teenagers adjusting their own lives to fit in with the increasingly common changing dynamics of their parents' relationships.

The notion of teenagers as a separate group of readers with their own tastes and demanding a style of writing that is directed specifically at them was not adopted by publishers until the second half of the twentieth century. It was then that teenagers began to be identified as a distinct if not definite period of transition between childhood, with its implication of dependency, and the separation and independence of adulthood. But even with the clear identification of the group, whose members in the USA in particular had their own styles of music, clothes and the like, it took a long time to establish an identity for books and, perhaps most importantly of all, to find a suitable space in libraries and bookshops. Naming this invention was a further difficulty. 'Teenager', 'Young Adult' ... what was this audience to be called?

And then there was the further problem that everyone knew that readers younger than the magic age of thirteen would be reading these books. Did publishers have a responsibility not to include 'unsuitable' material for them, or was it enough to have overt labelling warning that this was *intended* for teenagers? As books for teenagers became increasingly daring in terms of explicit writing about sex in the 1970s, violence in the 1990s and drugs by the end of the century, the naming and marketing of the books was a significant issue.

Before the concretisation of teenage fiction into named series, acknowledgement that teenagers wanted books about their own experiences had come gradually and had started (not surprisingly because 'teenagers' themselves were first recognised there) in the USA. Post-war teenagers were a far more vociferous and independent group than their predecessors

and they were no longer satisfied with the 'rites of passage' novels which had previously been considered as suitable teenage fare. These included classic novels such as Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as well as twentieth-century classics such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (1960), all of which, in different ways, showed children moving from innocence to experience through their new understanding of the adult world. Post-war teenagers demanded that their own specific experiences be explored in fiction. 'Teenage' became a separate fashionable entity, and so did its fiction. From the mid-1950s on, and increasingly with the social liberation of the 1960s and 1970s, books for 'young adults' were making their mark, attracting serious writers who recognised the potential market of intelligent, sophisticated readers who needed books that would acknowledge their growing awareness of the complex emotions and events they were experiencing. Writers needed to understand the dilemmas that were posed to this generation by their new freedoms and to offer sensible discussion of choices without too much moral instruction.

Initially, the prime thrust of books for the new teenage market was romance, the range of books reflecting contemporary mores as well as eternal truths. *Fifteen* by Beverley Cleary, one of the first novels directed wholly at teenagers, was published in 1956 in the USA but not until 1962 by Penguin in Britain – and then as the second title in their newly launched series for teenagers, Peacocks. It is an unpretentious, straightforward romance, which is unashamedly about a girl's desire for a boyfriend, the arrival of said boyfriend and their ensuing, developing relationship during the year. Cleary treads a delicate path between the mundane and the romantic, and the book's very 'decency' made it possible for it to fit on to the Peacock list of the time.

The reserve and modesty of books such as *Fifteen* was followed by a wave of books which were considerably more sophisticated and complex. While many still dealt with the very first steps in a relationship, others were tackling the more serious problems like teenage pregnancy, always a possible result of too much teenage romance. K. M. Peyton is a romantic writer to her fingertips but she is also a realist. Her stories about the delinquent Pennington who has a rare talent for playing the piano started in *Pennington's Seventeenth Summer* (1970) with not much more than background romance. But they progressed through *The Beethoven Medal* (1971), in which Pennington continues on his wayward and brilliant career, to *Pennington's Heir* (1974), in which girlfriend, now very young wife, Ruth struggles with a baby and nappies under the shadow of the grand piano, against a background of crashing minor chords. Realistic possibly, but certainly Ruth was a very un-liberated heroine by the standards of the next two decades, while the notion of the two young people actually getting married seems impossibly old-fashioned to a contemporary audience.

Teenage fiction emerged almost simultaneously with the first soundings of the women's liberation movement but it remained unaffected by it for a long time, even though the majority of novels written at the time were by women and directed predominantly at girls.

Honor Arundel's approach of using the popular romance with some elements of reality thrown in was similar to K. M. Peyton's. The books of both were an important bridge between magazine romance and literary love stories such as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Emma, her best-known heroine, first appeared in an uncomplicated adventure *Emma's Island* (1968). As an orphan on a remote Scottish island, she has all the qualities necessary for romance and, of course, as she grows up she falls in love. In *Emma in Love* (1970) Arundel describes the stages of first joy and then disillusionment that Emma goes through until she finally recognises that there will be other boys. But Arundel was well

aware that love has its price and she was not afraid of confronting the issues of sex and even single parenthood, as in *The Longest Weekend* (1969) in which Eileen struggles to cope with her three-year-old daughter and her suffocatingly 'understanding' parents.

Good teenage romances have persisted, looking at every possible angle of love and relationships. But fiction was several years behind the enormous fashion and popular-music upheavals of the mid-1960s. Reading retained its 'middle-class' conservative image and was in danger of offering very little to anyone other than the committed reader.

The mid-1970s brought a wave of more hard-hitting novels to Britain. Imports from liberated Scandinavia, such as Gunnel Beckman's *Mia* (1974) and its sequels, talked openly about sex between teenagers. Bodley Head's New Adult list on which they appeared was incredibly controversial at the time and did much to shape the identity of subsequent teenage fiction. 'Nice' stories lost out to novels which gave a less romantic picture of the realities of contemporary teenage life.

Lynne Reid Banks used her romance *My Darling Villain* (1977) to tackle parental control and particularly parents' views about class head on. Fifteen-year-old Kate, nice and very middle class, is allowed to give her first adult party, which is gate-crashed by some less-than-middle-class lads. After the ensuing chaos one of them, Mark, stays behind to tidy up, and they start going out together: but Mark's working-class background is deplored by Kate's parents. The way in which attitudes about both class and race are discussed by Lynne Reid Banks makes *My Darling Villain* – the title itself gives it away – a notably dated book, but the theme of loving against parental wishes is perennially popular.

Perhaps the most controversial, at the time of publication at least, was Judy Blume's *Forever* (1975). The joys and disappointments of first love are shown through the story of Michael and Katherine; more importantly, the joys and disappointments of their first sexual encounter are described explicitly and easily, making *Forever* readily accessible to pre-teens, too. For such frankness Judy Blume has been heavily censored in the USA, but *Forever* has an important place in the canon of teenage fiction and Blume's boldness of purpose and her directness of style were recognised and applauded in many circles at the time.

Admitting that sex among teenagers does take place was an important breakthrough for both writers and readers. For the first time, writers were beginning to acknowledge fully the reality of teenage relationships and to recognise the pressures that teenagers are under and the choices they have to make. As with their romantic predecessors, experiences were predominantly retold from the girl's point of view. Boys' feelings about sex and relationships were rarely explored except as a shadowy foil to whatever the girl at the centre of the story was thinking. The knowledge that girls are the prime readers of romances and the expectation that therefore the stories should be told from their point of view survives today, and most teenage romances are still told from the girl's angle.

Alan Garner fared better than most in *Red Shift* (1973). He was absolutely up-to-date in making Tom and Jan's failure to have a satisfactory sexual relationship the focal point of his story. Because of his parallel and mirroring historical narratives – one set in Celtic Britain and one in the English Civil War – the pertinence of the central story was easily missed and that, combined with Garner's elusive and cryptic style, meant the book had less impact than it should have. Garner's male perspective was refreshing, as was his superior writing in an area not always noted for this quality.

For both of these reasons Aidan Chambers, too, was an important contributor to the teenage books of the time. A boy's sensitivities were described by him in *Breaktime* (1978). Like Garner, Chambers is a demanding writer. His account of Ditto's sexual initiation and the subsequent reassessment of his life, and especially of his relationship with his father, is

retold in a complex but thrilling narrative which offers insight into ways of reading literature as well as speaking openly about sex. Melvin Burgess is not trying to be sensitive in the literary sense in *Doing It* (2003). Instead he aims to talk about sex as teenagers do themselves. A group of friends discuss their success – or otherwise – in sexual relationships. The boys are crude in conversation but can be seen to be quite caring as well. They want sex but they also want a relationship. Burgess was praised and criticised in about equal measure for his near-pornographic book.

Heterosexual sex between teenagers has long been widely accepted, even if the writing about it has been coy, but gay sex has largely been kept well hidden. In *Dance on My Grave* (1982) Chambers set out to change this with a book that is far bolder in both subject matter and style than anything that had gone before. Hal has known for some time that he is gay but he has not acknowledged it openly. When Barry appears, the two recognise their need for one another, but also acknowledge that they may not be faithful for ever.

The telling of *Dance on My Grave* is introverted and complex. Jean Ure's *The Other Side of the Fence* (1986) is more accessible, but the point of the story – that Richard's girlfriend Jan turns out to be a Polish boy – is not revealed until the very end, making the story didactic rather than instructive. Both books mark a brief window during which it looked liberated to acknowledge gay sex before a better understanding of the very real risks of AIDS made such fictions harder to tackle. In a new climate which realistically advocated protection rather than abstinence, Chambers returned to it in *Postcards from No Man's Land* (1999). A young sexual encounter is set, in present-day Holland, against a background of accepted gay relationships as well as a finely observed historical narrative during which the pressure of time changes the sexual mores, and a concurrent present-day story exploring the arguments on euthanasia. A finely wrought and thoroughly literary novel, *Postcards from No Man's Land* won the UK's prestigious Carnegie Medal. Dutch author Ted van Lieshout's *Brothers* (2001) is a deeply moving story about grief and the different ways it can be managed if not contained. After the death of his brother Luke, Maus passes through rage, guilt and isolation as he grieves for the loss of what might have been. But, in finding out more about his brother, Maus discovers that they were joined by the most intimate of secrets – both were gay. Like Chambers's, van Lieshout's story is both less discreet and far more subtle than the first generation of gay novels had been.

Strangely, though close friendship between girls lies at the heart of so many novels, exploration of gay female relationships has been less often explored. When it has, as in Deborah Hautzig's *Hey, Dollface* (1979), it has been less discreet. Hautzig writes far more plainly about Val's developing feelings for Chloë. Written in the first person by Val, *Hey, Dollface* describes how the friendship becomes romantic and physical though, after discussion, the girls decide not to become lovers.

Such openness about relationships marked an important change in the way teenagers and the kind of books they might want to read were perceived. But the upsurge of writing about teenage sex and the conviction that physical attraction was the impetus for all teenage relationships began to distort the realities of society. Ursula Le Guin's *A Very Long Way from Anywhere Else* (1976) was an excellent antidote, providing a welcome respite for teenagers who were quite happy having strong but wholly platonic friendships. Owen and Natalie are both intelligent, strongly motivated people set on different paths for further study. Their relationship is stimulating and enriching, each helping the other to discover what it is that they really believe in. Both find it hard to cope with the sexual expectations pushed on them by the media, their peers and even their parents. Paul

Zindel, too, has recognised that a common purpose may lead to powerful friendships which have nothing to do with sex. In *My Darling, My Hamburger* (1969) he makes his point about teenage relationships in a story which revolves around two couples who are treating being 'a couple' in quite different ways. He harks back to the theme in *A Begonia for Miss Applebaum* (1989), in which Henry and Zelda tell the story of their befriending of Miss Applebaum in alternate chapters, revealing much of their thoughts about each other and their developing emotions as they find out about the life of their amazing teacher and come to terms with her death.

Margaret Mahy has an exceptional understanding of just how emotionally charged teenagers are. She sees this as relating to many things, including the supernatural, as much as necessarily being bound up with preoccupations about sex. In *The Catalogue of the Universe* (1985) she captures the importance of Tycho and Angela's friendship. Their need for one another is based on understanding and intellectual harmony rather than anything overtly physical.

Once the sexual side of relationships had become a recognised and accepted part of teenage writing, the complexities of such relationships rather than their shock qualities could be discussed in an interesting way. Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody* (1992) takes a hard look at a girl's choices when she discovers that she is pregnant. Helen decides to keep the baby and the anguish that causes is resolved only at the end, but her steadfast belief in the rightness of her decision is painfully explored in her diary entries. Chris's responses are understandably different – he is mostly concerned with not losing Helen – but at least he is credited with a viewpoint and, even if he is clearly not as mature as Helen, he is at least concerned and caring. *Dear Nobody* has remained the best book on teenage pregnancy despite the recurrence of the theme in titles since. Society's attitudes to teenage pregnancies remain understandably negative given the limitations that they set on the lives of the young women especially. As a result, they give little fictional scope. What has changed is that there is no disapproval or surprise at the fact of sex, only dismay at the careless consequences at a time when they could easily be avoided.

Changing attitudes to sexual freedom, especially the advent of vociferous feminism, have caused a slowing down in the number of books where women are the underdogs – either emotionally or in terms of getting pregnant. Although the need for love or sex and the importance of relationships is still central to much of teenage fiction, the balance between the sexes has changed radically. During the 1990s what became tagged as 'girl power' swept from the worlds of pop music and fashion into fiction, with the result that teenage fiction became even more dominated by writing for girls. Of course, girls are still seeking relationships, but the expectation is that these will be on their own terms. The traditional roles of girls as weak and boys as strong, which lasted an unnaturally long time in fiction (far longer than in society as a whole), are replaced. Girls are now strong in relationships as well as in many other aspects of life. The advent of the teenage diary, begun famously with Sue Townsend's *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¾* (1989), in which Adrian airs his angst about parents, the failures in his life and, above all, his girlfriend Pandora, has been followed up by any number of teenage diaries. The diary format allows anxieties to be aired without preaching and gives an apparent authenticity to the teenage voice. Authenticity is essential to the success of such books and is hard to achieve. Louise Rennison's *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* (2000) strikes exactly the right note. Georgia Nicolson's intimate thoughts on her family, boys and the family cat much more quickly found a committed audience, and Rennison followed up the first with

a string of sequels, all of which catch the heightened emotions of adolescence and extreme self-absorption – one of its key characteristics.

While the idea of teenage sex became acceptable, the admittance of the widespread use of drugs by teenagers continued to be kept out of teenage books. Its illegality remains a restriction on how it can be written about but, in the interests of authenticity, the use of drugs by disaffected teenagers is sometimes at least accepted in fiction. Melvin Burgess broke the ground dramatically with *Junk* (1996), a harrowing story of a group of young people ‘squatting’ in a house in Bristol. Told through the voices of different characters, and especially Tar and Gemma, *Junk* manages to retain an open-minded and non-judgemental stance on the way of life of the young addicts and their various, largely unsuccessful, attempts to break out of the cycle of drug use. *Junk* won the CILIP Carnegie Medal but it also caused a storm of protest on publication and for many years afterwards.

Surprisingly, few followed where Burgess had so obviously led and drugs have remained notably excluded from teenage novels. Only a handful of younger writers, such as Chris Wooding, who wrote *Kerosene* (2001), the story of Cal’s tragic passion for lighting fires, when he was only twenty-one, include dope-smoking as one of the time-wasting and mood-changing activities of his young characters.

Beyond the limitations of peer relationships in the hot teenage areas of sex and drugs, books for teenagers are an excellent vehicle for exploring all kinds of relationships with other members of the family or other age groups. Recognition of the developing intellectual and emotional powers of adolescent readers, as they move out of a relatively safe world in which decisions are made for them, and into one of infinite variety and choice, has encouraged thoughtful and wide-ranging analysis. Closest in terms of subject matter to relationship with their peers are the numerous books which reflect relationships within families and, especially, the breakdown of traditional, close-knit families. To acknowledge parental failing is an extraordinarily difficult thing and many stories have served as valuable conduits for analysing the pain and trauma that can be caused.

The extent to which unhappiness and self-examination became a predominant theme reached an all time high in the late 1970s and was in danger of belittling teenage readers in a misguided attempt at social realism. Too many books were devoted to the fragility of traditional family values. Teenage readers were in grave danger of being sold very short by the dearth of high-quality writing and thinking in what was being offered to them. It needed writers of distinction to add an extra dimension to the genre. Robert Westall’s *The Scarecrows* (1981) painfully traces thirteen-year-old Simon’s traumatic emotional ride as he rejects his stepfather and conjures up spirits from the past whose powers threaten to overwhelm him. Westall borders on the emotionally savage in his version of how a teenager reacts to the replacement of his father by another man. Such emotional force combined with powerful imagery turns subject matter which, in fiction at any rate, was becoming depressingly routine, into a book of enormous power and importance.

Anne Fine has tackled family break-ups head on in both *Madame Doubtfire* (1989) and *Goggle-Eyes* (1992). Her wit, insight and subtlety set her books apart from the rest and do much to redress the balance and show just how well this hoary chestnut of a theme can be handled. In *Madam Doubtfire* she carries off the preposterous notion that the estranged father, desperate to spend more time with his children, can come back disguised as a housekeeper who takes charge of the children while the mother is working. The implausibility of the deception is deftly handled, with the children acknowledging and distancing themselves from the intrigue in almost equal, and perfectly convincing, measure. In

Goggle-Eyes, Kitty Killin tells Helly Johnson everything she needs to know about mothers having new and unwanted boyfriends who, as both girls know, may all too easily become unwanted stepfathers. Huddled in the school lost-property cupboard, the two girls share their grief at the loss of the parents they first loved. Helly's story remains untold as the forceful Kitty unravels her own story about the horrors of *Goggle-Eyes* and her eventual conversion to him and to his mother's relationship with him.

Paula Danziger's books are read by many who are not yet into adolescence, but much of what she writes about concerns how teenagers come to terms with parental failure and especially with the breaking up of marriage. Like Anne Fine, Paula Danziger's ability to write humorously about traumatic feelings and events enables her to inform her readers about important emotional developments without ever preaching to them. In both *Can You Sue Your Parents for Malpractice?* (New York 1979; London 1986) and *The Divorce Express* (New York 1982; London 1986) the titles alone indicate Danziger's lightness of touch on what can all too easily become a portentous and didactic subject area.

Cynthia Voight, in *Homecoming* (New York 1981; London 1983) takes a completely different approach to what became a primary theme in the 1970s and 1980s of family breakdown and abandonment. Warmth rather than humour is threaded through this long and profoundly moving story about four children who are abandoned in a car park by their mother when she can no longer cope with the problems of being a single parent without adequate support. Dicey, the oldest, leads the others on a journey to find their grandmother. Their trek takes them many miles to Maryland and their experiences on the way are a convincing mixture of meetings with people, some good and some bad. Most importantly, the journey is an opportunity for the characters of the children and their interaction with one another to be developed. From the starting point of the break-up of the traditional family, Cynthia Voight has written a story that is full of hope about sibling support and their ability to redefine a family in the absence of parents. Remarkably, too, she is uncondemning in her view of the parents' behaviour, ascribing it to circumstances rather than apportioning blame.

Homecoming is the first in a series of interconnected novels through which Cynthia Voight allows each of the four Tillerman children further room for development. The personal growth of her characters, and particularly of the two boys when they go in search of the father they know they need in *Sons from Afar* (1989), makes them fascinating models for all adolescents, not just those who are needing fictional role models to help them resolve their own problems.

Jan Mark's understanding of teenage confusions is equally acute and, like Voight, she writes about characters developing in all kinds of ways rather than merely as survivors of situations. Mark is particularly sharp in her observations about friendships and their importance to adolescents both at school and at home. *Thunder and Lightnings* (1976), her first book, revolves around the friendship between the bright newcomer Andrew and Victor, considered locally to be stupid. Their exchanges are spare and reflect both the initial unease and the subsequent comfortableness that the two feel with one another. In *Man in Motion* (1989) Lloyd, like Andrew, is newly arrived in a new home with a new school and no friends. At first he is at a complete loss to know how to make friends and is puzzled that his sister seems to find the whole thing so easy. But gradually things change and Lloyd finds himself with friends for a whole range of activities and not enough time to devote to his own passion – American football. Lloyd learns how to juggle his loyalties so that he can keep faith with all his friends and have time to do what he really wants.

Exploring the complexities of something as comparatively simple as friendships is every bit as important as delving into the more obviously traumatic areas of the problem novels mentioned above. Robert Cormier's picture of teenage interaction is far bleaker than anything Jan Mark describes. In *The Chocolate War* (1975) Cormier writes of the merciless persecution of one boy by the powerful secret society in an American Catholic high school in which corruption is rife. Cormier's novel is almost unremittably bleak in both style and content. It offers the reader little comfort, though some insights into the cruelties which teenagers can inflict upon one another. Later, in *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985), Cormier modifies the bleakness of his message, though the style remains as taut and telling. In it Jerry Renault, victim in *The Chocolate War*, is semi-recovered from his ordeal and returns to school to face up to his tormentor, revealed as a demonic character who reaches a nasty end.

Cormier is never frightened of showing how evil teenagers can be and he expands on this in *We All Fall Down* (1992). Four teenagers 'trash' a house in an act of mindless violence. The damage to the property is bad enough, but worse is that they push fourteen-year-old Karen down the cellar steps leaving her smashed and helpless. The repercussions on all involved – the trashers, Karen and her family, and the mysterious 'avenger' who watches it all – are skilfully and carefully unravelled, revealing much about the different characters' motives and allowing the reader to act as judge of each for themselves. *We All Fall Down* is a book of tremendous force and the lurid description of the trashing is haunting, but somehow Cormier weaves in a morality which, combined with the sheer quality of his writing, prevents his books from making gratuitous use of violence.

In fact, although it was not so much acknowledged when Cormier began writing, violence does surround teenagers and, as well as being instrumental in causing it, they are also often the victims of it. In the changing patterns of society they have some adult attributes – not enough to make them financially or physically independent but enough to make them obviously well beyond the need for the parental protection that younger children would automatically receive. Teenage lives at the margins of society increasingly began to be explored in fiction, a reflection of the way in which some young people were forced into independence. Keith Grey's *Warehouse* (2002) is a compassionate and ultimately hopeful story about a group of teenagers who live together in a disused warehouse. There are particular reasons why each is there but all are, in some way, victims of a breakdown of traditional support.

Fiction about these dispossessed teenagers has led almost seamlessly into the opening up of fiction to include a yet wider cast of characters. These range from teenagers who are in trouble, largely because they have been abused or damaged by an adult earlier in their lives, to those with physical or mental handicaps who have previously been all but invisible in teenage fiction. Tom Bowler's *Midget* (1994) gets inside the mind of fifteen-year-old Midget, so called because he is only three feet tall. In addition to being so much too small, Midget has difficulty speaking and suffers from fits. But Midget is a tough boy who is determined to prove himself and to reveal the secret savagery of his older brother. Bowler's skill is in writing convincingly from within Midget rather than merely describing him. Malachy Doyle achieves something similar in *Georgie* (2001), the story of a boy whose history of destructive behaviour has brought him into being schooled in a closed institution. Only a caring fellow-pupil can unlock Georgie's problems and enable the teacher finally to reach him and to begin to turn his life around.

Though interesting stories in themselves, in both of these there are moments when it is hard not to feel manipulated by the author. But writing about 'outsiders' does not have to

be like that. Benjamin Lebert wrote *Crazy* (2001), the story of his own life, when he was just sixteen. Benjamin is paralysed down one side and hopeless at maths. An outcast at all of his previous schools, Benjamin is finally sent to Castle Neuseelen in a last-ditch attempt by his parents to get him properly educated. Benjamin hates the thought of boarding school but at last he finds he is accepted for himself and begins to fit in despite his disabilities. Though not autobiographical, Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) is equally remarkable in its ability to get inside the outsider teenager. Fifteen-year-old Christopher has Asperger's Syndrome. He is a brilliant mathematician but has little comprehension of ordinary emotions. When he finds a dead dog in the neighbour's front garden he begins a trail of questions which ends in him discovering why his mother left home. Haddon's telling of Christopher's story is both eye-opening and haunting for what it tells us about seeing the world from such a different point of view.

Describing how life is for teenagers who are physically disabled is in many ways harder. Traditionally, disabled characters are tamed by learning to live with their disabilities or reformed by overcoming them. Either way is unconvincing in our scientific society and both run the risk of creating characters who descend into self-pity while screaming 'unfair'. Morris Gleitzman stands such books on their heads by taking a refreshingly humorous look at disability in his ironically titled *Blabbermouth* (1992) and its sequel *Stickybeak* (1993). Rowena Batts has something wrong with her vocal chords so, although she's a brilliant communicator, she cannot actually speak. Despite this, the books are told in the first person and Rowena's character comes through powerfully. There is no sense of self-pity, almost the reverse, as Rowena uses her inability to speak to her own advantage as often and as outrageously as she can. Lois Keith apparently occupies more traditional territory in *In a Different Life* (1997) as fifteen-year-old-Libby is forced into a wheelchair after a mysterious illness. Libby is first angry and despairing and finally optimistic as she tries to make the point that she is still an ordinary teenager with all the familiar hang-ups about boys, school, friends and parents. Keith's skill is in keeping a straight path between honesty and sentimentality. Hannes Keller, the hero of Reinhardt Jung's *Dreaming in Black and White* (1996) is born disabled and lives in the knowledge that his father finds his 'difference' hard to bear. In his dreams, Hannes slips back from his life in present-day Germany to the Nazi era. Here, it's clear that he would not be tolerated: like the Jews, he would be readily disposed of. But the present day does not always seem so safe either. Hannes wonders whether the screening of unborn babies will make disability as unacceptable today as it was for the Nazis. Like *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Dreaming in Black and White* moves beyond the nearer horizon of teenagers and has the subtlety to change attitudes.

The nature of relationships and how they work for teenagers of all kinds is obviously of vital importance during the physical and emotional changes during the teenage years but that does not mean that they are all that teenagers care about. Although often accused of being less politically or socially active than their 1960s counterparts, teenagers at any time are interested in world issues.

The incredible response among teenagers to issues concerning the environment and the needs of those in developing countries, as was revealed in the success of first Live Aid and then Band Aid, also needed to be reflected in fiction. Different issues dominate at different times and books which deal with them can be important stories of the moment rather than becoming classics. Robert Swindell's *Brother in the Land* (1984) was just one of a number of books published within a five-year span which dealt with what, at the time, seemed a perfectly likely event – the dropping of a nuclear bomb. The prospect of the

destruction of the world and speculation as to what might survive, and how, led to some undisciplined and morbid writing. Many seemed to assume that the sheer gravity of the subject matter was enough to make a book on the subject good, although this was clearly not so. *Brother in the Land* is an exception, and the fact that it is as readable and poignant today proves the point. In the aftermath of the nuclear destruction moral order breaks down, survival depends on selfishness. Or so Danny thinks, until he finds a crumb of reassurance in the behaviour of a handful of the other survivors. Robert Swindells wrote a book reflecting the mood of the moment but his understanding of how people behave *in extremis* has made it a book to last.

The picture-book format of Raymond Briggs's *When the Wind Blows* (1982) might not make it immediately look like a book for teenagers but the comic-strip layout of text and pictures does little to soften the intensity of the tragedy that unfolds through the story. Jim and Hilda, a retired couple, try hard to follow the government's instructions about what to do in the event of a nuclear war. Briggs's point was that such guidance was fatuous and would do nothing to help people if a bomb really was dropped. Jim and Hilda are not directly hit by a bomb but they are affected by radiation sickness. Watching them slavishly trying to do as they have been told while all the time turning greener, weaker and balder is almost too painful to bear, but it is a frighteningly powerful way of conveying the impact of the atomic bomb while also serving as a hard-hitting attack on government policy in supporting a nuclear programme.

Other books of the same period such as Louise Lawrence's *Children of the Dust* (1985) reflected just how pessimistic current thinking then was. Set after the dropping of the bomb, *Children of the Dust* describes a horribly mutated race as the sole survivors in a bleak new world.

But though the ultimate threat of the twentieth century, nuclear war was not the only one. As world-powers moved towards cooperation rather than confrontation, destruction of other kinds began to be more alarming. The effect of twentieth-century living on the environment became an issue for all by the end of the century. For young people it is of particular significance: one generation has messed up, can the present one put things right? Replacing the post-holocaust novels, the post-global warming or post-genetically modified crops novels are pessimistic about how the world will look. A world covered mostly by water in which people are reduced to poverty and despair is an all too common theme. Marcus Sedgwick's *Floodland* (2001) and Julie Bertagna's *Exodus* (2002) both describe the survival of a handful of individuals in situations reminiscent of some far-off historical period. Carl Hiassen sees the destruction of what we know coming from another source in *Hoot* (2002). Roy has recently moved to Hollywood and is horrified by the way the natural environment is being taken over by the big developers. Soon Roy is caught up in the fight for the surviving wildlife in this excellent eco-thriller. In Ann Hallam's *Dr Franklin's Island* (2001), the wildlife is not threatened by buildings but by genetic modification. Semi, Miranda and Arnie are stranded on a beautiful tropical island after an air crash. But the beauty of the place disguises the horror of the secret lab that they discover. Here all kinds of mutations are taking place as Dr Franklin and his team create pigs with human hands and monkeys with octopus legs. Semi, Miranda and Arnie are transformed themselves and need all their courage and intelligence to survive.

Books of this kind pick up on teenagers' commitment to issues that do not affect them directly but which they know about superficially from newspaper and television reporting.

The changing political and social structures of the world are also reflected in fiction. Books for children, including teenagers, have always played a vital role in promoting toler-

ance and understanding, often and increasingly as an essential antidote to the hysterical and prejudiced outpourings of the press. Contemporary domestic issues have been treated seriously for teenagers as in Ian Strachan's *Throwaways* (1992), which describes the pathetic existence eked out by children who have been abandoned by their parents because they can no longer afford to feed them. Sky, Chip and Dig soon learn (as did Danny in *Brother in the Land*) that integrity can and must survive against all odds if they are themselves to survive as people rather than merely exist. Robert Swindell's *Stone Cold* (1993), with its central theme of homelessness and its chilling account of the terrible dangers that the young who live rough may encounter, gives insights into a world which it is all too easy to keep at arm's length.

More radically, taking sides in civil conflicts at home and abroad is a reality for many. In the UK, the political unrest in Northern Ireland offers the closest-to-home look at a divided society. When Joan Lingard wrote the first of what was to become a quintet of books about Protestant Sadie and Catholic Kevin, the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland had only just begun. In *The Twelfth Day of July* (1970) the two teenagers meet against the background of the annual Orange Day celebration in Belfast. They rapidly become a modern version of 'star-crossed lovers' in *Across the Barricades* (1972), facing increasing hostility from friends and family – with the exception of Kevin's sister. Realistically, Joan Lingard moves the couple from Belfast in *Into Exile* (1973) and from then on the political situation in Northern Ireland recedes into the background as the story of the young couple's early married life unfolds. Sectarian hostilities happen the world over and, even if the Northern Ireland situation is resolved, the Kevin and Sadie books offer shrewd insight into a long episode in the history of the country as well as describe what it might feel like growing up anywhere where there is civil war.

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, tension within communities within the UK became increasingly evident as the newly shaping multi-cultural society began to emerge. Given their enthusiasm for contemporary themes, books for teenagers were surprisingly slow to reflect the realities of multi-cultural Britain. Jean MacGibbon's *Hal* (1975), the story of the developing friendship of a young girl recently arrived from Jamaica, won the Other Award for its portrayal of a black heroine – amazingly enough it was almost unknown in UK children's fiction at the time. A small trickle of titles followed, though mostly they were not for teenagers. Jamila Gavin's trilogy of titles begins with *The Wheel of Surya* (1992). The trilogy starts in India in 1947, just before Partition, and then traces how Marvinder and Jaspal make their way to England having been separated from their mother after Muslims attack their village. The trilogy continues with *The Eye of the Horse* (1994) which describes an uneasy way of life for Asian peoples in the immediate post-war period and concludes with *The Track of the Wind* (1996) which is set back in India with Jaspal caught up in the fight for Independence. Gavin's trilogy could help teenagers understand something of the culture of the British Asians as well as why they had come to live in Britain. In *(Un)arranged Marriage* (1999) Bali Rai writes about the problems of Pakistani children who are born in Britain but whose parents still cling to their old traditions. Manny is absolutely determined not to accept the marriage that his parents have arranged for him, but the lengths to which he has to go to avoid it surprise even him. Rai captures the confusion for many families trying to adapt to a new country and its startlingly different morality.

How British families see the new multi-cultural society is also a new area for fiction. Frankie finds himself on the opposite side to his mother when she starts a campaign against the newly arrived Romanians in Gaye Hincylmaz's *Girl in Red* (2000). He is

immediately attracted to one of the girls and so sees the newcomers as individuals rather than as a collective and intrusive group; his mother sees them only as ‘incomers’ who will take up work and space. In what was very much a book of the moment, Hincylmaz picked up on the then topical issue of the refugees arriving in the UK from all over Europe. Inspired by the reality of race riots in some of the major British cities, Alan Gibbons boldly confronts the issue of racial tension in whole communities. In *Caught in the Crossfire* (2003) Gibbons has important political points to make, but he also tells a convincing and dramatic story in which both the Kelly and the Khan families are pulled apart by the simmering racial hatred that is whipped up into a frenzy by the arrival in Oakfield of the leader of the Nazi-styled Patriotic League. Gibbons provokes thought about how easily societies can be pulled apart once prejudice is allowed free rein.

For UK writers, describing social and racial tension abroad seems to be easier. In the 1970s and 1980s apartheid, like the threat of a nuclear holocaust, was a live issue for many teenagers and traces of it will remain for many years to come. Toekey Jones’s *Skindeep* (1985) still deserves reading as it exposes not only the well-documented gulfs within South African society but also the hypocrisy and false thinking on which apartheid operated, since the friendship that develops between the two teenagers is ‘allowed’ because Dave is a ‘pass White’. In *Python Dance* (1992) Norman Silver explores how Ruth, living as a privileged White in 1960s Johannesburg, begins to question the assumptions of her background. Stepping outside her own world she learns the grim truth of how the Blacks, whom she has been brought up to despise, live.

As with apartheid, the extremism of General Pinochet’s regime in Chile exists no longer but James Watson’s *Talking in Whispers* (1983), a fast-paced adventure story in which Andres witnesses the ultimate in censorship – the burning of books – and plays an important part in exposing the secret service’s shooting of an eminent opponent of the junta, remains as a powerful reminder of an episode in Chile’s history and also as a picture of any repressive regime at any time.

The wars that have most recently affected Britain directly have been used as source material by Jan Needle and Robert Westall. Both exploit the particular to describe something much greater: the realities of conflict as set against the propaganda that is generated about them. Jan Needle set *A Game of Soldiers* (1985) in the Falklands War. Sarah, Thomas and Michael come face to face with a wounded soldier and soon discover the realities of the pain, fear and suffering of war, which contrasts sharply with the jingoistic patriotism that was being written about it at the time. Robert Westall did much the same for the Gulf War, though with a quite different kind of story, in *Gulf* (1992), in which an English boy ‘turns into’ an Iraqi boy soldier.

Like readers of all ages, teenagers need a mixture of fictions to sustain their literary interests. Self-knowledge is a spur to growth, but so too is a wider understanding of all aspects of society, present, past and in the future. While the impetus for teenage fiction may have come from the need to provide a vociferous band of readers with amusing stories about themselves, it is now a vehicle for telling the same readers about the world as it really is. Indeed, as novels become increasingly bleak, partly because of the bleakness of social issues such as homelessness, unemployment and the rest, there are serious concerns about what may and may not be suitable fictional fare.

Whatever the direct subject matter of teenage fiction, what remains important is the steady flow of good-quality writing for an eager but easily distracted age group.

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43 Crossover literature

Rachel Falconer

The first years of the new millennium have been miraculous ones for crossover literature, books and films that cross from child to adult audiences or vice versa. J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000) was snatched up by child and adult readers, taking sales of the series to over 40 million in 200 countries, with translations into forty languages. Her fifth novel, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, became an Amazon.co bestseller six months before its publication date of June 2003. Shooting for the first Harry Potter film began in October 2000, and its opening night was a glittering event attended by adult stars as well as children. In the milder shades of the book world, the Whitbread Book of the Year rules had been changed in 1999 to include children's books as contenders for the overall prize. Rowling came close to unseating the Laureates Heaney and Hughes as overall winner. In the event, her third in the series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, won the children's category, while Heaney won the overall prize with his translation of *Beowulf*.

But adult interest in children's literature has by no means been limited to Harry Potter. Niccolo Ammaniti's kiddult novel, *I'm Not Scared* (translated from Italian by Jonathan Hunt) is a bestseller in several countries (see Walden 2003). Walter Moers's *Captain Bluebeard* began as a children's classic in Germany, but is now a European kiddult phenomenon. In Britain, three children's books were shortlisted for the Whitbread Children's Book Award in the millennial year, all of which attracted substantial adult readerships: Jamila Gavin's *Coram Boy* (the eventual winner), David Almond's *Heaven Eyes* and Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Seeing Stone*, a re-imagining of the Arthurian legends. Philip Pullman's *The Amber Spyglass*, the long-awaited final book of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, was published in 2000. In 2001, *The Amber Spyglass* won both the children's award and the overall Whitbread prize, which for many commentators placed children's literature on a par with serious, 'literary' adult fiction in Britain. A *Guardian* leader took the point further in suggesting that this was 'a golden age for children's fiction' and 'at best a bronze age for literary fiction, with the behemoths of yesteryear (Rushdie, Amis, Barnes) stuck in repetitive middle age' (*Guardian* Leader 2001).

By 2002, the top thirty books on Amazon.co's general (that is, not children's) best-seller list regularly included children's books by Rowling, Pullman, Terry Pratchett and Tolkien. At the same time, most of the top thirty children's bestsellers sported covers with a crossover, rather than a specifically 'childish', appeal. For example, C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* were reissued with a dramatic lion's head staring directly out of the cover, instead of the classic illustrations by Pauline Baynes featuring children in pigtails, shorts and knee socks. *The Lord of the Rings* was reissued in covers representing scenes and characters from the Peter Jackson film. The Harry Potter books were reissued for adult

readers, in understated silver, black and orange or blue covers – and at a higher price. In W. H. Smith, the major British book retailers, it became commonplace to find, shelved alongside adult popular reading, such contemporary children's books as Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* and sequel, the Lemony Snicket books (for example, *A Bad Beginning*), Terry Pratchett's Carnegie award-winning *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* alongside his Discworld novels, and box sets of the first four Harry Potters and Pullman's *His Dark Materials*.

At the same time, crossover films achieved greater mainstream recognition and attracted larger mixed audiences than ever before. For film, the process had begun somewhat earlier, with Spielberg's *E.T.* and *Indiana Jones*, Lasseter's *Toy Story* and its sequel, and the crossover adaptation of Anne Fine's *Madame Doubtfire* (1987) as *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993) starring Robin Williams consolidating the mixed-age genre of family entertainment. In their at times banal appeal to a common cultural denominator, films like these aimed to amuse, comfort and delight audiences, rather than unsettle them. By contrast, George Lucas's *Star Wars* stimulated a crossover appetite for altogether more ambitious material. Epic in scale and mythic resonance, *Star Wars* was and is a nation-fashioning narrative in which both child and adult audiences have become deeply involved. But even with such established precedents, 2000+ were still landmark years for crossover film. In 2000, Minkoff's screen version of E. B. White's *Stuart Little* (1999) earned an Oscar nomination for best visual effects and an ASCAP Award for top box office film. The sequel, *Stuart Little 2* (2002), starring the voices of A-list actors such as Geena Davis, Hugh Laurie and Michael J. Fox, proved just as popular. The brilliant animated features, Adamson and Jenson's *Shrek* and Docter and Silverman's *Monsters, Inc.*, were both released in 2001. The following year, both films earned several Oscar nominations and other awards, *Shrek* proving particularly successful. After a nomination for a Golden Palm award at Cannes, *Shrek* won a Bafta for Best Adapted Screenplay and an Oscar for Best Animated Feature. The year 2001 also saw the release of Chris Columbus's adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and Peter Jackson's adaptation of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, both of which attracted record numbers of mixed-age audiences. Of the two, it was Jackson's, with its magnificent New Zealand landscapes and an epic narrative to rival *Star Wars*, that swept up the major awards (Baftas for best film and direction; Oscars for best cinematography, and more). In 2001, Jackson's adaptation of Tolkien achieved for film what *The Amber Spyglass* achieved for fiction: it established the crossover text as 'serious' art, worthy of critical recognition as well as popular acclaim. This situation seems set to last the next decade at very least, with a sequel to *Shrek*, and further episodes of Harry Potter and *The Lord of the Rings* already on general release or in production, and plans underway for a film version of the Pullman trilogy.

For reasons discussed at the end of this essay, I would consider 'crossover literature' as something distinct from writing 'for all ages'. But even setting this point aside, 'crossover' is still rather a slippery term that can be used to signify very different things. In postcolonial studies, for example, crossover is the critical term for texts that cross cultures or (like Rushdie's *The Ground beneath Her Feet*) represent such cultural shifts in the narrative. In gender studies, crossover is used to signify shifts in gender perspective (as in Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*). In children's literature criticism, however, crossover is generally meant to refer to a crossing between age boundaries, the boundaries (for example, young child, nine to fourteen, young adult, adult) themselves being subject to constant redefinition. Even in this field, 'crossover' can refer to different aspects of the narrative communication act: the relation between authors and texts, the internal attributes of texts,

or the relation between texts and readers, for example. Surprisingly, more has been written about cross-writing and dual address (with a focus on authors and narrators) than about texts or crossover reading. Barbara Wall's *The Narrator's Voice* focuses on narratorial dual address in children's fiction (Wall 1991); Shavit argues that children's literature participates in two systems (child and adult) simultaneously (Shavit 1986: 63–92; for an opposing view see Grenz 1988). *Children's Literature 25* is devoted to 'Cross-Writing', although it includes one article specifically on reader reception (Kooistra's 'Goblin Market as a Cross-Audience Poem'). Sandra Beckett's *Transcending Boundaries* (Beckett 1999) is subtitled 'Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults', and seven of its fourteen essays are concerned with cross-writing, in the Netherlands, France, the former Soviet Union and Italy. The other seven address a wide variety of issues, however, including crossover implied and actual readers, double attribution of texts, and post-post-modern configurations of childhood. With this range of perspectives, Beckett's is arguably the best single-volume introduction to crossover literature yet available.

Cross-writing includes authors who write sometimes for children and sometimes for adults, as well as writers (or intra-textually, narrators) who address more than one age of reader/viewer in the same text. Contemporary examples of the former include: Joan Aiken (*Mansfield Revisited* (1984), a Jane Austen novel for adults, and *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (1962), a Gothic thriller for children); Nina Bawden (*Circles of Deceit* (1998) for adults, *Carrie's War* (1973) and *The Peppermint Pig* (1975) for children); Neil Gaiman (graphic novels and a recent work of fantasy, *Neverwhere* (2000) about a fantastical underworld below London, for adults; and *Coraline* (2002) for children); Ted Hughes (his works for children include *How the Whale Became* (1963) and *The Iron Man* (1968) and *The Iron Woman* (1993)); Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children* (1981) for adults and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) for children); Isabel Allende (*The House of the Spirits* (1985) for adults, and *The City of Beasts* (2002) for children). Of the above, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, *Carrie's War* and *Coraline* have crossed over into adult readerships, although they are not obviously dual-addressed. Lena Kareland compares two cross-writing authors, the American Carl Sandburg and the Swede Lennart Hellsing (Kareland 1999). Ursula Le Guin's science fiction is mostly read by adults, while her fantasy novels attract dual-age readerships. Now that a trend has been established for adults reading children's literature, the number of books that cross age groups is certain to increase, whether or not there is any shift in narrative strategy or authorial intention.

Publishers have recently been directly involved in promoting this kind of crossover writing, for the obvious reason that a fan-base has already been established in one reading age group and may the more easily cross over into another. The publisher Hyperion has recently supported crossover titles from Alice Hoffman, Rudolfo Anaya and Michael Dorris. Rarer are writers like Michel Tournier, who rewrites the same texts for different age groups. (see Beckett 1999a). Dual-address fiction, the subject of Wall's study, is sometimes difficult to distinguish from children's texts that have acquired the status of 'classic' literature and passed into adult reading. All three early editions of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* were designed to be read by children, though of different ages. But it has since become an adult classic, while many modern children now find the unabridged *Alice* quite a difficult text with which to engage. (For the use of the child focaliser in *Alice*, see Cameron 1999.) Market trends, rather than dual addressivity, presumably underlie the success of recent children's publications by such celebrity figures as Sophie Dahl (*The Man with Dancing Eyes* (2003)).

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* contains large sections *about* children, though not addressed to them nor, historically, read in large numbers *by* them. Adult fiction and biography about childhood experiences are currently on the rise, and while they do not attract child readers, they often portray a crossover of temporal perspectives that closely relate to the dynamics of dual-addressed or dual-audenced fiction. Thus any holistic analysis of crossover literature should include consideration of recent publications for adults about childhood such as Michael Frayn's *Spies*, Martin Amis's *Experience*, Nick Hornby's *About a Boy* and Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time*. There are many precedents for this kind of dual-perspectived (as opposed to dual-address) fiction, from Dickens's *Great Expectations* and George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* to Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

The examples cited so far are works by crossover writers, or works with dual focalisation or address. But there has been comparatively little analysis of the experience of *cross-reading* which is, in many ways, the better indicator of a significant shift in cultural attitudes and, arguably, the more interesting for specialists in narrative theory. (For an excellent exception, see van Lierop-Debrawe 1999.) If we think of narrative not only as something constructed by an author, mediated by a narrator, but also as a script or a score that is activated by a reader's participation, it becomes evident how potent the crossover phenomenon is, how intimately connected it is with the workings of narrative temporality, and time *as* narrative. Narrative has been characterised as a reflexive process, which discovers or creates repetitive and closural patterns; equally, it is future-oriented, with an instinct for amplification, differentiation and deferral. (On narrative difference and deferral, see for example, Derrida 1978; Ricoeur 1984; Lacan 1984.) In crossover literature, the subject of narrative (whether character, text or reader) gets split into two temporal states, 'earlier' and 'later', in a way that renders it acutely susceptible to narrative's opposing dynamics of closure and deferral. (On plot as a narrative dynamic of Freud's pleasure and death drives, see Brooks 1984.) Bakhtin defines the *chronotope* as the narrative organisation of time and space in any text ('Forms of Time and of the Chronotope', Bakhtin 1984: 84–258); to adopt his term, the readers of crossover books and films are bi-chronotopically oriented. They occupy two positions in the narrative simultaneously, and are thus doubly subjected to narrative's twin temporal drives.

Without the gloss of literary theory, many adults have registered such a response to reading Harry Potter or Artemis Fowl or any other crossover novels which cannot easily 'pass' for an adult work. They are easily engrossed by the story itself, but they are also recollecting former reading selves, who are in turn reading themselves into future identities. On the face of it, crossover reading can be explained in very straightforward terms: adults are rediscovering the addictive pleasure of a good story, told directly and without any (post)modernist angst about the problems of representation. But considered a little more deeply, 'rediscovery', 'addictive pleasure' and 'a good story' take us to the most complex aspects of narrative, psychoanalytic and deconstructive theory. Francis Spufford gives a powerful account of the connection between his own earlier and later reading selves in *The Child That Books Built* (2002). But there has been surprisingly little discussion of such reading experiences in specialist children's literary criticism. U. C. Knoepfelmacher explores ideas similar to Spufford's though more briefly, in 'The Critic as Former Child: A Personal Narrative' (Knoepfelmacher 2002). (On the influence of children's books on Virginia Woolf and other modernists, see Dusinger 1987.) Another area that has been productively explored is the childhood reading of writers for adults.

But a good starting point for further study would be to adopt a dialogic approach to crossover literature, an approach which would resist universalising statements about the range of texts this appellation signifies (we are not just talking about the *Harry Potter* books), and would recognise in such narratives the vertiginous play between younger and older, between former, present and future selves, both intra- and extra-textually. The editors of *Children's Literature 25* lay the ground for such an approach, stating in their introduction, 'we believe that a dialogic mix of older and younger voices occurs in texts too often read as univocal' (Myers and Knoepfelmacher 1997: vii; and see IRSL 1987). But their understanding of dialogism curiously emphasises consensus over difference. Do *Huckleberry Finn* and *Robinson Crusoe* 'dissolve the binaries and contraries that our culture has rigidified and fixed' (Myers and Knoepfelmacher 1997: viii)? To me, these are crossover narratives that demonstrate the very 'hostile internal crossfire' Myers and Knoepfelmacher seem keen to transcend (vii); and this internal polemic is what makes *Huck* and *Crusoe* dialogic texts.

Three Bakhtinian concepts are of particular relevance to this field. The idea that identity is dialogically constructed, always the product of a confluence of voices, is essential for any theoretical account of crossover literature. The concept of heteroglossia, representing the other's speech, offers flexible, nuanced ways of accounting for the relation between child and adult discourses. And chronotopicity, the materialisation of space and time in narrative, helps us to consider the ways in which texts shift audiences over time, the way the categories of 'child' and 'adult' are constructed differently over time, and the way readers are created out of a composite of different temporal perspectives. But since it is 'the chronotope that defines genres and generic distinctions' (Bakhtin 1984: 85), an appropriate starting point might be to identify the specific genres that are currently crossing over from adult to child, or more dramatically, child to adult audiences. In the survey that follows, my choice of crossover titles is primarily guided by actual audience response. But since this account focuses on contemporary examples which may or may not have had time to acquire a mixed audience base, I am also guided by publishers' marketing strategies, advance reviews and other indicators of intended audience. (An intended *actual* audience is not the same as an author's ideal or implied audience, in Wayne Booth's sense in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Booth 1961). The latter can be inferred from within the text itself, the former requires a dialogic consideration of text in relation to actual, historical reader or viewer. Obviously, though, all these categories of reader are interlinked.)

The major areas of 'crossover' in contemporary literature and film are in the genres of magic fantasy, epic fantasy, science fiction, gothic, history and historical legend. There is also considerable crossover appeal in contemporary picture books, comics and graphic novels, and (though in a different way) social realism. Most of the crossover genres make use of ancient myth, traditional fairy tale or legend, while science fiction and fantasy reproduce the scale and thematic *foci* of northern and/or classical epic narratives. Many crossover books belong to more than one genre (for example, *Harry Potter* is both school story and magic fantasy); indeed, it is rare to find a work of fiction with only one chronotope, one generic world-view. And many genres, particular historical legend, science fiction, magic and epic fantasy, already have a long history of crossover between child and adult audiences. All these genres are offshoots of the adventure narrative, an 'ur-genre' that forms the basis of much adult as well as children's fiction. The chronotope of adventure-time is a common feature of many adult classics that have crossed over into children's literature, sometimes adapted and abridged, sometimes entire. (On the chronotope of adventure-time in ancient Greek romance, see Bakhtin 1984: 86–110.) Pre-twentieth-

century examples include abridged translations of the *Odyssey* (rather than the *Iliad*) and *Don Quixote*, and abridged versions of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels* and Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Unabridged versions of Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* were read to, or by, children in their original versions, and some adventure novels appealed strictly to one gender, but crossed age boundaries seamlessly: for example, Henty's novels appealed to boys and men, and Charlotte Yonge's to girls and women.

Genres that have crossed over in the past, but are not 'cross-breeding' on a large scale at present, include religious allegory and spiritual writing; dystopias; family and school stories; and nonsense verse and prose. In the genre of religious allegory, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* was one of the first English crossover books, being very quickly modified and adapted for children after its original publication in 1678. Its adaptation took place at a time when much literature published specifically for children was didactic or religious in content (see Jackson 1989). Twentieth-century crossovers in the same genre, although crossing in the other direction, include Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* and Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. Dystopias were another form of early crossover which are rarer on the contemporary scene (Peter Dickinson has written dystopic children's literature that sometimes crosses to adult readerships). Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1745) was very soon adapted for children, though in its edited version it reads as a more straightforward adventure story (the first, Lilliputian volume was often published on its own for children) (Cunliffe 2000). Twentieth-century dystopias for adults which have become children's classics include: Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*. In the case of *Lord of the Flies* and other dark, satirical works, such unlikely crossover might partly be explained by the focalisation of the narrative through a child character.

Family and school stories that have crossed from child to adult audiences in the past (and still do so) include Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, Alcott's *Little Women*, which domesticates Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*. Works of this genre were often overtly didactic and/or nostalgic about family life. Often consciously *anti*-domestic (though not, for all that, necessarily less conservative) were the Victorian 'nonsense' writers, Edward Lear (*Nonsense Songs*), Hilaire Belloc (*Cautionary Tales for Children*) and Lewis Carroll. Something of their legacy survives in Ogden Nash, Dr Seuss, Roald Dahl, in Spike Milligan's *The Goon Show* (1950s–60s), in the films *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) and *The Life of Brian* (1979), and in the work of crossover comedians Billy Connolly and Robin Williams.

By the mid-1970s, such chronotopic spaces as the home, playground or classroom were more often the ground for gritty, even brutalising, social realism. In the twenty-first century, school stories are more likely to cross age groups, if generically they are crossed with something else. The TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* situates gothic plots and characters in a conventional American high school. The films *American Beauty* (1999) and *Donnie Darko* (2001) cross high school narratives with, respectively, magic realism and gothic thriller. As evidenced by the current, odd popularity of 'School Disco' parties among adults, school narratives acquire a crossover appeal when they are divorced from real life, when they are made to signify the possibility of an outlandish transformation.

Some genres that have traditionally crossed over in the past are mutating into different genres but retaining their crossover appeal. For example, animal fables are developing into natural science and environment narratives, which less overtly anthropomorphise their

animal protagonists. Classic crossover animal fables include Kipling's *Just So Stories* and Jungle Books, Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* and Jack London's *Call of the Wild*. Like the earlier *Tarka the Otter* (1928) by Henry Williamson, Gavin Maxwell's *Ring of Bright Water* (1960) has moved well away from animal fable to nature study. Another mutation of the animal fable is into epic fantasy. Adams's *Watership Down* (1972) was an early, outstanding success in this genre, and currently Brian Jacques's Redwall series about rabbits, rats, ferrets and other animals, and Steven Oppell's Silverwing trilogy about bats, are beginning to attract adult readers as well as children. Animal fables can also obviously be employed for political allegory. According to Larissa Klein Tumanov, Aesopian children's literature in the former Soviet Union became a vehicle to convey dissident views to both child and adult readerships (Tumanov 1999). The animal fable also survives in works such as Allende's *The City of Beasts* (for children) and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. Martel crosses Latin American animal fable with natural science (the tiger named Richard Parker is always represented as a dangerous wild animal, never (beyond his name) personified) and Crusoesque survival narrative. The result is a 'boy's novel for adults', according to its dust-jacket, successful enough to win the 2002 Booker Prize.

But unquestionably the genre that is crossing age groups most frequently in western countries today is fantasy; and the most visible direction of crossover is from child to adult audiences. Within this genre, there is an important distinction to be made between the sub-genres of what I would call magic and epic fantasy (but the choice of labels is unimportant). Furthermore, these two should be distinguished from 'magic realism' or 'the fantastic'. It seems absurd to compare Rowling's Harry Potter series (magic fantasies) and Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (epic fantasy); such a comparison usually ends by judging Harry Potter to be conventional, derivative and superficial. But this is the result of reading all fantasy, and indeed all child-to-adult crossovers, as texts of the same kind. Bakhtin defined epic as a genre formally oriented towards the past, which is arguably a more reliable means of distinguishing it from other genres than length or extent of detailed realisation of a fictional world. In Pullman's case, the attitude is one of irreverence, but the trilogy is still oriented towards the past in its extensive polemic against traditional interpretations of Genesis and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Rowling's novels may be long (the fifth Harry Potter book is over eight hundred pages), but they are not concerned with questions of species origin; they do not cross swords with Genesis, or Icelandic saga, or classical or eastern myth. The Harry Potter books have been criticised as lightweight, but they are not built to convey epic gravitas. The same was said in an earlier generation of Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (again magic fantasy), when contrasted with Tolkien's epic trilogy.

Despite the presence of Dementors and death scenes, the Potter books *are* light reading in a certain sense. In my view, their lightness is their strength (the same might be argued for many novels in this genre). In *Six Memos for the Next Generation*, Italo Calvino, himself an outstanding crossover writer, describes what he thinks literature will still be uniquely capable of providing us, in a technologically accelerated world (Calvino 1996: 3–30; and see Poeti 1999). The first thing literature will still be able to give us is lightness, which for Calvino has to do with an orientation towards the real world that is not escapist, but that refuses to be ruled by immediate context. It suggests a mobility of perspective that resists the 'slow petrification' which Calvino saw occurring across the globe (Calvino 1996: 4). At the end of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan de-ossifies the animals turned to stone by the White Witch. And in

The Silver Chair, when Eustace falls off a cliff, Aslan reverses the gravitational fall and blows him safely into Narnia. Both episodes convey Calvino's sense of lightness; chronotopically they define the Chronicles of Narnia as magic rather than epic fantasy.

The highly popular German writer Cornelia Funke has written a magic fantasy that places age-crossover at the centre of the narrative. Published in English as *The Thief Lord*, it involves a magical carousel that can turn children into adults, and vice versa. Among the most successful is Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*, which pits an unscrupulous venture capitalist (equipped like James Bond with technological gadgetry, but conspicuously lacking Bond's civil servant sense of duty) against a feminist detective elf. The capitalist and the elf are children (over 100 years old, Holly is still young for an elf) but this book and its sequel *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident* frequently appear in adult sections of major bookshops. Michael Chabon's *Summerland* (2002) is another recent magic fantasy selling extremely well to children and adults.

Magic fantasy is also not magic realism, although both are governed by a threshold chronotope, in which characters instantaneously cross over into different realities or states of being. The back of a wardrobe and King's Cross Station Platform 9¾ are chronotopic images of the magic threshold. A. N. Wilson defines C. S. Lewis's type of fantasy as 'the interpenetration of worlds ... quite different' to Tolkien's (Wilson 1991: 226). Todorov described the 'fantastic' in terms that have become canonical for any definition of magic realist fiction. Such a text 'oblige(s) the reader to ... hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described' (Todorov 1993: 33; and see Armitt 1996). In Todorov's view, most texts resolve into one of these two modes of explanation. If events are explained rationally, the fantastic resolves into the uncanny; if explained supernaturally, the fantastic resolves into the marvellous.

Adult magic realism makes frequent use of the child's perspective. The use of the child focaliser in Bruno Shultz's short stories, for example, heightens the reader's sense of disorientation as the narrative shifts from natural to supernatural worlds. One can agree or disagree with Todorov's view of textual closure, but essentially the fantastic 'occupies the duration of ... uncertainty' and consists of 'that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event' (Todorov 1993: 25). But if magic realism hesitates on the threshold between two realities, magic fantasy crosses the threshold and continues 'further up and further in'. In Todorov's terms, magic fantasy opts for the supernatural explanation; it crosses over from the fantastic into the marvellous.

There are magic realist works for children, characterised by this hesitation between realities, but they cross over to adult audiences less frequently than magic fantasy at present. An early example is E. T. A. Hoffmann's first collection of fairy tales for children, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse-King* (1816), which, according to Dagmar Grenz, resembles his fairy tales for adult readers in its doubling of realistic and fantastic worlds (Grenz 1988). And while his second collection, *The Strange Child* (1817), simplifies plot development and characterisation for child readers, it is the former work that has since proved more popular with child and adult readers. According to Teya Rosenberg, magic realist works for children share many of the same characteristics as those for adults, including: the combination of naturalistic and supernatural effects, use of folklore, political content or subtext, and repetitions in plot and imagery (Rosenberg 2001: 14). Furthermore, Grenz argues that magic realism produces an opposite kind of hesitation in child readers to that described by Todorov:

while the adult reader sees himself questioned, by the ingress of the fantastic, in his thinking about rationality, the child reader feels his belief in the fantastic put in question ... by the parental advocates of the reality principles on whose care and recognition he is existentially dependent.

(Grenz 1988: 93)

Twentieth-century examples of magic realist works for children include Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), Alan Garner's *Elidor* (1965) and Louis Sachar's *Holes* (1998). More recently, in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002), the eponymous heroine discovers a parallel, counterfeit world in the corridors of her own house. The eeriness of the story derives from the deceptive similarities between the two worlds and the difficulty of keeping them apart. This is a magic realist novel that is clearly being marketed for a crossover audience, the dust-jacket bearing Bloomsbury's prediction that the novel 'will appeal to adults and children alike' and a quotation from Norman Mailer describing it as 'a comic strip for intellectuals'.

But the crossover genre that has garnered the most critical (in addition to popular) acclaim in recent years is epic fantasy. It is in contemporary children's, rather than adult, fiction that readers are most likely to find the revival of the mythic narrative, heroic quests to discover and test the self, battles between the archetypal forces of good and evil, stories that aspire to shape national histories as destiny. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–5) largely set the parameters of the genre. Initially intended as a sequel to *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Lord of the Rings* gestated into an entirely different kind of narrative, one which publishers were uncertain whether to class as child or adult fiction (see White 2001: 172–5). Richard Adams's *Watership Down* was also enormously influential in defining the ambitious scope of this genre, as well as its crossover appeal. S. F. Said calls *Watership Down* 'one of the original popular culture crossovers: a book that hooked adults and children on such a vast scale that it made publishing history' (Said 2002). This is a Virgilian epic transposed to an English landscape, with the rabbit Hazel as the *pious Aeneas* who leads his people to a new and better country. Hazel and the other rabbits are distinguished by their Trojan capacity for suffering and survival against the odds, an epic theme that captured child and adult imaginations in the 1970s. At around the same time, Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea trilogy (1968, 1971, 1972) explored epic questions common to classical epic narrative and the Book of Genesis, such as how or whether human beings can be reconciled to loss and death. Contemporary epic fantasies such as Philip Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials* (1995, 1997, 2000) and Terry Pratchett's Discworld series have had little difficulty in crossing between child and adult readerships. Also attracting substantial adult audiences are Susan Cooper's *Seaward*, Raymond Feist's Riftwar saga, Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time*, Michael Moorcock's *Elric of Melniboné*, William Nicholson's *The Wind Singer*, Susan Price's *The Sterkarm Handshake*, the Australian Garth Nix's *Sabrie* and the Canadian Steven Oppell's Silverwing trilogy.

One way that epic expresses its orientation to the past is in the retelling of foundational myths to strengthen a community or nation's sense of present identity. We see such retellings in the tales of El-ahrairah in *Watership Down*, and in the ballads sung in Elrond's house in Tolkien's Rivendell. The embedded narratives of Brian Patten's *The Story Giant* are networks of myths that sustain fragmented and endangered communities. Like Scheherazade, characters in these works survive through telling and listening to stories. The epic hero's individual quest for self-knowledge is thus metaphorically linked to the quest of an entire community for recognition and stability. In Oppell's Silverwing trilogy,

the hero – appropriately named Shade – survives only in the memories and stories told of his exploits. These become part of the bat colony's collective memory, lodged in the echo chambers that house the colony's myths of origin. In film, George Lucas's *Star Wars* begins *in medias res*, the first three episodes recounting the middle of the saga, the next three looping back, and the projected final three recounting the end of the war; nine rings, then, will complete this Wagnerian cycle of films. Given the strong precedence for crossover epic film which *Star Wars* established, Jackson's adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* hardly needed the massive support of Tolkien enthusiasts to ensure its success with a dual-aged audience. Dreamworks, the company producing the trilogy of *Lord of the Rings* films, plans to follow with an adaptation of Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, also in trilogy. Crossover epic fantasy, then, seems set to fill bookshelves, and cinema screens, for years to come.

The story goes that Tolkien and Lewis once agreed to write a complementary pair of fantasy novels; Tolkien was to take time, and Lewis space (Wilson 1991: 154). Tolkien dawdled over *The Lost Road*, while Lewis speedily produced the science fiction novel *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), eventually the first of a trilogy. The continuities between epic fantasy and science fiction are too many to be disentangled here (*Star Wars* is certainly both). But in the chronotope of science fiction, space (outer or inner) is generally dominant over time, and its temporal orientation is generally towards the future rather than the past. From Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* and H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* to present-day bestsellers, science fiction has successfully drawn a mixed-age audience. Some of Philip K. Dick's novels, such as *The Man in the High Castle* (1965), develop alternative futures out of hypothetically altered historical events; these, along with his collected short stories, have crossed audience ages on a mass scale. His science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* inspired the beautifully made crossover film *Blade Runner*. Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) is ostensibly an adult book, while *Farmer in the Sky* (1950), *Starman Jones* (1953) and *Starship Troopers* (1959, also later adapted as a film) are young adult books. But readers of science fiction enjoy the conventions of the genre, whatever its level of address. Dick and Heinlein enthusiasts have generally read the whole of the author's output, not just the books intended for their age category. The same could also be argued for novels by Ben Bova, Alan Nourse, Robert Sheckley and Dean Koontz. Roger Zelazny's *The Amber Chronicle*, Marion Zimmer Bradley's feminist Clingfire trilogy and Alastair Reynold's *Revelation Space* are a just few of the crossover titles selling particularly well currently.

If there are crossover space fictions, there are also crossover fictions about different historical times. Closely allied to fantasy are fictions drawing on historical legend. What T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone* did for mixed audiences of the 1940s, writers like Kevin Crossley-Holland (*The Seeing Stone*) and Catherine Fisher (*Corbenic*) are doing for crossover readerships in the new millennium. Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967), Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Lantern Bearers* (1959) and Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* trilogy (completed 1977) were published for children but by now attract crossover audiences. Peter Dickinson's 'young adult' novels (*Tulku*, *The Iron Lion*, *Eva* ...) are read by many adult readers. His recent publication, *The Kin* (2001), which concerns children of a biblical era inhabiting a prelapsarian 'Rift Valley', is described by one adult Amazon.co reviewer as 'too good to be "relegated" to the Children's Section' (13 August 2001). Gillian Rubinstein (alias Lian Hearn)'s *Across the Nightingale Floor* (2002) is a quest narrative that combines legend and fantasy, and concerns a boy with magical powers brought up among 'the Hidden' in rural Japan, who seeks to discover his destiny within a

walled city. The novel's dust-jacket describes it as 'a stunningly powerful story, a rare work of fiction that appeals equally to young readers and adults', while its web-site (www.nightingalefloor.com) lists twenty countries of publication and hubristically announces the novel as 'set to be a world wide phenomenon'.

From Scott's *Rob Roy* and Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* to Leon Garfield's *Jack Holborn* (1964), historical fiction and romance have attracted a mixed-aged readership for centuries (see Fisher 1986). But arguably we have reached a period in which the demand for historical adventure stories in the children's market has come to overlap significantly with a reviving interest in popular history among adult audiences. Simon Schama's recent BBC publication and TV series, *A History of Britain*, and the children's history series by Fiona MacDonald and Terry Deary (*The Vile Victorians, et al.*) may not have much content in common, but they all place an emphasis on high adventure, flamboyant protagonists and a clear, vivid and direct narrative style. Sensationalism can distort the history, whether aimed at adults or children, as in the case of Farman's *The Very Bloody History of London* (1999). This gruesome narrative, marketed as 'a crossover book for teenagers into adulthood', raised critical eyebrows because of its explicit descriptions of torture, especially of women. By contrast, the novelist Michael Morpurgo engages seriously with history in gripping narratives that have crossed from child to adult audiences. Continuing in the tradition of Ian Serrailier's *The Silver Sword* (1956), Morpurgo has written novels relating to, for example, the eighteenth-century Scottish clearances (*The Last Wolf*), the foot-and-mouth crisis (*Out of the Ashes*), and the aftermath of the bombing of Nagasaki (*Kensuke's Kingdom*).

Concerns about the appropriateness of 'adult material' in children's books is also recurrently voiced in discussions of children's social realist fiction (see, for example, Brennan 1996; Baer 2000; Koehnecke 2000). By 'social realism', I mean broadly speaking any fiction that represents the actual, material world and focuses on social relations rather than individual, heroic quests or journeys (for example, the desire to be identified through a social group or conversely the need to express a distinct selfhood within a community). 'Crossover' in this context can mean either texts that cross from child to adult audiences and vice versa, or texts that are aimed at teenagers crossing over into adulthood ('young adult' literature) (see Irving 1996). In practice, though, there is substantial overlap between these two types of crossover. An early example of adult to young adult crossover is Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974), a bleak novel about school corruption, was also written as an adult novel but marketed very successfully for young adults. More recently, Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* (1992) and Guterson's *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994) were marketed as adult novels, but soon attracted large numbers of teenage readers.

The controversies raised by crossover in this genre are slightly different to the ones discussed so far. What worries parents, teachers and journalists is the extent to which contemporary literature for children or teenagers deals explicitly with 'adult' themes: racism, class warfare, mental illness, drug abuse, sexual practices, violence and crime. The crossover is in the material, which then stimulates (it is feared, damaging) changes in perspective in the reader. In effect, this is a reaction against the 'tweenager' phenomenon (children developing 'too quickly' into adults), which is a direct counterpart to 'kiddultery' (adults masquerading as children).

One of the first such 'tweenager' novels was Judy Bloom's *Forever* (1975), which dealt with teenage sex with a directness heretofore not attempted for this age group. The prolific author Jacqueline Wilson, described as 'the voice of the "tweenage" generation'

(O'Brien 2002), writes ever more explicitly about divorce, abandonment and mental disorders. Wilson's novel *Secrets* (2002) concerns the friendship of two girls, one with a violent stepfather, the other with a mother who forces her on to fad diets. *Secrets* quickly made it to the bestseller lists of children's literature but, as one reviewer notes, is the sort of book that 'children like, but that makes adults uncomfortable' (O'Brien 2002). Julie Myerson similarly finds Anne Fine's *Up on Cloud Nine* (2002) a disturbing read. She describes the novel, which concerns a child with suicidal tendencies, as 'a strange, dark, slippery beast of a book', but she is also sure her own children will love it (Myerson 2002). The treatment of teenage sex in Melvin Burgess's *Lady, My Life as a Bitch* (2001), *Doing It* (2003) and *Filth* (2003) have provoked hostile reactions from adult reviewers (see Burgess 2001). While such novels may not attract adult audiences in the way children's fantasy currently does, they are in some respects more ground-breaking in the way they dramatise cultural and chronological crossover at the level of style and theme. An example of stylistic crossover is Chloë Hooper's *A Child's Book of True Crime*, which received mixed reviews because of its disturbing treatment of sexuality and murder. The central character is a teacher who thinks like a pathologically disturbed child, and her narration problematises Wall's conception of dual-address fiction. Focalised through this schizophrenic character, the narration 'veers from childlike to adolescent, to would-be mature dirty-realist', according to one reviewer (Joughin 2002).

An example of the thematic treatment of crossover is Paul Magrs's *Strange Boy* (2002), which relates the experiences of a boy on a council estate who discovers he is gay. Magrs, however, testily rejects such simplifying synopses, as well as the criticism that he has written an adult book for children; 'all of my books have been crossover: between fiction and theory, straight and gay, fantasy and realism' (Magrs 2002). *Strange Boy* is 'for people of thirteen and older', but it explores threshold crossings of several kinds, including class, gender and chronology.

Realistic representation of the threshold crossing is perhaps the distinguishing feature of the chronotope of young adult literature. In a 2001 conference at the Roehampton Institute in London, the Dutch crossover author Anne Provoost remarked that she made teenagers the subject of her novel *Falling* (now adapted as a film), because they were at a stage in their lives when it was still 'possible to swerve', an idea that is as likely to appeal to middle-aged adults as young ones. It is worth pointing out, though, that not all crossover social realism is dark, disturbing and violent. Francesca Lia Block's *Weetzie Bat* stories (1990–) give an off-beat view of life in Los Angeles with a sardonic humour that has attracted child and adult readers (Russell 2002).

While this article has concentrated on text-based crossover fiction, one could argue that the *visual* media first created, and still sustain, the largest crossover audiences (on the history of children's film, see Wojcik-Andrews 2002). In the 1930s in the USA, *Bugs Bunny* cartoons were screened between newsreels and feature films and watched by adult audiences. Major American newspapers all had (and mostly still have) comic pages, which mixed together child and adult strips (the latter being soap operas, or detective strips like *Dick Tracy*). If strips like Schultz's *Charlie Brown* could be said to appeal to the adult in the child, Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* (in which a stuffed tiger comes alive only when there is no adult figure in the frame) appeals to the child in the adult; both, in any case, have become crossover classics. Gothic thrillers and monster movies drew mixed audiences from a very early date. *King Kong* was apparently one of the few films that C. S. Lewis liked (Wilson 1991: 160). The film (rather than the original book) of *The Wizard of Oz* still has cult followings among adults and children, and was a seminal influence on Salman Rushdie (Rushdie 1992). As in text-based

fiction, films that are focalised through children tend to attract mixed-age audiences, though they may be initially aimed at adult viewers. The searing film of Barry Hines's novel *Kes* is one such; more recently, *Little Voice* and *Billy Elliot* have put a more upbeat (fairy-tale?) spin on the story of the deprived northern English child. The American comic-book heroes Batman, Superman and Spider-Man have all been adapted for film, moving from children's reading to crossover viewing. Out of the Hollywood mainstream, *Ghostworld* and *From Hell* began life as young adult graphic novels before becoming successful young adult and adult films. Walter Moers's two comic-strip series, Professor Schimanski and Kap't'n Blaubar, attracted a huge crossover audience in Germany, and Captain Bluebeard in particular has become an international crossover success. At 750 pages long, *The 13½ Lives of Captain Bluebear* (2000) is not for the fainthearted, but the combination of Vonnegut pace and Swiftian humour is as likely to attract child as adult readers.

Children's cartoon animation developed alongside adult cinema and television shows, in many cases parasitically so. As Matt Groening put it in an episode of *The Simpsons* (Episode 3F16, 'The Day the Violence Died'), 'Animation is built on plagiarism. If it weren't for someone plagiarising *The Honeymooners*, we wouldn't have *The Flintstones*. If someone hadn't ripped off *Sergeant Bilko*, there'd be no *Top Cat*.' Recently, both *South Park* and *The Simpsons* have transformed the early evening cartoon slot into an hour of brilliantly observed social satire; *The Simpsons* especially is consumed addictively by adults as well as children. TV sit-coms like *Friends* also attract enormous mixed-age audiences. Animation films are now extremely sophisticated technically, and have developed story-lines of increasing complexity and depth. Nick Parks's *A Grand Day Out* and *The Wrong Trousers* turned Wallace and Gromit into favourite comic icons, for both adults and children (see Abbotson 2000). *Monsters, Inc.* is an inventive portrait of adult corporate identity, where the corporation is sustained by the energy (shrieks or laughter) of unwitting children. In many ways, the film's satirical view of US big business is sharper and more perceptive than many adult films (*The Matrix*, for example).

Children's fantasy novels, in particular, are attracting film producers almost as soon as they have established substantial crossover readerships. Tolkien and Rowling are soon to be followed by film adaptations of Hearn's *Across the Nightingale Floor* and Colfer's *Artemis Fowl*. But the adaptation of children's fiction into crossover film has such a long and illustrious history, a history that is bound up with the larger story of the development of cinema, that it can only be touched on here.

The crossover appeal of contemporary picture books is a particularly interesting case, since these books have traditionally been marketed for the youngest readerships (see Scott 1999; McGillis 1999). Wegman's photographic book *Puppies* is clearly aimed at child readers, but it was previewed for dual audiences in *The New York Times Magazine*, and appeared on the adult TV show *Oprah*. But experimental picture books, such as those of Dr Seuss and Maurice Sendak, have done more than perhaps any other genre to call into question assumptions about what distinguishes children's from adult literature. Myles McDowell once listed the essential characteristics of children's literature, which included: a clear-cut moral schema, optimism, orderly plots, an emphasis on magic and adventure, use of conventions, dialogue rather than description, shorter length and simplicity (McDowell 1972/1976). Contemporary experimental picture books call into question every one of these 'essential' characteristics. John Burningham's *Would You Rather ...* (1978) is a narrative with an open ending comparable to adult experimental fiction (for example, Fowles's *French Lieutenant's Woman*). Jon Scieszka's *The Stinky Cheese Man* (1992) reinvents traditional fairy tales and comments on its own textuality, in the manner of metafic-

tional works such as Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* or Spark's *The Comforters* (Grieve 1998: 11). Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974) and *The Giving Tree* (1964) are children's picture books that are becoming adult classics in the USA. Sometimes the reference system seems aimed at the adult (parent?) reader, rather than the child. According to John Stephens, Anthony Browne's *Willie the Dreamer* (1997) 'establishes a dialogic relationship with Magritte and Dali', which would most likely pass unnoticed by a very young child (Stephens 2000: 18). But this is not to assume that the adult reader sees *more* than the child (assuming the adult picks up the references to modern art at all). As Stephens points out, the child reader is often quicker to notice the complex inter- and intra-textual references which characterise Browne's work.

Some picture books are also crossover in the sense that young adult and social realist fiction is: that is, they present adult themes to child readers. In this respect, they have attracted the same kind of controversy as discussed above. This is particularly true of picture books that represent war or genocide (books on the Holocaust and Hiroshima, for example) (Harrison 1987). Judith Kerr's ostensibly light-hearted picture book *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (1968) touches on the darker material of her autobiographical novel about Nazism, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971) (see Sylvester 2002). Raymond Briggs's *When the Wind Blows* (1982) is a far from optimistic critique of the nuclear arms industry, possibly aimed at young readers. Briggs's *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* (1984) satirises Margaret Thatcher's role in the Falklands War, and assumes a sophisticated level of interpretation.

It would be nice to think that the current high profile of crossover books and films could be explained solely as a response to the merit of the works in question. But such crossover activity needs to be understood as part of a broader cultural context. Some argue that social and economic changes have made adults more disposed to take notice of children's culture. Single-parent and higher-income families, working children and 'kiddults' may all have contributed to the dramatic rise in consumption of children's products. Like it or not, children in western capitalist countries are big business. And over the past twenty years, more and more young adults have become involved in the *running* of powerful corporations, especially in the USA. In a special issue of *The Economist* devoted to youth cultures in the USA, Europe and Japan, Chris Anderson charts the 'growing influence of young adults in 'the working world' (Anderson 2000: 3). He identifies three factors as being chiefly responsible for the dominance of youth in new corporations like Microsoft; all three are linked in some way to the importance of new technologies in the workplace. First, the Internet 'has triggered the first industrial revolution in history to be led by the young'; young people are growing up with technological skills that older employees have to learn, and learn more slowly (4). Michael Schrage of MIT is quoted as saying that this is the 'age of ageism' (8), an age in which 'Enfantpreneurs' are favoured to run 'immature technologies' (9). Second, corporate restructurings of the 1980s and 1990s, in breaking down traditional hierarchies, placed greater value on younger employees. Since that restructuring, the most sought-after employees are not those with a record of loyal service, but 'free agents who stay only as long as they are challenged and rewarded; flitting from job to job, once a trait of fickle youth, is now an admired sign of ambition and initiative' (5). And finally, like sexual preference, age is becoming a matter of choice. You can opt to be young, culturally if not chronologically; at thirty-five, you can dress and behave as a twenty-year-old, listen to the same music, play the same sports, lead the same social life. New York and San Francisco are societies 'converging on a virtual age somewhere between twenty and thirty', and other American cities are not far behind (5).

Such changes in working practice may have influenced the cultural habits of an enormous number of people, not only their consumption of books and films but also their decisions when and whether to find full-time work, have sex, drink, use drugs, marry, have (or not have) children, in what manner to dress, eat, and socialise. In July 2000, it was estimated that 10,000 people a week in Britain were buying Sony Playstations, that the sale of small scooters went up by 31 per cent and large scooters and motorbikes by 47 per cent, and that the consumers of these products were aged anywhere from eighteen to forty (Summerskill 2000). 'Kiddult' clothes became high fashion, and models dressed as 'Goldilocks', 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Little Red Riding Hood' were expected to appeal to adult consumers. Gucci sent a parade of baby-doll dresses down the catwalk; adults sported 'Babe' tee-shirts; sales of Reeboks and Adidas fashion trainers soared; Emma Bunton as 'Baby Spice' became a cultural icon; and Elspeth Gibson designed her winter 2002 collection after *Lord of the Rings*. And while adults regressed to 'kiddults', 'chadults' and 'middlescents', children aged to 'tweenagers', using mobile phones, reading glossy magazines like *Cosmogirl* for under-elevens, buying sexualised clothes, make-up and perfumes. For example, BBC 2's *Little Women* documented the lives of a group of seven-to-twelve-year-old girls who shopped at Harrods, watched wrestling on Sky Sports, discussed rape and dressed like their favourite pop idols.

Critical reactions to 'kiddult' and 'tweenager' cultures have been extremely mixed in Britain and continental Europe. In part, this is because the phenomenon is viewed as an export from the USA, and if within the USA youth culture is associated (correctly or not) with underground, anti-establishment movements, once it is marketed abroad it may come to stand for exactly the opposite: political conformism, global homogenisation, the erasure of cultural difference. In Britain, the reaction to crossover products and images has, again, been mixed: for example, on the negative side, some complain that children are being made to grow up too fast; others accuse adults of refusing to grow up. Thus David Aaronovitch writes, 'I don't like to see adults reading Harry Potter when they haven't read Nabokov, or men on shiny scooters when they should be on foot' (Aaronovitch 2001). According to Philip Hensher, adult nostalgia for the past is perfectly acceptable and normal; what is suspect is 'the new and ... strange phenomenon ... of adults buying and reading new children's books, which can carry no weight of nostalgia for them' (Hensher 2001).

The culture of 'kidology' is seen by some commentators to have infiltrated British politics, with detrimental effect. For some critics kiddultery is a sign of increasing American influence on British politics and culture, but for Timothy Garton Ash it betokens a return to English public school values. Garton Ash claims that the three main British exports of 2001,

Harry Potter, Frodo Baggins and Tony Blair – all have something in common. Inside a very modern, hi-tech, movie packaging, you discover a remarkably traditional Englishness ... Britain must be Gryffindor among the houses of Europe, and Harry Blair – Sir Frodo of the Shire – will lead us there. But Blair's notions of British leadership in Europe seems hardly comparable either to Harry's exuberant acrobatics in Quidditch, or Frodo's anxious journey into Mordor.

(Garton Ash 2002: 21)

In fashioning a political critique of Blair, Garton Ash at the same time fuses into a single entity all the varied books and films that are consumed by children of different ages,

interests and social groups. Thus simplified, children's literature is made to signify, on the one hand, American cultural imperialism and, on the other, traditional English insularity.

A similar range of opinions is evident in specialist academic criticism about contemporary crossover literature. Some critics applaud the fact that children's literature has 'finally come of age', a curious phrase which, if it were accurate, would spell the end of the entity it celebrates (see Nikolajeva 1996). Others, by contrast, are worried that children's literature is disappearing under the pressures of adult consumerism. For example, Neil Postman, in *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1983), and Jack Zipes, in *Sticks and Stones or the Troublesome Success of Children's Literature* (2002), argue that children are being deindividualised, or homogenised, by a bombardment of consumerist messages from TV, pop culture, games, popular films and pulp books. To my mind, Postman's study really only proves that a certain kind of childhood (his) is disappearing, while Zipes's stimulating collection of essays is flawed by inconsistency. In the final essay, he argues on the one hand that Harry Potter is only being bought and read by adults, not children, and on the other hand that this kind of derivative, sexist and banal book is responsible for turning children into consumerist clones. But it is hard to see how the Potter books could exert such influence on children, if they are not actually reading them. In any case, both his arguments are hard to square with the fine introductory essay, which encourages academics to study not only classic children's literature but also what contemporary children are actually reading now: from cereal packets to comic books to Playstation manuals (see also Zornado 2001). But perhaps the commonest argument recently advanced by critics, authors and publishers is that some children's literature transcends age difference altogether; – for example, S. F. Said argues that crossover or kiddult books had – and still have – 'the ageless resonance of myth' (Said 2003).

The claim to transcendence should be distinguished from that of crossover potential, since there must *be* recognised age boundaries in order for texts to cross over them. The argument that good children's literature is 'for all ages' is not a new one. Many authors have maintained that they do not write specifically for children. C. S. Lewis claimed that if a book is not worth reading at sixty it is not worth reading at six, and Richard Adams insisted, 'I do not, myself, recognise the distinction between publications for children and for adults ... In my view, the distinction may do more harm than good' (Eccleshare 2002: 90).

But authorial intentions, however interesting, do not determine the relationship between readers and texts (and not all authors would agree that transcendence is something to aim for). For the most part, children's literature has attracted a distinct group of readers since at least the mid-eighteenth century. This group certainly includes adults – parents, librarians, educators, students, publishers and booksellers, writers and journalists – but it is still a group distinct from readers of mainstream 'adult' literature. Even these adult readers do not respond to children's literature agelessly, any more than children do. A text may activate an adult's 'inner child' or indeed any number of argumentative and mutually incompatible inner children. Equally, a text may activate a child's 'inner parent', as Don Latham argues of Lois Lowry's Annemarie, in *Number the Stars* (1989) and *The Giver* (1997) (Latham 2002: 8). Crossover books and films are interesting precisely because of the shifts and slides of temporal perspective they induce in their readers and viewers.

The argument that children's literature is for 'all ages' can also be framed negatively. As Jacqueline Rose points out, children's literature is primarily written, sold, chosen, bought and consumed by adults, so it has always been only secondarily for children (Rose 1984). But children only come 'afterwards' in discussions of children's literature, as she claims, if

we decide *a priori* to begin the discussion with authors and end it with readers. Rose passes over child *readers* in silence because, she says, their motives are not recoverable. But this is to mystify children unnecessarily, to reduce them to the status of Spivak's subalterns. Children can articulate their views about reading, and these views can and should be incorporated into specialist critical analysis. Moreover, in applying the familiar postcolonial and/or feminist critique of 'Otherness' to the arena of children's literature, Rose fails to account for the continuum between children's and adults' experience, a continuum that does not exist in gender or race relations. Many children are curious about adult perspectives, and one reason they read books and watch films is to gain insight into adult discourses and constructions of reality – as Juliet McMaster notes, child writers don't usually write about children, but about adult worlds (McMaster 2001: 281).

From the brief survey above, it should be apparent that there are different types of crossover in different genres, and there are many different genres of literature that are currently crossing from child to adult, and adult to child audiences. Some of this traffic from one age of audience to another is new; some has ample historical precedent. But it seems certain that in recent years we have witnessed crossover literature entering a new and important phase. Adults are arguably more engaged with contemporary children's literature than they ever have been. This engagement could become merely predatory or manipulative, as some critics fear. It could be one-sided, but it could also be the basis for a more dialogic understanding of children's and adults' cultures, their interdependence, and their inter-illumination.

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44 Writers for adults, writers for children

Marian Allsobrook

The study of children's literature is usually thematic or generic; it is rewarding, however, to compare authors' adult texts with those addressed to their child readers. Here a few preliminary paragraphs will selectively survey some English writers of the past, eminent but seldom hailed for their texts for children. The discussion will then address the wider field, in which authors of significance, but less often regarded as authors for children, will be identified; inevitably, there is some overlap with 'crossover' books, which move between audiences.

I shall also stress the transformation of what is written for children in English, by those who are translated or who bring other cultures to their writing in English. This remarkable feature is made possible by the distinctive and differentiated forms of the English language, both within the United Kingdom and beyond. Writers who are born in cultures where English dominates, or who converse bilingually or trilingually, or who settle in parts of the world where the global language prevails, bring new energies, figurative possibilities and inventive achievements to the medium which increasingly accesses other worlds to young audiences. English accommodates myriad forms of itself, as this chapter aims to establish. Issues of cultural hybridity and cultural mobility are inscribed in the texts of those who relocate or regularly use scattered homes, or are exiled. The resulting innovation, through collaboration, performance and presentational ingenuity, has transformed the consciousness of younger readers and of supervisory adults.

In part, this transformation has achieved a stronger sense of identity and worth, empowering children of mixed or diverse cultures. Among those responsible for this sea-change, Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, Leila Aboulela, Hanan al-Shaykh, Benjamin Zephaniah, Buchi Emecheta, Vikram Seth and the Abedayo group of writers for adults and for children will be discussed. As an example of a literature in which samples of adult texts are selected for children, embodying a literary canon for the next generation to absorb, there will be some consideration of Nepalese texts. As in so many cultures, the dominance of what is available globally for child readers in English tends to inhibit the emergence of texts written specifically in that country for a young audience. The strong moral substance of the Nepalese texts selected for pupils reminds us of the supervisory adult's role in the process; these are texts chosen for schoolbook use, as lesson material, hugely influential, although the child is not free to select the reading matter.

Philip Pullman makes an important claim for children's books: that they address the moral issues so often evaded in recent adult texts (Parsons and Nicholson 1999: 117; Chrisafis 2002: 13). Any retrospective sweep of the Western tradition of writing for children demonstrates the way in which the moral, philosophical and social concerns of

writers who wrote primarily for adults are reflected in their work for children, and how significantly authors in the adult field have enriched children's literature.

Writers of adult texts, from the time of Chaucer, have written for children, although the momentum quickened in the eighteenth century, as revolution in Europe and North America shifted awareness of relationships between powerful adults or masters and those they controlled. Child-rearing and the parental role became matters of concern as the concept of parenthood was debated. The strong moral content of a child's book enabled Mary Wollstonecraft and other professional female writers of the eighteenth century to gain credibility and be received as legitimate, rational writers. Although the desire to divert and entertain was strong, it had to be balanced by moral earnestness. However, the feminised code had emerged a generation before Wollstonecraft and her female contemporaries gained professional status.

In England, Samuel Richardson produced three early works for young readers, apart from his *Aesop* (1740), including *Letters of Advice to a Nephew* (1731), while he experimented with printerly innovations which extended meaning on the page, anticipating the inventive techniques employed by modern authors for children, particularly in picture books. He also authorised miniaturised versions of his three great adult novels. *The Paths of Virtue Delineated, or the History in Miniature of the Celebrated Pamela, Clarissa Harlowe and Sir Charles Grandison* (1756) dispensed with the epistolary form, while retaining the use of dramatised episodes. Richardson's novels kindled a consuming interest in Europe for sixty years among writers busy on translation, parody and prequel. G. Lessing, translating Richardson's *Aesop* into German in 1757, acknowledged feminised codes when praising Richardson's knowledge of the education of the human heart and of the promotion of virtue. Richardson's collaborative literary production must have been unique. Eagleton characterises him as the 'engagingly modern deconstructionist adrift in an infinity of texts', and describes his texts as 'plural, diffuse kits of fiction' (Eagleton 1982: 21–2), the result of a process of ceaseless revision responding both to readers and to fellow authors. If, as McKillop suggests, one of his achievements was to make domesticity interesting, the women writers who followed and admired him were significant in achieving recognition for the children 'discounted from history for centuries' (Inglis 1981: 83).

Drawing upon personal experience of revolutionary Paris, Mary Wollstonecraft gave value to the depersonalised poor, recognising the unacknowledged nobility of their endurance. In *Original Stories from Real Life* (1791), she emphasised children as literary characters; she reworked a translation of Madame de Cambon's *Kleine Grandison* (1780) as *Young Grandison* (1790), introducing new scientific material into the fictional boyhood of Sir Charles Grandison, constructed for children. Arnaud Berquin, also exploiting the iconic status of Richardson's hero, produced *A History of Little Grandison* a year later.

The extent of Mary Lamb's collaboration with her brother Charles has been underrated: she wrote several of the *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807). Similarly, Maria Edgeworth's role as novelist for child readers has been insufficiently recognised. Praised by W. B. Yeats in 1891 as the most 'finished and famous' Irish novelist, she proves herself 'a thorough mistress of multiple discursive practices' (Myers 1992: 139). She produced the first sociological fiction and initiated not only the regional novel, but also prototypes of several genres of American women's writing, the female *Bildungsroman* and narratives of manners and customs. Her *Castle Rackrent* (1800) influenced Walter Scott, who produced one text specifically for children, *Tales of a Grandfather* (1827–30), a history of Scotland and of France.

Two years after her celebrated *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley wrote *Maurice, or The Fisher's Cot* (1820), first published in 1998, for children; like her mother, Wollstonecraft, she addressed the child's experience in her fiction about a range of parenting roles, as a child moves unwittingly towards reunion with those who had lost him.

Both these writers resemble Dickens, in that a major writer's work for children, his *A Child's History of England* (1852–4), is probably his least familiar work. Dickens also used the fairy tale inventively, defending it against propagandist exploitation by the illustrator Cruikshank, champion of temperance. In his *Child's History* he builds a conspiratorial alliance with the young reader, who is encouraged to view history through the individual lens superimposed by Dickens; barbarous tendencies attributed to the Irish reflect authorial bias.

Dedicated to the son of the actor Macready, Robert Browning's poem *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* (1842) tells a story that the poet's father had already narrated. More recently, Terry Pratchett has invoked the tale as the basis for *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* (2002).

Mark Twain reworked more disparate elements from widely diverse sources, generating important new forms of fiction through parody of Shakespeare, burlesque and use of the vernacular. Influenced by Bret Harte's 'new realm of discourse', the world of hard-living, subversive vagabonds (Ruland and Bradbury 1991: 192), he exploited new possibilities, incorporating 'stretchers', tall tales of mocking and ironic dialect. His writing drew upon regionalism and the rapidly changing world of the industrialised spread of population and wage slavery, once the two coasts of the USA had been linked by rail in 1869. Twain interrogated American culture in burlesque in the adult fantasy *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1869) and in the classic boy's story *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876).

Less to the taste of the American public, Thomas Hardy's commissioned fiction for children failed to find publication for some ten years. *Our Exploits at West Poley* (1883) eventually appeared in *The Household* in 1892. As in Twain's adult fiction, man is dwarfed by a landscape which inscribes the secrets of the human condition. Hardy empowered his two boy heroes to seize destiny and redirect it (a stream generating mill-power in two villages); in their exploits they explore the organic subterranean world of the caves where nature's supremacy is challenged. Hardy chose a secret place to attract young readers and his protagonist, Steve, possesses the fatal ingenuity of Henchard, the mayor of Casterbridge, written at the same period. Hardy's proto-cinematic devices, or visual compositions, capture all the tensions present in each narrative.

Both Oscar Wilde and Rudyard Kipling have made important contributions to children's literature, Wilde drawing upon the fairy-tale tradition and Kipling in part upon the fable tradition. Wilde composed fairy tales for his sons, believing this to be a father's duty. He read Kipling to them and told them of huge disconsolate carp in the lake which would not stir unless called in Irish. The redemptive patterning of tales like *The Happy Prince* and *The Star Child* (1888) are reflected in *De Profundis* (1905). Kipling, remarkable for his wide-ranging output and for his achievement as a modernist, provoked differing critical responses. Wilde rated him 'a genius who drops his aspirates and our first authority on the second rate'. J. M. Barrie criticised his coarse journalese, calling him 'the man from nowhere' in 1890. Yet T. S. Eliot recognised him as a major writer in 1919 and Henry James acknowledged his appeal. To Chesterton, the *Just So Stories* were 'a great chronicle of primal fables', their animals 'walking portents'. Brecht admired and copied Kipling and C. S. Lewis identified him as primarily the poet of work, bringing to literature new areas of language (Green 1971: 59–60).

The character Psmith started life in P. G. Wodehouse's school stories, but proved so popular that he was relocated in adult fiction. T. S. Eliot's cat personae in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939) celebrate the secret, devilish dimensions of the creature. Like children, these characters inhabit their own sub-culture at odds with dominant values. A relish for naming and for terms of address permeates the text, which extends rather than reworks the fable form.

Drawing upon cultures beyond Europe, as professional journalists like Kipling, John Masefield and Arthur Ransome also wrote for children. The modernist features of their work have attracted interest more recently. Hunt recognises classic patterns of displacement and closure (Hunt 1991: 131) in Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* series (from 1930). In the 1938 edition to his *Old Peter's Russian Tales* (1916), Ransome wrote that 'fairy stories ... live for ever with a life of their own', deprecating his role as editor. In his stories, wise fools succeed and innocents outwit the evil ones, such as Baba Yaga, the terrible witch with her iron teeth and appetite for children's flesh.

Some of that territory is shared by Isaac Bashevis Singer in his Yiddish stories. As journalist and writer, Singer has portrayed Jewish life in adult texts and in four volumes of stories for children (such as *Zlateh the Goat* (1966)). Fascinated by the process of translation, Singer often reworks medieval superstition, employing a dangerously unreliable devil-narrator in many of his adult stories. In an essay 'Are Children the Ultimate Literary Critics?' he acknowledges the child's ability to judge the merits of a narrative. Among the reworked biblical tales, the festivals, witches, animal fables, letters, recipes, oaths, verses and prayers, resound the multiple voices of Polish peasant communities and of Jewish culture, especially the combined spirituality and vulgarity of the shtetl.

The substantial and varied achievement of Langston Hughes has in recent years received due recognition, although his collaborative work and significant writing for children are insufficiently promoted. One of his final works (unfinished) *Black Misery* (1967/1994), offers the child an artefact designed to express the racial tensions that black children live with. Using white text on black pages, each facing black on white illustrations by Arouni, Hughes traces the experience of rebuff and unease in an analysis of misery, representing the black child's dismay in a society ordered by white American assumptions. Hughes claimed the prime function of creative writing was 'to affirm life, to yea-say the excitement of living in relation to the vast rhythms of the universe' (Hughes 1967/1994: Afterword). His verse for children, as in *The Sweet and Sour Animal Book* (1932), is part of his negotiation of the boundaries between serious and light verse. A humorous verse alphabet, its animals are disconcerted, or are denied the stereotypical attributes: the bee fails to find honey in papier mâché flowers; the horse who used to pull the fire-wagon has been replaced; the inventive language potently describes the 'smothered rage' of a caged lion, the 'wisdom bumps' of the camel and the 'quackle' of the goose. *Popo and Fifina* (1932), co-written with Arna Bontemps, is set in Haiti, where the spirit of adventure is safely grounded in secure familial structures and a verdant island landscape. Haiti was chosen as an environment nurturing positive models of collaborative black endeavour, craftsmanship and appreciation of nature. (Grace Nichols, in her adult novel *Whole of a Morning Sky* (1986), similarly portrays Guyana outside Georgetown as an idyllic environment for children.) Hughes devoted much of his life to establishing an audience for his black American literature, as a versatile member of the Harlem Renaissance. Writing for children, he sought to shape the consciousness of the next generation and affirm their creative potential; *Popo and Fifina* was his first novel written specifically for children. Work and play are given balanced treatment: domestic tasks, carpentry and Popo's first experience of work contrast with games

and kite-flying (the red star, 'like a wish or dream', proudly defeats a rival kite when their cords are tangled). The moonlit episode of 'Drums at Night' allows Popo to join older youths and adults in the 'deep vibrant music' of the drums, a glamorous, not sinister, experience for the child. The shared contentment is emphasised. Bontemps, as an academic who promoted black folklore and literature, here fosters a reader-friendly inclusive quality. Both writers sought to inform the American reader about the Haitians, also of African origin, and validate their culture.

Hughes, the Black Laureate as he was called, challenged conventional boundaries of literary genre, of geographical or political origin; in this, and in his strong moral sense, he is an interesting counterpart to Ted Hughes, whose preoccupation with nature, legends of creation and inclusiveness marks a commitment to encouraging child readers, child writers and those who teach children. He reworked the animal fable in two significant forms: *Meet My Folks* (1961) ends hauntingly with a vision of a more symbiotic relationship between future generations and nature. The much more ambitious *What Is the Truth?* (1984) presents a mosaic collection of poetic fables interspersed in a portentous dialogue, affirming the Creator's presence in all living forms. In *Ffangs the Vampire Bat and the Kiss of Truth* (1986), he creates a promising fable character, Attila the fighting cock, whose brief adventures usher in the unfortunate Ffangs. A revenge fable element is discernible in *Crow* (1970) and in some of the *Moortown* poems (1979), both for adults. Ted Hughes uses several of the *Moortown* poems in his children's collection, *Moon-Bells and Other Poems* (1986). In his novellas for children, *The Iron Man* (1968) and *The Iron Woman* (1993), bewildered child heroes meet monstrous, but (generally) benign challenges to a global threat that adults disregard. Though the ferrous couple are allowed a mutual polishing, Iron Woman remains barren and clumsy, an 'ecological fantasy' rendered 'too didactic' (Alderson 1993: 31). *The Iron Woman* contains austere illustrations, rather adult for a children's book; these contrast with the large-scale, soft-edged pictures of *What Is the Truth?* which suggests a child's close-up view of living forms.

Most of Sylvia Plath's work, including *The Bed Book* (1976) for children, was authorised for publication by Ted Hughes. Plath addressed some of her most famous poems directly to her own children, such as 'You're' and 'Morning Song', while others voice a mother's thoughts: 'Nick and the Candlestick', 'For a Fatherless Son', 'Words for a Nursery'. *The Bed Book* invites the child, who is directly addressed, to range imaginatively in fantastic bed-vehicles. Plath explores a child's inventiveness within domestic adult restraints in humorously affectionate rhymes, which allow the child reader all the tricks and treats of adventure with a reassuring circularity of bedtime narrative structure. *The It-Doesn't-Matter Suit* (1996) evokes Plath's Germanic parental heritage in both the illustrative style of Rotraut Susanne Berner and the character of the tale. Plath reassures the reader that the inevitable pecking order is capable of rewarding the youngest member of the family; the relish, energy and humour of her narrative style make this an entertaining addition to children's literature.

Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990) celebrates the power and importance of storytelling, clearly addressing a dual audience with its protest against 'Silence Laws'. Its exuberant vitality renders solemn didacticism elsewhere quite inert by contrast. The teasing game played by Salman Rushdie with his reader, so conspicuous in *Midnight's Children* (1981), is evident in the children's text. Significantly, the first publication of *Haroun* by Granta, without illustrations and with plain covers, indicated its relevance to adult readers. More recently, the Viking edition (1999), lavishly illustrated to reflect the fertility of the text, characterises it as a children's book. *Haroun* employs bold patterns of

opposition and refraction: Sengupta, the shadow people, the dark factory ship and web of night in turn confront the radiant source, the brimming stream of Rashid's story-telling. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's Shandyeian resonances are clear in the pervasive sense of the instability of the text and in the narrator's preoccupation with his nose; *Haroun* is similarly allusive, though its fields of reference are more popularly accessible. The living and transforming power of Logos, the word, is most ironically affirmed in the case of *Haroun's* creator.

Like Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta came to Britain and as a writer drew upon her own cultural heritage to write for adults and for children. She interrogates the legacy of slavery in Nigeria, and in *The New Tribe* (2000) addresses the British-born Nigerian experience. *The Bride Price* (1976) and *The Slave Girl* (1977), like *The New Tribe* for adults, take the viewpoint of a youthful protagonist, enabling the text to appeal to teenagers and young adults. In her control of the narrative and development of characters with strong human appeal, Emecheta informs her diverse readership about the cultural legacy of Nigeria, the psychological hinterland shaping the consciousness of her central characters. *The New Tribe* traces an adopted child's experience of white English family life, incorporating reference to Olaudah Equiano's *The African* (first published 1789); until Chester has visited Nigeria and distinguished dream from reality, he is troubled by his complex parentage. The dual setting, at first and finally in England, within which the definitive experience of Nigeria is framed, offers the reader a powerful *Bildungsroman*. Chester's relationship with his adoptive parents and his search for his biological parents are enhanced by the presence of an adopted white sister, who has her own difficulties to manage. The novelist affirms the value of opportunities available in Europe, however uneasy and painful the transition. Emecheta's ironic sense shapes her narrative, in which the child or teenage perception is focalised, breaking down a rigid distinction between her 'adult' texts and her children's books, which include *Titch the Cat*, *Nowhere to Play*, *The Moonlight Bridge* and *The Wrestling Match*. In *Destination Biafra* (1982), she writes from a woman's viewpoint about the Nigerian civil war; as an academic with her own publishing company, she has produced an autobiography and a futuristic novel about an untouched African village community, *Rape of Shavi* (1983).

As Langston Hughes and Buchi Emecheta undoubtedly wished to record in literature the customs, values and stories of those of African origin, so that young people would have a sense of a legitimate heritage and place in the world, at the same time there has been a desire to provide a literature for that audience which is relevant, engaging them as readers. A family-based group of writers and publishers exemplifies the collaborative achievement in the black tradition of literature and orature, the Adebayo family, based in London. Diran Adebayo's *Some Kind of Black* (1996) represents the experience of an Oxford undergraduate who negotiates new relationships with his family, peer group and social contacts. The tensions between his student concerns and the dynamics of street life, domestic anxieties, political activity and consciousness-raising groups are skilfully managed; as in *The New Tribe*, the central character's bond with his sister is a powerful element and parental expectations affirm the importance of education as the route to fulfilment. This novel offers the teenage reader a strong story, although it is marketed as an adult book. It interrogates police perceptions and assumptions, while council projects for improved integration, such as 'Proud Minds of Tomorrow', receive ironic treatment. Diran Adebayo draws upon autobiographical material in his contribution to another adult text, *Sons and Mothers* (1997). In 'The Quality of Mercy', he contextualises a son's relationship with his mother and her sudden, untimely death. Yinka Adebayo recognised the

potential audience for children's stories drawing upon black experience in Britain. He has now written a series, *The Drummond Hill Crew*. The titles target the young black audience and the dialogue engages the young reader for whom the language is shaped: a glossary of terms initiates the general reader, direct address is used in the explanation of the vocabulary and the register is exuberant. Alliterative and colourfully figurative terms give the text a zestful pace. *The Glamma Kids*, *From Boyz to Men*, *Ragga to Riches* draw on conventional sub-genres within the school-story category; the issues, however, are adroitly chosen: the girl who pretends to be a celebrity and is found out; hidden treasure with a touch of magic. What refreshes familiar narrative elements is the textuality: the linguistic rituals of the class-teacher, songs, clues, recipes, advertisements, letters, an archaic diary. Yinka Adebayo is motivated by the knowledge that a generation of increasingly alienated and marginalised youngsters needs books that address its own experience. A younger brother, Dotun, is a partner in the X-Press, which publishes adult fiction, children's books and cultural texts, including *The Drummond Hill Crew* series.

These writers, through performance, interview, school visits, awards and television success, gain a much wider, diverse audience; like Benjamin Zephaniah, they will be drawn into the Establishment of literary activity and orature. Their views, their contributions to committee work and educational projects like the Story Garden in Stratford, London, E15, promoted by Zephaniah as a patron of Discover, are a networking endeavour which reaches out to identify and capture child audiences who might not follow conventional bookshop routes to reading.

Zephaniah established himself as a performance poet and through that success engages with a range of educational programmes appealing to children. He travels for the British Council, writes adult poetry like *Too Black, Too Strong* (2001) and has shown sustained commitment to human, child and animal rights, working with children in South African townships and recording a musical tribute to Nelson Mandela. He is strongly influenced by Jamaican culture. In the Preface to *Too Black, Too Strong*, he surveys the heritage culture of Britain, addresses Britain's diverse ethnic history and draws attention to problems of racial inequality. Then he says, 'Let's go global.' As a poet who won't stay silent, he affirms that he lives 'in two places, Britain and the world'; he sees his duty as a poet to question and explore the state of justice in the world. He extends the word 'black' to include all those oppressed by racism and injustice. 'My "strong" is the strength that we get when we stand up and get counted' (Zephaniah 2001: 11–13). Poems like 'Nu Blue Suede Shoes' and 'The Approved School of Reggae' speak to the marginalised of any culture, employing the linguistic register that has popularised his poetry for young audiences in collections such as *Talking Turkey* (1994) and *Funky Chickens* (1996). However, his two novels for that readership, *Face* (1999) and *Refugee Boy* (2001), about a boy from Eritrea whose parents are tragically caught up in conflict in Africa, employ a much more formal, standardised English, perhaps to dignify the young hero's courageous facing of problems that would daunt secure adults. Zephaniah's narrative material is compassionate; his plotting – perhaps because of publishing strictures – tends towards rushed closure, particularly in *Refugee Boy*, where major incidents occur in the last ten pages. Zephaniah ends the novel affirmatively and includes 'Refugee Writes', a punning verse that appeals for compassion and tolerance. Details of the Refugee Council are also provided (2001: 293). Zephaniah's *We Are Britain!* (2002) celebrates the diversity of Scottish, French-Melanesian, Hindu, Chinese, Kurdistan Muslim, Welsh, Croatian-Hungarian, Irish, Jewish, Sikh and Caribbean children. Each child's family, hobbies, way of life and friends are represented in photographs, poems by Zephaniah and biographical text. In the

Preface, he suggests that children can, by reading the book, ‘almost see the history of the whole world’ (2002: 1). Here he encourages inclusivity of approach, adaptability and a sense of living in an integrated community.

It is easy to appreciate Zephaniah’s special regard for Shelley, who defined poets as the unacknowledged legislators of mankind; another favourite for Zephaniah is Mervyn Peake, whose work for children as illustrator and author has been neglected, though his artistic influence is evident in the work of modern cartoonists and designers. Born in China, Peake produced *Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor* in 1939 (re-issued in 2001, with an Afterword by his son). Peake’s other works for children include *Shapes and Sounds* (1941), *Rhymes without Reason* (1944), *Letters from a Lost Uncle (from Polar Regions)* (1948) and *The Glassblowers* (1950). Peake also succeeded as illustrator of such children’s books as *The Hunting of the Snark* (1941), an edition of the Grimms’ fairy tales (1949), *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1950), both of Carroll’s *Alice* books (1954) and one of his own childhood favourites, *Treasure Island* (1949). He illustrated a compilation of nursery rhymes, *Ride-a-Cock-Horse* (1940). During this period he completed his *Gormenghast* trilogy (1946–59), for which he is chiefly recognised as a writer. From this adult text, the publisher Hodder extrapolated material for *Boy in Darkness* (1996), Titus Groan’s journey from Gormenghast, illustrated by P. J. Lynch. A note indicates that the story was first published in a collection entitled: *Sometime Never: Three Tales of the Imagination*. The universal, timeless power of Peake’s narrative vision here is nightmarish. His brilliantly idiosyncratic portrayal of animal and human characters is evident in *Captain Slaughterboard*; the lovingly inventive design of the whole book, with ‘handwriting’ print and captivating decorative detail, cheerfully endorses an adaptable tolerance, which the captain ultimately achieves after first oppressing his crew-members and scheming as coloniser to abduct the Yellow Creature and exploit him as a freak. The captain is won over by the island habitat and by the creature itself; the upbeat ending shows the captain’s companionable adaptation to a very different way of life. Along the way Peake introduces a memorable menagerie of invented creatures and a highly individualistic crew.

Many of the Western texts considered here have interrogated European traditions from afar and in the light of other cultures in order to move on. As examples from Nepal will show, the role of authors who write for, or seek to influence children, is of another generic order, though the moral imperative remains a constant factor. Discussion is limited here to a few notable writers from the last century.

Lekhnath Pandyal (1892–1965), the ‘pearl among the poets’ or ‘Kavi Shiromani’, sought reform in society and, although his poetry was not directly addressed to children, he is currently studied in schools and his poetry, such as *Indradhamu* [Arrow of the God Indra], features in school textbooks. Yudha Prasad Mishra (1907–90) is also studied in the classroom; his work is concerned with nature, patriotism and the need for change, achievable through the individual’s contribution to society. Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909–59), the ‘great poet’ or ‘Mahaa Kavi’, wrote poems for readers of all ages; some of his texts are compulsory study at secondary-school level. The tensions caused by exile, broken health and censorship did not obstruct his academic and reforming career. The work of the ‘poet of the era’ or ‘Yug Kavi’, Siddhi Charan Shrestha (1912–92), such as *Amma* (Mother), is also enshrined in school textbooks; topics include social revolution, patriotic vision, nature and compassion for the poor. Some of his most famous poems are *Tirmi Tara* [Twinkling Star] and *Mero Pratibimba* [My Shadow]. Devraj Neupane (1947–) believes that the child reveals the man; he is notable for his autobiography of childhood, but he also wrote essays, songs and poems. He is an outstanding author of children’s poems and features in

most Nepali school textbooks. The significance of the contribution made by these writers is many-featured; the impulse to usher in social reform motivated most of them and caused them hardship in some cases. They also wished to express their response to nature, to rootedness in their homeland and its peasantry. The individual child tended not to be their consciously targeted reader, but their influence led them to be canonised in the pages of school textbooks. That influence inevitably colours the consciousness of decades of pupils in Nepali classrooms.

The work of translators of children's books sustains scholarship: Denys Johnson-Davies extended the audience for books from Arabic cultures. He is the translator of Hanan al-Shaykh's *A Bird in the Hand* (1984), an appealing story of the henna-painted bird on the child's hand; while the child sleeps, the bird takes adventurous flight. The magic realism of the text is matched by the subtly jewelled pastels of the illustrator Najah Taher. Hanan al-Shaykh enjoys a considerable reputation as a novelist for adults: *The Story of Zahra* (1986), *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (1989), *Beirut Blues* (1995) and *Only in London* (2001) explore the ways in which cultures can be displaced and relocated, creating a little Chinatown or Beirut. A segment of a culture, here Arabic, is sutured into the composite of a cosmopolis, like London. In *Only in London*, Samir experiences the severe dislocation just after an air flight to London when he passes through a district where shops display their Arabic character: 'Come in ... We speak Arabic' (23). Hanan al-Shaykh addresses cultural ironies, the experience of exile and perceptions of Englishness colliding with ancient ethnicities in her delicate, humorous adult texts.

Winner of the Caine Prize in 2000 (for writers out of Africa), Leila Aboulela, novelist and short-story writer, would not describe herself as an author for children but, like Diran Abedayo, in her figural or internal focalisation can adopt the youthful viewpoint. In her collection *Coloured Lights* (2001), the story 'Tuesday Lunch' is told by a Muslim child at a British primary school. Nadia, aged eight, reads the school lunch menu and chooses a pork pie. The poem 'My Mother's Friends', again with a child's perception, is a strikingly animated portrayal of a roomful of women observed by a child; prose pieces, 'Aeroplane' and 'The Judge', have also been written for child readers. Leila Aboulela's first novel, *The Translator* (2000), about a mixed marriage set in Glasgow, has been praised for its 'restrained lyricism' and eloquently refracts British life and forms of the English language. She accompanies Hanan al-Shaykh in offering the adult reader refreshingly affirmative ways of seeing and thinking. Both authors have been self-effacing about their work for children, which deserves a wider audience. These writers infuse their work in English with the wealth of another language and culture, identifying new areas of readership in minority or marginalised groups, but also engaging British-born or English-speaking readers.

New territories also engage Vikram Seth, whose writing ranges from work for children, again so far receiving scant attention, to poetry, the novel in verse, *The Golden Gate* (1986), translation and travel writing. Most readers know him for his novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993); *From Heaven Lake* (1983), however, records travels through China and Tibet, urging a better understanding between different cultural groups, while presenting the author's exploration of his own appreciative response to those he meets. In *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (1993), Seth reworks animal fables from Asia and Europe, as the title implies. The Foreword directly addresses a readership that certainly includes children, and Ravi Shankar's illustrations reinforce the appeal to a younger audience. In the ten tales, ingenious rhyming couplets establish pace and subversive humour; of the two from Greece, 'The Hare and the Tortoise' is familiar from Aesopian versions; Seth's hare, however, is 'hot and heady', given to incessant trivialising on her mobile and a ready

victim of the celebrity cult. Her lipstick graffiti, satin shorts and sampling of magic mushrooms bring her down (1993: 43–55). The last two tales, which came to Seth directly ‘from the land of Gup’, allow him to satirise further fame’s lure: the nightingale becomes addicted to applause and suffers a fatal decline. In ‘The Elephant and the Tragopan’, creatures form a committee to ‘outmanoeuvre man’ and ensure a future for the planet despite man’s predation. ‘The Bigshot’ wants guaranteed water supplies, reminding the elephant that ‘the operative word is votes’. Bigshot’s son, Smallfry, saves the Bingle valley from the dam, although the tragopan is martyred in the struggle. Child readers would approve the heroism of Smallfry, understanding the issue of whether or not the tragopan consciously sought celebrity status as a martyr (1993: 98–117).

Earthcare, as the Canadian publishers Douglas and McIntyre categorise their books for children that address environmental issues, reflects the perception of fable-writers, who see in creatures the qualities that enhance our self-knowledge. In Margaret Atwood’s books for children spanning more than twenty years, the child’s response to nature is predominant. *Up in the Tree* (1976) playfully explores in verse the discovery of the two child characters that nature provides friendship and shelter; *Anna’s Pet* (1980) introduces the child reader to the different habitats that creatures need, if they are to flourish. The central character visits her rural grandparents, where she learns that certain creatures do not make good pets; finally she takes a tadpole back to her city home, knowing that ‘it’s hard to keep anything for ever’. This book is co-written with Joyce Barkhouse, in the *Kids of Canada* series. In 1995 *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut* appeared, subverting the traditional narrative of the spoiled heroine, whose absurd posturing is affectionately ridiculed in the outrageous textual alliteration. This contrasts strongly with Atwood’s first two titles for children, in which the narrative voice could be that of a child, learning to read.

Whereas these children’s books were written in parallel to Atwood’s publication of adult texts over the span of her career, some established writers produce a book in response to an issue, or in collaboration with adult offspring, as in the case of Toni Morrison. Morrison’s son Slade (when he was nine years old) illustrated her celebration of children’s innocent ingenuity, *The Big Box* (1999), in which, in vigorous rhyming text, she advocates appropriate freedoms for children, whose parents can be too protectively controlling. Three children, Patty, Mickey and Sue, are boxed in, within doors that open only one way; instead of contact with living, breathing things, they endure virtual or artificial realities. The child characters are responsible, dutiful, but are told by adults that they can’t handle their personal freedom. Adult approval, depending upon compliance with this restrictive code, is challenged when the children escape from the box and ecstatically encounter porpoises, rabbits and real trees. As in the case of so many texts considered here, the rooting of the characters, both adult and child, within the context of the whole range of life-forms, of negotiating sustainable relationships with those forms, is central and determines the meaning in moral terms.

The reworking of the Crusoe myth by Michel Tournier in a text for adults, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* (1967) [Friday or The Pacific Rim] and its parallel text for children, *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* (1971) [Friday or the wild life], provides not only material comparable with the numerous Robinsonnades that emerged in response to the original Defoe text, but illustrates the author’s techniques in addressing each audience. A further bonus for the critic is Tournier’s insistence upon the central character’s need to achieve integrity in relation to his fellow-human and his environment. Playfully, through role reversal, Vendredi initiates his colonial master into alternative ways of living, through

which Robinson's anguish is relieved. Renewal, negotiation and diminution of restricting boundaries supersede absolute control.

Despite the richness of the interplay between work for adults and for children, publishers continue to omit reference to an author's work for children in the indexes of biographies; biographers and critics routinely dismiss from their inquiries the role of texts for children when assessing that author's significance. Coming through this discussion, there should, however, be a strong sense of the close, often intimate bond with a specific child reader that brought the text into being. This awaits systematic attention, although a little work has been done on Roald Dahl and his short story for adults 'The Champion of the World', in *Kiss Kiss* (1959) and the novel for children, *Danny the Champion of the World* (1975) (Shavit 1986: 43–59; Chambers 1985: 38–40).

Looking at these authors who include texts for children among what they write, we find that they often choose such works to inscribe the importance of story-telling; from such texts emerge voices insufficiently heard elsewhere, voices of those displaced or exiled. While the dynamics of cultural encounters or collisions may be explored, the grace and humour of human experience are part of the celebratory text that the author better known for adult writing chooses to construct for a specific child or for a young audience. The texts that are created for children shape the consciousness of the next generation; in addition, they derive significance from their expression of the semi-autonomous cultures which have always existed alongside the dominant culture. This is a striking feature of the texts created by writers who have settled in English-speaking countries or chosen to adopt the language for the expression of their cultural experience. The thimble measure of the text for children may be slight, but the infusion amply evokes the author's cultural largesse.

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45 Metafictions and experimental work

Robyn McCallum

The term ‘metafiction’ is used to refer to fiction which self-consciously draws attention to its status as text and as fictive. It does this in order to reflect upon the processes through which narrative fictions are constructed, read and made sense of and to pose questions about the relationships between the ways we interpret and represent both fiction and reality (Waugh 1984: 2). Although they are not interchangeable, there is considerable overlap between contemporary categories of metafiction and experimental fiction. Texts which are experimental are often also metafictive, and vice versa. As categories of fiction both are, to some extent, context bound, definable in relation to other forms of narrative fiction – the category ‘experimental’ changes through time, socio-historical context, and critical conceptions of what constitutes the mainstream. With children’s literature this category can shift between ‘literary’ and popular, neither of which is exempt from experimentation, depending on which aspects of a text are the focus of attention: the discursive and stylistic techniques, narrative technique and structures, content, social, ideological, intellectual and moral concerns and so on.

A key distinction between metafictive and experimental texts and the majority of fiction written for children lies in the kinds of narrative and discursive techniques used to construct and inscribe audience positions within texts. Briefly, the narrative modes employed in children’s novels tend to be restricted to either first-person narration by a main character or third-person narration with one character focaliser (Stephens 1991: 63). Texts tend to be monological rather than dialogical, with single-stranded and story-driven narratives, closed rather than open endings, and a narrative discourse lacking stylistic variation (Moss 1990; Hunt 1988). These are strategies which function to situate readers in restricted and relatively passive subject positions and to implicitly reinforce a single dominant interpretive stance. Restrictions on narrative point of view in particular frequently have the effect of restricting the possible interpretive positions available to implied readers (Stephens 1991: 63; 1992b: 27).

Metafictive and experimental forms of children’s writing generally use a broader range of narrative and discursive techniques: overly obtrusive narrators who directly address readers and comment on their own narration; disruptions of the spatio-temporal narrative axis and of diegetic levels of narration; parodic appropriations of other texts, genres and discourses; typographic experimentation; mixing of genres, discourse styles, modes of narration and speech representation; multiple character focalisers, narrative voices, and narrative strands and so on. These are strategies which distance readers from a text and frequently frustrate conventional expectations about meaning and closure. Implied readers are thereby positioned in more active interpretive roles. By foregrounding the discursive and narrative structuring of texts, metafictions can show readers how texts mean and, by analogy, how meanings are ascribed to everyday reality.

Metafiction and readers

Although the use of metafictional and experimental narrative forms in children's fiction has recently received positive criticism (Moss 1985; Lewis 1990; Moss 1990, 1992; Hunt 1992; Stephens 1991, 1992b, 1993; Mackey 1990), the genre can still generate resistance and scepticism. A common response is that it is too difficult for children. Metafictional texts often draw attention to their own artifice through the parody or inversion of other texts, genres and discourses. These strategies depend upon a reader's recognition of the parodied text, genre or discourse, and hence assume certain levels of literary and interpretive competence. As inexperienced readers, children may not have learned the cultural and literary codes and conventions necessary to recognise metafictional devices. However, as Hunt has observed, 'it may be correct to assume that child-readers will not bring to the text a complete or sophisticated system of codes, but is this any reason to deny them access to texts with a potential of rich codes?' (1991: 101). Furthermore, Mackey argues that metafictional children's texts can 'foster an awareness of how a story works' and implicitly teach readers how texts are structured through specific codes and conventions (1990: 181).

The instructive potential of metafiction has been emphasised by many theorists (of both adult and children's texts). Hutcheon's description of the activity of a reader of metafiction also aptly describes the activity of an inexperienced child reader: that is, 'one of learning and constructing a new sign-system, a new set of verbal relations' (1980: 19). By involving readers in the production of textual meanings, metafictional texts can implicitly teach literary and cultural codes and conventions, as well as specific interpretive strategies, and hence empower readers to read more competently: more explicit forms often seek to teach readers conventions and strategies with which to interpret metafictional texts as well as other more closed texts.

There are two main aspects of metafiction which are important for reading development. First, developmental studies suggest that mature readers 'read with a more reflective and detached awareness of how the processes of fiction are operating as they read' (Mackey 1990: 179). Metafictional narratives construct a distance between an audience and the represented events and characters and can potentially foster such an awareness (Stephens 1991: 75). Second, there is a demonstrated relationship between play-oriented activities, such as verbal puns, jokes and rhymes, role play and story-telling, and the acquisition of language and of complex cognitive and social skills (Vygotsky 1934/1962; Britton 1970/1972). Underlying much metafiction for children is a heightened sense of the status of fiction as an elaborate form of play, that is, a game with linguistic and narrative codes and conventions. Janet and Allan Ahlberg exemplify this kind of writing for quite young children, by producing narratives which are parodic reversions of familiar childhood texts (for example Allan Ahlberg's *Ten in a Bed* (1983)).

A second objection to metafiction (for children and adults) is that as a radically self-reflexive and playful genre it is ultimately self-indulgent and solipsistic. To assume that fiction can be self-reflexive in any simple way, however, is to confuse the signifying and referential functions of the linguistic signs that constitute a text – that is, it is indicative of a failure to distinguish between signs and things. It is precisely this distinction that theorists such as Britton see as important in the encouragement of an 'openness to alternative formulations of experience' associated with the move out of egocentricism (1970/1972: 86), and which metafictional texts frequently foreground and exploit. We use language and narrative to represent, mediate and comprehend reality, as well as to construct fictions. By 'laying bare' the artifice through which fictional texts mean, metafictional texts can also lay bare

the conventions through which what we think of as ‘reality’ is represented and ascribed with meanings.

Defining metafiction

Metafiction tends to be defined in two main ways: as a distinctive sub-genre of the novel, defined in opposition to literary realism; or as an inherent tendency of the novelistic genre (Ommundsen 1989: 266). Waugh (1984) and Lewis (1990) both stress the relation between metafiction and the classic realist text. Metafictions appropriate and parody the conventions of traditional realism in order to construct a fictional illusion and simultaneously expose the constructedness of that illusion (Waugh 1984: 6). Our understanding of a metafiction will depend to some extent upon the conventions and intertexts which it parodies, but more specifically upon assumptions about the verbal sign inscribed within these conventions. The narrative conventions of realist fiction work to mask the gap between linguistic signs and their fictive referents and to construct an illusion of an unmediated relation between signs and things. In doing so, these conventions obscure the fictionality of referents and imply a reading of fiction as if it were ‘real’. In metafiction, however, the ontological gap between fiction and reality is made explicit; that is, the fictionality of the events, characters and objects referred to is foregrounded.

While the relations between metafiction and literary realism are important, to define one in opposition to the other excludes from consideration a vast number of (often ostensibly ‘realist’) texts which have self-reflexive elements but which are not ‘systematically self-conscious’ (Ommundsen 1989: 265), as well as early forms of metafictional writing. Hutcheon has stressed that the use of self-reflexive narrative strategies is part of a long novelistic tradition: ‘Art has always been “illusion” and it has often, if not always, been self-consciously aware of that ontological status’ (1980: 17). Anita Moss’s (1985) inclusion of early writers such as Nesbit and Dickens acknowledges this tradition in children’s literature.

Much of the critical discourse around children’s metafiction has been situated within a theoretical frame which opposes metafiction and realism and has focused on recent and unambiguously ‘metafictional’ examples. However, an approach which proceeds from an opposition between mainstream children’s writing and ‘counter texts’ – texts which don’t fit unproblematically into the category of children’s literature – excludes all but the most explicitly self-conscious forms and, by implication, suggests a simplistic correlation between metafiction and subversion (for example, Moss 1990: 50). On the other hand, to over-emphasise the novelistic potential for self-reflexivity at the expense of specific identifiable metafictional narrative techniques and discursive strategies is to reduce the possibilities of critical insight and analysis. In other words, both aspects need to be taken into account: the specific strategies through which metafictions play with literary and cultural codes and conventions, and the historicity and conventionality of these metafictional textual practices.

Postmodernism, metafiction and experimental picture books

Metafiction is a mode of writing which has recently flourished within a broader cultural movement referred to as postmodernism (Waugh 1984: 21) with which it shares some common features: narrative fragmentation and discontinuity, disorder and chaos, code mixing and absurdity of the kind which appears in the picture books of John Burningham,

Chris Van Allsburg, Anthony Browne, David Wiesner, David Macaulay and the novels of William Mayne and Terry Pratchett.

Two recent studies have focused on postmodern features of contemporary picture books (Lewis 1990; Moss 1992). The tendency towards parody, playfulness and openness in many recent picture books constitutes a metafictional potential: picture books comprise two inherently different modes of representation – verbal and visual – the relations between which are always to some extent more or less dialogical. Words and pictures interact so as to construct (and defer) meanings, rather than simply reflecting or illustrating each other. The visual and verbal components of a picture book can thus imply a dialogue between text and picture and readers – for example, Burningham's Shirley books or Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*.

The combination of two sign systems clearly provides a way of problematising the representational function of visual and verbal signs and of foregrounding the ways in which the relations between signs and things are structured by culturally inscribed codes of representation and signification. The extent to which meanings are socially and culturally constructed, and hence open to challenge, is a concern addressed in many of Browne's picture books, for example *A Walk in the Park* (1977) or *Willie the Wimp* (1984). Browne characteristically uses surrealist visual elements to foreground the gap between signs and things (for example, his construction of settings out of pieces of fruit and other odd objects). Similarly, Wiesner's pictures in *Tuesday* (1991) are constructed out of a bricolage of visual quotations. Van Allsburg uses realist pictorial conventions to represent fantastical situations, blurring textual distinctions between the fantasy and reality.

Metafiction and experimental narrative techniques

Though we can make broad distinctions between implicit and explicit forms of metafiction and between texts which reflect on their own narrative processes and those which reflect on their linguistic construction, metafictional strategies tend to be used in combination, which means that individual texts have a curious habit of refusing classification. For this reason, rather than attempting to classify texts, I have organised the discussion which follows around specific metafictional and experimental strategies.

Intertextuality and parody

The term intertextuality covers the range of literary and cultural texts, discourses, genres and conventions used to construct narrative fictions. In metafiction these are often foregrounded so as to heighten their conventionality and artifice. Intertexts include specific literary texts, as well as generic and discursive conventions – such as Leon Garfield's parody of nineteenth-century narrative genres in *The Strange Affair of Adelaide Harris* (1971) – and cultural texts and discourses – such as Terry Pratchett's parodic appropriations of department-store jargon in *Truckers* (1989). The relationship between the focused text and its intertexts in metafiction is frequently parodic, though not always – for example, references to the work of John Fowles in Caroline Macdonald's *Speaking to Miranda* (1990) indicate interpretive possibilities to readers (McCallum 1992). A common metafictional strategy is the production of a re-version of a specific text – such as Jan Needle's *Wild Wood* (1981), a re-version of *The Wind in the Willows* – or of well-known fairy stories, or folk tales. Overt forms of intertextuality have three main effects: they foreground the ways in which narrative fictions are constructed out of other texts and

discourses; they work to indicate possible interpretive positions for readers, often distancing readers from represented events and characters; and they can enable the representation within a text of a plurality of discourses, voices and meanings.

Narratorial and authorial intrusions

There is a strong tradition of intrusive narrators who, by drawing attention to their story-telling function, seek to validate the status of their narrative as 'truth'. A common self-reflexive narrative strategy is to use narratorial intrusions to comment on the processes involved in story-telling and to implicitly or explicitly foreground the fictionality of the narrative. In implicit forms of metafiction, such as Edith Nesbit's *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), the narrator draws attention to the act of narration through direct address to readers, discussion of narrative choices about material, tone, register, diction and order, self-conscious parody of conventionalised narrative discourses, and references to the relations between 'life' and fiction. Anita Moss (1985) argues on these grounds that the novel is an explicit form of metafiction. However, although the narrative is self-reflective and readers may go on to infer the status of Nesbit's text as a literary artefact, this is not a position constructed within the text. More explicit forms of metafiction, such as Terry Jones's *Nicobobinus* (1985), Gene Kemp's *Jason Bodger and the Priory Ghost* (1985) or Aidan Chambers's *Breaktime* (1978), overtly parody the intrusive narrator so as to break the fictional illusion. In the final paragraph of *Nicobobinus*, the narrator, Basilcat, discloses that the whole narrative – including himself – is a fiction. Anachronistic narratorial intrusions in *Jason Bodger* also break the fictional frame by alerting readers to the gap between the time of narration and the time of the story.

In experimental fictions narratorial and authorial intrusions often function quite overtly to position readers in relation to a text. An authorial note at the end of Kemp's *I Can't Stand Losing* (1987/1989) almost demands that readers take a moral stance in relation to the text. Kemp morally censures the behaviour of the main character, thereby confirming the implied reader position constructed through the novel and implicitly undermining the contrived fictionality of the ending of the novel. Jan Mark's *Finders Losers* opens with a note addressed to a narratee which describes the relationship between the narrative and the narratee (and by analogy the text and its readers) in terms which constitute the story and its meanings as being constructed by the narratee rather than as being artefacts of the text: 'By the time you have read all six [stories] you will know exactly what happened on that day, and why, but you'll be the only one who does' (1990: 6). The second-person pronoun usually refers to a narratee, but is also used to directly address an implied reader (as in 'choose your own adventure' novels). When it is used more extensively – as it is in Peter Dickinson's *Giant Cold* (1984) and the opening of Peter Hunt's *Backtrack* (1986) – its referential function can be more ambiguous, having a disruptive effect on the relations between text and reader.

Narrative forms: mystery, fantasy, games and readers

Hutcheon describes specific narrative forms which can function as internalised structuring devices to represent reading positions and strategies (1980: 71–86). The mystery is a common device whereby a character's quest to solve a central mystery is represented as analogous to a reader's struggle with the text (Stephens 1993: 102). Combined with an extensive use of character focalisers whose viewpoints are limited, partial and selective and

who consistently misinterpret events, this strategy can be used to construct implied readers in a position of superior knowledge, as in Garfield's parody of Conan Doyle in the character Selwyn Raven, in *The Strange Affair of Adelaide Harris*. Further, Stephens has shown how Mayne uses these strategies in *Salt River Times* (1980) and *Winter Quarters* (1982) to express an 'analogy between interpreting human situations and reading fictions' (1993: 102). A variation on this structuring device is the construction of a mystery which remains unsolved, for example Hunt's *Backtrack* or Gary Crew's *Strange Objects* (1990). The focus becomes, not so much the mystery itself, but the interpretive processes and discourses through which characters attempt to produce solutions.

Fantasy and game genres are also used as internalised structuring devices which point to the self-referentiality of a text. A fantasy text constructs an autonomous universe with its own rules and laws. Metafictional fantasies draw attention to the temporal and spatial structuring of this world – its geography, history, culture – and the role of readers in the act of imagining it and giving shape to the referents of words (Hutcheon 1980: 76). In this way, the reading of metafictional fantasies is 'emblematic' of the reading of fiction in general (81).

The 'choose your own adventure' novel is a relatively recent popular genre which explicitly constructs readers as 'players' in a fictional game and as active participants in the construction of the story. Readers construct characters from an assortment of traits and roles, and at each narrative juncture readers are offered a choice, usually from two or three possible narrative paths leading to a range of possible endings – see for example Steve Jackson's and Ian Livingstone's *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* (1982). This is a highly conventionalised and codified genre, which can potentially teach its readers specific narrative conventions, as well as implicitly reinforce social codes. It is not, in itself, particularly metafictional, though it does clearly have a metafictional potential which has been exploited by writers such as Gillian Rubinstein and Pratchett. In *Beyond the Labyrinth* (1988) Rubinstein's main character attempts to transpose the rules and conventions of the Fighting Fantasy fiction which he is reading on to life. In *Only You Can Save Mankind* (1992) Pratchett inverts and parodies the conventions of computer games. Both writers are concerned with the interrelationships between the ways in which we perceive, think and behave in game fictions and in life. Pratchett's novel implicitly suggests that the modes of action and interpretation used in both fiction and life are very similar; Rubinstein makes more clear-cut distinctions between them.

Narrative disruptions and discontinuities

Disruptions to the causal, logical or linear relationships between narrative events, characters and narrators, and between primary and secondary narratives, have the effect of foregrounding the narrative structuring of texts. There are two main strategies for disrupting narratives: narrative metalepsis, and the representation of heterotopias. Metalepsis refers to the transgression of logical and hierarchical relations between different levels of narration (Genette 1980: 234–5; McHale 1987/1989: 119); heterotopias are fictional 'spaces in which a number of possible orders of being can coincide' (Stephens 1992a: 52).

A classic example of narrative metalepsis occurs in Browne's *Bear Hunt* (1979). By literally drawing his way out of each predicament, Bear functions as both a character constructed within the text and an authorial figure who actively creates and changes the discourse of the text. By transgressing his narrative function, Bear disrupts the conventional hierarchy of relations between character, narrator and author. A more subtle use of metalepsis occurs in Diana Wynne Jones's *The Spellcoats* (1979) where, through the

process of narrating her story, Tanaqui realises that the act of narration is itself a performance which can influence events in the world. Implicit here is an awareness that any narration of a past simultaneously re-constructs (and fictionalises) that past, but Tanaqui's narratorial role literally shifts from scribe to that of author. What begins as retrospective narration of past events (that is a secondary narrative) becomes a narrative which simultaneously shapes and changes events in the present (that is, a primary narrative).

The relationships between authors, primary narrators, secondary narrators and characters are usually hierarchical. By inverting or transgressing these hierarchical relations, metalepsis can be used to articulate questions about authority, power and freedom, such as who has control of the story and its characters – the narrator, her narratees, an author, his readers, or the socio-cultural context within and through which stories are told, heard, interpreted and appropriated. In *A Step off the Path* (1985) Hunt makes extensive use of metalepsis to articulate complex concerns with forms of textual and cultural appropriation and displacement. This is a multistranded novel, in which a story told by a character (Jo) in one narrative strand is a version of events occurring in another strand. The story concerns a group of knights (descendants of their Arthurian namesakes) who exist on the margins of mainstream society and culture. The novel hinges on a discrepancy between these knights and their 'fictional' counterparts represented in the popular medieval romance fictions of mainstream culture, out of which Jo's narrative is constructed. Furthermore, these fictions also inform and obscure the perceptions and interpretations of other characters in the primary narrative. The point is that by appropriating the stories and culture of one social group and re-writing it as 'romance' (that is, fiction or myth), the dominant culture effectively writes this group out of 'history' and out of the present. With his representation of the knights, then, Hunt inverts the usual direction of metaleptic transgression, so that the primary narrative disrupts and transgresses the secondary narrative.

Fantastic children's literature is characterised by widespread representation of heterotopias (Stephens 1992a: 52). Diana Wynne Jones and Peter Hunt both construct temporal heterotopias in which a number of possible time zones co-exist in order to overtly play with the relations between history and the temporal structuring of narrative. Jones's *Witch Week* is premised on the possibility that parallel alternative worlds are constructed through spatio-temporal divergences which occur at decisive points in history – for example, events such as battles, 'where it is possible for things to go two ways' (1982/1989: 171). This works self-reflectively to represent the kinds of narrative choices which writers make in constructing fictions (Waterhouse 1991: 5). In *The Maps of Time* (1983) Hunt takes this idea a step further: narrative paths diverge as characters perceive and imagine events as occurring differently.

Macaulay's picture books quite overtly play with narrative and temporal linearity. He uses a recursive narrative structure in *Why the Chicken Crossed the Road* (1991). *Black and White* (1990) is an elaborate play with perception, representation and interpretation. It consists of four narrative strands. Each is represented using different narrative and pictorial techniques, and they become visually mixed in the latter part of the text as the visual frames are broken by images which mirror and spill over into adjacent frames. The four narratives are linked by repeated images and 'story' elements, which imply that the four stories might constitute aspects of the same story. However, readers' attempts to construct a single logical chronological narrative are frustrated through the confusion of logical, temporal and causal relations between the four strands. Ultimately the text refuses interpretive closure. What we get is layering of different but similar fictions, interwoven into and endlessly reflecting each other.

Mise en abyme and self-reflective devices

The term *mise en abyme* refers to a representation or narrative segment which is embedded within a larger narrative, and which reflects, reproduces or mirrors an aspect of the larger primary narrative (Prince 1987/1988: 53; McHale 1987/1989: 124–5; Hutcheon 1980: 54–6). It usually functions to indicate ways in which ‘the larger narrative might be interpreted’ (Stephens 1993: 105). Narrative aspects which might be reflected include: the story or themes of the primary narrative; its narrative situation – such as the relationship between the narrator and narratee; or the style of the primary narrative text (McHale 1987/1989: 124–5).

In realist novels a story, photo, painting or drawing will often function as a *mise en abyme* to reflect the thematic concerns of the primary narrative. For example, in Zibby Oneal’s *The Language of Goldfish* the main character, Carrie, executes a series of abstracted drawings based on ‘the idea of making patterns in which the real object disappeared’ (1980/1987: 31), descriptions of which are analogous with Carrie’s experience of a dissolution of selfhood which she both desires and fears as she retreats from adolescence and growing up. Lois Lowry also uses this device in *A Summer to Die* (1977). Self-reflective visual images, such as mirrors, paintings and intertextual quotations, are also a common metafictional strategy in the picture books of Browne and Van Allsburg, where they work to foreground the nature of the text as representation, and to blur the distinctions between textual fantasy and reality.

Stories narrated within the primary narrative by a character or a secondary narrator which reflect the story or themes of the primary frame-narrative can also function as *mise en abyme* devices. For example, in Paula Fox’s *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (1967) the stories which James tells reflect larger thematic concerns with the role of story-telling in the recuperation of the past and the construction of a subjectivity. Russell Hoban plays with the recursiveness of the ‘story-within-story-within-story’ structure in repeated descriptions of ‘Bonzo Dog Food’ labels in *The Mouse and His Child* (1967). Stephens has discussed the use of *mise en abyme* in three of William Mayne’s novels, *Salt River Times* (1980), *Winter Quarters* (1982) and *Drift* (1985), and where he sees the device as functioning to replicate the relations between reader and text (1993: 108). Similarly, the representation of relations between a narrator and her narratees in Hunt’s *A Step off the Path* replicates a range of text/reader relations.

Self-reflective images are also used to mirror the narrative processes in texts. Thus the narrator of Price’s *The Ghost Drum* (1987) is a cat chained to a pole around which it walks, telling stories, winding up the chain (that is, the story) as it goes. Similarly, the image of story-telling as ‘weaving’ is represented literally in *The Spellcoats* where the narrator’s story is literally woven into a coat.

The linguistic construction of texts and the world

There are four main strategies whereby metafictional novels can be self-conscious about their existence as language: parodic play on specific writing styles; thematised wordplay, such as puns, anagrams, clichés; variation of print conventions and the use of marginalia, footnotes and epigraphs – strategies which draw attention to the physicality of texts; and deliberate mixing of literary and extra-literary genres, such as the journal, letter, newspaper items, historical documents, and so on.

Pratchett’s *Truckers* is a metafictional fantasy novel about a group of ‘nomes’ who live under the floorboards of a large department store. Their social system, culture and reli-

gion is a bricolage of appropriated signs and discourses associated with department stores, mixed with parodic forms of biblical and religious discourse. Pratchett constantly plays on the slippage between signifiers and signifieds, foregrounding the gap between signs and things (in the meanings the nomes ascribe to 'Bargains Galore', for instance). By foregrounding the construction of the represented world and, hence, the construction of the text, Pratchett also draws attention to the ways in which representations of the world outside the text are similarly constructed and ascribed with meanings. The stories in Ahlberg's *The Clothes Horse* (1987) are constructed out of a play with the literal meanings of commonplace figures of speech, such as 'clothes horse' or 'jack pot'.

The combination of typographical experimentation and overt genre-mixing is widespread in recent popular children's fiction but, as Stephens has suggested, 'seems to be settling into its own formulaic conventions: two or three clearly delineated genres or modes ... are juxtaposed in order to suggest restricted perspective and to complicate otherwise flat, everyday surfaces' (1992a: 53). In novels such as Libby Gleeson's *Dodger* (1990) or Aidan Chambers's *The Toll Bridge* (1992), the metafictional and experimental potential of genre-mixing is repressed through the combination of these strategies with an implicit authorial position and with realist conventions. The discourse is treated as a transparent medium which simply conveys information, rather than as a specific linguistic code which constructs and inscribes this information with meaning. Novels such as Hunt's *Backtrack*, Chambers's *Breaktime* or Crew's *Strange Objects* consistently foreground their own textuality. Extra-literary genres and discourses are combined so as to effect abrupt shifts in the diegetic levels of narration, disrupt relations between fiction and reality within the textual frame, and draw attention to the discursivity of extraliterary genres.

Multistranded and polyphonic narratives

Two common experimental strategies which can also be used metafictionally are multistranded and polyphonic narration. Multistranded narratives are constructed of two or more interconnected narrative strands differentiated by shifts in temporal or spatial relationships, and/or shifts in narrative point of view (who speaks or focalises). In polyphonic narratives events are narrated from the viewpoints of two or more narrators or character focalisers. These are strategies which enable the representation of a plurality of narrative voices, social and cultural discourses, perceptual, attitudinal and ideological viewpoints. In doing so, they can work to efface or destabilise a reader's sense of a single authoritative narratorial position, and thereby situate readers in more active interpretive positions. These are not in themselves metafictional strategies though they can be used as such, particularly in texts which use multiple narrators or focalisers to represent different versions of the same events, such as Mayne's *Drift*.

One of the most common narrative structures used is interlaced dual narration. The narratives of two narrators or character focalisers are represented as two parallel strands interlaced together in alternating chapters or segments. This can work to overtly structure a novel as a 'dialogue' between two social, cultural, historical or gendered positions, as in Hunt's *Going up* (1989), Caroline Macdonald's *The Lake at the End of the World* (1988), Jenny Pausacker's *What Are Ya?* (1987), Jan Mark's *The Hillingdon Fox* (1991) or Dickinson's *A Bone from a Dry Sea* (1992). However, like typographic and generic forms of experimentation, interlaced dual narration has also settled into its own formulaic conventions and is frequently structured so as to privilege one dominant authoritative position.

These narrative forms are at their most innovative when combined with other experimental narrative features, such as intertextuality, complex shifts in narrative point of view, and indirect and effaced modes of narration (see Stephens 1992b and Hunt 1991: 100–17). Two of the most sophisticated examples of polyphonic multistranded narration to date are Alan Garner's *Red Shift* (1973) and Jill Paton Walsh's *Unleaving* (1976).

Postmodernist historiographic metafiction

Historiographic metafiction refers to novels which self-reflexively mix fictive and historical modes of representation so as to pose questions about the relationships between fiction, history and reality (Hutcheon 1989: 50). Represented historical material may refer to either actual or fictive events – the texts and documents represented in Hunt's *Backtrack* are almost entirely fictional, whereas those in Crew's *Strange Objects* are a mixture of actual and fictive. It is the physical incorporation of the discursive style of history writing, rather than their actual historicity, that is characteristic.

Intellectual historians such as White (1987) and LaCapra (1980) have focused on the relations between representation, in particular narrative representation, and our capacity to know and understand the past. To the extent that the past is only accessible via its documents, archives and artefacts, our knowledge of that past is always mediated and determined by prior textualisations or representations. Potentially the past is, therefore, only knowable as text, and is thereby always already implicated in problems of language, discourse and representation. Historiographic metafiction highlights concerns with interpretation and representation by incorporating 'historical' texts and discursive conventions. For example, Hunt plays with the conventional historicist assumption that the closer an account of an event is to that event in time, the more accuracy and credibility it has, by including a transcript of an inquest report in which he steadfastly refuses to disclose information, thereby drawing attention to the discursive strategies which structure the report. The primary narrative of *Backtrack* centres on two characters, Jack and Rill, who investigate what caused a mysterious train crash which occurred seventy years earlier. The mystery remains unsolved and the lack of narrative resolution draws attention to the discourses whereby the mystery is constructed and whereby Jack and Rill attempt to solve it: namely, historical research, conjecture and reconstruction, and conventionalised generic narrative codes – the espionage plot, and the crime of passion plot. A subsequent blurring of the status of these discourses, as fiction and/or history, foregrounds their conventionality and the extent to which fiction and history are both culturally inscribed categories of discourse and not always easily distinguishable from each other. The narrative forms for representing and structuring events are common to both history writing and fiction, and that these are forms which impart meaning as well as order (Hutcheon 1989: 62). The possibility remains that the act of narration, in either fictive or historical writing, might construct and thereby construe its object.

Conclusions

An increasingly noticeable phenomenon has been the appropriation of experimental and metafictional narrative techniques into mainstream children's literature, an occurrence which blurs the distinctions between experimental and non-experimental, between the mainstream and the marginal. However, a key distinction between experimental and non-experimental writing for children lies in the audience positions constructed within

texts. As experimental and metafictional features become more superficial aspects of a text's construction, and hence more conventionalised and formulaic, the range of interpretive positions inscribed in texts becomes increasingly restricted. Many of the techniques and strategies which I have described are not in themselves 'experimental' or 'metafictional', though they have the capacity to function in these ways when used in combination either with each other or with particular discursive and narrational modes. Metafictional and experimental forms of children's writing generally utilise a wide range of narrative and discursive strategies which distance readers from texts, and construct implied readers who are more actively involved in the production of meanings. By drawing attention to the ways in which texts are structured and to how they mean, metafictional texts can potentially teach readers specific codes and conventions and interpretive strategies with which to read and make sense of other, more closed, fictions. Furthermore, to the extent that we use language and narrative to represent and comprehend reality, as well as to construct fictions, metafictional texts can, by analogy, show readers how representations of reality are similarly constructed and ascribed with meanings.

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46 Drama

Susanne Greenhalgh

In Hans Christian Andersen's story 'In the Nursery' (1865) an old man and his granddaughter stage their own version of the romantic domestic play to which the parents have gone, building a theatre from books and old boxes and turning a broken pipe and scraps of clothing into actors. 'Is this not better than the real theatre?' asks the little girl at the end of the performance. With its interrogation of the relationship between children's play and 'real' theatre, improvisation and scripted drama, and its child's perspective of the adult patriarchal world (but mediated by an adult), this story offers a fitting prologue to the complex questions raised by drama for and by children. As Andersen's story acknowledges, scripted drama, as well as participation in theatre and other forms of performance, has been part of children's culture in virtually every society in the world at some point in their history, and yet it is still rare to find attention paid to these texts in discussion of writing for children. There are many reasons for this absence. All kinds of playtexts, not only those for children, have often been denied the status of literature, while awareness that the dramatic text constitutes only one layer of signification within the complex sign system that is theatre (where any object may stand for another), and the difficulties posed by their relationship with the intrinsic ephemerality and intangibility of actual or hypothetical performance have generated an attitude of caution towards this vast and elusive area of study. Reading a play is clearly a very different activity from reading a novel or a poem, or even listening to a story. A play's words – whether dialogue or stage directions – are always designed to produce a *performed text*, in which the verbal codes and clues are turned into characters, speech, objects, sound, space and action presented to an audience who in turn must interpret and take an attitude to what they see and hear, and whose response actively and directly shapes the nature and meaning of the experience. Furthermore, the fixing of a play as a finished text, written down and published, has been neither a priority, nor even a possibility, in many theatre cultures, which have relied instead on processes of rehearsal and memorisation (as the grandfather in Andersen's story improvises an entire short play out of his long experience as a playgoer). Even in cultures where *reading* a play has become an accepted activity in its own right, interpretation is always open to the performative *rewriting* that will accompany any new staging of the script. And it is through participation in performance, as actors or audience, rather than through reading, that most children experience drama.

A note on terminology for children's drama is needed. 'Creative drama', also referred to as 'creative dramatics' or 'child drama', is usually understood as an informal process-centred and expressive activity directed towards imaginative and usually improvised enactment by children (and sometimes their adult guides), without any prior script, as activities to develop the child's experience, creativity and understanding. 'Participatory

drama or theatre' structures active involvement by the young audience/performers in the action (scripted, devised or improvised). Although offering itself as a more 'open' form, it can often be tacitly coercive. The term 'emancipatory theatre' has been coined for theatre with the young that genuinely allows them to choose the direction of the action. 'Children's theatre' (or 'theatre for young audiences', a term growing in popularity) involves the performance of theatrical art (scripted or devised) usually by trained professionals (which may include children) and envisaged as primarily designed for a young audience. It potentially employs all the skills and aesthetic qualities expected from 'adult theatre'. However, the term is also used of performances by children, for instance in schools. 'Children's plays' (either pre-scripted or as a documentation of a devised production) remain the staple of this form of theatre, whether performed by adults or children. 'Youth theatre' usually refers to theatre by young adolescents often intended for an audience of similar age, while 'young people's theatre' may involve this but can also include drama activities offered by professional or educational companies felt to have special relevance to the concerns of the young. Theatre in Education (TIE) combines aspects of creative drama and theatre (often involving professional theatre makers working in educational contexts) and aims at being at least participatory if not actually emancipatory. Scripts and scenarios will usually emerge out of long research preparation and sometimes from long-term engagement with projects involving the young participants in many kinds of activities, designed to encourage learning in the broadest sense. 'Reader's theatre' almost always takes place in schools and is closely linked with enhancing students' understanding and appreciation of non-dramatic forms of literature by adapting them into dramas that can be given staged readings.

Drama, has, in practice, often been inseparable from other forms of writing, including that for young audiences, as Andersen's story again illustrates. Writers of novels or poems for children, from Andersen himself to A. A. Milne, Ted Hughes and Alan Garner, have written plays as well, or even, like J. M. Barrie and his *Peter Pan* (1903–4) turned plays into children's books. Dramatists most noted for their adult work, for example Jonson, Webster, Strindberg, Gertrude Stein, Alan Ayckbourn, Edward Bond, David Mamet, Megan Terry and Wendy Wasserstein, have also written plays for child performers or audiences. In our mediatised, digitised world, it is the dramatic mode which increasingly dominates, often becoming the chief means through which other genres and narratives are delivered, but this 'intermediality' has a longer history than is often recognised. Adaptation of the fables and fairy stories that were once part of both adult and childhood oral culture has always formed a staple of world drama, from Shakespeare to Carlo Gozzi's ironic *fiabi*, Maeterlinck's *fin de siècle* symbolist fantasies or Brecht's pragmatic transformations of folk tales into political *Lehrstücke* (learning plays). From the mid-eighteenth century on, with the advent of publications addressed specifically to children, the resulting stories, rhymes, novels and poems have regularly been put into dramatic form: transpositions which are often translations too, exploiting theatre's cross-cultural capacity to carry native and local traditions and narratives into other national contexts. One of the first public performances for children in Japan, for example, was a version of the European fairy tale *The Gay Fiddle* in 1903, while its first children's theatre companies were influenced by German fairy-tale performances and the post-revolutionary Soviet children's theatres (Rouyer *et al.* 1994: 26). Conversely, the global dramatic repertoire, especially Shakespeare, has been the source for countless prose narratives tailored to the supposed needs of the child reader. In turn, theatre, and the experience of dramatic performance, which in western culture are so dominated by the concept that 'all the world's a stage',

have inevitably formed one of the many, liminal alternative worlds that pervade children's books; represented variously as a means of bringing families and friends together, or as a surrogate for the loss of such emotional connections, as a healing place for trauma, or an exciting, colourful but often dangerous location for growing up and acquiring new skills, insight and confidence.

Although drama has always been intrinsically intertextual with other literary forms, its primary relationship is, of course, with the actualities of theatre and performance, and thus with the material culture and ideological practices of societies. Plays, like other cultural forms, emerge from and engage with the culture that shapes them, but the ways in which they in turn also shape the culture which produces them can be viewed as more direct and visible in a mode of cultural production which is inherently and inescapably interactive and dynamic. On the other hand, while plays always emerge from specific national or ethnic communities, as a social institution theatre has often had internationalising and intercultural tendencies, seizing and translating its subject-matter from many cultures, and acting as a conduit for the transmission of new and different perspectives on life and living. The anthropologist Victor Turner, in collaboration with the performance theorist Richard Schechner, has modelled this process as a kind of double feedback loop, in which aesthetic drama is continually fed by the social drama of everyday conflict and change, which in turn unconsciously borrows its tactics and scenarios from the art forms that emerge (Schechner 1977: 144; Turner 1982: 74). As new dramatic conventions appear, altering the terms on which audience and playwright meet, they also create new versions of the world and its inhabitants that do not simply mirror reality but help to construct it. Drama therefore offers an especially vivid and concrete record of the ways in which childhood has been understood, perceived, imposed and contested in different periods and cultures.

It is precisely these self-reflexive, world-building aspects of performed drama that have always attracted educators and social engineers. Promising as it does possibilities both for effective instruction under the guise of entertainment and the instilling, through a public and shared mode of collective experience, of the values of an institution or a whole society, the dramatic genre is premised on *action* (as its etymological origins in the Greek word for something done suggest, and as Aristotle was the first to emphasise). Drama, more than most other genres, is acknowledged to have designs on its audience, even if only to win its applause. And these attributed powers to both educate and morally improve the young have always been proffered as a chief defence against perennial 'anti-theatrical prejudice'. Aristotle was only the first of many to attempt to theorise as socially productive the relationship between the mimetic impulse, learning, pleasure and the fully fledged artistic forms of drama and theatre. There is now a proliferation of terms, definitions and distinctions associated with these fields of enquiry, derived from a number of disciplines and philosophies. Play, not plays, is the focus for many of these approaches. Many theorists, especially in America, seek first to distinguish between the 'doing' and 'seeing' activities implied by the root meanings of the words 'drama' and 'theatre' to propose a continuum from imaginative, imitative play, regarded as natural and innate in children, to formal theatrical presentation of dramatic scripts. (For a discussion of graphical representations and the 'continuum' see Davis and Evans 1987.)

The next stage on from 'natural' drama on this 'continuum' is *guided drama* involving 'child' or 'creative' drama (or 'dramatics'), which is characterised as improvisational, non-script-based, emotionally expressive, developmental of personality, social and intellectual skills, language and communication, moral or social awareness, aesthetic appreciation and empathy with others, and concerned with process rather than product. This is followed by

'participation' drama, in which more 'theatrical' activities such as watching as an audience become prominent, as well as direct intervention in the unfolding dramatic action. The culmination is experience and appreciation of the arts of theatre. As Stephani Woodson has noted, however, the concept of the continuum leans heavily both on the evolutionary models of childhood as a stage of development, and on Romantic idealisations of the child and nature, implying that childhood is simple and irrational, adulthood complex and rational, and that the child's progression from drama to theatre mirrors this 'maturing' process (1999: 204). According to Moses Goldberg, the goal of 'creative dramatics' is 'not performance, but rather the free expression of the child's creative imagination' (Goldberg 1974: 4). From the perspectives made available from the new field of performance studies, however, largely adult-dominated and 'complex' theatre and child-centred 'simple' creative drama can both be seen as forms of what Schechner calls 'restored' or 'twice-behaved' behaviour (1985: 36), requiring framing, aesthetic choices, and generating a sense of the 'multiple realities, each the negative of all the others', which 'locate the essence of performance' (123).

Further perspectives on these questions of child agency in performance, particularly important for much contemporary drama for and with children, are offered by the materialist theories of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin. In 1928 Benjamin, as a result of his love relationship with a Russian children's theatre worker, wrote a brief but suggestive 'Proletarian Children's Theatre' programme, unpublished until the 1960s, which described a 'pre-ideological' theatre out of which a 'true' education in Marxist dialectics could emerge. Benjamin, too, emphasised play but wanted to create conditions for its 'radical release' to bring about a 'fulfilled' childhood (1928/1973: 31) through improvisation, the stimuli of other arts practices, and above all dramatic play with provided or found objects. From this engagement with the material world rather than the 'dangerous magic-realm of mere fantasy' (30) children's self-generated, rather than imposed, performance gestures would create a theatre which would be 'truly revolutionary ... a secret signal of what will come to be' (32). The ongoing debate between those who regard drama as primarily an expressive, creative form arising from universal instincts and physical/cognitive imperatives, those who prize its powers to model a world (and self) in the constant process of being constructed, and those for whom its aesthetic dimensions are most valuable and 'timeless' in turn affects what is seen as drama, and how its relation to childhood is understood.

Jack Zipes has argued that in a globalised world

[m]ost contemporary plays for children are produced for the play's sake, not for the children's; most pander to the entertainment industry's expectations and conceal power relations ... Traditional plays show off talent while concealing any connection to the daily struggles of children or their attempt to grasp how art can play a role in their immediate lives. While many plays deal with social issues, they divert attention from those mediations that bind children into the corporate interests of the public sphere.

(Zipes 2003: 12)

There has always been a dialectical tension between the potential of drama to create a questioning active child subject through the experience of conflict and otherness, and its use for purposes of socialisation and the encouragement of conformity with cultural norms. Here the fact that drama also concretely explores the relation between child and

adult, is significant. Unlike the experience of reading, in child drama adults are almost always present, one way or another, as authors, actors, facilitators or fellow spectators. The genre always assumes, implicitly or explicitly, a dual reception, if not always appearing to offer a dual address, to both kinds of audience simultaneously. The many theories which connect theatre with the instinct to play underline the sense in which drama can be regarded as the genre, above all others, which can revive the child in its participants, whether nostalgically or provocatively. What is sometimes overlooked about children's drama, however, is that in the intrinsically social and political tripartite performance experience, which always involves the self, the performer and the rest of the audience (Read 1993: 90), that audience always includes other children as well as adults: a power relationship at least as important as that with adults.

The assumption that children constitute a specialised audience for drama, requiring plays and performances tailor-made for them, is put in question by much of theatre history. In many of the cultures of the past, as is still the case in some African and Asian societies where children and adults habitually form part of the same audience, little or no distinction was made between the dramatic fare offered or performed, although children may require initiation or long apprenticeship to acquire the appropriate performance skills, as in the dance dramas of Japan, China and Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is possible to find evidence of special recognition of the young as both performers and audience at specific key points in western theatre history. The ritualised competitive displays of choral song and dance out of which Athenian drama emerged in the fourth century BC already highlighted the role of boys on the cusp of maturity, but the emergence of a new kind of 'performance culture' designed to serve the ideological needs of an evolving and highly experimental democratic *polis* accentuated the significance of the youths about to become citizens through their roles in the chorus. Here they were educated through enactment, 'playing the other' of the male free, rational and militarily active ideal citizen through impersonations of women, slaves, old men, foreigners and animals (see Zeitlin 1990). These roles for young adults also contrasted with the mute male child roles which were occasionally written into tragedy, especially by Euripides, in the form of passive victims of war or female evil, as in *The Trojan Women* or *Medea*, the first of countless adult plays to employ child figures in order to create effects of pathos and innocent suffering.

If Athenian drama can be regarded as in some ways an early form of youth theatre, other dramatic modes demonstrate more ways in which youth performance can be political. Benjamin linked children's play with the carnivalesque in its capacity to subvert and challenge the fixed structures of a culture, and seasonal periods of allowed misrule and hierarchical inversion, when boys could temporarily become priests, chiefs or kings, have been a feature of much popular festivity and ritual across the world. Children also participated in the European religious and biblical drama of the middle ages, sometimes, as in versions of the story of Abraham and Isaac, taking a central role with the emphasis again on pathos and innocence, combined with iconographic functions as emblems of the gentleness and purity of Christ or his saints and martyrs. With the revival of the traditions of classical training in rhetoric by the humanists of the Renaissance, drama became a core element in the school curriculum. The Roman plays of Terence, and to a lesser extent Seneca and Plautus, were the most favoured models for classroom declamation as well as performance, together with religious stories, either in the form of Bible or saint's tales or moral allegory, but often blended with narratives and tropes from popular oral culture.

School drama for boys, modified according to whether the institution was Catholic or Protestant, was an important influence on professional drama in continental Europe

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was particularly the case in the theatrical culture of early modern England, where, unlike much of Europe, boy actors not only took all female roles, but a distinctive professional tradition of children's companies and play repertoire developed from the court performances of choir schools, to which many of the best-known dramatists of the time, such as Lyly, Peele, Jonson, Marston, Dekker, Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman and Middleton, contributed. These plays are far from simple, but rather fully exploit the potential for parodic, satirical and playful effect created by the presence of child performers, 'a sort of Jack-and-the-giant situation in which the audience's sympathies were clearly with the smaller characters' (Shapiro 1977: 104).

Other important sites of school drama were the educational establishments of the militant Catholic religious order, the Society of Jesus, founded by Ignatius Loyola, which for over 200 years staged often spectacular and hugely popular performances of plays written both for and by the young. Surviving examples, such as the martyr play *Vitus* written by the English recusant Joseph Simons for boys at the Jesuit college at St Omer in 1623, show they provided excellent roles for young protagonists, such as boy emperors and martyrs, and even a child Christ. This long-lasting dramatic tradition, which was also exported to the newfound Americas as part of the missionary endeavours of the order, was always a form of 'outreach' theatre, designed to attract (and if necessary convert) visiting dignitaries and natives, as well as relatives and members of the local community. It was also, as Goethe recognised when he witnessed performances in Rome, above all a theatre of the world, designed to serve the needs of the young by extending their social abilities and intellectual understanding, as well as moral virtue, and developing and staging their talents as actors and writers, through giving them the richest theatrical resources possible. It is hardly surprising therefore that Jesuit drama produced many of the most important playwrights of the time, including the Corneille brothers, Racine and Molière in France, Calderon and Lope de Vega in Spain, and Goldoni in Italy, only losing influence with the dissolution of the order in between 1750 and 1773.

All the drama discussed so far was the product of strongly gendered performance traditions, written and performed by men and boys, and often designed to produce the forms of masculinity approved by its society, though also capable of calling such certainties into question, as in the transvestite drama of Renaissance England. Even when not intended for public performance, it still offered mimetic models of, and practice in, the public skills of debate and persuasion, and was peopled by male dramatic figures equipped with nimble wits, moral awareness and will, heroic endeavour or manly endurance. However, there was a largely hidden counter-tradition, only recently excavated by feminist historians, of writing by women in the form of 'closet drama' created for the domestic space rather than the playhouse or school theatre. In convents, schools and homes this amateur female theatre offered a new kind of theatrical 'sociability', one intimately bound up with family life, and thus with children. It was necessarily intimate and small-scale, since such performance (or even reading) was only permissible within the security of close relationships, but could be interrogative, as well as imitative, of the established dramatic conventions of the male canon. The performances by children in court or noble households had also been a form of 'family' drama, but one in which the concept of 'family' was both extended and hierarchical, in which children were often equivalent in status to servants, or actually working in such roles as pages, maids or apprentices.

The impact of Enlightenment ideas about human perfectibility and the possibility of social progress through reason and scientific enquiry brought with it significant changes in

ideas of childhood and family structure, influenced especially by the philosophies of Rousseau, as well as the beginnings of political feminism. The first woman to write drama specifically for these child performers and audiences was Stephanie, Comtesse de Genlis, tutor to the future king of France, Louis Philippe, whose *Théâtre à l'Usage des Jeunes Personnes*, first published in 1779–80, along with her other writings on education, was rapidly available in English. In England it was the husband of the radical feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, political and educational philosopher turned children's publisher, who produced the first English play anthology for children in 1807. Wollstonecraft, whose daughter Mary Shelley also wrote several plays for the young, though also a follower – and critic – of Rousseau, found de Genlis's work for and ideas about children's education marked by conservatism and sentimentality. The 'new dramaturgy' she created, which replaced black-and-white morality with 'the struggle between good and not-so-good', watered down or ridiculed evil and maintained a mood of 'triumphant sweetness and light', offering a manipulative dramatic world deliberately deprived of real conflict (Levy 1992: 2–3).

Unlike de Genlis's plays, which aimed at gently moulding the child to socially and morally desirable ends, the plays of the Anglo-Irish writer Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849) illustrate the potential of child-focused drama to address issues of social concern and to make implicit links between the position of children as subordinated subjects and other forms of social hierarchy and oppression. Edgeworth wrote both as a member of a family circle linked with such scientific radicals as the members of the Lunar Society, and as an inhabitant of a colonised nation. The system of *Practical Education* (1798) that she and her father devised and advocated was mimetic in the sense that it was built on detailed observation and recording of children's speech and behaviour. As well as the *Little Plays* (1827), which were added to the *Parent's Assistant* anthology of educational tools for use in the domestic setting, Edgeworth's novel *The Absentee* (1812), about tenants and landowner relationships in Ireland, was originally written as a play for her large family of stepbrothers and sisters. It was only turned into novel form when the leading playwright and theatre manager of the time, Sheridan, advised that the play would not be passed by the censor for professional staging.

Despite these early stirrings of interest in drama as a vehicle for progressive education, the fact that during the nineteenth century the socialisation of the young of all classes increasingly took place in schools rather than the family meant that surviving published drama includes both school and household or other amateur drama, mainly in the form of fairy tales and folk stories, history and religious plays, sentimental comedies, improving scenarios and parodies. However, the chief forum for child-centred performance texts was becoming the professional theatre itself, more than ready to offer a more specialised product for a new category of consumer. Commercial imperatives to keep theatres open and profitable throughout the year led to the introduction of seasonal offerings for family audiences, especially at Christmas, based around appropriate parts of the existing theatrical repertoire, such as pantomime, burlesque, fairy and folk tales, and magic shows, with a theatricality based more on spectacle and musical and obvious moral lessons than subtleties of plot or characterisation. Finland even had its own national children's playwright in the journalist and historical novelist Zachris Topelius, whose didactic and moralistic versions of national and international folk tales, written in the middle of the century, formed an almost unvarying dramatic repertoire well into the twentieth century. Such plays were a very different form of 'family entertainment' from that which had been provided by theatre during previous centuries, and were to be the dominant

mode of children's theatre in Europe and America for over a hundred years, continuing in many respects into the present. Although J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* attempted to break the mould by creating a more psychologically complex drama in which a child would play the child protagonist, the role would constantly be given to adults and the play turned into another version of pantomime.

Much of the subsequent development of drama for the young was also, in one way or another, a reaction to or rejection of the norms established by these commercial traditions. By the beginning of the twentieth century, such critiques were being developed from both educational and political perspectives, and to some degree these different emphases helped determine the formation of three main counter-traditions, which would influence the emergence of different forms of children's drama in various societies. The educationally focused perspective, with creativity also a key concept, became influential in much of the English-speaking world, while, following the Russian Revolution of 1917, a more ideological view of drama for the young dominated large parts of Soviet-influenced eastern Europe, and subsequently countries of the third world, such as Cuba, China and various African and Asian states, often as part of their own revolutions. The third tendency, though still heavily influenced by socialist ideals, was more concerned with theatre as an art form or vehicle of spiritual or cultural values rather than its uses as a tool for social change. In practice, however, throughout the twentieth century these different tendencies towards education, social conditioning, creativity and aesthetic enhancement, have constantly intermingled and migrated across national borders, both through the work of individual practitioners and theorists and through international organisations and events such as festivals and theatre tours specifically designed to encourage interculturalism. The evolution and dissemination of specific national dramatic repertoires have also inevitably been significantly affected by historical events, such as the two world wars and the long period of world domination by the superpowers of the USA and the Soviet Union. Also influential have been the independence from colonial rule by European powers of many nations in Africa and Asia, the development of a youth-based counter-culture movement in the west in the late 1960s, and the struggles against totalitarian and militaristic regimes in Europe and Latin America, and in the Middle East.

Although the first state theatre for children was created in Hungary in 1919, with the support of intellectuals and artists such as Bartók, Kodály and Lukács, with similar attempts made in Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1918, it was in Russia that a national programme for children's theatre was first realised from the 1920s onwards. Theatre buildings and permanent, highly trained companies were established in all the major cities, leading to an ongoing demand for the production of new plays and the adaptation of existing writing of all genres for children and adults, as long as the state-endorsed principles of social realism and socialist idealism were incorporated. Children's theatre (generally known as TUZ) was seen as both a primary means to redress the social and economic inequalities which the revolution had been intended to overturn, by exposing the young to the cultural riches of the past and present, and also as a visible and appealing showcase for the progress made towards the promised utopia. Accordingly, the well-subsidised theatres were able to build a colourful and popular repertoire, ranging from fairy tales to versions of adult classics for different ages, and combining drama with music (as in the famous *Peter and the Wolf* commissioned from Prokofiev in 1928 by the Moscow Central Children's Theatre, led by Natalia Sats). The celebrated children's writer Samuel Marshak (1887–1975), in his role as head of the children's writers' union, was an important supporter of children's drama, and many of his stories, along with those of other well-

known children's authors such as Yevgeny Svarts, became a staple of the repertoire. The children's theatres also served as a refuge for artists viewed as dissident or otherwise out of step with the party line. By the mid-1950s their output catered as much to adult as to child audiences, dealing with the problems of society rather than providing an escape through fantasy, or using fairy tales as a disguise for political parody. It benefited from the participation of outstanding musicians, dancers and visual artists to develop new, aesthetically innovative possibilities for performance which could be exploited by playwrights. Victor Rostov, whose play *Her Friends* (1949), about a blind girl, had been officially criticised for 'sentimentality', wrote a number of works which dealt with contemporary issues of conflict and moral choice rather than conformity, centred on young Hamlet-like protagonists, and it was his play *Alive Forever* which opened the studio of the Moscow Arts Theatre at the beginning of the 'thaw' that followed the end of Stalin's oppressive regime (Smeliansky 1999: 26).

The seriousness of Russian theatre's engagement with both aesthetics and social goals for the young was a major and continuing influence on the rest of Europe even during the Cold War years. Although much of the drama that emerged was at the safe, traditional end of the spectrum, with the familiar reliance on fantasy and charm, in the mid-1960s, as counter-cultural political movements and reactions against them rippled through many European societies, young theatre-workers began to discover a new oppressed minority in children. They attempted to find ways to radicalise the children through reinventing the techniques of Brecht and Piscator for the new conditions; they later discovered new influences such as Augusto Boal's forum theatre and the American Living Theater, all of which introduced different ways of thinking about content, audience address and mode of presentation. Grips Theatre in Berlin, with its rediscovery of Brecht's 'fun' cabaret theatre, was to be a much-copied and enduring exemplar of the possibilities for a political children's theatre (Zipes 2003) in Europe and beyond. Countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia, with existing traditions of richly poetic, highly experimental theatrical forms, liberated children's drama into the surreal, the dreamlike and the abstract.

All over Europe, after a period of rejection of the 'cosy' fairy-tale traditions which had dominated mainstream theatre, there was a new realisation not only of the ways in which these materials could be made fresh and exciting for children, but how they could also revitalise adult theatre practices. Writing of the achievement of theatre for young audiences in Europe, Wolfgang Wöhlert celebrates it as a 'theatre of feeling and fantasy, a theatre that speaks most of all to the senses', which, in its ability to reach people from all social levels can be regarded as a 'folk theatre for all generations' that has yet never given up its specificity as a theatre for the young (Rouyer *et al.* 1994: 26).

In the English-speaking world generally, the development of drama for the young was driven by a combination of commercial and socio-educational imperatives in a broadly liberal humanist mode. Children's theatre in the USA can be dated to the creation of Alice Minnie Herts's Children's Educational Theater in New York in 1903, which primarily aimed to serve the 'melting-pot' requirements of the society by using drama to teach English and encourage social integration. Subsequently the production of drama for children remained dominated by similar social and pedagogic objectives, with plays performed by primarily amateur companies and written by teachers and social workers. A key figure in expanding the diet available to children from the 1920s on was Winifred Ward (1884–1975) who developed the field of 'creative dramatics' through both her writing and practice, introducing university courses on educational drama, founding the Children's Theater at Evanston and in 1944 initiating what would eventually become the

Alliance for American Theater and Education (AATE). Ward advocated drama in the form both of informal educationally motivated creative drama and theatre productions by casts of children and adults, and consequently put a new focus on encouraging innovation and quality in playwriting for children and in children's theatre companies. An early pioneer in the former field for many years was Charlotte Chorpenning (1872–1955), whose plays for the Goodman Theater in Chicago (1925) from 1931 mostly favoured versions of 'universal' and 'familiar' fairy stories, folk tales and well-known children's books, and emphasised clear moral values. Her plays were also part of the Federal Theater Project, which introduced drama to countless deprived children across the nation during the 1930s. Although colleges and universities would remain important in developing standards and skills in playwriting through their teaching and theatre arts programmes (many taught by faculty who themselves wrote prize-winning children's drama, like Jonathan Levy, Moses Goldberg and Suzan Zeder), the emergence of a number of regional children's theatres introduced an important new source for the patronage and encouragement of dramatic writing. Leaders in this field have been the professional children's theatre companies of Minneapolis, Seattle, Lexington and Honolulu, all of which have graduated over the years to well-equipped theatre buildings, and established close links to local schools, libraries and museums. The existence of these, and other, non-building-based companies has led to a huge increase in playwriting for children since the middle of the twentieth century. A particularly successful experimental touring company is Judith Martin's long-established Paper Bag Company (1955), which borrowed some of the practices of Russian children's theatre to offer surreal object-based scenarios combining art activities with performance in a way reminiscent of Benjamin's 'programme'.

In a rich field, some of the outstanding dramatists to emerge include Aurand Harris, Sandra Fenichel Asher, James Still, Max Bush, Ric Averill, Laurie Brooks and Jose Cruz Gonzales, with plays ranging stylistically from heightened realism and zany fantasy to complex psychologically based explorations of mythic narratives, and dealing with subjects derived from history, children's literature and the narrative and cultural traditions of the many ethnicities that make up America. An important stimulus for such variety of writing has undoubtedly come from the awards and sponsorship made available by the many American organisations concerned with children's theatre. The Bonderman National Youth Playwriting Symposium, which showcases and develops plays for young audiences, was started in 1985, and is held biannually in Indianapolis. The event has also served as a model for newer TYA development venues, including the Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices programme, the Provincetown Playhouse's New Play Readings, and the American Alliance for Theater in Education's Playwrights in Our Schools programme. However, America has also been the first location for globally marketed and franchised Disney musicals, starting with *Beauty and the Beast*, which not only co-opt children as junior consumers of multinational tie-in products but, as Julie Taymor's *The Lion King* has demonstrated, have an ability to appropriate once radical 'world theatre' styles and techniques for commercial ends in a way analogous to the marketing of 'world music'.

In most of Asia, a specialised, professional children's theatre and accompanying dramatic repertoire only emerged after the Second World War, and remains undeveloped, other than in countries which were part of the USSR. In Japan, where a degree of westernisation accompanied industrialisation from the beginning of the twentieth century, theatre was influenced by both German and Soviet forms of children's theatre, and since the war a flourishing range of companies and organisations has arisen, which combine aesthetic and educational approaches and draw on the many other national performance

traditions, such as puppetry and mask. Throughout Asia, and increasingly in Africa, it is possible to detect a tension between growing influence from western cultures of childhood, such as ‘Disneyfied’ fairy tales, transmitted globally by the media, and the desire to preserve and build on local performance traditions and narratives, and address pressing social issues through ‘theatre for development’. Influences have also come through the work of western specialists in TIE and educational drama (especially in former British dominions and colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa), or the emancipatory techniques of Grips Theatre, for instance in parts of India.

In the UK, too, drama was initially influenced by developments in child-centred educational theory and practice, with some key figures emerging whose ideas would reach an international audience, such as Peter Slade, Brian Way (who founded Theatre Centre in 1953), Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. All of these, though with different emphases, sought to place drama at the heart of the school curriculum, as a ‘way of knowing’ as well as teaching, and as an art form distinct from theatre. The development of professional theatre for children has reflected the importance of London as a theatre centre, with 30 per cent of productions now originating there, although as early as 1927 Scotland had had its own company founded by Bertha Waddell on the model of Soviet children’s theatre.

In 1947, Caryl Jenner (1917–73) founded the Unicorn Theatre which, after a difficult time in the 1990s, is now the focus for a campaign to build a specialist centre for national children’s theatre practice and research. The Polka Theatre and the Oily Cart company also provide imaginative drama for the very young.

Theatre in Education, which seeks to blend aspects of child drama and formal theatre, is Britain’s most distinctive contribution to world drama for children, which has since been exported to former British colonies and dominions such as Australia, South Africa and Canada (whence to the USA), and, though few of the resulting plays have been published, it has also been the proving ground for many new playwrights, such as Bryony Lavery, Diane Samuels and Julia Pascal, and has attracted established ones such as Edward Bond. Despite this, many of the TIE companies which came into being in the 1960s, inspired by the new educational theories, disappeared as a result of arts and education funding cuts during the 1980s and 1990s and the creation of a National Curriculum focused on set targets for literacy achievement which has squeezed out theatre-going and creative drama activities. As a result, such work has been increasingly taken over by professional companies, sometimes for rather cynical economic reasons (although children pay cheaper prices, they can provide a stable and predictable market, especially for ‘set text’ productions), with a possible dilution of the educational focus and a return to more traditional or canonical narratives in some cases.

As well as versions of great plays (especially Shakespeare – see Megan Isaac (2000), Naomi Miller (2003), and Richard Burt (1983)) – dramatisations of the adult literary heritage for teaching purposes have always been an important aspect of British drama for the young. These have been augmented by stage versions of children’s literature such as *Alice*, *Peter Pan* and *The Wind in the Willows*, which in turn eventually provided commercial and state-subsidised theatres with a popular and ‘quality’ alternative to the Christmas pantomime. The golden age classics have since been regularly joined by an abundance of new members of the canon, including many versions of Roald Dahl’s work by the prolific and talented David Wood (who has created plays from virtually every possible kind of source, including Enid Blyton and Eric Hill’s *Spot the Dog* series of picture books), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Royal Shakespeare Company 1998), *Tom’s Midnight*

Garden (Unicorn 2002), David Almond's *Skellig* (Young Vic 2003) and an epic two-part version of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (Royal National Theatre 2004).

While adaptations of children's literature have been prevalent across the world, this genre appears particularly dominant in the UK, where it has always been a major feature of radio and television drama for children and families (Greenhalgh 1998) and where children's books and their authors have become valuable assets for the heritage and tourist industries. Following the publication of a report on education and the arts industries in 2000, the Arts Councils of England and Scotland have turned their attention to how children's theatre can be developed, through funding for more companies (in Scotland) and the encouragement of quality and diversity in writing (in England) through supporting theatre-based writing internships and sponsorship (Arts Council England 2003). Action for Children's Arts, a lobbying group made up of professionals in arts for children and chaired by David Wood, is also putting drama for children at the centre of planned conferences and 'inspiration' events, involving the Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo (whose *When the Whales Came* is a popular adaptation) and Philip Pullman, and celebrating the centenary of *Peter Pan* in 2004. Speaking at the Arts Council England seminar on quality in children's theatre in Birmingham, October 2003, the artistic director of Unicorn, Tony Jackson, acknowledged the positive spin-offs that this new seriousness about children's literature in the UK might have for children's drama, but also pointed to the need for British children's theatre to move away from its educational and literary roots to the aesthetic possibilities offered by physical theatre, performance art and collaboration with artists in other media such as that of the choreographer Alain Pleytel in Belgium (see Kear 2004). In 2003 LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre) inaugurated a research and performance season, *Why Do We Play?* focused on work by, for and about children from around the world. Jackson's own production of *Red Red Shoes* at the Unicorn, as well as 'crossover' theatre like *Shockheaded Peter*, points to the possibilities and challenges of exploring the darker aspects of childhood, in ways perhaps necessary in a society which, in the wake of notorious child murders, some by other children, takes an often schizophrenic view of childhood 'evil' and 'innocence'.

In his essay for the first edition of this Encyclopedia, Peter Hollindale described children's drama as the 'Cinderella' of children's literature. The analogy can be taken further. Cinders in her rags (at least in many theatrical versions) creates a poignant and self-revelatory form of 'poor theatre' through her imagination, compared with which the spectacular stagecraft of the 'transformation' scene stage-managed by the fairy godmother can look tawdry and hollow. This essay has tried to emphasise the complex and shifting international web of relationships with play, theatre, performance, other literary forms for children, and changing technologies in which children's drama must be situated if we are ever to understand its 'multiple realities, each the negative of all the others' (Schechner 1985: 123).

Much remains to be done. As we move further into the twenty-first century we can celebrate decades of achievement across the world in creating spaces where children can interact imaginatively with themselves and their many worlds. There is much to celebrate too in the new scholarly attention being given to this field, for instance in the wonderful resources of the Jonathan Levy Child Drama Collection at Arizona State University. The task of discovering a hidden history and documenting its present manifestations is a demanding but exciting one, and riches wait to be uncovered, for example in the still relatively unexcavated records of children's theatre in the former USSR, or the changing nature of children's performance in postcolonial societies like South Africa or India, or

post-revolutionary ones like China or Chile. The theoretical perspectives made available by gender and performance studies must be brought to bear on a range of productions, plays and practitioners. If it is true that this field is on the verge of being granted a new seriousness by the public and governments, at least in Europe and the English-speaking world, the scholarship of childhood studies needs to support this through more serious and substantial critical and theoretical attention to the resulting products and processes (Schneider 1995) just as publishers and librarians should ensure that its texts do not disappear as so many have done in the past.

Plays will remain important in these endeavours, for the young, the practitioners and the scholars. The criteria used by Tony Jackson to evaluate the 'quality' of drama can help us begin to construct a full appraisal of their dramaturgy: 'Does the play matter to children? Is it something they might care about? Does it have a sense of poetry? Of flight? Does it contain a child's perspective? Is it a drama? Can it transcend and transform?' (Jackson in Arts Council England, 2003). But we should also listen to Jack Zipes when he warns that 'unless children can appropriate the scripts, all plays – Broadway plays, classical dramas, adaptations of famous novels – have minimal value for their lives' (Zipes 2003: 12). Perhaps, in the end, this is the main lesson that children's drama has to teach the adult world, to stand back and give the young room for their 'radical play'.

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47 Story-telling

Mary Medicott

Story-telling is often regarded as the ‘ur’ form, the base of all the arts. It combines the art of the tale, regarded in the Irish proverb as ‘worth more than all the wealth of the world’, with the fundamental human propensity for seeing life in the form of stories. As Isaac Bashevis Singer put it, ‘Today, we live, but by tomorrow today will be a story. The whole world, all human life, is one long story’ (Singer 1976: 5).

The oral tradition was originally the basis of all knowledge. Prior to the development of writing, it was the only way to share and pass on actual or imaginative experience. The manner of the communication was also highly significant, since it involved direct contact between the listener and whoever was the story-teller, sometimes as part of special celebrations, often in the course of ordinary life.

The oral tradition consists of three main sorts of material. First are the inherited stories which include myths, legends, folk tales and fairy tales and all the proverbs, riddles and songs which traditionally accompany them. Second are life stories, many of which are also inherited. Accounts of personal, family and tribal events, these can be seen as the building blocks of history and the cement of social living. Third is the new material story-tellers create, sometimes weaving it so seamlessly into the old that its newness can scarcely be recognised except as creating the topicality and freshness which are major ingredients in helping tradition to survive.

For children, the materials of the oral tradition carry enormous educational potential as well as providing entertainment. In *The Ordinary and the Fabulous*, an influential book on using traditional literature with children, Elizabeth Cook argues that: ‘a grown-up understanding of life is incomplete without an understanding of myths, legends and fairy tales’ (Cook 1969: vii). Describing the power of story to empower and inspire, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe observes in *Anthills of the Savannah*: ‘The story is our escort; without it we are blind.’

Co-existing traditions

There is vast variety in the world’s oral traditions. At the same time, most oral traditions themselves possess many different threads with key places such as palace or castle, temple or church, market square, kitchen and bedroom providing the focus for different kinds of stories and different modes of telling, the nature of each determined by the type of venue, the kind and size of audience and the expectations surrounding the story-teller.

In courtly traditions from ancient Greece to modern Africa, story-tellers entertained the chief or king, his entourage and guests. Normally highly trained, they undertook a long apprenticeship. In medieval Wales, such a story-teller was known by the name

cyfarwydd, the familiar one, the one who knows the way. In contemporary West African countries such as the Gambia, comparable traditions are still upheld by the *griot* trained from childhood in the ancient stories, the music to which they are sung, and the history and genealogy of whoever is the *griot's* patron.

Story-telling has also played a vital part in esoteric and religious traditions, the simplicity, wisdom and depth of stories providing a form of teaching as important for the adult on the high slopes of spiritual search as for the child on the foothills of knowledge. Buddha, Mohammed, Christ and other great religious teachers spoke in the form of stories. Preachers of all kinds have maintained their example. In the West, Sunday School remained one of the few venues where the telling of stories survived even in the period of its general decline. The telling of stories retained similar importance in India, where for example the telling of the story of the *Ramayana* still plays a vital part in Hindu celebrations of Diwali. However, a characteristic of religious stories, especially in the modern age, has been their tendency to spread to new audiences outside the religions of which they have formed a part. The teaching stories of Sufism, for example, characteristically possess a pithiness of wit which has proved widely attractive to people not themselves followers of that religion's beliefs. In other religious traditions, as for example among the Hasidic Jews or many North American Indian peoples, the important stories were specifically *not* to be shared with outsiders.

Market-place story-telling was typical in many cultures and is still to be observed, for example in Morocco. From North Africa and the Middle East to the Asian subcontinent and the Far East, it was the skill of the market-place or roadside story-teller not only to hold the attention of an audience but to attract it in the first place. Peripatetic story-tellers have also played their part in rural situations. Satisfying the hunger for new stories of remote rural communities, they too have helped create and maintain rich story-telling traditions, for example in the Chinese countryside.

Celebration and accord are the keynotes of community story-telling traditions. In Ireland, the *ceilidh* is the time for music, dancing and stories. Among the Xhosa in South Africa, *intsomi* is the term for the well-loved tales told on such occasions. In West Africa, dilemma tales are a speciality, a way of communally sorting out complex issues of psychology, ethics and imagination. Wherever the venue – Indian verandah, Maori *marae* or Scottish traveller's tent – stories have traditionally been central in marking the community's seasonal life and in developing and maintaining a sense of community spirit.

Although children were typically included in the community story-telling occasions of many different traditions, remaining present until they went to sleep, the occasions themselves were rarely specifically for them. Children had other times, especially bedtime, when stories were told and discussed, with grandmothers characteristically playing a vital role in cultures across the world.

Domestic story-telling was, however, not necessarily for children. The Egyptian writer Huda Shaarawi has described the visits of the flower-water seller to the women's household as events that were especially enjoyed when she was growing up: the flower-water seller was a story-teller (1986: 46). Spinning, weaving and dress-making were also aspects of women's lives that were closely linked with story-telling in numerous cultures of the ancient and recent past. The well-known European figure of Mother Goose, now integrally associated with children's nursery rhymes, probably derived from the elderly women who ruled the kitchens of European households in past centuries and, in this role, told stories to the servant-girls when the day's work was finished.

The variety of story

Magic is a universal ingredient of different oral traditions, a central representation of the transformative power which stories and story-telling possess. There are many other common themes. However, different traditions also reflect the distinctive ways of life of the peoples who created them. Special characters and types of story emerge, often much loved by children. The Arabic world of the Middle East has Nasruddin Hodja, the wise man often regarded as a fool by others. Ghana has Ananse, half-man, half-spider, whose stories travelled with slavery to the Caribbean. America has Brer Rabbit. England has Jack. Russia has Baba Yaga, the witch both loved and feared. Almost everywhere, animals are important. Taking on different aspects of human personality, they are also reminders of the mythical time, where stories often begin, when humans could talk to animals and animals could talk to each other.

The innumerable bodies of story which represent the world's oral traditions could scarcely have emerged without long passage of time and anonymity. Anonymity is particularly significant. From Homer onwards, oral stories coming into written literature acquired particular tellers who became closely associated with them. That process has continued. Hans Christian Andersen, well known in his own circles as a brilliant story-teller, especially with children, drew deeply on Scandinavian oral traditions in producing his written stories. Yet his stories do not easily lend themselves to being told as opposed to being read aloud. Nor would it be easy to contemplate retelling the Lake Wobegon stories of the contemporary American story-teller Garrison Keillor unless you were the man himself. Some stories become integral with particular people and their style. However, the stories of genuine oral tradition are characteristically the property of no one.

Anonymity differentiates the oral from the literary tradition. What happens when it is absent illustrates some of the problems the oral tradition has faced since the development of printing. Putting stories into writing tends to harness them to the phrasings and viewpoint of the particular writer. It also removes them from active memory: when people can go to a book for a story, they tend no longer to retain it in a readily tellable form. Thus while the great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European folk-tale collectors such as Perrault in France, the Grimm brothers in Germany, Afanasiev in Russia, Asbjørnsen and Moe in Norway, performed the great service to humanity of recording huge numbers of stories which might otherwise have disappeared, the publishing of folk tales inevitably changed some of the central facts of the oral tradition. When a story is written down, it no longer needs to be remembered. What works in speech does not always work on the page, and reading is generally a private activity whereas story-telling, by definition, is shared.

The decline of oral tradition

Loss and change in the world's oral traditions is still acute today. As the continent of Africa and other areas experience a huge loss of native languages and the change away from traditional rural patterns of life that happened much earlier in other parts of the world, so whole bodies of story are lost along with the circumstances in which they would have been told. The depredations of Aids have also become a new agent accelerating the decline.

Decline in the oral tradition has, however, never been a straightforward issue. As is shown by a number of essays in a recent anthology of research papers, *Traditional Storytelling Today* (Macdonald 1999), the oral and literary traditions in a number of

ancient cultures such as Iran and India successfully co-existed over many centuries, with each continually providing new stimuli to the other as stories moved back and forth between them. Nonetheless the growth of literacy and mass publishing can undoubtedly be seen as major reasons behind a worldwide decline in the oral tradition. Collectors such as Pitré in nineteenth-century Sicily noted that many of the best story-tellers with the biggest repertoires were themselves illiterate. The advance of literacy undermined the traditional tellers, diminishing the respect that they had been accorded. The coming of television quickened the process. A story is told of a story-teller in a pub in Ireland, in the middle of telling a tale when the television was switched on. He stopped in the middle of what he was saying and never told again.

Changes in social structures and the circumstances in which people meet together have furthered the processes of decline as people worldwide have tended to move into cities, leaving behind the natural, long-established venues for story-telling. Even the development of central heating has been a factor as, in the northern hemisphere, traditional fireside settings became redundant or non-existent. A further significant factor has been the increase in social mobility and the decrease in size of family units, with these often no longer including grandmothers and other such mainstays of domestic tradition.

The writing down of folk stories and myths, which was eventually to bear fruit in the current renewal of story-telling, also had the effect that it often led to a misunderstanding of the nature of the stories themselves and the audiences for whom they were intended. When a story is written down, not only the choice of words but also the choice of audience assumes a fixed and long-term importance. As well as adopting a highly literary style, numerous of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century story-collectors, such as Perrault with 'Cinderella', decided that folk tales and fairy tales were meant for children. Since then, children have increasingly benefited from the presentation to them, often in picture-book form, of stories from all round the world which had previously been part of adult belief-systems.

The renewal of story-telling

The contemporary revival of story-telling can be traced to a number of developments, including the rise of psychoanalysis and the new understanding of symbol and myth brought about by Jung and other writers such as Joseph Campbell and Bruno Bettelheim. After a revulsion against myths and fairy tales on the part of many parents and teachers on the grounds that they were too violent, the new understanding of their psychological value is currently helping to change attitudes about their suitability.

Another factor behind the revival was the twentieth-century increase in travel, with the consequent interspersing of peoples across the world and the new valuation of ethnicity and culture. In Britain, during the 1970s and early 1980s, for example, new cultural needs were felt – for instance, for children to learn why the celebration of Diwali is an important part of Indian life. This created a demand for story-tellers from different cultures to tell the religious stories and folk tales of their peoples. Over a similar period, a developing awareness of ecology was combining with new regard for the knowledge of primitive peoples to create an increased interest in traditional ways of life and the wisdom enshrined in the world's oral traditions. The growth in the children's book market, too, began making widely available, often in colourful picture-book format, traditional stories which had previously languished in obscure collections. Gail E. Haley's version of an Ananse tale, *A Story, a Story* (1970), and Joanna Troughton's version of the Aboriginal story of

Tiddalik (*What Made Tiddalik Laugh* (1992)) are examples of what has become an important genre.

In Britain, revival was apparent in such developments as the foundation of the now-defunct College of Story-tellers, which took much of its inspiration from Sufi stories and the work of Idries Shah; the forming of the multicultural troupe of story-tellers and musicians, Common Lore; and the organisation of major story-telling festivals for adults, the first taking place in Battersea in 1985. Story-telling gained ground in schools and libraries, reminiscence work was done with elderly people and story-telling therapies began to be developed with disabled and ill people. In education, the National Oracy Project was influential, with numerous projects and publications drawing attention to the importance of story, the abundance of techniques for working with it and the value of encouraging children to see themselves as tellers. A new breed of professional story-teller emerged from these many developments, with the renewal also gaining immensely from the fresh opportunities it brought to traditional tellers like Duncan Williamson, a Scottish traveller who claims to know more than 2,000 stories, some of which have been transcribed in *Fireside Tales* (1983) and other collections.

The renewal in Britain was marked and crystallised by the formation in 1993 of the Society for Storytelling, an organisation including among its membership both those who tell stories on a professional or non-professional basis and those who simply enjoy listening. The Society's wide-ranging activities have included a special focus on the potential of story-telling in education. Scotland and Ireland, where renewal saw especially fertile new connections being made with old oral traditions that were still surviving, have both subsequently instituted a guild of professional story-tellers with accompanying growth in the spread and type of story-telling events in both countries. A significant further development throughout Britain has been the springing up of local story-telling clubs for adults.

Much of the impetus for the story-telling renewal in Britain came from America, where story-telling for children had long been a feature of the public-library system. The growing success of the major annual story-telling festival at Jonesborough, Tennessee, and the formation of NAPPS (the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Story-telling), subsequently renamed as the National Association for Storytelling, gave focus to a substantial renewal evidenced in the prevalence across the country of story-telling festivals, clubs, conferences, workshops, college courses, and a flourishing market of books and cassettes related to story-telling.

The USA was ethnically a fertile ground for story-telling renewal. Already home to the numerous rich story-telling traditions of the Native American Indian peoples, it had also become host to a huge variety and number of other ethnic traditions, first with slavery, then with the influx of immigrants from other countries and continents. These varied traditions are now well represented in the spread and variety of the work offered by America's professional story-tellers. Canada too has made a distinguished contribution. Toronto's Public Library Service pioneered story-telling training and provision at Boys' and Girls' House, and the Toronto School of Storytelling became important.

Neither in America nor in Britain was the revival in story-telling a sudden movement. In Britain, the poet John Masefield had developed a passionate interest, although he failed to get a planned Guild of Story-tellers off the ground. The librarian Eileen Colwell was a pioneer, instituting regular story-telling sessions as a feature of England's first children's libraries in the 1920s and, in *A Story-teller's Choice* and other books, she created useful collections of good stories for telling with notes about how to tell them. In the USA, Marie Shedlock, author of *The Art of the Story-teller*, and Ruth Sawyer, author of *The Way*

of the *Story-teller*, had both been highly influential, drawing particular attention to the value of story-telling with children.

Story-telling revivals have now gained momentum in countries across the world. In Australia, the stories of the Dreamtime have assumed new importance as part of the Aboriginal fight for political and cultural rights. In Iran, story-telling has been introduced as a significant feature of teacher-training. In France, through the work of Abbi Patrix and others, considerable experiment has taken place in story-telling as a performance art. Throughout the world, public attention has been drawn to the cultural, spiritual and educational importance of stories by means of festivals such as Beyond the Border at St Donat's in South Wales; the Festival at the Edge in Shropshire, England; the Scottish International Storytelling Festival in Edinburgh; the Glistening Waters Storytelling Festival in New Zealand; the Vancouver Storytelling Festival; and innumerable others, in Germany, France and other European countries.

Story-telling has in the process of renewal acquired many interesting new contexts for its occurrence, as for instance in Japan where, in the period after the Second World War, the innovative *bunko* movement provided a way of compensating for the absence of libraries for children. A system in which people with private stocks of suitable books invite neighbourhood children to their homes to borrow their books on an informal basis, the *bunko* movement remains widespread. Especially since the influential visits to Japan of the English librarian-story-teller Eileen Colwell, it has encouraged oral story-telling, with many *bunko* mothers taking on the role of story-tellers to the children visiting their homes, extending the children's interest in stories by this approach.

The modern renewal in story-telling has also raised a number of contentious issues. One which has been strongly felt, for instance among North American Indian story-tellers, is the question of whether stories may be told by people from outside the communities where the stories originated. A second not unrelated issue concerns copyright. Of particular relevance when story-tellers are being paid for their work, the question relates to the ownership not only of a story but also of the manner of its telling. To whom does the story and the telling belong when they have been developed for performance by a particular story-teller?

The art of story-telling

Story-telling is a live, expressive form in which story-tellers have a number of instruments: voice, facial expression, body movement, eye contact and, where these are used, musical instruments and props. Setting, too, is important and, as in the theatre, arrangement of the venue can also be part of the art.

Voice is the major instrument. Use of it varies enormously between tellers and cultures. Sometimes the emphasis is on an evenly paced narrative style, sometimes more on dialogue and mimicry, for example of animal sounds and birdsong. Some tellers use the actor's ability to put on different voices; others rely on change of tone and pitch rather more than accent. Ability to draw on dialects is almost always admired. As well as pace, rhythm and dynamics of speech, the story-teller draws on the value of silence. Pausing is essential to give the audience time to move through the mental images summoned by the tale. The length and weight of a pause is as vital as in music.

Use of facial expression and body movement also varies greatly. Some tellers enact; others recount. Much also depends on venue. In the glow of a fireside telling, voice assumes unique importance; large gestures will seem out of place. In other settings, hand gestures, for example, may play as expressive a part as in the associated art of shadow-play.

With children, eye contact is the aspect which most strongly differentiates story-telling from story-reading. It gives a host of advantages, ranging from the freedom to observe which children are restless to being better able to establish rapport and communicate emotions. Some story-tellers use cloths or interesting objects to focus interest or enhance the story. Sound-making instruments may also be used, either for effects within a story or to punctuate the telling. Where props are used, it is vital to consider the size and arrangement of the audience. Whether people will be able to see is greatly affected by whether the teller sits, stands or moves about. With children, it is important not to adopt a position which might feel intimidating. For seated tellers, a low seat is often ideal and, considering the arm movements that may be used, a stool is often preferable to an armchair.

Preparing to tell

Preparation involves attending to the story as well as the circumstances in which it may be told, the nature of the event and the kind of audience. Getting to know the story is the greatest challenge and is easiest when the story has been heard and not read. Being able to remember a story that has been heard probably means that the previous story-teller has told it in a memorable way, the words, sounds and meaning already shaped and patterned for telling. With a story found in a book, the work of bringing it to life has to be done from scratch. In either case, preparation involves considering how to make the story your own.

Imagination is crucial and strongly linked with memory. Remembering a story requires making a relationship with it and visualisation, essentially the act of making pictures in the mind, is an important technique. (Significantly, story-tellers in several traditions have often been blind.) The mental pictures on which the story-teller subsequently draws during the telling may be formed from all kinds of information, visual, aural, olfactory and textural. They may also be fed by research.

Another primary technique involves getting to know the story's underlying shape and structure, a task which is also helpful in identifying different types of stories and their inter-relationships. In America, Margaret Read Macdonald has published a source-book for story-tellers giving motif indexes and guides to tracing variants.

Words are also important. In traditional story-telling, freshness and beauty are important requirements but so is the reassurance of phrasings which sound well settled, honed by time and repeated use. According to Alan Garner, the writer and collector of folk tales, 'folktale is no dull matter that anyone may touch, but more a collection of patterns to be translated with the skill, bias and authority of the craftsman, who, in serving his craft, allows that craft to serve the people' (Garner 1980: 10).

The word stock of oral tradition consists of a wealth of phrases, refrains, formulaic runs, dialect words and proverbs and riddles. Alliteration is a frequent feature: 'There wasn't a stone but was for his stumbling, not a branch but beat his face, not a bramble but tore his skin.' Metaphor, too, is common. A person may disappear 'into the night of the wood' or run 'as swift as the thoughts of a woman caught between two lovers'. Also available are patterned beginnings and endings. 'Crick!' says the West Indian story-teller. 'Crack!' the audience replies. 'There was, there was not ...' may be a starter in Ireland. Other starters summon another kind of time: 'When birds made nests in old men's beards ...'

Endings soften the return to reality: 'They lived happily, so may we. Put on the kettle, we'll have a cup of tea.' One common Armenian ending reminds the audience of the nature of the oral tradition: 'Three apples fell from heaven: one for the story, one for those who listened and one for those who first told this story long, long ago.'

Particularly important with children are refrains and chants encouraging participation. ‘Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me, I’m the gingerbread man’: chanted or sung, such choral forms are also a peg for memory. Where they have not been handed on, it is worth making new ones. Where research can dig them out, it is good to bring them back into currency, adapted or in their original form.

Bringing stories to life in these ways is something which children can enjoy practising just as much as adults.

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48 Children's information texts

Margaret Mallett

Introduction

The distinction between fiction and non-fiction is blurred and constantly shifting, but we still use it and need it.

(Fisher 1972: 10)

In one respect things have changed little since Margery Fisher wrote her seminal book *Matters of Fact*: we still follow libraries and bookshops in wanting to decide on which side of the fiction/non-fiction line a particular title belongs. When it comes to children's texts the decision can be particularly perplexing. Some early autobiography, biography and travel books have a strongly literary flavour, and there are historical novels and 'information stories' where fact and fiction mingle. I doubt that we should base a judgement on the argument that fiction is for pleasure and non-fiction for utilitarian purposes when it is clear that we both learn from and enjoy the best texts in each category. We are on safer ground if we think of an information text as one whose *main* intention is to impart knowledge and ideas. To succeed it has to link securely with the reader's existing knowledge before sharing further observations, facts and ideas. The importance of the information book is demonstrated by the fact that, following the work of the Australian genre theorists, mediated by Wray and Lewis (1997), the UK Literacy Strategy requires teachers to make children familiar with the following non-fiction texts types: recount, report, explanation, instruction, discussion and persuasion.

An appraisal of the role and value of information texts or non-fiction (the terms are often used interchangeably) is timely, as the variety of media through which information is presented and the range of texts types is greater than ever before. Print books now have to compete in school budgets with electronic learning resources. The trend towards less book-buying in a more varied market concerns Graham Taylor, who points to a discrepancy between the value we place on books and the relatively low priority they are given in budget planning (Taylor 2003: 23). In spite of the revolution in new technology and its impact on children's reading resources, many believe books in print form are likely to survive for a long time. Aidan Chambers thinks books will be born again, made newly magnificent using some of the new technological techniques (Chambers 2001: 157).

I begin with an analysis of the different kinds of children's non-fiction and their purposes, moving on to three main contexts: pedagogical, publishing and critical.

Kinds and purposes

Information books should be beautiful, well written and organised and *exciting*...lending themselves to enquiry and discussion and therefore research.

(Nicholson 1996/7: 34)

Traditionally, publishers have categorised information texts within three main groups: children's information books, text books and course books. Children's information books and resources can help learning in school or be read at home for interest and pleasure. Text books support study by offering a basic introduction to a topic. Course books take older pupils through units of work in particular subjects with text, diagrams and, sometimes, questions to work through. This account concentrates on children's information texts, although some of the analysis will be pertinent to text and course books.

Criteria for choosing books and other resources depend on the purpose they are to serve and their audience. Purpose and audience affect the organisation and the style of writing (Littlefair 1991). At the very least we expect authors of information texts to be aware of the likely knowledge of the age group for whom they are writing, to be accurate and to present their material invitingly. We want more than lists of facts – we need help to progress towards an insight, a generalisation and perhaps a summing up to take us forward. Both authors and readers have feelings about facts and ideas. So, interactive texts, those that encourage questioning and debate, are most likely to involve a young reader in a dialogue that ensures learning is alive and genuine.

For my discussion, I have grouped texts in a way likely to be familiar to children, teachers and parents: early non-fiction; reference texts; topic books, both narrative and non-narrative; non-book print and popular culture; electronic texts and information communication technology.

Early non-fiction

Children's very first books with an informational function are ABCs, and number and concept books with titles like *Opposites*, *Up and down* and *Colours*. They are often presented in robust form: plastic bath books, cloth books and board books. Textured 'touch and feel' books and 'lift the flap' books (which reveal hidden objects) encourage an interactive, playful approach. The purpose of these early books is to help children organise their experience by picturing and naming everyday objects and people (Mallett 2003).

From about the age of three, children are ready for information picture books – about a trip to the park or a day at nursery school; books about journeys and about life cycles also have the time sequence organisation familiar to young children who have had stories read to them. Some are illustrated by photographs, others with art work often by acclaimed illustrators such as, in the UK, Helen Oxenbury, Lucy Cousins, Jan Ormerod, Barry Watts, Eric Hill, Shirley Hughes, Robert Crowther, Satoshi Kitamura and Ruth Brown. Illustrations can create multi-layered meanings which provide information not made explicit by the words. Malachy Doyle's *Cow* (2002) shows the typical events of the animal's day. One picture shows a cow with a wound on its hind quarters, a wound not referred to in the writing. In my experience it is just this kind of troubling and intriguing detail which becomes a talking point.

The language of early information books is informal and inviting. *Cow* uses the second person to achieve a friendly tone – ‘You tear the grass and chew the cud.’ Sometimes books are organised around questions, or a storybook character (or one from a television programme) introduces numbers or colours. Purists are nervous about the ‘genre confusion’ a mixture of fact and fiction may cause! But I have lost count of the times children and teachers have praised books like those in the UK Macdonald Bees series: for example, *Seed in Need* which explains the life cycle of a plant with the help of ‘talking’ insects. Baker and Freebody (1989) suggest we regard these early texts as ‘transitional genres’ because they are precursors of more mature forms.

Reference texts

Children’s reference texts – dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias and atlases – pour from publishing houses, including specialists in the UK such as Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Dorling Kindersley, Kingfisher, Heinemann, Usborne and Franklin Watts. Reference texts offer young readers some independence in the search for information. Authors and publishers keep three main things in mind: first, the design, the arrangement of the material to help make it inviting and easy to use; second, the coverage – which needs to be appropriate for the intended readership; third, the language which, if clear and inviting, will explain ideas effectively and extend and reinforce the illustrations.

Dictionaries teach about alphabetic order, word recognition and the development of vocabulary. We look for a core of everyday words, words to support children’s lessons, and most good dictionaries now include definitions of words to reflect the new technology – ‘email’, ‘Internet’ and ‘computer’ – as children need the vocabulary to talk about new concepts as our culture changes. Most compilers of early dictionaries go to great pains to contextualise words, putting them in sentences and indicating different parts of speech and singular and plural forms. Dr Seuss makes dictionary browsing fun in *Cat in the Hat Dictionary* (2002 edition) by using witty annotations like ‘zero is too cold for zebras’ and hilarious illustrations. By the age of six, children appreciate more substantial dictionaries, such as the *DK Dictionary* (2002), which have carefully thought-out definitions and example sentences.

A thesaurus has two main purposes: a good one both enriches vocabulary by suggesting synonyms and antonyms and encourages a genuine interest in words. *The Oxford First Thesaurus* (Delahunty 2002) makes its purpose explicit on the back cover. ‘Are you looking for another word for “nice” or “bad”? When you are looking for another way of describing something you need a thesaurus.’ There are superbly illustrated double spreads for specially important or interesting sets of words. For example, words about sound – ‘bleep’, ‘bubble’, ‘clang’, and so on – surround a fantasy machine shown operating in interesting ways (2002: 98–9).

Encyclopedias are often a first port of call, a starting point for other reading. Making a modern encyclopedia, whether single or multi-volumed, involves a considerable amount of teamwork: writers, designers, photographers and artists, teachers and museum curators are often involved. You need some people who understand the entries as specialists and some who understand how children learn. The editor’s role is crucial in ensuring that there is consistency of approach. Encyclopedias need regular updating: not only does knowledge advance, but our attitudes towards historical events and ideas constantly change.

Good atlases for the very young will have clear maps and will carefully explain how to use symbols, keys and co-ordinates, but like other reference books they often need adult

mediation. *The Oxford Infant Atlas* (1998 edition) comes in a large format so that teachers can use it for demonstration purposes, and children can find the same maps and features in the small version. Publishers are producing electronic versions of print reference books, and this atlas is also produced in a CD-ROM version (2001) which is easily navigated and provides some interactive activities to give children immediate feedback.

Topic books

Topic books are copiously illustrated and usually on one subject such as ships, volcanoes or electricity. They have proved extremely resilient in print form even though they are increasingly available on CD-ROM. Teachers help children, particularly those under eleven, to use them to support lessons and projects. The defining features of the topic book, which identify it with a genre, were described by Christine Pappas in 1986. She suggested three global 'obligatory' features: topic presentation (the many different kinds of frog found throughout the world belong to the *Anura* amphibian category), attributes (frogs have smooth skins, no tails and can often leap long and high) and characteristic events (frog spawn is laid in the spring, develops into tadpoles and then these take on their mature form as frogs). Pappas considers it important that these features are present and coherent because this allows children to build up expectations about the structure of such books. Bobbie Neate also stresses the need for children to acquire expectations about how this kind of information text is organised; she recommends that authors and publishers stick to a predictable format using 'structural guiders' like headings, contents pages and indexes (Neate 1992). But many feel that children's topic books have suffered from having too predictable a format, particularly when produced in series (Fisher 1972; Arnold 1992; Meek 1996).

Teachers want texts to support different subjects and publishers have responded to this. Science books aim to reinforce and link with children's existing knowledge and to extend it in an interesting way. They give children the opportunity to encounter several different kinds of informational writing or 'genres': *procedural* or instructional writing explains how to experiment, or make a model; *recount*, how to share what happened on a nature visit; *explanation*, how machines and systems work; and *report*, describing topics ranging from electricity and magnetism and the structure and processes of the human body. We need science books that inspire and excite curiosity and the desire to understand. David Macaulay's *The New Way Things Work* (1998), available in print and CD-ROM, enthral readers of any age. Macaulay uses superb diagrams and absorbing text to explain how technology has worked through the ages, from the wheel to the computer, to help us in our everyday lives.

When it comes to geography texts we seek those which will support a developing sense of place. But of course environments are essentially dynamic; and some authors help children see the effect of change on people and on the landscape. Texts to support the learning of young geographers include posters, travel agents' brochures, estate agents' information sheets and articles in newspapers and magazines. Illustrations are especially important in communicating geographical information and include diagrams about population changes or climate and photographs to reveal landscapes and the lifestyles and occupations of the people that live there. Books to help give very young children a foothold in geographical concepts are often in 'information story' form: *The World Came to My Place* by Jo Readman (2002) places questions about the things we eat and use every day in the context of a story about a boy in quarantine in the care of

Grandpa; Ifeoma Onyefulu's story *Emeka's Gift* (1995) shows through photographs the food, games and lifestyles of people in an African village. Travel books like S. Wheeler's *Dear Daniel: Letters from Antarctica* (1997) help young readers find a personal foothold in a terrain and a culture.

History texts, particularly those which offer interesting material in the form of contemporary documents, interviews, photographs of objects and paintings, help children learn how to use evidence and to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. These texts also aim to help develop a sense of chronology: timelines, and family trees help put actual events in the context of the 'bigger shapes' of history. For example, Nell Marshall's *Letters to Henrietta* (1998) shows how the 'big shapes' of war affect ordinary families and reminds us that the personal letter is an important primary source. Some of the more literary kinds of non-fiction – autobiography, biography and historical fiction – can help children begin to think and speculate like young historians. The best of these offer a carefully constructed background as a context to learn about a particular life. Equally, books which teach history in a humorous way, such as the UK publisher A. and C. Black's Horrible Histories and Scholastic's Dead Famous series, are bestsellers, showing, that for some children humour and the subversive can be the way into thinking about history.

Modern problems such as conservation, drug abuse, war and crime are now being tackled in children's novels. Fiction is a powerful medium, not least because of its capacity to 'distance' us from things that may be too sensitive to face head on. But information books for primary and secondary schools can also take on these issues successfully if they reinforce children's existing knowledge and introduce something new and interesting. A book is succeeding if children strive for a more than superficial knowledge and want to debate, for example, why rain forests are being cut down and why people abuse drugs. Some of these texts are termed 'discussion' or 'persuasive' texts because they model how to construct an argument and weigh evidence. Authors unafraid to take on the raw, the upsetting or the confusing are most likely to awaken passionate interest and concern.

Non-book print and popular culture

Children are introduced to an environment saturated by print from an early age – newspapers, letters, flyers and advertising material, print on food packets and notices and on street signs. Imaginative practitioners bring these into school to promote play, drama and projects to link school literacy with literacies at home, in the community and in the outside world.

English work in the later primary and early secondary years has always drawn on a range of printed material to encourage discussion and children's writing. The choices children make about what they read in their leisure time, both fiction and non-fiction, also exist in a cultural context: gender, social class and community identity all make an impact. In many countries cultural and tourist organisations can supply booklets, exhibit annotations and interest sheets which support and link with first-hand experience.

Information communication technology

Media texts and digital technologies are part of our culture, and becoming able to read and create text using ever-developing electronic technology is part of becoming literate in an informational age. Multi-media programs differ from print sources in their dynamic use of sound, music and film. The moving image can show complex and detailed processes

like the digestive system, the working of a car engine and speeded-up versions of a plant growing and an animal moving. So while a print version of a diagram, for example of the blood system, might use devices like arrows to show the direction in which the blood is flowing, the electronic medium allows the system to be shown in action. Concepts like the water cycle, migration and a volcano erupting can be brought to virtual reality. Two studies explore some of the implications of 'reading' visual images, including those on multi-modal systems. These are *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) and *Image Matters* (Callow 1999). The latter book presents the research of a number of Australian academics and teachers; a main theme is that we need to teach children to interpret and evaluate visual input from every medium.

Information-handling software brings interesting ways of organising information when children create their own texts, and makes easier the creation of databases and spreadsheets. It also helps with practical problems of the storage of vast amounts of material. We need, however, to be as critical of software packages and CD-ROMs as we are of print resources.

The Internet brings access to worldwide sites and provides exciting opportunities for children to develop areas of expertise and hobbies. It certainly has a part to play in extending children's visual literacy because of the quality images provided, not least stunning satellite weather maps and museums, wildlife parks and zoos. However, we need to keep two things in mind: information on sites is not monitored or edited and varies considerable in quality; the sheer amount of information can be overwhelming and children need considerable support when they use the internet.

Pedagogical aspects

We learn best when heart and head are engaged.

(Arnold 1992: 133)

At one time, the key to using information texts seemed to involve mainly the acquisition of library and study skills. Often these skills were taught out of context and the children were then expected to apply them. But the main impetus to wanting to find out is the young learners' interest and curiosity and their need to know (Arnold 1992; Meek 1996; Mallett 1999). This interest can be awakened and sustained by making learning collaborative. Paradoxically, while learning to read helps give children the means to learn independently, it is talking and sharing with the teacher and other children that helps energise their research, putting their questioning and thinking into top gear. At the beginning of a new topic, teachers help children organise their prior knowledge, which allows children to remain in control and to formulate their own questions to take to the secondary sources. It is children's questions which help them to truly engage with a text, entering actively into the author's discourse.

But, particularly in the case of the under-tens, other experiences enhance and enrich learning from texts. These experiences may take the form of a visit – to a farm, museum or factory – or be linked with practical work like making a model, experimenting with science or cooking something. The skilled practitioner helps children integrate learning from such first-hand experiences and learning from secondary sources. This involves not only imaginative choosing of texts to extend children's learning, but also the judgement to bring texts in at just the right point. Progression in this kind of reading is partly to do with becoming able to read a greater variety of text books, magazines, posters, flyers, electronic texts and

the Internet. But we also want to support children's increasing capacity to read texts of greater profundity and complexity within each category. As children move onwards they need to encounter texts with different 'voices', some of them impersonal and to do with categorising, generalising and abstracting.

But this comes later. Younger children benefit from hearing the teacher read out loud so they can hear the 'tune' of non-fiction writing (Barrs 1996/7: ii). Through discussion they can be helped to link what they have learnt from different sources. The teacher can show how a specific bit of information fits with broader frameworks, hierarchies and insights. Where children have invested their feelings as well as their thinking in their learning it becomes much more than superficial. Five-year-olds learning about whales brought great passion to finding answers to their questions, not least to the question 'How can we stop the blue whale from becoming extinct?' They insisted that the teacher read to them from books intended for much older children. It is in this kind of context, when children are fully involved with the topic, that we can teach, for example, flexible reading. Sometimes we need to 'skim' through a text to find a date or name or 'scan' it to get the gist of a passage. 'Skimming' and 'scanning', swift kinds of reading, are often contrasted with critical and reflective kinds of reading which help us understand and evaluate facts and ideas.

What are the best ways of supporting children's non-fiction writing? Scholars and teachers in Australia, known as 'the genre theorists', argue that children need to be directly taught about the global structures of different texts. Only this, they consider, will help children control challenging non-fiction forms as writers. There has been some exciting cross-cultural debate; if you wish to read about the issues round this approach you might begin with Reid (1987). The Nuffield-funded Extending Literacy team, based at Exeter University in the UK, worked with teachers and children during the 1990s to find ways of helping children to organise the fruits of their research and their reflections on this research. Writing frames – sheets with headings and phrases – were designed to help children structure their written accounts in different informational genre (Wray and Lewis 1997). Children who find it difficult to know how to start their writing may find these frames helpful. But the Exeter team did not favour the direct teaching of genre features recommended by the Australian genre theorists. It is probably best for children to move quite swiftly to structuring their own accounts (Mallett 2003, and see also Britton 1970, Beireter and Scardamalia 1987; for working with the internet, see Selinger 2001).

Publishers' perspectives

I witnessed first hand while serving on the Youth Libraries Committee ... the close links established with the Publishers' Association and individual publishers, some of whom asked to attend selection meetings in library authorities to gain insights into the reading habits of children.

(Lonsdale 2001: 169)

Children's information texts have long been an important strand in publishing in English-speaking countries. America has a history of strong texts in this category, with authors such as Jean Fritz (biography including *Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?*), Seymour Simon (science and zoological topics – on whales, sharks and wolves, for example) and Russell Freedman (social and historical themes) (see details in Harvey

1998). This is also true of Australia and New Zealand, which, while having been traditional markets for UK books, have growing reputations for their own information texts.

Generally, today non-fiction publishing is 'driven by the market rather than the muse' (Unstead 2003: 4), with an eye to global distribution (although publishers are sometimes motivated by conviction – the writers and artists of *Lines in the Sand: New Writing on War and Peace* (2003) and the publisher, Frances Lincoln, gave all profits and royalties to UNICEF's emergency appeal for the children of Iraq). Some topic books cover the same subjects again and again – putting new bright covers on the books, adopting modern computer-like format but with largely the same information. Not surprisingly many titles are produced for home markets directly to support statutory programmes, and there is everything to be gained from partnership between publishers, teachers and librarians.

There is much demand for information books in Korea, Taiwan and increasingly in Japan, China, Malaysia and Thailand where parents often wish their children to learn English at an early age. The wish to sell into international markets can affect the scope and emphasis of the texts. This can have an enriching effect; for example, nature books will need to show flora and fauna of different parts of the world. However these new considerations may militate against the achievement of truly individual books.

Three well-established traditions can also lead to texts lacking individuality. First, publishers have long produced books in series with a consistency of format, style and approach which can constrain the writer's originality and offer 'the facts' rather than ideas and information for debate. It is also true that busy practitioners may be tempted to order a whole series, from a catalogue perhaps, without considering the merits of each text. Second, some publishers are addicted to the double-spread format. The trouble with this is that sometimes the text has to be stretched out to fill the spread while on other occasions so much has to be crammed in that coherence is compromised. Third, authors these days are very often supported by marketers, designers, photographers, artists, computer experts and an array of consultants. This can make it much harder for a truly individual 'voice' to emerge, which might tempt us into the subject and sustain our interest. Some publishers have responded to this criticism and show that it is possible to produce series and yet avoid the procrustean discipline which makes books uniform (for example, Walkers Books' Read and Wonder series in the UK).

Publishers also try to meet the challenge of ever-changing advances in technology and have, for quite some years now, been transferring information books to computerised form. New technology and new kinds of visual literacy mean that they need to find ways of capturing the interest of young readers who are perhaps the most visually aware generation ever. They need to be responsive to new knowledge, new attitudes and new ways of presenting information. Crude and ethnocentric accounts, for example about explorers taking over territory, are now rare. But we always need to guard against distorting information, for example by omission. Children's books about other cultures can tend to give an over-simplified or idealised view of particular societies in a troubled world.

The impressive technology of computer games and the satellite weather maps and news reports on television and film have brought about young people's high expectations of the way in which visual information is presented. Print books have benefited as much as electronic texts, with ever more sophisticated and complex illustrations – although some information needs to be expressed verbally. We know that learning demands language and the visual needs mediation: drawings, photographs and diagrams are 'culture bound like other semiotic systems' (Meek 1996: 47).

The critical context

What shines out from good criticism and judgement of information books is a distinctive kind of ‘connoisseurship’, a linking of knowledge and experience.

(Meek 1996: 109)

Each year some of the best non-fiction texts published do much more than what Peggy Heeks would call ‘assembling and ordering facts’ (Heeks 1970: 721). They awaken genuine interest and excitement in the young reader by linking with their interests and experience, and even the non-fiction strands in reading schemes and programmes, once such a target for reviewers, now often include books by fine authors like, for example, Meredith Hooper (Cambridge Reading). Information books are not reviewed widely, but there is a vast number of websites and journals (such as, in the UK, the *Times Educational Supplement* and *The School Librarian*). The reviewers may be children’s librarians or academics, and they often find themselves on selection panels for non-fiction awards: for example, in the UK, the *TES* information book prize; in Australia the Children’s Book Council ‘Book of the Year’ awards; in New Zealand the Library and Information Association Aotearoa non-fiction award; in the USA a non-fiction category was added to the Boston Globe–Horn Book Awards in 1976.

One of the first to give a critical appraisal of non-fiction texts, examining them in terms of their accuracy, readability, design and illustration, was Margery Fisher (1972). Fisher observes that, at the same time as imparting facts and ideas, information texts must encourage the reader to assess what they read – in other words, they need to encourage critical reading by giving help with the interpretation of facts. Writing as non-fiction editor for *Books for Keeps*, Eleanor von Schweinitz noted that successful books have a clear focus and good linkage between illustration and writing, making a text satisfying and coherent (von Schweinitz 1989).

Certainly, writing a good information book for the young is as demanding as any other kind of writing. I keep three questions in mind when appraising a book. Does the author make insightful assumptions about potential readers’ existing knowledge and experience? Is the young reader offered a helpful route into the book? Is the information offered in an imaginative and appropriate way? Some books are for children just starting on a topic and needing to be invited in, others are for those who have the foothold of a beginning expert. In appraising an author’s work, we must take into account that the audience is likely to be multicultural and socially mixed, and that we want to interest both girls and boys. Reviewers should be dedicated to their task and to becoming, in Meek’s term, ‘connoisseurs’ so that they contribute to a developing culture of appraising children’s information books (Meek 1996: 109). Comment is needed on content, organisation and accuracy and on illustrations and retrieval devices – but above all on how the book appeals and interests.

Who knows how long print texts will remain the main ones used for reading to learn? The signs are, though, that new technologies – bringing about new literacies beyond what we can now contemplate – will continue to complement and enrich rather than replace them. The presentation of some kinds of information – that on databases and spreadsheets, and some diagrams – will be computer-dominated. And teachers will bring new energy to help children ‘read’ images, both print and moving. Teacher educators will continue to modify their courses to do justice to all the new ways of presenting and organising information. But I think the print text will survive because it offers a distinctive experience. Can a machine ever replace the feel of a hardback cover under the hand, the smell of the pages inside or the sheer aesthetic appeal of the best print illustrations?

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