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Yan Wu
Kerry Mallan
Roderick McGillis *Editors*

(Re)imagining the World

Children's Literature's Response to Changing Times

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Introduction

The world is never too much with us

Yan Wu, Kerry Mallan, and Roderick McGillis

This book's title, *(Re)imagining the World*, sets an ambitious goal. To re/imagine is to imagine again or anew, to recreate, to form a new conception of something. To re-imagine is to put the imagination to work reconstructing whatever it is that we are re-imagining. Reconstructing the world, this is the task. Literature and children's literature do this all the time. Literature does not so much reflect the world as it constructs possible worlds; it gives us models of possibility. It gives us utopias, dystopias, and whatever might exist in between. Children's literature around the globe constitutes a grand act of imagining; the books children read, the films they see, and the internet games they play participate in the recreation of the world by providing children with new ways of perceiving the world; they provide children with possible worlds and even some impossible worlds. The way we see past, present, and future finds renewal in children's literature. In other words, children's literature works in similar ways to literature for adults; it sets out to examine, and in the process, construct the world. Education too has the responsibility to introduce students to the world in its complexity, and in the process construct the next generation. Education and children's literature share a socializing agenda; both set out to draw young people into the future.

This book examines how children's literature and education in its broadest sense can form creative connections that will enable young people to think beyond limits, to realize the options, and to imagine the kind of life that a prosperous future could hold. Children's literature's re-imagining of the world is its way of understanding the world we inhabit, its past and its possible future. The task of the chapters in this book is to examine children's literature's work of re-imagining not as a linear process of history but as a movement across and between different times and spaces. In choosing to explore 'the world' in literature written for young people we are not suggesting that narrative form is ever a simple reflection of the world. Rather, we enlist narrative as an imaginative and productive practice that offers readers propositions, speculations, and possibilities for thinking about the

problems and challenges that beset humanity at any given time. Narrative not only reflects the world, it also participates in the creation of the world. The reading of narrative is a pedagogic and communal activity as much as it is a personal activity. We read for personal enjoyment and edification, and also for the opportunities for sharing that reading offers. Children's literature teaches readers not only about the world, but also how to shape the world. It generates constructive discussion.

Education and children's literature must always respond to the tenor of the time; to not do so means they become redundant, ephemeral with all the social and economic implications that would naturally follow. Since the 1990s, we have seen many policies, debates, resources, curricula, and opinions about the requirements of Education for the twenty-first century. These various approaches to education look to new skills, new knowledge, and new technologies that will enable students to cope with the world in which they will grow, work, and live. Science and technology are burdened with the expectation that they are the fields that will provide the answers to some of our most pressing problems—climate change, pollution, disease, poverty, terrorism, an ageing population, shortages of food and water, over population, depletion of natural resources. Given the seriousness of these concerns it may seem trivial or foolish to consider how children's literature can play a part. After all, isn't literature meant to provide a source of enjoyment, an escape from everyday concerns? The question is: an escape to what or where? An escape to possible worlds does not free us from the imaginative responsibility of confronting the world as we know it or as it might be or even as it has been. Our argument in this book is that because of its ability to entertain and provoke as well as educate, children's literature serves an important role in contributing to intellectual and emotional well-being by offering imaginative, creative and cognitive ways of knowing that complement others—common sense, memory, intuition, experience. We do not promote creativity and imagination at the expense of reason or science. We consider the best education as open to multiple ways of knowing that invite curiosity, creativity, and pleasure. Imaginative activity forms the bedrock for reason in its most exalted mood.

(Re)imagining the World sets out to capture the spirit of the inquiry. Contributors explore a word or concept in terms of its implications for children's literature and its readers. What we do not envisage is another Keywords book. Philip Nel and Lissa Paul have edited *Keywords For Children's Literature* (2011), patterned explicitly after Raymond Williams's well-known *Keywords* (1976). These books, as Nel and Paul indicate in quoting Williams, offer "an exploration of the vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion" (qtd Nel and Paul 2). Our book offers explorations of more general vocabulary, words that do have "social and cultural" importance, but that are not specifically associated with literary or cultural studies. The writers of the chapters were free to approach their word in ways that seemed appropriate to themselves. We seek to bridge the gap between criticism, theory, and imaginative practice. To do this, we asked contributors to reflect on single concepts or 'words' that reflect global concerns or issues, either one that is current, from the past, or a future possibility. For example, the word 'privacy' carries with it changing ideas about personal space, freedom,

surveillance, security, exposure, secrecy, property, and so on. Children's literature has variously examined privacy in terms of children's own spaces for play or contemplation (e.g. the cupola in Ruth Park's *Callie's Castle* 1974) or children's invasion of non-private spaces (e.g. the museum in E. L. Konigsburg's *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* 1967), technology's invasion into personal thoughts (e.g. M. T. Anderson's *Feed* 2002), and surveillance of individuals and groups by authorities (e.g. Jan Mark's *Useful Idiots* 2004). How protagonists have managed to create, preserve or regain their privacy is integral to a text's imaginative approach. We might look back at earlier books for children and find the convergence of private and public spaces. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) focuses on a very private space—a walled garden—and chronicles the change in this space from private garden to communal healing ground. Or even earlier, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) examines the inner life of a lonely and private child and follows her passage from her inner fairy tale world to the realities of adult life. These books explore the private life of girls, but we might also look for the private life of boys; perhaps a representative example is J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). In any case, these texts provide stimulus for readers to engage critically and creatively with social concerns—privacy is the example before us—within and outside the textual worlds, as well as with the ethical, moral, and personal considerations that 'privacy' suggests.

Privacy is not one of the words under investigation in this book, but it might have been. Privacy, like the words under consideration, is not a literary term or a familiar theoretical term. It is, however, a term we might theorize. It can be a legal term as well as a word specifying personal desire. Privacy suggests intimacy and isolation, secrecy and seclusion. The private is for the eyes of the self, for the knowing of the self. Although privacy suggests separation from a community, a person has privacy even in a crowd. The private is something we share judiciously. We expect to control what we want others to know and what we do not want others to know. Privacy might refer to space-private property, or to time–time away from work or other duties. Privacy is a legal issue; the Federal Governments of Canada and Australia passed Privacy Acts in 1980s, setting out rules for the collection and use of personal information. The threat to security, both personal and public, also has legal ramifications. Privacy may refer to the body (private parts), or to the mind (private thoughts). It is both material and ideal. In most cases, privacy has to do with rights: the right to have certain things, ideas, places secluded from those we do not welcome. The right to think or believe whatever seems best to the individual. Human rights are the concern of everyone, including children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 was the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political, and social—to children (under 18 years of age).

Privacy also has something to do with literature. Reading may be a private activity; we read more often than not by ourselves and often in spaces that are private or at least solitary. We may share this private reading activity with others, and in this sense reading makes for insiders and outsiders. In a way, literature or, at least the discussion and criticism of literature, is private, as Frank Kermode has

argued in *The Genesis of Secrecy* (1979). This secret aspect of the literary text is why we have literary education; education in this sense is an initiation into the mysteries of that private sphere we call literature and culture. Privacy allows us to form the communities we want. Privacy pertains to both the individual and the collective.

Since its beginnings, children's literature has taught young readers about privacy. The secluded world of childhood evoked in Wordsworth's "Ode Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (the children who "sport upon the shore") gives way to the "philosophic mind", a mind turned outward to the public sphere. This interplay between the inner and the outer world threads its way through children's literature. In the nineteenth century, we have the inner worlds of Alice in Carroll's famous books (1865, 1871) and Little Diamond in George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), private worlds that contain within them the child's growing concern for the larger world outside itself. More recently, we have stories of enclosed worlds such as the cult world of "The Believers" in Jane Yolen and Bruce Coville's *Armageddon Summer* (1998). Children's literature returns again and again to the tension between the inner world of a growing child and the outer world adults inhabit. The conflict between the attempt to hold onto private desires and the pull to conformity and convention is the theme of much children's literature. The Canadian classic, *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), is a representative example of a story about one child's intense individuality and her desire to hold onto this individuality and yet be accepted by her community. She wishes to hold onto her private world and at the same time to enter the public world. The book confronts the inevitable clash of private and public.

We might examine this clash of private and public as it moves through a number of different contexts. Many books for the young present their readers with the inner thoughts of a protagonist in the form of journals, letters, or diaries. The diary is especially interesting as a form of private expression because writing is such a public act; one writes so that someone may read. This very private act of writing a diary has its public side when we consider that someone other than the writer, sometime, will read the diary. The private document will become a public document unless the writer or someone else destroys it before someone else opens it. Daniel Handler's *Why We Broke Up* (2011) uses the epistolary form to share with its readers a young woman's intimate accounts of her romance and why she broke up with her boyfriend. This text illustrates the dual audience of the letter—the primary (and private) addressee, and the indeterminate (public) readership. And now we have the intersection of technology and privacy—blogs, email, texting, and social networking—as examined in the work of Cory Doctorow and others. Technology makes children's literature widgets available for blogs and social networking sites. Perhaps the intersection of public and private is nowhere more evident than in social networking sites where strangers can and do become friends without ever meeting each other outside virtual space. The convergence of private and public is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the various means the internet

has of bridging the gap between strangers. Fan fiction is yet another aspect of the interplay between the privacy of reading and its public display.

Authors of the various chapters in this book set out to explore terms such as privacy, terms that are not always part of the critical or theoretical lexicon of either children's literature or cultural studies. Erica Hateley takes a look at reading, and the need for "flexible literacy", a necessary skill given the changes in print and electronic writing and publishing. She chronicles the changes in reading since the beginning of children's literature in the modern sense and draws on examples from traditional codex to interactive app picture books. We read, in part, to acquire knowledge, and knowledge is the subject of Alice Curry's chapter. Curry examines the ways contemporary fiction is responding to the exponential increase in information in the digital age. She concludes that these texts speak to the need for individuals to become information literate otherwise they will not be able to participate fully, and contribute responsibly, towards the "ever-expanding knowledge economy".

Less familiar are the other words under consideration. For example, consumption in its varying implications comes under scrutiny in Margaret Mackey's chapter. Mackey teases the positive and negative aspects of consumerism and the book as a collectible product, and she does so by noticing the connection between the book and the capitalist enterprise from the beginning. For his part, Perry Nodelman connects the notion of a child's discovery of the world and children's books part in this discovery. The complication sets in when he considers just how discovery may be less spontaneous than it is manipulated, constructed, ordered, and designed to lead to specific places. Nodelman's chapter offers an intricate definition of children's literature.

"Childhoods" is perhaps the closest we come to a technical term in children's literature studies, although we are more familiar with "child", "childhood", "child studies". Accordingly, Lijun Bi and Fang Xiangshu chronicle the changing conceptions of children and childhood in China, from the early dynastic period to the post-Mao period. A fascinating aspect of this chapter is the opportunity for Western readers to learn about China's history and compare this with the conception of childhoods in the West. We can say something similar about Xu Xu's study of "Imagination". Xu Xu draws on Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities to examine Chinese children's literature with a view to understanding the correlation between childhood and nationhood at three historical moments in modern China. The example of China should prove heuristic. A recent study of national identity through children's books is Miriam Verena Richter, *Creating the National Mosaic: Multiculturalism in Canadian Children's Literature from 1950 to 1994* (2011). Ingrid Johnston's chapter, "Migrancy", takes Richter's examples further by examining more recent narratives of migration for children in the context of Canadian multiculturalism. As Johnston points out, the notion of Canada as a mosaic is one that is criticised as often "migrants' differences are put on display and stereotyped" in multicultural children's literature. Her examples of Canadian children's fiction illuminate the complexities that often accompany migration.

Other chapters investigate words both more and less familiar in the study of children's literature. For example, Jean Webb explores food in children's literature. Food has received considerable attention from critics of children's literature, but Webb's chapter is comprehensive both historically and thematically. She covers books from the nineteenth century to contemporary work, and she looks at the various ways food has served thematically in books for the young. Kerry Mallan's exploration of empathy in children's books demonstrates the slipperiness of empathy; it is not always as benign as we might think. Other chapters deal with monsters and memory. Clare Bradford takes monsters for her subject. Her chapter is less a teratology than it is an exploration of the monstrous in the world of the adolescent. Monstrosity comes in various guises, not least when it slinks about domestic space. Cherie Allan focuses on both personal memory and public memory in books for the young. After a general consideration, she turns her attention to the Australian cultural memory of the Anzac Legend. Finally, Yan Wu brings a child's perspective to the collection through his interview with a ten-year-old Chinese girl. Together they explore expectations about the future and the appeal of children's literature.

Taken in its entirety, this book is about the current state of children's literature and how it got here. Each word is interesting in its own right and readers may pick and choose chapters that appeal to them. However, the reader who reads all the chapters will come away with an enriched sense of both what children's literature is and how it works—in both literary and a cultural senses. Children's literature has work to do in educating its readers. This education is a calling out, an invitation to "come over, come over", like the taunts of a children's game; to break through the line that separates knowledge from ignorance, wonder from complacency, familiar from strange. To break through is to read against the grain, to read to know just how limiting and also liberating the reading experience can be. Reading, like the games children play, involves risks. We risk our subjectivity when we read. We risk our innocence when we read. And we risk the challenges of the future when we read. Reading is a great game, but as these chapters indicate, it is a game that can threaten as well as exhilarate, interpellate as well as liberate. So much depends upon learning how to read.

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Chapter 1
Reading: From Turning the Page to Touching the Screen

Erica Hateley

> Now it is clearly no accident that these two events—the creation of a new form of literature for children on the one hand, and the development of a trade in games and toys on the other—were both happening at the same time. A shift was taking place in the way people felt and thought about children and the accoutrements of childhood, including books and toys, were implicated in this change (Lewis 1996, p. 13).

David Lewis is describing the convergence of book and toy technologies and cultures as the eighteenth century became the nineteenth century. His historical insight reminds us that changes in reading—both in terms of what is read and how it is accessed—have always characterised children's literature. While the combination of changing times and reading might immediately call to mind debates around 'new literacies' or 'multiliteracies'—the recognition of the need for flexible literacy as a tool of social participation and agency in the age of globalised, multicultural, late-capitalist, mass culture and communication—it is also useful to remember that change is constant. Indeed, it has often been true that readers operate in environments of "increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioural, and so on" (Cope and Kalantzis 2000, p. 5). Nonetheless, to the degree that in the "mass media, multimedia, and in an electronic hypermedia [, m]eaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal" (Cope and Kalantzis 2000, p. 5), it is productive to consider the ways in which new technologies are used to make reading itself meaningful. This chapter considers the ways in which contemporary children's literature *depicts* reading in changing times, with a particular eye on the cultural definitions of 'reading' being offered to young people in the age of the tablet computer. A number of picture books, in codex and app form, speak to changing times for reading by their emphasis on the value of books and reading as technologies of literature and of the self.

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1.1 Literacy and Subjectivity

A powerful model for understanding connections between reading and subjectivity is the 'literacy myth'. This is a cultural and narrative logic whereby "Literate persons, for example, are said to be more empathetic, innovative, achievement-oriented, cosmopolitan, media aware, politically aware, identified with a nation, aspiring to schooling, 'modern,' urban in residence, and accepting of technology" (Graff 2001, p. 12). In other words, the literacy myth links the ability to read and write with the hallmarks of preferred subjectivity in contemporary, consumer-capitalist societies. Importantly, the literacy myth does not inherently limit literacy to a print-based codex culture.

Within narratives for young readers the literacy myth often takes the particular narrative form of a romance of reading, wherein acts of reading are explicitly linked to personal development and triumph over adversity. This romance of reading can be seen in any number of children's texts, but is exemplified in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988) where not only reading but the reading *of literary books* indexes Matilda's growth:

> The books transported her into new worlds and introduced her to amazing people who lived exciting lives. She went on olden-day sailing ships with Joseph Conrad. She went to Africa with Ernest Hemingway and to India with Rudyard Kipling. She traveled all over the world while sitting in her little room in an English village (Dahl 1988, p. 15).

What marks Dahl's romance of reading as exceptional—as well as exemplary—is the extent to which Matilda is a self-motivated agent throughout her story; she teaches herself to read because she has been culturally neglected by her parents. Matilda reads her way through all of her local library before she goes to school, and once at school, the emotional and intellectual compatibility of Matilda with her classroom teacher Miss Honey is indexed by a shared appreciation for Lewis, Tolkien, and Dickens.

A characteristic of Dahl's writing for young readers is that child protagonists will face direct antagonism from negative adult figures, and will achieve personal development by triumphing over those adults. In *Matilda*, the negative adult world is embodied in Matilda's neglectful parents and actively malevolent school headmistress, Miss Trunchbull. Tellingly, though, Matilda's adult allies are active facilitators of her literary and scholastic education: the public librarian and her first classroom teacher.[1] Thus, even while Dahl's children's fiction has had a long, ambivalent history of acceptance and exclusion by adult gatekeepers, *Matilda* offers a clear endorsement not only of literacy and reading, but also of adults who facilitate and value children's reading.

1.2 Metareading in Children's Literature

Matilda's explicit linking of the happy ending and narrative closure with reading serves as a reminder that in children's literature, metareading (reading about reading) often has the self-consciousness of the metafictional and the intertextual

without necessarily encouraging ontological uncertainty or presuming intertextual competence on the part of the implied reader. Metareading in children's literature can just as easily aim to produce readers who take for granted the value of reading, as to desire readers who are self-reflexive about the act of reading.

Children's literature predominantly seeks to convey a positive understanding of reading, modelling for the implied child reader an idealised reading experience that shapes the self and improves the subject's relation to the world. The invitations these works extend to readers to take up questions about reading are significant, whether or not they extend to posing "questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 1984, p. 2); whether or not they "explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh 1984, p. 2). Metareading invites young readers to identify with the 'right' kind of reading, not only in terms of content but also of medium. Thus, while many of these works are self-consciously metafictive and/or intertextual, my interest here lies in their engagement with representing, defining, and endowing with significance, the act of reading *per se*.

The romance of reading can be seen in a number of recent picture books for young readers—children with emerging literacy skills who are just as likely to be read to, or read with, as to be reading independently. Concrete depictions of reading offer obvious opportunities to consider how a particular work understands or defines reading, and such depictions appear frequently within texts for children. For reasons of scope, I am focusing here on books which not only represent reading but attribute to it a particular significance for the protagonist and for the implied reader.

1.3 Positive Pictures of Reading

In David Ezra Stein's *Interrupting Chicken* (2010), reading is a valued domestic activity that helps to forge and strengthen family bonds; reading enhances the cultural and social education of a child; and, helps constitute the child protagonist's present and future agency. It is clear that the act of reading, the texts being read, and the valuation of both within the daily life of the family constitute the book's politics of literacy overall.

In *Interrupting Chicken*, a father and daughter prepare for bedtime by agreeing that Papa will read a story aloud and the little chicken will go to sleep thereafter. The rhythm of this picture book is set by Chicken interrupting three different stories begun by Papa; Chicken gets too excited by the introductions to familiar fairy tales, and cannot stop herself from interrupting the story to share the moral of the tale with its protagonists. Chicken has learned from these stories, so she tells Hansel and Gretel "DON'T GO IN. SHE'S A WITCH!", and Little Red Riding Hood, "DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS!" (Stein 2010). These stories are, importantly, *read* to Chicken rather than told, and readers of *Interrupting Chicken* are repeatedly reminded of this fact visually as the double-page spreads incorporate depictions of the fairy-tale book that Papa and Chicken are sharing. From early on, readers are shown that Papa and Chicken share a home in which books and

creativity are privileged—there would seem to be no recent communications technologies in this house, or at least there are no signs of them, but the home has books and art materials scattered throughout. Chicken's drawings are used as decorations in the shared living spaces and in Chicken's bedroom, suggesting that she is actively encouraged to express herself artistically and that such expressions are valued by the family.

When Papa tires of Chicken's interruptions of his reading to her, he invites her to tell him a story. Readers see a double-page spread of Chicken's story framed by the full-bleed background which encases readers in the family space shared by Papa and Chicken: she has made her own fairy tale book (Stein 2010). It is important that Chicken not only tells a story, but is visually and verbally literate—she writes and illustrates her text, "Bedtime for Papa". The narrative thus not only draws on the cultural symbolism of bedtime as a time of parent–child bonding, and links the shared reading and telling of stories with close familial bonds, but also connects these ideas with the development of the child as a literate subject.

Leonard S. Marcus is correct in his assertion that "what she [Chicken] wants above all is to *get inside* the story: be the hero, not the listener, and be in charge" (Marcus 2011, p. 29), and it is important that authority here means advanced literacy. Hidden in plain sight in *Interrupting Chicken* is an endorsement of the logic that suggests that consuming culturally authoritative texts—even as here, canonical fairy tales are rewritten to elide representations of parental neglect—facilitates social agency and status.

As with *Interrupting Chicken*, Louise Yates's *Dog Loves Books* (2010) defines reading as personally significant, but uses its older protagonist to connect reading with the building of social bonds beyond the family unit. In *Dog Loves Books*, readers meet a dog who so loves interacting with books—in tactile, sensory terms, as well as for their content—that he decides to open a bookshop. When the first visitors seek cups of tea or directions rather than books, Dog grows despondent but distracts himself by reading. While reading, "he forgot that he was alone" and "he forgot that he was in a bookshop" (Yates 2010). While Dog is reading, Yates's readers can see that dinosaurs, marsupials and other figures from Dog's books come to life around him, and he also travels to other worlds. Dog's immersion in reading means that when a customer comes into his store looking for a book, Dog "knew exactly which ones to recommend" (Yates 2010). Dog shares a number of books with a young customer, and together they become ballerinas, knights, and pilots—at least in their imaginations.

The value of reading to the individual is clear here, and is connected less with the moral lessons of *Interrupting Chicken* than the personal development narrated in Dahl's *Matilda*. Being engaged in books allows Dog access to new knowledge and new experiences, and distracts him from negative emotions in his day-to-day life. In turn, his capacities as a reader enable him to forge social bonds with others. Reading is a conduit to personal development and social relations.

Both *Interrupting Chicken* and *Dog Loves Books* specifically connect reading—as something more than functional literacy—with print culture, and the sharing of books. They take up questions of digital literature or digital literacies implicitly,

in the sense that the determined absence of digital culture from these 2010 picture books about reading seems to locate them within current adult anxieties about children not reading books. By focusing on reading in general, and the reading of books in particular, they avoid any explicit comparisons between codex and digital technologies. By contrast, one recent high-profile picture book tackled the issue head-on.

1.4 The Digital Generation

Lane Smith's *It's a Book* (2010) depicts a dialogue between a jackass and a monkey, whose physical sizes seem to suggest a child questioning an adult. The jackass wants to know about the book monkey is reading and its affordances. Jackass uses the experiences familiar from his own personal technology (shown to be a laptop computer) to ask the monkey about whether a book can be used for scrolling, blogging, gaming, tweeting, and so forth. While *It's a Book* derives comedy from the jackass's initial lack of knowledge about books and the monkey's refrain, "it's a book", it is surely a positive feature of the jackass's queries that they focus on ways to interact with the materials he encounters. In a sense, the jackass is a subject of a participatory culture that has not educated him on the value of dialogue. The early part of the story suggests that jackass is, both personally and culturally, all about speaking and not at all about listening. Just as the jackass wants to send material out into the world but does not want to receive any in return, he asks many questions but does not seem to listen to the answers.

When the monkey finally gets the jackass to look at the book, the reader of *It's a Book* also gets to see it. The monkey has been reading an illustrated version of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. The jackass's first response is to try rewriting the story in 'text speak', which suggests he has not really *read* it. Once he begins reading, he is engrossed by the story and a clock on the wall behind the jackass shows several hours passing. When monkey requests his book back, jackass refuses and monkey announces that he is going to the library. The final joke of the book turns on jackass still not fully understanding the technology he is engaging with. More important is *It's a Book*'s endowing the reading of a story in a codex with a kind of absorption, and a lack of interruption or distraction.

The claims *It's a Book* makes for the value of reading are implicit (unless adult readers of the book view a quiet child as an end in itself), and are made clear by the comparisons with what the book is not. Unlike *Interrupting Chicken* and *Dog Loves Books*, *It's a Book* not only explicitly addresses the technologies that young readers encounter in the twenty-first century, but also seems quite sympathetic to their attractions. Nonetheless, *It's a Book* seems quite clear that the reading of fiction is a task best undertaken with a codex and a receptive mind. That is, even as its account of reading and codices seems somewhat conservative, *It's a Book* makes a call for *balance* between receptive reading and productive writing. It values different kinds of textual and technological experiences.

These books seek to affirm rather than to destabilise cultural logics of literacy and subjectivity. So, while the plots either depict or imply future rewards for readers, they also show protagonists gaining immediate pleasure, self-development, and the building or strengthening of social bonds ('networks' in real rather than virtual environments). However, if the claims made on behalf of reading are distinguished from the technology being accessed, three particular ideas emerge as common to recent bibliophilic picture books: the reading of specific texts is identified as valuable (intertextuality); shared or mediated adult-child reading experiences are valued as both indicating and strengthening familial relationships; and, reading is a social practice constituent of sociocultural agency. Although the picture books discussed so far all yoke these experiences to print culture, it is not *necessarily* the case that such experiences or logics cannot be transferred to digital culture.[2] Rather, these are narrative and thematic examples of the same anxieties that have seen the picture book recently become "increasingly assertive in its physical three-dimensional form" (Salisbury and Styles 2012, p. 185). But the form and content of picture books have long been shaped by the possibilities and constraints of technologies of production and reproduction. Fetishisation of the codex runs the risk of 'forgetting' that what is commonly understood as a picture book today is as much the result of production as it is of content. It is important to consider the ways in which reading is represented in other forms, in order to begin to disentangle (as far as it is possible or desirable) form from content in the shaping of reading as a meaningful experience.

1.5 Playing with Technology

History shows that new technologies of printing and publishing enabled the comparatively cheap and reliable reproduction of high-quality, (often) coloured illustrations and spurred the picture-book industry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Kiefer 2008; Lewis 1996; Lundin 2001). Similarly, recent technological developments in printing, such as digital typesetting and reproduction, print-on-demand, and electronic publishing have affected the production and circulation of literary texts today. A relatively direct line can be traced from the printing plate to the digital editions of the Kindle (or similar)—the advance of technology enables increasing number of 'prints'/copies without a reduction in edition or copy quality; and these copies can be safely and economically circulated to an increasingly global population of consumers (again, with minimal damage to the integrity of the text). The incorporation of digital tools in the making, design, and publishing of visual art in and for books has particular implications for the production of picture books; what seems less clear at this time are the implications of digital publishing for the reading of picture books.

Herther notes that, "Beginning in the mid-1980s, the nascent multimedia industry (then built around CD-ROMs) focused on what was often called 'edutainment' or 'infotainment'—products that would both entertain and enlighten

users" (Herther 2008, p. 29). In the case of picture books, CD-ROMs were published which brought together 'book' and 'game' versions of a text, and to varying degrees of success combine them within a meaningful textual environment that emphasised the fun potential of reading, and the learning potential of (usually) computer games. The turn of the twenty-first century is marked by a convergence of the book and the toy that resonates with Lewis's account of the birth of the children's picture book, and this can be seen clearly in tablet or mobile touch-screen technologies. Initially developed and marketed with a focus on telephony, wireless internet access, personal communications, and gaming, smartphone and tablet makers rapidly realised the market potential of e-books and interactive digital reading.

1.6 Touching Texts

Gerard Goggin describes a number of intersections between picture books and touch-screen computing following the 2007 launch of Apple's iPhone:

> A more adventurous development occurred in the modification or creation of interactive books as apps for the iPhone. These included genres such as children's books, with titles such as *Princess Dress-Up: My Sticker Book*, Dr Seuss's *Fox in Sox*, *Winnie the Pooh Puzzle Book*, and *True Ghost Stories from Around the World* (with new stories regularly added). Children's books had long had different kinds of interactivity, users expectations, and play (pop-ups, tactile features, tear-offs, stickers, and so on), so iPhone apps provide a new medium for realizing these features (Goggin 2012, p. 204).

The same claims are true for Apple's iPad, which launched in 2010. In fact, when it comes to affordances for picture-book texts, the iPad's larger screen and physical approximation to other forms of e-readers and tablet technologies may well offer a greater challenge to codices than the iPhone did. Al-Yaqout argues that part of the iPad's success as a technology for picture books may well be the extent to which it *aligns* with rather than differs from the physical experience of reading codex picture books. She notes that this is true to the degree that when using the iPad, "the turning of the page has been artfully constructed to mimic a hand movement reminiscent of the action a reader performs when navigating the pages of the codex text" (Al-Yaqout 2011, p. 68). The iPad offers not only an ideal convergence of book and toy, but also of familiarity and innovation.

The size and shape of the iPad, as with many tablet technologies, offers a physical experience for the reader that is not necessarily different from the ways in which the body interacts with a codex. At the same time, the iPad had immediate visual advantages over competing e-book technologies in the specific domain of picture books. Not only could users quickly learn to turn the page by swiping a finger across the iPad's screen, they would be consuming high-resolution, full-colour renditions of picture-book illustrations.[3] Further, the iPad's particular modes of interactivity seemed tailor-made to respond to what e-book developer Jon Skuse describes as the ideal e-picture book:

> The eBook isn't about winning or losing. It's about an "exploration," an experience, rather like a pop-up book. What many publishers are doing wrong at the moment is just copying printed picturebooks on to this format, which does both media a disservice. It's just like looking at a PDF. Children will simply flick through. A printed picturebook is a particular kind of physical experience that can be savored and revisited. The eBook needs to exploit its own particular characteristics and strengths to evolve as similarly special but distinct experience (Salisbury and Styles 2012, p. 184).

Early game-changers in interactive app picture books were Atomic Antelope's *Alice for the iPad* (2010) and *Pop Out! The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Loud Crow Interactive (2011). Each of these apps adapted canonical children's texts which had distinctive and influential visual cultures associated with them. Each take advantage of the iPad's swipe, pinch, and other gestural controls and also utilize the possibility of turning or tilting the iPad and having objects on the screen respond as though to real physics. Loud Crow's *Peter Rabbit* offers digital equivalents of tabs and spin wheels from movable books of the past. *Alice for the iPad* allows the user to manipulate elements of Tenniel's illustrations. Each includes musical soundtrack and read aloud options. In short, they seem to combine playing with reading, and traditional literary culture with new technology, and are examples of the ways in which interactive app books can transcend the constraints of e-books described by Jon Skuse.

More recently, contemporary picture books that take up the meaning or significance of books and reading have been components in adapting books to iPad apps, and iPad apps to books. Oliver Jeffers's *The Heart and the Bottle* has been adapted into a widely celebrated interactive app, and in a reversal of this flow, *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* offers a useful example of a text about books being adapted from an interactive app into a codex picture book.

When contacted by a film director to make a children's book which would appear in a narrative film about an aspiring children's book maker, Oliver Jeffers returned to a manuscript he'd abandoned five years earlier and began making a new illustrated version (Penguin Group USA 2010). The film has not yet appeared, but the book has. Jeffers's *The Heart and the Bottle* (2010) tells the story of a girl's emotional development before, during, and after the loss of a beloved family member.

Intellectual dialogue is at the core of *The Heart and the Bottle*, and reading (literal and symbolic) constitutes a key element of this dialogue. An early opening shows the importance of conversations between the girl and her grandfather that draw both on imagination and information from books. The space where these ideas interact encompasses "all the curiosities of the world" (Jeffers 2010). The girl and the man explore oceans, starscapes, forests, and books—*The Heart and the Bottle* shows an ongoing process of tempering information and imagination to forge new understandings. Although the book affirms some problematic logics of rationality and intuition that align adulthood with knowledge and childhood with imagination, it does not absolutely privilege one over the other. This dialogue of exploration and creativity continues, "until the day she found an empty chair" (Jeffers 2010) after the death of the man. As a strategy for managing grief, the girl encases her heart in a glass bottle to keep it safe from any external forces, positive or negative. In so doing, she loses her sense of wonder and curiosity.

It is not until she has grown up and meets another child that the girl (now a woman) desires to recover her heart, and the functions of dialogue and imagination it makes possible. The story shifts to focus on the woman's inability to recover her heart. It is not until she enlists the help of a child that she can set her heart free and forge the kind of relationship she enjoyed in her own childhood.

Once she has her heart back, the woman sits in what was her grandfather's chair, begins reading his books, and recovers her humanity. Although not as overtly about "reading" as the picture books discussed above, Jeffers's *The Heart and the Bottle* includes books as an essential technology for developing subjectivity and interpersonal relationships. The book's main focus is on curiosity, sharing, dialogue (with the world, ideas, and other people), and the reading of books is identified as a crucial example of such.

The iPad app version of *The Heart and the Bottle* (HarperCollins 2010) was released in 2010 and quickly enjoyed success. It was named an "App of the Week" in the iTunes marketplace, and as its features include a voiceover narration by Helena Bonham Carter was appealing to multiple segments of the market. Each opening of the picture book has an equivalent screen in the app version, and Jeffers's images are rendered interactive insofar as readers of the app use the touch screen to reveal or manipulate elements of the illustrations. Of course, the mechanics of interactivity are such that readers are only able to "make happen" what has been programmed to happen. Nonetheless, there is a feeling of contributing to the forward movement of the narrative, and certain features extend the reader's identification with the protagonist. For example, readers can draw a picture that the girl then carries to the next page; and readers are involved in generating the darkened atmosphere after the old man's death—by swiping their fingers across the screen they make the room darken.

Tellingly, the app fills in some meanings that the reader of Jeffers's picture book infers. In particular, one scene shows the woman thinking of the empty chair, where the app offers a transitional image—readers use their finger to swipe the figure, and as the girl grows up into a woman, the image of her thoughts shifts from one of the girl and the man sharing a book to the empty chair (HarperCollins 2010). It is difficult to assess whether this interactive element, in making the implicit explicit, aids in the development of the narrative or diminishes it. In a story about the importance of reading and imagination, such moments may actually deter the reader from using their own imagination.

1.7 If Books Could Fly

My final example is the textual grouping published under the title *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* which—as of the time of writing—manifests in three related but discrete versions by William Joyce and Moonbot Studios: an animated short film (2011), an app (2011), and a picture book (2012).

The wordless animated film establishes the narrative which is shared by all three texts: Morris Lessmore is a man who loves books; when his life is ruined by a tornado-like storm the devastation is represented by Morris finding himself in a

colourless world without books (Joyce and Oldenburg 2011). When he sees a woman being flown through the sky by a flock of books, Morris is lead to a library. Initially, his role seems to be to tend to the health and well-being of the books—which in this narrative are endowed with subjectivity, feelings, and actions—but it is soon revealed that his true job is to make meaningful the lives of others. Morris literally brings colour to the lives of people who visit the library as he finds the right book for them.

The film clearly suggests that the best way to keep books alive is by reading them, and the best way for people to live fully is by reading books; it has strangely little to say about the how or why *of* reading. The circulation of books stands in metaphorically for acts of reading, but other than colouring people's existence, it is unclear why this might be. The film is more explicit about the act of writing—Morris achieves personal fulfillment both by circulating books and by writing the story of his own life. After he dies, Morris's story finds its way into the hands of a young girl, and it is clear that she will be the next person to sacrifice her life to the library.

Moonbot's iPad app adaptation of the animated film uses the visual culture and plot of the film, and adds a verbal narration—available as words across the bottom of each page, and as a voiceover narration—that makes clear any ambiguities of the film (Moonbot 2011). Interactive features mostly involve tapping or swiping elements within an illustration to activate a short animation or temporarily move an object. Philip Michaels's generous description captures the spirit of the *Lessmore* app:

> Moonbot went beyond merely repurposing the Morris Lessmore film. Instead, the app comes loaded with interactive features that augment the storyline. When a windstorm blows Morris out of his comfortable life, you can make houses fly off with a flick of your finger. A bowl of alphabet soup becomes a canvas for forming words. You help Morris piece together fragments of a torn up page. Everything neatly fits in with the action, and it's a terrific way to get drawn into the saga of Morris Lessmore, particularly for younger readers (Michaels 2012).

The app feels most interactive when the narrative stops to allow a more free-flowing sense of play, as when readers have the opportunity to play the film's soundtrack song, "Pop! Goes the Weasel", on a virtual piano. This raises the question, however, of whether the app is most effective as a book or as a toy.

Intriguingly, where the film showed Morris circulating generic books, the app clearly shows the titles of at least four—*A Christmas Carol, Treasure Island, Frankenstein* and *Alice in Wonderland*—aligning *Morris Lessmore* with a particular canon of children's "classics". Dragging these titles to characters on the screen transforms them temporarily. So, for example, dragging *Treasure Island* onto a character changes them briefly into a pirate, using *Frankenstein* transforms a man into Frankenstein, a boy into Frankenstein's monster, and a woman into the Bride of Frankenstein (*Morris Lessmore* tends to treat its intertexts as general popular culture collocations, rather than as discrete literary works). It is at this point that the *Morris Lessmore* app stakes a particular claim for the meaning of reading: the identification with a narrative that changes the reader's sense of self, if only for a short time.

The app also gives an insight into an opening of Morris's book, which is a picture book about coming to terms with the world: "I laugh. I cry. I seldom understand things but it is more and more a sort of comfort" (Moonbot 2011). These lines, visibly penned by Morris in the film version, are shown as finished product in the app, but are not present in the picture book.

The picture book juxtaposes visual styles as full-page illustrations that are digital paintings taken from the film, but pages on which the verbal narration are printed use a hand-drawn illustration style (Joyce 2012). To the degree that the hand-drawn illustrations seem less fully realised than the digital paintings, so does the telling of Morris's life seem lesser than the living of it. This creates a sustained sense on the part of the reader that they are reading Morris's book and his life at the same time, but a diminished sense of the role that reading can or should have played in that life.

Morris Lessmore in all of its incarnations seems less interactive than an example of a work whereby the "overall combination of design play affordances makes the child become somewhat visually distanced from the effects, so the interactor begins to occupy the position of an appreciative viewer of a spectacle" (Reid-Walsh 2012, p. 172). Not to put too fine a point on it, but a spectacle about books is not the same as an invitation to consider the meaning and significance of reading. There is no doubt that the narrative's "unifying metaphor of life as story is a powerful one, as is the theme of the transformative power of books" (Kirkus 2012), but it is a little more doubtful whether *reading* is a concern of, or actively invited by, the narrative.

As impressive an aesthetic and technical feat as the *Morris Lessmore* texts are, they demonstrate the fallacy of equating interactivity with agency. They show that texts can be about books without also being about reading. So, I am not yet ready to unproblematically embrace app books as offering reading opportunities unavailable in codices. As Jacqueline Reid-Walsh's recent critique of movable books makes clear:

> …the interactor roles for the child have shifted from agency to activity to spectatorship. These shifts are linked to the design of the artifacts. The simpler designed objects enable a wider range of roles for the child interactor, including authorship, while, the more complexly designed artifacts channel the interactions into predetermined sets that divorce the different interactor functions from one another (Reid-Walsh 2012, p. 177).

While apps such as *The Heart and the Bottle* and *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* invite readers to interact with their content, the mechanisms of and for creating such works are hidden far from children's eyes and hands. In *Interrupting Chicken* the possibility of making one's own book, to read alone or with others, is made clear. Even if such a plot were made available in an app book, the reader cannot see how to make their own; spectacular visions of books seem to displace acts of reading.

1.8 Conclusion

Reading is as much a process or a journey as it is an end in itself. The subjunctive aspect of reading, which links it to ways of being, is presently more visible in codex picture books than interactive apps. Ironically, the increasing fetishisation of books is deferring rather than encouraging agential reading. It is likely that as the iPad generation comes of age as authors and artists, they will produce texts that harness both the affordances of tablet technologies and the possibilities of reading as a technology of the self. For now, it seems that books are being re-imagined, but reading has not yet necessarily found its new time.

Notes

1. It falls beyond the purview of this paper to explore the wide range of tensions between education, literacy, and childhood agency that are explored in Dahl's novel. The reading capabilities that mark Matilda as exceptional run the risk of marking her as a non-child: "Although you look like a child, you are not really a child at all because your mind and your powers of reasoning seem to be fully grown-up. So I suppose we might call you a grown-up child, if you see what I mean" (Dahl 1988, p. 189). The end of the novel restores Matilda's childhood by managing her exceptional reading through educational practice, and the implied child reader has a figure of (perhaps ironic) identification available to them.
2. Obviously, such books reveal adult cultural anxieties around the much-vaunted "death of the book", and anxieties around the social and cultural importance of literacy attainment (especially, but not exclusively, in the realm of literary over functional literacy). I suspect they also indicate an adult cultural anxiety about the potential autonomy of young people engaging in non-print cultures beyond the immediate gaze or management of the adults in their lives. Al-Yaqout notes "The long held first port of call for acquiring a new book has been a library or a bookshop; both of which commonly require not only supervision but also an allocated timeframe" (Al-Yaqout 2011, p. 72). It is telling that in current picture books that depict reading often also represent bookshops or libraries as privileged spaces—indicating a wider anxiety not only about the place of books and reading in young people's lives, but the places in which books and reading happen.
3. More prosaically, but no less significantly, the iPad exploited consumers' familiarity with purchasing through Apple's digital shopfront, iTunes, as much as their familiarity with the touch-screens of the iPhone or iPod Touch. At the time of writing, Apple's iPad and their digital content marketplace, the iTunes store, are the clear market leaders and trendsetters in the convergence of digital culture technologies and children's picture books. Such market share and leadership is in no way guaranteed but in the moment at which this analysis is being made, it is obvious that the iPad marks the testing ground for innovation in adapting the genre of the picture book to digital tablet technologies.

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Chapter 2
Knowledge: Navigating the Visual Ecology—Information Literacy and the 'Knowledgescape' in Young Adult Fiction

Alice Curry

2.1 Changing Times: Information Literacy in a Digital Age

The poet John Milton, according to popular belief, might have been the last man to grasp the sum-total of recorded knowledge by reading—around 400 years ago—every book contemporaneously in print (Pepperell 2009, p. 384). Today, a single issue of *The New York Times* contains more information than an average man in the seventeenth century would have had access to in his lifetime (Epstein 2007, p. 20). In this milieu of ever-expanding knowledge—dubbed by many the Information Age—information literacy, or in broad terms, the ability to identify, analyse and use information effectively and responsibly, has been heralded by educators as an essential skill for the modern child as well as the life-long learner. The 'very broad institutional acceptance' of information literacy in the United States, as well as its animated discussion in library science journals in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, suggests that information literacy is becoming a valued and recognised element of contemporary learning (Purdue 2003, p. 653). How, then, and to what extent has this overwhelming concern with information literacy made its mark on literature for children and young adults? Using Bertagna's *Exodus* (2003) and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011) as case studies, I consider how contemporary fiction is responding to the exponential increase in information that characterises the Information Age. I pay particular attention to instances of media-induced stress, and what has variously been termed 'information anxiety' (Wurman 1989) and 'information trauma' (Epstein 2007), and suggest that the textual trope of a 'knowledgescape'—or digital landscape—renders the quest to navigate today's information-saturated environments a metaphor for becoming information literate.

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Of the several descriptions of information literacy that have been advanced over the past few years, the definition offered by the Final Report of the Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, released almost twenty-five years ago by the US Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), is the most-widely cited.[1] The ACRL defines information literacy as 'the skills to be able to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for any given need'. 'Information literacy,' it argues, 'is a means of personal empowerment. It allows people to verify or refute expert opinion and to become independent seekers of truth'. 'Ultimately,' it concludes, 'information literate people are those who have learned how to learn'. In the primary, secondary and higher education institution there is continuing debate over the division of roles between classroom, faculty and library staff in the teaching of information literacy (see, for instance, Albitz 2007). Despite the confusion that this relatively recent concept still inspires, information literacy is nevertheless generally considered 'a unique set of skills and cognitive abilities' and an increasingly important learning imperative (Scales et al. 2005, p. 235). In 2005, the UNESCO-sponsored 'Information Literacy Meeting of Experts' issued 'The Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning' which stated that information literacy 'is a basic human right in a digital world' (Garner 2006, p. 3). By 2009, the concept had generated so much discussion that US President Barack Obama declared October to be 'National Information Literacy Awareness Month' (Haras and Brasley 2011).

Considering the levels of acceptance of information literacy in social and educational agendas, it is to be assumed that this concept has had some bearing on contemporary fiction for children and young adults. A quick browse of recently published print titles referencing digital technologies suggests the interpolation of internet-related knowledge practices in contemporary thinking, in matters as diverse as love—*Luv @ First Site* (*TodaysGirls.com #5*) (Kindig et al. 2004)—adventure—*Digital Disaster (Hyperlinkz #1)* (Elmer 2004)—crime—*Hackerteen: Volume 1: Internet Blackout* (Marques 2008)—and philosophy—*Young Ethan's Internet Search* (*for the Truth*) (Kessler 2004). The fact that these novels are invariably serialized reflects the limitless nature of contemporary media engagement whereby information is quickly consumed and continuously generated, circulated and recreated in endless feedback loops thereby perpetuating rapid information expansion. More nuanced portrayals can be found in futuristic fantasies that grapple with the posthuman condition in worlds in which technological prostheses—including informational systems—have become integrated into the human condition. M.T. Anderson's *Feed* (2004), as a classic example, imagines a future America in which an internet 'feed' implanted in peoples' brains renders all recorded knowledge already a property of the human brain and forever mediated by consumer advertising; the functioning (post)human in this primarily illiterate society is not one who *knows* more than anyone else but one who is able to access information more efficiently.

Anderson's *Feed* indicates that contemporary authors are increasingly engaging with the accessibility of knowledge rather than the ontological properties of knowledge itself. Such an epistemological concern reveals a preoccupation with

formalism that Hirsch (1987) has noted more generally in pedagogical practices. Formalism, as defined by Hirsch, is the contention that 'how-to knowledge, skills that are universally applicable to all circumstances of life, is the important thing to be learned' (p. 11). Clark has expanded Hirsch's original thesis to contend that formalism is a 'focus on skills, not knowledge; on rhetoric or style, not content (be that information or ideas); on process, not substance; on ideology, not truth' (2009, p. 509). In this aggregated set of dichotomies, knowledge is rendered less important than the stylistic vestments in which it is couched. Such a vision corresponds with Purdue's definition of information literacy '[a]t its worst,' which he argues 'is merely a set of skills to enable individuals to 'manage information' more efficiently' (2003, p. 654). In this bleak rendition of educational practice in which content is subsumed to form and substance to process, one encounters an interpretation of the educational establishment as an institution liable to show less concern for 'knowledge' than for equipping students with the skills to contend with the increasing pressures of information expansion.

The diverse ways in which knowledge can be generated, structured and disseminated in today's digital cultures renders information acquisition dependent on a grasp of multimodal knowledge practices. Stephens and Geerts (2013) have noted that contemporary Dutch and English adaptations of traditional tales and story motifs for children display an increasing awareness of such multimodality since today's readers 'require texts of a kind which adapt the cultures of the past to engage with the diffuse nature of contemporary textuality and information flows' including the 'random swirl of information' conjured up by an internet search browser. These texts, they suggest, often exhibit a playfully hypertextual 'mish-mash' of various source texts and thereby encourage readers to turn to internet search engines or information sites such as Wikipedia to fill in the gaps. Whilst I agree with Stephens and Geerts that this emerging trend can indeed 'open up other avenues of pleasure' for the inquisitive child reader, I suggest that this overt awareness of information inundation is also the subject of less playful textual strategies in fiction for older readers.

The sheer volume of information circulating in today's multimedia environments has given rise to the medical condition Information Fatigue Syndrome (IFS), referring to the anxiety, stress and weariness caused through what is colloquially termed 'information overload' (Wilson and Lizabeth 2001, p. 1). An analysis of today's increasing preoccupation with information il/literacy and its manifestations in children's texts must take into account such instances of information-induced stress. 'Information anxiety,' Wurman argues 'is the black hole between data and knowledge. It happens when information doesn't tell us what we want or need to know' (1989, p. 34). According to Epstein, this knowledge gap reflects the wider postmodern condition whereby the individual is appreciative of 'surfaces and signifiers, traces and simulacra, while resisting depths and meanings'; the lack of concentration of the contemporary information user, he notes, can be likened to the 'symptoms we might expect of one who has undergone an acutely traumatic experience' (2007, p. 21). Such concepts reveal a general acknowledgement that the limitations of epistemic institutions and the fallible

conditions under which knowledge is produced necessarily hinder our capacity to become information literate. In a context in which 'drowning in the abundance of information that floods [our] lives' is considered a possibility, information literacy—as the ACRL notes—is nothing short of a 'survival skill'.

A growing preoccupation with information anxiety in recent young adult fiction reflects this distinctly (post)modern manifestation of trauma and centres on the key premise that traditional knowledge institutions are struggling to keep up with the demands of a rapidly expanding knowledge economy. I suggest a further tendency in such literature to envisage knowledge-seeking in spatial terms, in correspondence with Marcum's claim that today's information-overloaded reality constitutes a 'visual ecology' (2002, p. 189). The visual ecology, as defined by Marcum, is a 'universe of action' arising through 'the dynamic, discontinuous, individualized, random access texture of our experience,' rendering 'many existing institutions, resources, and cultural mores dysfunctional in various degrees' (pp. 189, 190). In Bertagna's and Roth's novels the visual ecology is communicated via the trope of a digital landscape that is shaped by the knowledge choices of its users. In these novels the classic bildungsroman takes an epistemological turn; knowledge acquisition for the young protagonists inheres in attempts to navigate the spatial parameters of what I hereby dub these digital 'knowledgescapes'. A geographical rendition of knowledge acquisition corresponds with the concluding statements of the ACRL final report:

> To respond effectively to an ever-changing environment, people need more than just a knowledge base, they also need techniques for exploring it, connecting it to other knowledge bases, and making practical use of it. In other words, the landscape upon which we used to stand has been transformed, and we are being forced to establish a new foundation called information literacy.

I turn to these new landscapes—or 'knowledgescapes'—to consider the impact of information literacy on contemporary young adult fiction.

2.2 Information Anxiety: The 'Knowledgescape' as Trope in Contemporary Fiction

In the far-future world of Bertagna's *Exodus* (2003), in which only isolated islands remain above water after the melting of the polar icecaps, the sixteen-year-old protagonist, Mara, struggles to uncover the history of the world's drowning by wading through the masses of unfiltered data left behind by defunct global communications systems. Her quest to find a safe home for the flood refugees pits her against two important knowledge institutions—the internet (in its first incarnation as 'the Weave' and in its reincarnation as 'the Noos') and the library of Glasgow University. These traditional establishments are discursively constructed as spatialities in need of physical navigation by the information user. Mara's schema for knowledge acquisition is predicated on the need to become information literate: '[S]he needs more than shimmering visions. She needs rock-solid evidence; something she can believe in.

Something everyone can believe in' (p. 38). This epistemological progression from raw data to knowledge to understanding—of both a personal and collective nature—defines the parameters within which she can successfully contribute towards the development—and survival—of her community.

The 'cryptic symbols' that allow Mara access to the internet-like Weave immediately render this electronic space accessible only to those with technical ability (p. 26). The '*wide electronic boulevard[s]*,' '*buzzing, sparking towerstacks*' and '*glittering electronic strands*' through which Mara '*zips and zooms*' mark the Weave as a vast urban landscape (pp. 26–27). In this gated community, the droll narratorial admission that Mara 'has picked up cyberwizzdom with the greed and instinct of an animal on the scent of a hunt' renders knowledge acquisition the epistemological equivalent of survival of the fittest (p. 26). In intertextual adherence to the epithet 'all that glitters is not gold,' the knowledge encapsulated by the Weave is found to be inaccessible, unreliable and hostile to the user. Mara's long, empty joyrides through this digital landscape afford her the temporary pleasures of thrill-seeking yet ultimately leave her feeling frustrated and apathetic since 'looking for anything in there is like looking for a needle in a million haystacks' (p. 145). Polluted by a 'great spill of electronic litter,' the Weave is a discursive site of epistemic atrophy: a visual ecology promising 'infinite possibility, an endless unfolding of choices' yet finally offering nothing except a 'venomous froth of data-decay' (pp. 27, 28). This ghostly graveyard of recorded knowledge functions as an illusory palimpsest of human hopes and dreams assembled under the ostensible banner of progress. In this eerie electronic space where 'glittering strands' turn to 'bleak ruins and wasted boulevards' when viewed 'up close,' knowledge has atrophied to such an extent that the Weave has grown 'wild and savage' (pp. 27, 28).

If the University of Glasgow's more ancient knowledge institution, the library, promises a medium less susceptible to epistemic atrophy, knowledge acquisition is nevertheless found to induce similar anxiety. The crumbling ruins of the university library are spatially intimidating; 'towering book stacks,' '[b]ook avalanches' and 'paper mountains' threaten to collapse in telling echo of the 'tumbledown towerstacks,' 'rotting heaps' and 'junk mountain[s]' of the Weave (pp. 152, 27). These vast edifices of knowledge that physically dwarf the information-seeker promise much but deliver little: 'How will she ever find the information she needs in these mountains of books?' Mara sighs as she wanders aimlessly through the library's ruins, contemplating the 'thousand lives' she would need to sift through the available information (p. 153). If the rotting heaps of electronic waste and mutated creatures of cyberspace are a symbol of the failure of global communications systems, the 'feathers and droppings' littering the books of the library are comparably haunting invocations of epistemic decay (p. 153). In the dank and rotten halls of the university library, knowledge is discursively hidden within space and buried under layers of historical process.

Mara's entry into the virtual world of the Noos—the New World's reincarnation of the internet—positions her on the opposite side of the information superhighway, leaving her struggling 'to get to grips with the New World technology' (p. 223). In this new cyberspace, changing technologies have rendered older epistemic systems

obsolete. Mara's instructions to the search engine of the Noos to find her a 'story' are particularly telling:

> 'I want a story,' she instructs the small glitter-ball of electronic energy that immediately bounces towards her.
>
> The glittering search-ball bounces high into Noospace and explodes in a million fragments – electronic questers – that scatter across the mutating patterns. Moments later, like a reverse explosion, the fragments zoom back into a ball, having searched the Noos to find what Mara wants.
>
> *Storey as in floor, level in building?* the glitter-ball reports back.
>
> 'No, S-T-O-R-Y,' says Mara. 'As in once upon a time.'
>
> *Falsehood, lie*, it suggests, when it's back in one piece.
>
> Mara sighs. 'No. Try books.'
>
> *Boots?*
>
> 'Books!'
>
> The search-ball scatters yet again and takes a moment longer than usual to gather back the questers. Mara's hopes rise as she watches the glittering fragments gather into a globe.
>
> *Defunct word*, it claims uselessly. (p. 255)

In eliminating story from the New World hegemony, the sky cities have dismantled the conceptual parameters within which Mara has learnt to assemble knowledge into understanding in her progression towards information literacy. Within this 'living world of info and data,' Mara must 'freefall' until she learns to steer 'to whatever or wherever' she seeks (pp. 239, 238). The Noos has reconstituted the internet as a virtual space of momentary creation and recreation—a visual ecology—in which information literacy is the key to successful social functioning. If Mara is to gain entry to this gated community she must master the technological apparatus through which knowledge is transmitted and spatially navigate the vast terrain that constitutes the expanding knowledgescape.

Roth's *Divergent* portrays a future world with similarly sophisticated technologies capable of constructing digital landscapes from the data stored on centralised computer systems. Tris, the sixteen-year-old protagonist, is forced to traverse a series of these simulated landscapes, dubbed 'fear landscapes,' in order to become a member of the Dauntless faction, one of the five factions—or population groups—which make up the novel's urban setting. These simulated landscapes are designed to test the initiates' capacity for bravery in the face of anxiety and self-doubt; traversal of the fear landscapes is a process of spatial navigation around virtual obstacles drawn from the initiates' 'worst fears' (p. 296). Considered the culmination of the Dauntless initiation following weeks of instruction, preparation, practice and evaluation, these digital landscapes function as knowledgescapes: changing terrains of data designed to test the initiates' intellectual capabilities. Tris' attempts to analyse these digital landscapes, evaluate their reliability and interpret them in light of the initiation requirements outline her progression towards information literacy.

In a 'huge, dank space' in the Dauntless compound, the initiates' fear landscapes are superimposed onto the physical features of the room to create a visual ecology that 'feels real' even though it is electronically simulated (pp. 296, 234). These virtual landscapes require the initiates 'to combine the physical abilities [they] learned in stage one with the emotional mastery [they] learned in stage

two,' thereby forcing them to analyse their fears and 'develop strategies to face them' (pp. 297–298). Shifting according to Tris' emotional responses, these landscapes take the form of stormy skies, enclosed spaces or raging seas; within these spatial parameters, Tris must undertake a form of intellectual reasoning 'to figure out what th[e] simulation means' (p. 384). Whilst Mara in *Exodus* uses knowledge acquisition as a point of entry into the wider world, Tris turns her gaze inwards to navigate her knowledgescape through her increasing understanding of the self:

> I am not afraid of drowning. This is not about the water; it is about my inability to escape the tank. It is about weakness. I just have to convince myself that I am strong enough to break the glass. […] I ball my hands up into fists and pound on the wall. I am stronger than the glass. The glass is as thin as newly frozen ice. My mind will make it so. I close my eyes. The glass is ice. The glass is ice. The glass is—.(pp. 385–386)

Tris' success in manipulating the simulations at the point at which they become most threatening renders information literacy a tool for developing agency within the constraints of an imposed epistemic framework. By learning to apply both logic and emotion to her interactions with these digital landscapes, Tris successfully challenges the anxiety caused by information inundation and 'take[s] control of the situation' (p. 394). As in *Exodus*, information literacy is here a combination of mastering the technical apparatus through which knowledge is communicated and spatially navigating the visual ecology.

2.3 Information Inequality: Topographies of the 'Knowledgescape'

The trope that I have dubbed the 'knowledgescape' is a telling indicator of the significance of information expansion to contemporary young adult fiction and centres on the capacity of the subject to become information literate through successful navigation of the visual ecology. Katz (2001) has developed the concept of 'doing a topography' in feminist political geography that gives a useful starting point for an analysis of this trope in contemporary young adult fiction. 'To do a topography,' Katz contends, is to analyse the various salient features and spatial coordinates of a landscape in order to 'excavate the layers of process that produce particular places' (pp. 1231, 1228). Such analysis helps one consider the various ways in which social practices 'sedimented into space' impact upon the physical landscape (p. 1229). 'Revealing the embeddedness of these practices in place and space,' she argues, 'in turn invites the vivid revelation of social and political difference and inequality' (p. 1228). Topographies, understood in this way, can unearth the social and political determinants of particular landscapes. To do a topography of the knowledgescapes of contemporary fiction is to analyse these textual landscapes as a set of spatial features shaped by the knowledge choices of the societies that construct them. Such an analysis of Bertagna's and Roth's novels reveals the social and political ideologies that underpin the knowledge practices of the depicted societies, with a focus on the information inequality that lies at the heart of each society.

To do a topography of the knowledgescapes of *Exodus* is to plot Mara's progression towards information literacy against her increasing understanding of the social inequalities that underpin the New World. Mara's early realisation that she has failed to understand the wider political implications of the Weave reveals that insularity or ignorance can limit the effectiveness of the knowledgescapes as a space for information acquisition:

> How could she spend half of her life in the Weave and never see the truth? How did she not see those awful cries for help that lie among the ruins and junk mountains of the Weave? She thought it was an adventure playground, that's all, and she's been so engrossed in her thrills and spills that she hasn't seen what should have stopped her in her tracks long, long ago. (p. 52)

The 'awful cries for help' that discursively narrate the world's drowning lie in forgotten corners of the Weave, embedded in the landscape. Mara's sudden awareness of these SOS messages quite literally changes the epistemic terrain, forcing her to interrogate the social and political ideologies that have led to the collapse of the 'old world'. Mara's journeys through the Weave and later the Noos take on new definition; rather than 'freefalling' through the endless vortexes of data, her searches are targeted towards unearthing information about the social inequalities that allow the New World populations to live in luxury whilst the rest of the world works as indentured slaves or drowns. Navigation of the knowledgescapes now leaves her 'shocked to the core'; 'Before, fear was a game,' she realises, '[n]ow it's far too real' (pp. 47, 182).

Mara's increasingly fraught journeys through the New World's knowledgescapes uncover the segregated knowledge practices that bolster the socially divisive policies of the sky cities. The Weave, the Noos and the University are all implicated in the uneven distribution of wealth and privilege that defines the New World social system. The University library is particularly reviled by the group of flood refugees clinging to life at the foot of one of the towering sky cities; labelled the 'bad place' with its 'poisonous books,' the library is shunned for being the ideological foundation of the new sky city 'that lives only for itself in its own world of dreams and forgets the rest of the world' (pp. 156, 158). Knowledge acquisition is here construed as a tool for elitism rather than social equality or community cohesion; referring to Caledon, the founder of the New World, the flood refugees note that: 'If it wasn't for the ideas that he found in his books there would be no bars between our world and the sky, no wall to trap us inside and the others outside' (p. 194). Learning is perceived to erect physical barriers—bars and walls—between those who benefit from hegemonic knowledge practices and those who fall on the wrong side of the knowledge divide. The gated community of the New World resembles the Weave in its insularity, enclosing its inhabitants within a visual ecology of 'cybervizits and safaris, realsports and feelmovies, blisspools, solhols, zoominlums, colourjetting, sensawave clubbing, fear circuses and a hundred other entertainments' whilst barring entry to the disenfranchised (p. 249). A topography of this artificial landscape reveals the social inequalities embedded in its layout; Mara's progression towards information literacy invests her with the skills not simply to navigate its spatial parameters but also to interrogate its political foundations.

To do a topography of the knowledgescapes of *Divergent* is similarly to map Tris' progression towards information literacy against her growing understanding of her socially and politically divided society. The 'empty room' onto which the initiates' fear landscapes are superimposed acts as a canvas for the initiates' ideological refashioning (p. 297). A textual focus on the emptiness of space—in juxtaposition with a crowded visual ecology—forges a semantic link between the space in which knowledge acquisition is enacted and the 'building skeletons and broken sidewalks… [and] empty subways' of societies' 'factionless' (p. 25). These homeless citizens, disinclined or unable to function within the tightly policed faction parameters, live lives 'divorced from society, separated from the most important thing in life: community' (p. 20). Tris' father's injunction early in the novel that '[v]aluing knowledge above all else results in a lust for power, and that leads men into dark and empty places' renders knowledge acquisition similarly conducive to anti-social behaviour (p. 35). That knowledge is associated both with power and with emptiness—holding out the promise of filling a void whilst leading one further into dark and empty places—intimates that learning results not in the social harmony to which Tris' society ostensibly strives but in a stratified society that denies social welfare to those who fail interpellation by the epistemic superstructure.

In a society divided into five factions, each concerned with nurturing its own particular virtue, the allocation of all knowledge to the Erudite faction enforces cultural uniformity via the widespread information *il*literacy of the remaining factions. The flawed logic that prompts Jeanine, the Erudite leader, to wage a war for control of the government pivots on a linear understanding of information acquisition: 'She is more machine than maniac. She sees problems and forms solutions based on the data she collects […] [T]o her it is just crossing off an item from a list of tasks, the only logical progression of the particular path that she is on' (pp. 431–432, 435). Whilst Tris learns to apply both logic and emotion to navigate her simulated landscapes, Jeanine lacks the emotional comprehension to deal responsibly with the 'data she collects'. The Erudite headquarters—like the gleaming New World sky cities in *Exodus*—are a telling representation of the academic ivory tower with its floors of 'white tile,' walls that 'glow' and mirror-like doors that make Tris squint (p. 355). To do a topography of the empty spaces of *Divergent*'s knowledgescapes is thus to analyse the knowledge divide that flourishes under Jeanine's leadership as a strategy for producing and policing difference. Within such a context of information inequality, Tris' 'divergent' personality—rendering her capable of independent thought—is the key to her counterhegemonic progression towards information literacy.

2.4 Conclusion: Information Literacy and the Visual Ecology

Both *Exodus* and *Divergent* use the immediacy of the present tense to convey the vividness, saturation and moment-to-moment nature of the visual ecology. Information overload threatens to mire the protagonists in chains of empty signifiers

at the behest of crumbling knowledge institutions where information disassembles into data rather than assembling into understanding. In accordance with Hirsch's definition of formalism, these novels exhibit tension that the 'how-to' of knowledge practices—how to *access* it, how to *use* it, how to *consume* it, and in this case how to *traverse* it—may be more important to a young adult's successful social functioning than the actual *knowing* of knowledge itself. So how does the 'knowledgescape' inform an understanding of the impact of information literacy on contemporary fiction for children and young adults? The knowledgescape, as I have defined it, is a trope that represents the modern visual ecology as a digital landscape that must be navigated by the novels' information-seekers. Traversal of this landscape is predicated on gaining the skills both to master the technological apparatus by which knowledge is communicated and to understand the social and political underpinnings of institutionalised knowledge practices. As such, it is metonymic of a young person's progression towards information literacy.

The challenge facing educational establishments going forwards is to ensure that information literacy functions 'at its best' to facilitate the active citizenship that the ACRL proclaims should result from a critical engagement with knowledge (Purdue 2003, p. 654). Shapiro and Hughes argue that it should therefore 'be something broader' than the basic knowledge management skills that allow an individual to consume information more efficiently (1996, p. 35). Instead, information literacy should be something that allows individuals 'to think critically about the entire information enterprise and information society': something 'more akin to a 'liberal art'—knowledge that is part of what it means to be a free person in the present historical context of the dawn of the information age' (p. 35). This rather grand prognostication nevertheless gets to the heart of the epistemic reconceptualisation offered by these novels. Information literacy in this instance takes on an ethical dimension and corresponds with the ACRL's definition of citizenship as a state of affiliation that 'in a modern democracy involves more than knowledge of how to access vital information. It also involves a capacity to recognize propaganda, distortion, and other misuses and abuses of information'. Tris' counterhegemonic acts as she strives to 'acquir[e] the skills to force the bad out of our world so that the good can prosper and thrive,' and Mara's pledge to keep 'furiously turning ideas over in her head' until she finds a way to expose the New World's social injustices inspire hope in the altruistic ways in which knowledge practices can be locally applied to better serve human community (Roth 2011, p. 412; Bertagna 2003, p. 144).

'Because we have been hit by a tidal wave of information,' contends the ACRL, 'what used to suffice as literacy no longer suffices; what used to count as effective knowledge no longer meets our needs; what used to pass as a good education no longer is adequate'. Contemporary young adult fiction is responding to this broader recognition that traditional epistemic practices—from literacy, to knowledge acquisition, to education—no longer suffice. A change can be recognised in the ways in which young adult novels are handling epistemological processes as well as the attention given to the potential dangers and frustrations of contemporary knowledge acquisition. Common concerns centre on information inequality between groups with differing levels of access to the technologies and resources

that characterise today's visual ecology. Such concerns are telling precursors of the psychological anxiety warned of by Wurman and Epstein that centres on the gap between what we know and what we *think* we should know in our information-saturated societies. Whilst two novels do not make a trend, such a narrative motif is an arguable indication of young peoples' wider concerns over information literacy in the digital age. Only the information literate individual, these novels suggest, will be able to participate fully in, and contribute responsibly towards, today's ever-expanding knowledge economy.

Note

1. Quotations from the ACRL (here and in the remainder of the chapter) are taken from the Final Report (1989) of the Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL): http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/presidential/. Accessed 15 September 2012.

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Chapter 3
Consumption: The Appeal of Abundance in Bookspace and Playspace

Margaret Mackey

Home is where our books are—an over-simplification but one that contains a grain of truth, at least for many successful readers. Children often learn to read in the classroom but it is more frequently at home that they *become readers*, not at all the same achievement. Bedtime stories represent one important focus of many parent–child relationships, and shared knowledge of characters and plots become family reference points. It is for these reasons that educators place such emphasis on the importance of home reading, that organizations like Booktrust in the United Kingdom hand out early reading packs to the families of babies, and that libraries devote resources to programs for small children and their caregivers. Statistics about families that do not provide books for their children at home are regarded as news. A recent report from Booktrust, for example, suggests that nearly 60 % of families do not own a baby book until they receive their Bookstart package (after which 75 % of parents report that they engage their babies with the books) (Williams 2012).

Observations about the importance of book reading at home are manifestly true for many children; are they also sentimental? Do they disguise or co-exist with more commercial domestic realities: that home is also where habits of consumption really take root? that many children's stories, under the pretty guise of wish-fulfilment, engender depths of covetousness in the reading child?

Certainly some commentators would think so. "Domestication and commodification are intimately connected," says Lauwaert (2009, p. 86). "Consumption [is]… deeply ingrained in the structures of the domestic sphere: local, private, persistent", say Silverstone and Hirsch (1992, p. 5). Such consumption is not confined to the demographic that buys cheap tie-ins; it is arguable that many intellectual children, in the comfort and privacy of their own homes, also learn forms of *book* greed that some readers of this chapter may regard more benevolently than other kinds of consumption because of entrenched cultural prejudices or because of the apparent

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benefits of book ownership. Not every owner of a domestic library thinks on terms of possessing shelves of commodities but a book, of course, is one form of collectible.

3.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Children's Domestic Consumption

General theories of consumption posit a "perpetual and relentless round of having and yearning…. Yearning drives consumption, and one way to begin to grasp this massive, pleasurable, painful, and finally destructive impulse is to understand simply that we yearn" (Rosenblatt 1999, pp. 3, 6). The idea of consumption as destructive is a common motif, but the realities of domestic life complicate this simplistic approach. As Jane Smiley points out with some asperity, "feminism and consumerism are tightly linked" (1999, p. 162). She suggests that modern American consumerism (and, by extension, that of much of the West) "is not just a consumerism of pleasure, it is also a consumerism of work—housework, farm labor, transportation, industrial labor, construction" (1999, p. 156). The amelioration of grinding domestic labour associated with keeping the home habitable is particularly important for women:

> The freedom to be educated in something other than home economics and the freedom to earn money, to have a voacation, to have an avocation, to engage in all the useful and useless activities of our historical moment, depend on the lightening of the domestic load through contrivance, technology, and the use of nonhuman, nonanimal power (1999, p. 163).

Smiley (1999) thus reminds us of the significance of domestic consumption as the release of women from the intolerable pressures of keeping the fire going, fetching the household water, and managing issues of domestic hygiene (the hard manual labour of laundry, the repetitive drudgery of dealing with the household chamberpots).

Grant McCracken looks at household consumption in a different light, teasing out an extensive sociological and cultural description of "homeyness," exploring the ways in which people "feather their nests", sometimes in the cause of ostentatious display but often with the aim of buttressing their own psychological security. There is not space here to do justice to his argument but it is worth highlighting his observation that people sometimes make use of their "homey" priorities as strategies *against* consumption and display. "Homeyness allows the individual to defend against status strategies. It allows for the containment, management, and repudiation of these strategies" (2005, p. 41).

Domestic consumption can thus be perceived as a more complex endeavour than the fruitless and unending attempt to satiate desire. The issue becomes more complicated again when the question of how children consume is brought into the picture. No doubt contemporary children are subject to mass persuasion to increase and specify their desires, and to look to consumable items as an iterative answer to such yearning. But, as Susan Willis suggests, children may perceive their activities with consumable items in rather different terms:

> Children transform commodities into use values and use these as a means for articulating their social relationships. What is more, they do not recreate lost values or bygone forms of utility…. Rather, children's play produces newly imagined social possibilities (1991, p. 32).

Without subscribing to an essentialist and potentially reductive concept of childhood as innocent, it is still possible to observe children investing consumption with such social relations in ways that adults are less likely to perform. At the same time, children are somewhat more able than adults to substitute for actual consumption with *pretend* consumption; imaginary substitutes sometimes function just as well as the purchased item for play purposes. Adults are less likely to be satisfied with imagined ownership.

This is a topic that would bear much more substantial investigation than I propose to give it here. For my purposes, it must suffice to say that many complex elements are at work in children's approaches to consumption in the home; reproducing the work of creating "homeyness" may be one ingredient of their play, and using toys to open social worlds may be a priority that exceeds the lure of ownership for its own sake. Over-simplification of a complicated network of determinants does no one any favours.

Much imaginative activity occurs within mediated frameworks that children must learn to comprehend. In this chapter, we will contrast Lankshear and Knobel's (2007) concept of "bookspace," and Sekeres' (2009) delineation of the "playspace" as virtual locations for vicarious and actual acquisition, with a view to teasing out some of the complexities of the role of consumption in children's literate lives.

3.2 Owning and Wanting to Own

Consumption and its role in the home and in children's developing awareness have been controversial for a long time. L.M. Montgomery provides a vignette of one contested interpretation of consumer pleasures in *Anne's House of Dreams*, first published in 1926:

> "Well, you certainly have a lovely day for your wedding, Anne," said Diana…."You couldn't have had a finer one if you'd ordered it from Eaton's."
>
> "Indeed, there's too much money going out of this Island to that same Eaton's," said Mrs. Lynde indignantly. She had strong views on the subject of octopus-like department stores, and never lost an opportunity of airing them. "And as for those catalogues of theirs, they're the Avonlea girls' Bible now, that's what. They pore over them on Sundays instead of studying the Holy Scriptures."
>
> "Well, they're splendid to amuse children with," said Diana. "Fred and Small Anne look at the pictures by the hour."
>
> "*I* amused ten children without the aid of Eaton's catalogue," said Mrs. Rachel severely (1981/1926, pp. 33–34).

The mail-order catalogue, here represented by the Canadian example of Eaton's department store, presented a deluge of illustrated consumer goods, targeted advertising, and, crucially, a distribution strategy that made such materials accessible (and yearned over) even in small rural outposts such as Avonlea. They were a tangible representation of the idea of local and domestic access to *plenty*, a

concept that features in many examples of children's literature. The question of access is as important as the idea of *more than you could ever want*. And much of the focus of such consumption is domestic.

Many adults lament the excesses of the huge commercial network that targets contemporary children to buy (or persuade their parents to buy) ever more and more. Parents and teachers often worry that stories are utilized to fuel desire for related commodities, that children's emotional commitment to their fictions is cynically converted into associated forms of financial investment. But the relationship between children's stories and unrestrained consumption is more ancient; folktales and fairy tales often supply vistas of unlimited treasure as part of the delights of their invented worlds. What tempted Hansel and Gretel but greed over the chance of consuming the witch's cottage? How often are three wishes converted into a vision of never-ending acquisition?

The contemporary Western world of child consumption may seem overwhelming, even metastatic, in its endless invitation to children to spend ever more money, but some domestic links between child reader and child greed have been long established. Some of the earliest books written deliberately for children were sold with commodities, as in the example of John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, which could be purchased along with a pin-cushion for girls or a ball for boys (http://www.history.org/history/teaching/enewsletter/volume2/june04/pocketbook.cfm, accessed June 23, 2012). Denisoff speaks of nineteenth century children being inculcated into a "habituated commercial lifestyle" (2008, p. 2). *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *The Wizard of Oz*, to take two impressive examples of commodification, were associated with toys and tie-ins from their initial appearance in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century. And, as we shall see, in many of the early series books, child readers were inducted into a kind of consumer voyeurism.

In this chapter, I explore areas of overlap among children's literature, domestic life, and consumption. I will single out examples of children's stories that focus on the domestic, simply for the sake of streamlining my argument. My test sample of three American text sets covers a century of publication for children: the *Maida* books by Inez Haynes Irwin, the *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and the *American Girls* collection of dolls, books, and thousands of accessories.

3.3 Little Centres of Consumption

Children's fiction offers a home for many kinds of wish-fulfilment. The association between children's novels and food is well established and is being treated separately in this book. But children can lust after many forms of commodity, even before their innate potential for covetousness is cultivated and expanded by contemporary marketing and branding exercises.

In the following discussion, I will explore issues of consumption as they appear in and impinge on my selected examples of children's literature. *American Girls*

strikes some as an apotheosis of consumption but my other two sample texts challenge the notion that spin-offs and commodities represent a new and cancerous outgrowth on the previously pure world of children's books. Through the course of a century, we may see children invited to ogle, to envy, and to want as they pore over their books; the lures of *virtual* consumerism, at least, are not new, and in some ways are more voracious since there are no constraints enforced by a real-life budget.

My two twentieth-century series offer some interesting contrasts and comparisons—and also suggest that the delights of imagined ownership are not confined to a particular ideological persuasion. They were written by women whose lifespans significantly overlapped, although their politics were radically different. Inez Haynes Irwin wrote fifteen books about *Maida* between 1909 and 1955, and, in a fortuitous element of symmetry, one book is actually entitled *Maida's Little House* (1921). Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote the seven books of the *Little House* series and their partner volume *Farmer Boy* between 1932 and 1943; many other materials were published after her death in 1957, mostly under the aegis of other authors. The *Maida* books and the *Little House* books linger in the marketplace today via very different selling arrangements.

The vast orgy of merchandizing that has grown up around the works of Laura Ingalls Wilder provides a contemporary link to my third text set: the more market-driven literature of the *American Girls* empire of dolls, accessories, and children's books. This third exemplar bears a surprisingly large number of elements in common with my first two prototypes, though its origins and motivations are quite different. It presents an opportunity to assess what has changed and what remains the same over the span of more than 100 years.

3.3.1 Maida's Little Universe

Maida's Little Shop (1909) sets out the initial parameters of Maida's world. Daughter of millionaire Jerome "Buffalo" Westabrook, she has been sickly all her life. Surgery has now cured her lameness but she remains aimless and depressed. A chance encounter with a little neighbourhood store provides the first spark of life that her father has seen in her, and he is well equipped to grant her wish to run her own little neighbourhood shop in Primrose Court.

Author Inez Haynes Irwin was a feminist and a suffragette. Her plots include a variety of nods to radical politics and her inclusion of gypsy siblings in the main group of protagonists is unusual. Despite such progressive deviations from the norm of children's series writing, however, Irwin is very willing to set out displays of luxuries, lovingly and lengthily described for the delectation of her child readers.

Initially Maida's riches are within the compass of a child's imagination, as she sets out her wares in her shop window.

> The window certainly struck the key-note of the season. Tops of all sizes and colors were arranged in pretty patterns in the middle. Marbles of all kinds from the ten-for-a-cent "pee-weezers" up to the most beautiful, colored "agates" were displayed at the sides. Jump-ropes

> of variegated colors with handles, brilliantly painted, were festooned at the back. One of the window shelves had been furnished like a tiny room. A whole family of dolls sat about on the tiny sofas and chairs. On the other shelf lay neat piles of blank-books and paper-blocks, with files of pens, pencils, and rubbers arranged in a decorative pattern surrounding them all.
>
> In the show case, fresh candies had been laid out carefully on saucers and platters of glass (1909, pp. 45–46).

Because Maida is stocking her shelves to suit the tastes and budgets of the children of the neighbourhood who are so much poorer than she is, because she gives away little goodies to children too poor to be able to afford even her modest prices, because everything is done with love and taste and concern for the child customer, Irwin is able to have her cake and eat it with a vengeance in this little tableau. We get to gloat over the wealth of treats without feeling decadent about it. Indeed, one of the delights of imagined treasures like these is that we do not even have to choose; we can have it all if we like (unlike the child I heard in an American Girl store recently who had taken on the substantial challenge of persuading her father that "$58 is not really a lot of money." From her father's snort in reply, I do not think her chances of success were very great, highlighting the paradox that when the commodities are real there are very many that you do *not* get to own).

"Buffalo" Westabrook is nowhere near so restrained as Maida, showering his child with delicacies suited to the super-rich. We soon discover that his gifts to his daughter have included her own weight in twenty-dollar gold coins, a walk-in doll's house, her own limousine, and the like. Naturally she is unspoiled by this largesse and enjoys none of it so much as she loves playing with the children in Primrose Court. Nevertheless, the table is set for the defining plot engine of the series, which is initially laid out in the second book, *Maida's Little House* (1921).

"Buffalo" Westabrook sets up a group of the Primrose Court children in Maida's "little house," where they live a communally organized dream existence: every comfort and luxury, just enough work to make them feel good about themselves, and a never-ending assortment of recreations and adventures. In time, they add a camp, a set of cabins, a zoo, a theatre, a lighthouse, even an island to Maida's little list of properties. To adult eyes, this catalogue is beyond ridiculous, but as a child reader of this ever-expanding empire, I felt nothing but a comfortable form of yearning. I especially fancied the little island, and drew maps of it in school when I should have been working. All that I required to join the Westabrook plutocracy of island-owners was a piece of paper and a pencil.

Even in the overblown universe that Maida controls from the second book onwards, the delights of domestic ownership are constantly reiterated. Here is Maida's bedroom in the Little House:

> The room was simple—it held but a big, double, old-fashioned canopied bed; an old-fashioned maple bureau; and an old-fashioned maple desk; a little straight slat-backed chair in front of the desk and a little slat-backed rocker by one of the windows – but it was quaint. In front of the rocker was a cricket as though just ready for little feet. The flowered wall-paper matched the chintz curtains and the chintz ruffles on the little cricket (1921, p. 54).

This interior reminds me very strongly of many scrapbook pages of domestic settings that I lovingly compiled as a child from none other than the pages of the

Eaton's catalogue. Irwin multiplies the impact of her trope of coziness through theme and variation:

> [Rosie's] room….did not differ much from Maida's or from Laura's across the way – except where the key-note of Maida's wallpaper and chintzes were yellow, that of Rosie's was crimson and Laura's blue…. [A]lthough all the rooms showed a similarity, they also showed an individuality. Rosie and Laura went wild with excitement.
>
> Oh look at my sweet, *sweet* closet!" Laura called from her room. "What a queer shape with the roof slanting like that. And a baby window in it! (1921, p. 55).

These rooms are consciously "homey" in McCracken's sense of the term, and the girls delight in the work of keeping them snug and welcoming.

There is much more of the same. The boys, meanwhile, have their quarters in the barn—more Spartan but beguiling in a different way, no doubt perceived at the time as gender-appropriate. They too have their chores; domestic comfort and domestic labour are not conceptually separate in Maida's world.

The general *motif* of the series is a grand theme of *and–and–and*. "Buffalo" and his helpers never run out of things to give the children. And child readers, presumably, never tired of reading about it because Irwin went on publishing this series until 1955.

3.3.2 Laura's Little Luxuries

At first glance, Maida's universe has nothing in common with the austere pioneer world described by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Laura had few possessions, and those she had were hard-acquired and highly valued. Wilder has somewhat fallen out of favour nowadays because of the perception that her historical account is irretrievably marred by racist over-simplification (though she unquestionably remains much loved by many children and parents). In terms of her personal political standpoint, she was strongly individualistic to the point of libertarian, thoroughly opposed to the community ideology of the New Deal. Her daughter Rose, who edited her manuscripts, was even more extreme in her stance, and re-shaped some of her mother's narratives to increase the solitary, individual fortitude and skill of Pa and Ma as they forged their way across the west. "There are… many examples of how Wilder and Lane self-consciously altered the Ingallses' story so as to highlight a view of them as self-reliant, individualistic, restless, buoyant, and innovative," says Fellman (2008, p. 82).

However she adjusts the components of history to promote individualistic and Eurocentric virtues, Wilder has few peers when it comes to describing the complex labour required to make even a simple household object. Unlike "Buffalo" Westabrook who simply appears to wave his wallet around, Laura's Pa brings specific skills, tools, time, energy, and imagination to the creation of goods for his family. Much of his work goes into the manufacture of a sequence of domestic interiors. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, Pa carves a bracket for Ma's china shepherdess, her icon of domestic stability (throughout the series, she brings it out only when she judges her current home has become civilized enough to receive it;

it is an enduring emblem of homeyness). The work involved in creating this shelf is detailed over several pages, culminating in its assemblage:

> At last he had the pieces finished and one night he fitted them together. When this was done, the large piece was a beautifully carved back for a smooth little shelf across its middle. The large star was at the very top of it. The curved piece supported the shelf underneath, and it was carved beautifully, too. And the little vine ran around the edge of the shelf… .
>
> The little china woman… was beautiful standing on the shelf with flowers and moons carved all around her, and the large star at the very top (1932/2004, pp. 61–62).

In Wisconsin, before the family travels west in that famous covered wagon, the small Laura lives a relatively social life. In the year of this story, she is finally old enough to go to town with her parents in the spring. As she nears the general store for the first time, "Laura's heart was beating so fast that she could hardly climb the steps. She was trembling all over" (1932/2004, p. 167).

Wilder produces a description of plenty that is more utilitarian than Maida's set of toys and treats, but the psychological impact is not so different:

> The store was full of things to look at. All along one side of it were shelves full of colored prints and calicos. There were beautiful pinks and blues and reds and browns and purples. On the floor along the sides of the plank counters, there were kegs of nails and kegs of round, gray shot, and there were big wooden pails full of candy. There were sacks of salt and sacks of store sugar… .
>
> Laura could have looked for weeks and not seen all the things that were in that store. She had not known there were so many things in the world (1932/2004, pp. 168–170).

Pa is a considerable craftsman but he is not as averse to store purchases as popular ideas of the series would sometimes imply. In the little house on Plum Creek, he invested heavily in ready-mades:

> There was nothing more that a house could possibly have. The glass windows made the inside of that house so light that you would hardly know you were in a house. It smelled clean and piny, from the yellow-new board walls and floor. The cookstove stood lordly in the corner by the lean-to door. A touch on the white china door knob swung the bought door on its bought hinges, and the door knob's little iron tongue clicked and held the door shut (1984/1953, p. 81).

The connections between consumption, coziness, homeyness, and the reduction of drudgery are once again made plain. What better, more humane use of money could there be than the creation of a comfortable, welcoming domestic interior?

The creation of such comfort out of a combination of skill, hard work, and good old American spirit may be part of the impetus that led to the extreme commodification of the *Little House* books. As long ago as 1998, Christine Heppermann lamented the corruption of the self-help ethos of the stories:

> It is rather ironic that the original nine Little House books, those totems of something-from-nothing resourcefulness, now stand at the mouth of a raging merchandise river. Picture books, paper dolls, calendars, sticker books, craft books, board books (including two that play music): one imagines that seeing every one of the more than seventy titles that currently compose the "Little House program," as a 1998 HarperCollins catalogue

> refers to it, en masse would be akin to watching the cloud of grasshoppers descend in *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. Before you know it, you are drowning in pests, and, judging from the healthy number of new Little House items published each season, they just keep coming (1998, p. 689).

To this day, the commodities "just keep coming." In winter 2012, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum Online Gift Store (http://www.walnutgrove.org/store/, accessed March 2, 2012), listed a variety of new items, all the way from a reproduction of Laura's engagement ring (while the original cost $1.40, the contemporary version costs $350.00) through a variety of doll accessories (picnic basket, boots, fishing rod, snowshoes, umbrella, etc.) to quilting materials and a book about repeating rifles. My personal favourite is "Pa's bibs"—dungarees and shirt to fit a Ken doll. Keep in mind that this flood of bits and pieces represents the new items for a single season and the irony of such an excessive expression of an iconically frugal life becomes overwhelming.

The captions for some of the doll items in this online store explicitly mention that they will fit American Girl dolls. This crossover is not surprising; not only is it a good business decision on the part of the Walnut Grove museum, but it also exploits the ingenious transfer mechanism between stories of hardship and hard work and the attraction of owning lots and lots and lots of stuff, even if much of its charm lies in the fact that it is *humble* and *thrifty* stuff. This merger of sentiment and commerce reaches its logical apotheosis in the world of the American Girl.

3.3.3 A Celebration of Domestic Consumption

> At American Girl, we celebrate girls and all that they can be. That's why we develop products and experiences that help girls grow up in a wholesome way, while encouraging them to enjoy girlhood through fun and enchanting play (http://www.americangirl.com/corp/corporate.php?section=about&id=1, accessed March 3, 2012).

From its earliest days, American Girl has entwined dolls and their accessories with children's novels featuring the character represented by the doll. It is a complex, never-ending universe: to take one example, I own a historic doll, Felicity, and a book starring the character Felicity, a girl who lived during the time of the American Revolution. But I also own a miniature Felicity doll (to be owned by another doll, presumably a contemporary one), and a miniature version of the Felicity book. Book as book and book as miniature plaything both take on supporting roles in this world.

In this world, consumption is not a late add-on to the fictions; it is built into the very process of fiction-building from the beginning (and vice versa). The logic of the brand informs the fiction inexorably, and the enticements of domestic ownership are everywhere.

Yet the company is capable of surprises. In 2009 they introduced Gwen Thompson, the homeless doll. Her existence highlighted complex and intriguing contradictions between American Girl's commitment to representing American history

(including such negative elements as slavery in the past and widespread homelessness in the present), the deliberate thwarting of the lure of domestic possessions through a doll character who had no home to put them in, and the $95 price tag, which put the doll insultingly out of reach of the very children she was representing.

3.4 Consuming in Bookspace and Playspace

The *Maida* books sideline issues of consumption by making them a matter of course. Everything the children might want, they soon acquire, but this acquisition is carefully thought through by attentive adults who have the children's best interests at heart, so that's all okay. Your every wish is wholesome in such a universe.

The *Little House* books foreground consumption in a different way; Laura's belongings are modest indeed, but the creation of new things to own is a crucial element in a number of the books. Wilder cannot be held responsible for the orgy of commodities that now trail behind her books and the television program that arose from them; but the logic of the gift shop is not completely hostile to the ethos of the books. *Things are important* in the *Little House* books, and domestic things are particularly important. Mowder perceives an importance inherent in these things that goes beyond domestic limits to create a national movement to take over the American West:

> The re-ordering of the West is not the masculine version of the cowboy gunslinger and the cattle drive, but of the continual erection of new homes in which to shelter the women, of new places to spread the tablecloth and display the china shepherdess (1992, p. 18).

Despite the metastasis of the china shepherdess (so to speak) in the never-ending growth of *Little House* tchotchkes, both the *Maida* stories and the *Little House* stories initially created their domestic interiors and adventure-filled landscapes through nothing more material than black marks on the page. In Lankshear and Knobel's term, these stories are communicated in "bookspace" (2007, p. 13). The cross-over between *American Girl* books and *American Girl* dolls and accessories is much more tangible than anything that occurs in these two earlier text sets, and creates what Sekeres names "playspace" (2009, p. 406), a more multi-dimensional zone of textual encounters. In what Sekeres refers to as "branded fiction" (2009, p. 405), the dolls and other representations of the story impinge on the child's response to the story by supplying concrete instantiations of what otherwise might be more freely imagined. At the same time, the stories potentially restrict free imaginative play with the dolls. Does the multimodal dialectic of the playspace compensate for the reduction of a free-rein imagination? Without talking to children who perform their imaginative lives inside that playspace, we should be wary of jumping to conclusions.

The historic dolls, who star as characters in their own sequence of books, are each branded together with an enticing set of domestic belongings: a bed, a chest or trunk, a desk, and other, more individual items. Rebecca is rich and Addy is poor but they have a roughly equivalent number of *things*; Addy's bed is modest and Rebecca's is sumptuous but each owns a bed. Rebecca owns a phonograph and Addy

owns an ice-cream freezer—both historically appropriate belongings, and equally enchanting in their miniature fidelity to the original. In the company's democratic (and commercial) fervour to make each character/doll equivalently desirable, the playing field is levelled in the initial character description. Rebecca is labelled thus: "Inspiring and confident, she is the star of her story. She's a lively girl with dramatic flair, growing up in New York City" (http://store.americangirl.com/agshop/html/thumbnail/id/1182/uid/630, accessed May 13, 2012). Addy is described similarly: "Courageous and strong, she is the star of her story. Addy escapes to freedom, and now she wants to re-unite her family. Can she do it?" (http://store.americangirl.com/agshop/html/thumbnail/id/302/uid/43, accessed May 13, 2012).

These tags are recipes for the creation of more or less flat characters, and nobody would claim a great deal of literary merit for the *American Girl* historical novels. Even the obligatory shop scene contains a didactic component:

> Everywhere Felicity looked, she saw something useful or pleasing. There were aprons, nightcaps, combs, spices, sponges, rakes, fishing hooks, tin whistles, and books. Felicity loved to daydream about the faraway places everything came from. The tulip bulbs came from Holland, the tea from China, and the cotton from India (Tripp 1991, p. 3).

The passion for admiring, creating, improving and owning the domestic interior is a much more dynamic force in this world than any manifestation of plot or character. Acquiring the accoutrements of a miniature household in the American Girl store is significantly more expensive than cutting up pictures of beds and trunks and desks from the Eaton's catalogue and gluing them onto the scrapbook page, but the impetus of acquisition and display is not that different. And it is not hard to imagine that many contemporary children may still use the American Girl catalogues in exactly the same way as their predecessors: cutting out and manipulating images of consumable goods while occasionally managing to purchase an actual item or two.

The role of budget constraints in the creation of a domestic imaginary is underanalyzed. What is the impact of ownership when the representations are tangible and expensive? Is it psychologically different if the child acquires items through relentless, acquisitive nagging as opposed to lovingly saving her allowance in anticipation of furnishing her AG world? What is the imaginative role of the hybrid, in which expensive AG clothes and accessories are hung in a home-made cardboard closet? The studies of child culture in the consumer age do not really give us solid empirical answers to such questions.

3.5 Children's Literature *as* Consumption

So far we have explored some of the ways in which children's books may enable the pleasures of vicarious or actual consumption, with a particular focus on the acquisition of domestic accoutrements. One of many extremely clever features of the American Girl universe lies in the assumption, both explicitly and implicitly presented, that the ideal domestic interior will include books. Just as girl and doll may wear matching outfits, so they may own identical books, with the doll's copy

appropriately and appealingly scaled down to suit her eighteen-inch world (my miniature *Nancy Drew* volume is complete in every paratextual period detail and is highly evocative of the original, even though the text itself is shortened by several chapters).

The idea of books as items of consumption is not entirely compatible with our conventional notions of literary value. To many of us in the academy, the idea of owning books is entirely virtuous and nothing to do with commodification and greed. There is considerable research that associates book ownership among children and their families with higher literacy rates and better chances of success in life (e.g., Jumpstart 2009; Clark and Poulton 2011). Yet in their different ways, all three of my sample series provide examples of ways in which book consumption is fostered to more acquisitive ends.

3.6 Owning Books

Irwin's publishers, Grosset and Dunlap, were responsible for producing *books in bulk* to a degree that is astonishing to contemplate—both from the Stratemeyer Syndicate and from prolific individual authors. Many North American libraries refused to stock such material (Ross 1997, p. 19), so it seems clear that Grosset and Dunlap were aiming their products at individual readers. The role of this publisher in the reading lives of children throughout the twentieth century deserves more complex study than it has received up to now, but it seems safe to say that its fortunes rested on the encouragement of individual consumption of its many titles.

Many of these Grosset and Dunlap titles have entered into a kind of half-life on the Internet. When I set about trying to procure titles from different early series, I was taken aback to find many sophisticated websites created by devotees in order to track and price extant copies of books that have long vanished from ordinary bookstores. They may not exactly be commodities, but they are most definitely collectibles. "Maida's Other Little Website of Maida Books," for example, supplies images of all the dust jackets and some of the frontispieces of different editions of the books (http://maidaweb.tripod.com/, accessed March 4, 2012). A related site offers a table of different bindings that includes nine headings for information to note about your binding and some extra advice about dating your copy:

> If you are paying premium for a mint copy with dust jacket, make sure that the dust jacket and the book both list the same last book in the Maida series. If the two lists do not match, the dust cover may have come from another printing edition of the book. To some collectors, this will lower the value of the dust jacket if it is evident that they are not a matched pair (http://maidaweb.tripod.com/Bindings.htm, accessed March 4, 2012).

Like many other such websites, this one offers a mix of nostalgia and a more hard-headed approach to collecting—a mix of values that somehow works compatibly.

The *Little House* books survive in more mainstream ways, and in a variety of different forms: hardbacks, paperbacks, boxed sets, anniversary issues, black-and-white, full-colour, abridged, adapted, reworked into picture books and colouring books and sticker books. The books proliferate as expansively as the other *Little*

House consumer items, and in their "gift-set" prettiness often serve a commodity role. It is impossible to know what Wilder would have made of the torrent of consumables connected with her stories but it is certainly conceivable that she would have been delighted by the ongoing sales of the books themselves.

The American Girl books serve the commodities more directly, but it is interesting to observe that while my Felicity doll has been discontinued, the books about Felicity are still for sale. The description of the boxed set of six paperbacks selling for a total of $39.95 gives some flavour of the approach:

> This keepsake boxed set features all six of Felicity's beautifully illustrated books, filled with her inspiring stories about growing up in 1774. The box opens up to reveal a fun-filled Felicity's Favorite Things board game! Girls will have fun earning points as they move around the board collecting cards. Board game and pieces tuck into a storage pouch that folds-up with an elegant ribbon closure (http://store.americangirl.com/agshop/html/item/id/174417/uid/127).

Mattel (who took over ownership of the line from its original producers, the Pleasant Company) also encourages linkage between the dolls and other forms of text. With the purchase of a "My American Girl" doll, child customers gain access to an interactive environment known as Innerstar U (http://web.innerstaru.com/, accessed March 4, 2012). Here child purchasers create a virtual representation of their doll who travels to a variety of stations designed to encourage wholesome interactivity. This universe is obviously fictional, but it is not particularly narrative in its organization and its ontological status in relation to other official forms of children's literature is complex. The fact that it opens with a "home" page draws attention to its relationship to domestic life.

Children may well move relatively seamlessly among doll, book, website, cut-outs from the catalogue, and their own imaginative play; and they may establish the limits and boundaries of their fictional world with little concern for the differential details of how it is instantiated on any particular occasion. Adults are very much less likely to consume in this fashion.

In their different ways, all of these approaches (with the possible exception of the ground-breaking Innerstar U) foster the significance of the bookshelf, both as a repository for items of value and also for its decorative domestic functions (all that emphasis on dust jackets and boxed sets).

Is the consumption of books somehow purer than other kinds of consumption? We certainly invest enormous cultural value in children's *reading* of books, and use the book habit as a marker for future literate and other success. And there is no doubt that there are virtues to reducing the frustrations of the kind of happenstance access to books that I, for example, experienced in the 1950s. I did not know what it was like to read a complete series, or to read even two or three books in the right narrative order. The paperback revolution made many changes to children's reading behaviour, one of which was the ability to read (or should we say *consume*?) a series of books in strict chronological order (many series heighten the importance of this approach by numbering the titles).

Like most middle-class parents of my era, I made sure to buy many more books for my own children than I had ever owned myself (though they were also prolific

users of the library, just as I was). I am certainly not dismissing the pleasures or the psychological and educational importance of owning books for yourself as a child. Nor do I dismiss the damage caused by the kind of poverty summed up by the lives of those many children who do not own a single book. I do think, however, that it is important to articulate and question the drive to acquire *more and more* books that is so often marked off as worthy and significant and redolent of cultural capital, in contrast with other habits of consumption that are tagged as crass, commercial, and less deserving of respect.

3.7 Conclusions

In choosing popular series titles for closer exploration, I have opted for the reading materials perhaps most likely to be chosen by the child directly without adult intervention (though adult sponsorship may be involved in AG purchases). Perhaps in those titles more likely to be selected by adults, child heroes are more abstemious (not a proven case by any means!), but there seems little question that consumption of the vicarious or literal variety is an important element of these popular books. The consumption of the books themselves, either in large numbers or in a variety of presentation formats, is also highly encouraged, an invisible or valorized element of consumer behaviour that is not often scrutinized.

My first concern is to contest the ahistorical claim that heavy-duty calls to consumption are a new and insidious twenty first-century evil. My second aim is to challenge the scorn sometimes addressed to children and/or their parents whose consumptions patterns are sneered at as excessive or obsessive. The world of children's literature itself has taken a sharp turn towards the idea that consumption at least of books is perhaps healthy after all. It will do us no harm and it might do us some good to consider some of the contradictions bound up in that pious assumption.

Children do seem to enjoy consuming and thinking about consuming. The politics of my three sample text sets—radical, libertarian, or corporate—all seem able to enfold the contemplation of consumption into their thematic concerns. A knee-jerk opposition to consumption as outside the austerity of the bookspace is hardly warranted today; we have some complex thinking to do.

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Chapter 4
Discovery: My Name is Elizabeth

Perry Nodelman

In a video that my daughter recently posted on Facebook, my granddaughter Elizabeth, not quite six months old, lies on a blanket, pushing herself up and down on her arms and then making swimming gestures with them, lifting and dropping her torso, moving her legs up and down and then in and out, flexing her knees, all the while sucking contemplatively on various toys—hard at work at the business of being an infant, teaching herself many things, but mostly, it seems, discovering how to crawl. Or so it seems to me: for I know what crawling is, and how and when babies learn to do it, and what it signifies about their physical and psychological development. From my adult point of view, Elizabeth is in the process of placing herself in the context of a range of cultural assumptions about what babies are and do.

From Elizabeth's point of view, though, Elizabeth is not on the verge of crawling. She does not yet know what crawling is. She is just about to discover the act, and may be some months away from discovering the word and the cultural context that attaches to it. Elizabeth is merely exploring her world. It takes an adult point of view to understand the explorations as acts of discovery, as the unfolding revelation of something about it happen that has not quite happened yet.

From my adult point of view, childhood is, inherently and just about always, a process of discovery—of learning more about the new life and the new world one has less and less recently entered. The focus on newness and the discovery it entails is key to adult ideas about childhood: what distinguishes children from us older and more jaded people. Children themselves are in no position to share that idea of their newness, at least not until adults teach them to think of themselves in that way. Children don't necessarily know that what most matters about them, what most defines them, is their newness because they have at first none and then little (although ever increasingly more) older experience to which they can compare their current situations. They are too new to know that they are new. They simply are,

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far more importantly than they are new. Like Elizabeth, they are always in the act of learning to crawl without knowing what crawling is. They exist, to begin with, outside adult assumptions about the world we understand them to be discovering.

Written mostly by adults, children's literature is and always has been essentially a literature of discovery, a literature about people learning to cope with and understand new situations—to deal with their own newness and with the newness of their environments. But as Elizabeth's crawling experiments reveal, in being about those things, children's literature tends to be a misrepresentation of what childhood experience might actually feel like to children, who are new without knowledge of their newness, without knowing they are in a process of discovering what we adults already know. Children's literature is also, then, a key way in which adults teach children to accept the misrepresentation as the truth, so that the misrepresentation ceases to be misrepresentative and becomes the way things actually are for them. In life, then, as most often in this literature, children come to understand that their world is primarily about discovery, and especially about the discovery of who they are and the way the world is as adults understand those things. Children's literature makes them children in ways we adults can understand and privilege—children involved in the endeavour of becoming adults like us.

Children's literature is, then, a form of cultural construction, a means of reformulation and reshaping of young people in terms of an ongoing culture of childhood that is inherently repressive. But what it represses is the undiscoverable childhood before and beyond it—the childhood outside of the language that contains a word like 'childhood'—and into what most of us understand to be a desirably rational, desirably moral, desirably good, desirably human way of being: being human enough to enter into and partake in the reality affirmed and sustained by the languages we share, to belong to the community of other humans. In encouraging the discovery of what we adults believe the world already is and in encouraging children to share our world with us, children's literature is positively repressive. I mean that in a good way—albeit also in a bad one.

As a literature of discovery, children's literature is essentially didactic. Some of its didacticism is obvious—it teaches and reinforces children's existing knowledge of alphabets, facts, information about history and science. Some is less obvious. Even nonsense poems teach or reinforce child readers' convictions that nonsense is worth paying attention to, perhaps worth reading exactly because it seem to be doing anything but teach something. When the White Queen of Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* asks a riddle about a fish cooked in its own dish with a lid that is hard to remove, she asks "Which is easiest to do,/Un-dish-cover the fish, or dishcover the riddle?" (1871, p. 208). It's fairly easy to dishcover the required answer: an oyster is a fish-like morsel that comes in its own covered dish of a shell. But the real dishcovery here is the fun of playing with language—the dishcovery of puns and word games and the pleasure they can offer.

So children's literature is always teaching something, always encouraging the discovery of something. Its foundational idea is that children are different from adults in ways that make them free enough from conventional adult thought to be blissfully imaginative but also, essentially innocent, always knowing less than

adults and therefore, despite the bliss of ignorance, always needing to know more. And so, children's literature is always engaged in the act of providing more, helping its young readers to discover more about the world as we adults believe it to be. We all, children and adults, need to know the way we agree things are. We all also, surely, ought to be aware that the way we agree things are is not the only way things are or might be—and that anything claiming to represent the only way things are, the one true reality, can be repressive. Children's literature can help children to discover a whole range of things about their world and about themselves. We all, adult and child readers alike, might well learn to be at least a little suspicious about what it allows us to discover.

Always proceeding with an awareness of the limited newness of its potential readers, the innocence that needs to be challenged and eventually eliminated by new discoveries, children's literature is by definition a simple literature—or at least, a kind of text simpler than a lot of the literature that adults produce for each other. It is most typically simpler in language, simpler in plotting, simpler in its depiction of character and morality. It is often silent or at least relatively taciturn about the aspects of human experience adults feel less comfortable with and therefore hesitate to worry new discoverers about, lest discovering some of the darker aspects of their new world might overwhelm them: war, death, incurable disease, a whole range of adult moral failures and supervisory inadequacies, and above all, strangely, information about the bodily eliminatory functions they are surely already aware of and any and all forms of sexuality and bodily pleasure. It thus allows for the discovery of what one should be embarrassed by and silent about.

But for all its simplicity and silence, children's literature nevertheless offers young discoverers vast riches to discover—far more, surely, than most of them are likely to experience outside of books. In their childhoods, my children absorbed more than some experts know about, among many other things, the history of magic, how to juggle and do card tricks, the holders of obscure world records for sit-ups and various kinds of overeating, and the sinking of the Titanic. In my own childhood some years earlier, I pored over the volumes of *The Book of Knowledge* (1949) (subtitled "the children's encyclopedia that leads to love of learning"), discovering in the space of a few pages much about 'Gluck's Work in the Development of the Opera', (p. 6914), 'The Hundreds of Suckers in Each Finger of the Starfish' (p. 7069), 'How to Identify Meat Cuts at the Butcher Shop' (p. 7082), and 'Two Ways of Splicing a Stick' (p. 6960). The endpapers of the maroon volumes of *The Book of Knowledge* I still own depict a boy and girl standing on a book-like maroon raft that looks like one of those volumes, two young discoverers floating towards a shore on which stands a skyscraper, a totem pole, a pagoda, a locomotive, a giant telescope, a windmill, a giraffe, an elephant, Mount Rushmore, some giant Easter Island heads, an observatory, a factory, a humble rural cottage, and a volcano, along with rockets, airplanes, butterflies, and birds flying in flocks. It looks like a fun place to visit, this busy world of Knowledge.

But for all its often enjoyable didactic urge to teach stick-splicing and astronomy, to allow young readers to discover the world we adults already know or believe is knowable around us, the world described for my younger self in *The Book of*

Knowledge and still described in children's literature now is surprisingly unlike what we usually understand as reality—and not just because it is simpler. It is different.

I have still not, at my advanced age, seen the statues of Easter Island. For that matter, I have never actually attempted to splice a stick. My experience of such matters remains theoretical—firmly planted in the world of *The Book of Knowledge* and outside my actual experience. I have to take *The Book of Knowledge*'s word for it. But then, even the simplest of word books intended for beginners tend to offer the names and images of objects not likely to be found in the vicinity of most babies: not just queens and kings and the xylophones and zebras that often occur in alphabet books, but also horses and pigs and other creatures that might have loomed larger in the lives of children of an earlier time than they do for most children, at least most North American children, now. I myself have been in the presence of an actual living pig only once or twice, but I feel I know pigs intimately, for pigs are a significant part of children's literature from word books on through the 'Three Little Pigs' of house building fame, the swell pig Wilbur of E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), and Ian Falconer's eponymous *Olivia* (2000).

Indeed, the world of literature for children, especially the youngest of children, is much more rural in a far more specific way than the places occupied by most of the children who live in the parts of the worlds where children's literature is most widely available. It invites child readers to discover and accept the reality of a nostalgic pastoral Eden in which happy people—many of them, strangely, grandpas like I am—tend to raise pigs and chickens in the cosy farmyards of small non-industrialized farms, and thus represent a lifestyle that survives, in these days of vast single-crop farms and industrialized animal-raising in vast factory-like barns, primarily in books for children.

And it does, in fact, survive in many such books written over many decades, both from established presses and self-published writers—a surprising number of which also feature farmer grandparents, many of them visited by city-dwelling grandchildren If one were to believe these books, there has been a major shift in population in recent years, from the farm to the city (a shift which actually occurred some generations earlier; my own ancestors left the farms of eastern Europe some generations back and never looked back). A search I made on Amazon.com turned up two books called *Grandpa's Farm* (1965) (one by James Flora, one by Kenneth Danczyk,) and another by Anne Hunter and Vivian Sathre called On *Grandpa's Farm* (1997). All feature old-fashioned mixed farms, as do Stephen Earl West (2011) and Jerod R. Eller's *My Grandfather's Farm* and Joy Cowley and Olivier Dunrea's *The Rusty, Trusty Tractor* (1999). In Sean R. Smith and Jess Yeomans's *Harmony on the Farm* (2012), a young girl spends an ideal day on her Granddad's old-fashioned mixed farm befriending cows and pigs while learning the value of vegetarianism; and in Mercer Mayer's *Little Critter: Grandma, Grandpa, and Me* (2007), a cute little monster visits his monstrous but bespectacled and overalls-sporting grandfather on another traditional mixed farm.

Some books are quite upfront about their nostalgia. In *On Granddaddy's Farm*, Thomas B (1989). Allen reminisces about his childhood summers in rural

Tennessee; a reviewer suggests that 'the soft pastels capture an age gone by'. According to *Publisher's Weekly* (1991), Helen V. Griffith and James Stevenson's Grandaddy's Place (1991) is 'a bracing story of a young city girl's rediscovery of the past and its importance to her'. In *Grandpa's Tractor*, Michael Garland (2011) describes how a grandfather and his grandson 'share the sweetness of reminiscence and evoke a bygone era' (Kirkus). And *A Week on Granddaddy's Farm: Millie Visits Her Grandparents on Their Farm in West Virginia* (2008), based on the author Gail Popp's childhood experiences, 'portrays life on the farm experienced by typical families living without electricity, gas, or running water'.

While no grandchild is in sight, Feodor *Rojankovsky's Grandfather's Farm* (1943) is a ten-foot long panorama showing pigs, cows, horses—all the usual suspects, including the quaint red barn and the overall-wearing grandpa. While there might well have been farms (and even farmers) like this in North American in the early nineteen-forties when Rojankjovsky made these images, it is instructive how many more recent books depict something much like Rojankovsky's farm without offering any sense that it does not represent current reality. There is little evidence that anyone younger than a granddad might be capable of running a farm. Why all the nostalgia? Why all the aging farmers? Why all the avoidance of contemporary industrialized one-crop- or one-animal-oriented farming?

The most obvious answer to that, I think, is that we adults generally tend to think of places like the contemporary farms that house thousands upon thousands of caged pigs or chickens who will never see the outdoors as rather nightmarish—one of the darker aspects of our world and, therefore, not childlike enough to merit discovery. Childlike means innocent—more innocent than the way things actually are; and so, we tend to assume a discontinuity between young children and the actual not-so-innocent world we live in, and to hope, even while we are in the process of helping children to discover that world, that they need not know the whole ugly truth, at least not yet. We need to keep the industrialized nothing-but-pre-pork-chop pigs safely inside their giant factory barns and out of view. Knowing too much about ugliness is not childlike; knowing too much about present reality is not childlike.

For we adults, furthermore, childhood is what once was, what we once were—and so, as we think about it, imagine it, and write about it for those who still share it, its landscapes and settings are those of the past. And not just our own past, but the past of our own great-great grandparents; for by now city dwelling children have been visiting their grandparents on farms in children's books for so many generations that many of them have, like me, grown up to be city-dwelling grandparents of city-dwelling grandchildren themselves. The farms children get to visit in children's books represent a time so long gone now that it can seem safely and purely innocent and utopian. It can happily ignore not only the realities of current grand-parenting, but also the real great-grandpas of the past who went mad from rural isolation or proudly joined the Ku Klux Klan or the Communist party. It is nothing but a happy place, a simpler time, a time and place housing people older and simpler than your citified parents and your citified childhood self—but nevertheless, significantly connected to you, both by family ties and by innocence.

Unsophisticated old-fashioned grandparents who understand blissfully unsophisticated children better than their parents do because they are somehow equally innocent are another convention of children's literature even when they don't own farms.

Another reason for dwelling on the presumed simplicity of the past is its pedagogical utility—its value as a tool of discovery. If the G page in an alphabet book wishes its readers to discover that G is for grandpa, it needs to provide an image that easily sums up and can stand for grandpa-hood generally. A photo of just one real grandpa like the one my granddaughter Elizabeth is stuck with cannot do that job. Not all grandpas are called Zaida or defined by their copious eyebrows or their frequent acts of typing on laptops or their utter lack of overalls or farm experience. What is needed is something typical—something easily recognized, something that expresses the defining quality of grandpas as a category, an idea. In children's books, often still, the type of grandpa is rosy-cheeked, white haired, a little pudgy, a little impatient with all them new-fangled chemicals and city ways, a lot rural. And once you've met one, you're in a position to know them all—to understand that other overall-wearing geezers are the essence of grandparenthood, and to see a keyboard-using grandpa like me in terms of how I diverge from what has become a norm. You have discovered your way into a very useful but potentially offensive and dangerous stereotype. You have entered language at the cost of having always to struggle against the limitations of its definitions, its tendency to narrow the range of what can be understood by using it.

Being typically rural, the grandpas of children's books tend to be well acquainted with pigs. There are a lot of pigs in children's books, a lot of mice and dogs and cats, a whole lot of animals. Considering the widespread conviction that children like to identify with the characters they read about, there are a surprising number of children's books whose main characters are not human children at all, but, like the pigs Olivia and Wilbur, members of other species. Whether they are sophisticated city-dwellers like Olivia or residents of nostalgic farmyards like Wilbur, pigs are always animals, less than human in ways that make us think of them as more like children than like adults, and children more like animals than adults are. In their lack of sophistication, children are more natural in a good way—more at one with the rhythms of life—and also, more natural in a bad way—more prone to instinctual anarchy and in need of supervision. Children's literature allows children to discover a lot about animals because it often wants them to understand how much they are themselves animals—animals in need of adult pens and padlocks.

But the animals of children's literature are rarely just animals. The pigs can often talk, sometimes to farming grandpas, sometimes just amongst themselves. Consider the one with the straw house. Consider Wilbur. These are creatures who are already half-human—like children are, presumably, except that children are animals in the process of becoming always more human, of discovering their humanity, i.e., their likeness to adults.

Nor are talking animals the only exotic discoveries to be made from children's literature. There are also literate spiders like Charlotte, super-strong girls like

Pippi Longstocking, genies in magic lamps and wizards with magic wands, flying boys, flying carpets, flying broomsticks, flying islands. The world of children's literature has more and stranger things in it than the real one does; mixed right in with the instructions for stick-splicing, *The Book of Knowledge* offered me knowledge of fairy tales and Arabian nights.

But for all the newness and strangeness of the remarkable people and objects of children's literature, for all their divergence from the world as we adults believe it actually is, the discoveries they allow the children who read about them remain firmly attached to more grounded and more mundane versions of reality. For one thing, while opening up a range of delightfully impossible things to discover, the texts almost always make a point of identifying those impossible things as, exactly, impossible—as fantasy. Nonsense is, after all, called non-sense. Every reiteration of the conventional fairy-tale opening 'Once upon a time' is an announcement that fantasy will follow—an invitation to suspend disbelief for a while and enjoy what isn't true for the sake of its untruthfulness; and if the phrase isn't actually in the book, the adults who share books with child readers happily provide some verbal equivalent: 'but pigs can't really fly, of course' or 'isn't make-believe fun?' One of the main things that fantasy literature allows young readers to discover is that there is such a thing as fantasy and that it happens in books, in movies, in video games, on stage, on TV—anywhere but in real life. You can safely enjoy it just as long as you realize what a big bunch of delightful lies it is.

On the other hand, paradoxically, the lies turn out upon investigation to be nothing but the truth. The fantasies of children's literature are firmly attached to the reality they appear to diverge from. Their ideas about what makes their characters admirable or hiss-worthy, good or evil, are their authors' ideas about what makes for good and evil in reality, and their happy endings are happy because they confirm their authors' ideas about the right values to live by, not just in Narnia or Hogwarts or Zuckerman's farm, but in Peoria, Illinois or Coventry, West Midlands, or Winnipeg, Manitoba. Everything new in them is old again, the same-old same-old. Once more, what the literature of discovery allows its young readers to discover is what we adults already know and want them to know, too, for their own good. It is for their own good– and also, of course, for their own ill. It makes them human like us at the price of being excluded from a whole range of other frightening, delightful, anarchic, confusing, debilitating, empowering, impossible possibilities.

The plots most typical of children's literature reveal its central concern with the newness of its intended audience and with the newness of the world for that audience. Someone once suggested that all the plots of all the novels boil down to just two: a person goes on a journey, or a stranger comes to town. I can't name that someone, for even the Google search engine doesn't seem to know who it was that said it– the range of proposed possibilities, all without supporting evidence, include Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, the American novelist John Gardner, "an old saying," 'one of my profs', or just plain 'they'. As is usually the case, what 'they' all know is wrong, of course. There are lots of novels that centrally concern neither journeys nor strangers, or in which journeys occur and newcomers arrive within the context of a wider

or more complex plot arcs more centrally concerned with something else—life in an English village, perhaps, or finding oneself to be a millionaire or a cockroach, or the dust that floats in the wake of a young man's dreams. But the most formulaic of the best-selling novels of popular literature do tend to concentrate on one or the other of those overarching patterns. Consider how many romances focus on women who meet handsome strangers new in town, how many fantasies and science fiction novels follow their heroes on their journeys to strange lands.

Because children's literature tends to be a simple literature, more often and more typically like popular formula fiction than like literary fiction for adult readers, it, too, tends to focus centrally on journeys and strangers. Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit journeys to Mr. McGregor's garden, Maurice Sendak's Max goes where the wild things are (1963), and C.S. Lewis's young protagonists journey to the wilds of Narnia. Meanwhile, Wilbur of *Charlotte's Web* is himself a stranger who comes to town and then, after settling in, meets a strange new friend. In Dr. Seuss's beginner book, a decidedly strange cat in a hat bursts into the children's home, as do the cooks of Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) and various nightmares, monsters, and sandmen and in other picture books and various aliens, ghouls, vampires, and other undesirable visitors in children's novels.

While all of these books represent one or other of those two basic plots, all of them deal with the same basis issue: an encounter with newness. Discovery.

The point of all of them—of much of children's literature—is both the excitement of the encounter with what's strange and an eventual triumph over strangeness. The person who goes on a journey in most children's stories comes home again, for as I and many others have pointed out, the trip away and back again, the home/away/home story into the strange and then back to the familiar, is the most common plot of children's fiction. Not surprisingly, also, the stranger who comes to town either eventually chooses to leave, or is forcibly ejected, allowing a return to what was, or else becomes domesticated and accepts the new place as a now-familiar home. In other words: if children's literature focuses significantly on the discovery of the new, it seems to do so primarily in order to expel or disperse or move beyond newness. The conventionally requisite happy endings of children's literature then define happiness as the same-old same-old, the discovery that for all the attractiveness of the strange and the new, familiar old home is best.

But once one has travelled away from it and come back again, home is itself a different place, for one returns bearing the experience of having been away, thus not only seeing and understanding the old familiar in a strange new way but also transforming the place you left and are now re-entering with your own newly acquired strangeness: the person who goes on a journey has no choice, really, but to return as a stranger whose coming back to town makes the town different.

That last possibility suggests one key way in which writers of children's books complicate the simple patterns most conventional to this literature: they offer combinations of the two basic patterns. In Sendak's *Outside Over There* (1981), for instance, the invasion of Ida's home and kidnapping of her baby sister by strange goblins prompts her to then go on a journey in order to rescue her. And in both L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables (1908) and Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*

(2006), a person begins by going on a journey to a strange new town and thus becomes a stranger arriving there and learning how to deal with and accommodate to its strangeness as it learns to accommodate the newcomer's strangeness.

That two books written on different continents a century apart should express this commonality reveals something important about the conventions of children's literature—how very resilient they are, how they survive while styles and circumstances change in the world that children live in outside of them. Farms may get mechanized in Manitoba or New South Wales, but quaint old barns filled with homey assortments of sheep and chickens and grandpas still reign supreme in children's books. Pigs keep talking and boys keep flying. People keep going on journeys and strangers keep coming to town. Characters keep discovering things, for children's literature remains essentially a literature of discovery. And what they discover by and large is what we adults who produce the literature know already.

In other words, as the years pass and its readers grow up and new young readers replace them, children's literature remains essentially the same. So what, then, is its response to changing times? My most direct answer to the question implied by this book's subtitle is that it tends to act as a force against anything changing all that much. As I suggest in my book *The Hidden Adult* (2008), I believe that that happens because children's literature 'exists only and always when adults believe that children need something special in what they read that child readers can't provide for themselves and that adults must therefore provide for them…. Until adults made this assumption, there was no children's literature. As long as adults continue to make it, children's literature will possess the underlying samenesses I've been exploring throughout this book' (pp. 248–49)—and also, indeed, throughout this essay. As I go on to suggest in *The Hidden Adult*, the characteristic markers of children's literature 'are all variants of and manifestations of the basic opposition between adult and child implied by the very circumstance of adults writing for children' (249); and a key aspect of that circumstance is the assumption that adults know what children need to hear and how they need to hear it—what they need to discover. In allowing children to discover some of what we adults already know, what we choose to allow them to discover, children's literature thus helps to shape young readers into the kind of children we believe children already are and/or ought to be. It always has been from the time it came into existence a few centuries ago, and unless we completely revise our ideas about children and our relationship to them, it always will be.

To me, by and large, that seems like an honorable thing for children's literature to be doing. Childhood would surely be something of a hideous nightmare for children who had no adults to offer them ways of understanding themselves and their world. Without adult interference, all children would be feral children, outside of language, outside of culture, outside of that sense of self that comes from an awareness of how one relates to others. As I suggested earlier, being shaped by language and culture may be a form of repression, but I suspect it is much less repressive than the horrific alternative.

In recent years, however, many scholars have found that basic tendency of children's literature to construct culturally recognizable child subjects to be

problematic—more significantly a negative act of repression than a positive act of education—and have bemoaned the extent to which children's literature criticism has been shaped by Jacqueline Rose's famous assertion that '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' (1984, p. 2). Many scholars, in fact, would like to believe that the child might not be grasped at all—that children's literature is primarily benign because children can resist its efforts to grasp them. As Richard Flynn suggests, 'Children are also capable of creatively misappropriating the cultural artifacts they inherit from adults and transforming them into their own texts…. [T]here are increasing numbers of scholars who respect children's subjectivities and take them seriously' (2011, p. 66).

The implication here that pointing out the extent to which texts might influence children repressively implies a lack of respect for children is disturbing. There is, surely, respect in the wish to equip children with knowledge of the world they now exist in, and respect also in becoming aware enough of the repressive aspect of that education to be wary of its effect on young readers. Assuming that children generally have built-in defenses against adult efforts to construct them seem to me much less respectful. What comments like this one of Flynn's most significantly forget is the extent to which the children who 'misappropriate' texts are already shaped by their previous reading, by the language and culture that has already shaped or grasped them—often, literally, for their good, as when an adult teaches them the kind of critical thinking that arms them against grasping texts, that is, constructs them into misappropriating readers. The idea that children inherently and always possess the agency to do more than just improvise within the framework the adults in charge provides represents a kind of wish-fulfillment fantasy, a willed belief that children can and do resist the impositions of adult culture upon them more than we might suspect—that childhood is blissfully free from culture just as farms are free from complex machinery. It isn't, though, no more than adulthood is a free state of self-willed individuality. I know enough about both genetic inheritance and cultural constructions of subjectivity to suspect that the wiggle room is not all that substantial; and as John Stephens suggests, 'children's literature since the middle of the twentieth century has tended to reduce the degree and define the contexts in which the agency of young people is possible' (p. 142). Resistance remains possible, but I suspect it is not somehow naturally present as a fact of being young, but rather, that it most often requires a different adult construction—an adult commitment to teaching young people the skills of resistance.

Just around the time my granddaughter Elizabeth was born, KidsCan Press published a new picture book by Annika Dunklee and Matthew Forsythe: *My Name is Elizabeth* (2011). Not surprisingly, Elizabeth received a number of copies of it as gifts, including one from me. My daughter took a photograph of Elizabeth with the book—Elizabeth quite literally repressed, that is, pressed down, by the book, which was almost as large as she was herself. I could easily read that photo as an image of oppression—of a child whose separate, unique selfhood was on the verge of being subsumed and absorbed into the language and culture that would soon define who she is and why she matters: what an 'Elizabeth' is, and how the

culture around her defines and limits Elizabethhood in terms of, among other things, ideas about gender and attractiveness and middle-class North American subjectivity. But I choose instead to read it as a hopeful picture, a depiction of the upcoming onset of literacy, an image of discovery, of a child being equipped with the tools that will shape her for good as well as for ill and, in the long run, make her as free and as independent as a person like her or you or me can possibly be.

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Chapter 5
Childhoods: Childhoods in Chinese Children's Texts–Continuous Reconfiguration for Political Needs

Lijun Bi and Xiangshu Fang

In dynastic China, children were subordinates, seen as the property of their parents. To the worst degree, they were even considered slaves of the household, with little right to discover their own world through exploration, play, and other developmental actions. Consequently, for over 2000 years, texts written in China failed to acknowledge the rights a child had to autonomy from her or his parents, and there was no concept of a child simply being a child. The beginning of the twentieth century, however, ushered in a 'discovery of childhood' and a dynamic series of reconfigurations of 'childhood' according to political needs. When China faced the degeneration of her traditional heritage and a cultural predicament, youth represented the new vigour for a revitalised China and children symbolised the future. Attempting to strengthen China's global position, leading figures of a new culture movement in the early twentieth century advocated Western child-centred education theories, which recognised children as independent human beings, entitled to their own rights, as opposed to what they regarded as the spiritual lethargy derived from the Confucian cult of ritualised subordination. A shift in values accompanied the advent of revolutionary beliefs, shaping modern Chinese children's literature for the first half of the twentieth century. In Mao's China, children were no longer viewed as heirs to the family, but rather to the new socialist motherland and the proletarian revolutionary cause. Children's literature was developed on the conviction that its task was to train a new generation, who would ultimately improve society. After Mao's death, a new ideological system of Neo-Confucianism began to take shape, filling in the vacuum left by the decline of faith in Marxism in China. Chinese moral educators asserted that modernisation did not necessarily mean Westernisation. They argue

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that Chinese children's literature in the new era is to 'mould future national character' (*suzao weilai minzu xingge*) (Cao 1988, p. 311). This chapter focuses on these changes, examining four distinctive periods: the dynastic period until 1911; the Republican period from 1911 to 1949; Mao's socialist phase from 1949 to 1976; and the post-Mao 'new era' from 1976 to 2000. These changes have to be understood in China's historical and socio-cultural contexts.

5.1 The Dynastic Period, Until 1911

During the Han dynasty (202 BC–220 AD), much of China's cultural, political, administrative, and indeed ideological frameworks were formed. The features of these frameworks that emerged during the Han dynasty affected China until the middle of the twentieth century. It was the Han emperors who established the legitimacy and effectiveness of centralised authority. This authority would become a ruling governmental norm for all future regimes. The acceptance of the central authority of a single ruler involved the acceptance of a doctrine regulating the function, duties and place of the Emperor and his subjects. Confucianism was such a doctrine and therefore was recognised as the state orthodoxy by every imperial court since the reign of Emperor Wudi (140–88 BC) of the Han dynasty (Fang and Bi 2013, p. 128). The Confucians asserted that tranquillity and happiness within society could only be achieved through *xiao* [filial piety], the principal value of Confucian morality and a central concern in texts for children. Filial piety was crucial to the Confucian rationale for organising social order, revolving around inherent superior-inferior statuses within certain human relationships: children ought to obey parents, wives ought to obey husbands, and subjects ought to obey their emperor. In Chinese history, disobedient offspring were regarded with particular revulsion, and there were numerous cases of grown-up offspring undutiful to their parents being thrown down wells to their deaths by angry relatives. Such a demanding concept of family and social discipline may help to explain why the lack of individualism and the veneration of conformity have been a continuous feature of Chinese culture (Lynch 1996, p. 4). A marked characteristic of traditional Chinese society was its alertness to hierarchical differences and its expectation of obedience to proper authority.

But what exactly is *xiao* [filial piety]? The Chinese character (*xiao*) is made of two parts: child (子) supporting an aged (老—abbreviated) parent. This is one of the most difficult terms in the classical Chinese for English translation. Since the idea of *xiao* has been practised religiously in China for thousands of years and has become an important component of the ancestor worship, the English term 'filial piety' catches the spirit of the original Chinese term quite well. However, some Chinese scholars are not satisfied with the English translation 'filial piety', which has been used since the Jesuits in the sixteenth century. The problem is that the concept is not confined to 'being good to one's parents' only but also includes 'being good to one's ancestors'. Consequently some Chinese scholars prefer the

phrase 'being good to parents and ancestors' as a better English translation for the term *xiao*, but clearly this is too long-winded and clumsy.[1]

Classic of Filial Piety (*Xiao jing*) concentrates on defining *xiao* and elaborates on the meaning and function of filial piety through the conversations between Confucius and his disciple Zeng Shen (sometimes known as Zeng Zi):

> One day, Confucius was at home, and Zeng Shen was there to learn from him. The Master said, 'The Ancient Kings had a most important virtue and all-embracing way of conduct, to make the world harmonious, the people practice peace and cordiality, and neither above nor below had resentment. Do you know what it was?'
>
> Zeng Shen rose from his mat and said, 'I, Zeng Shen, am so devoid of intelligence; how would I know it?'
>
> The Master said, 'It was filial piety, which is the root of all virtue,[2] and the stem out of which grows all moral teaching. Sit down again; I will explain the subject to you.'[3]

Ancient Chinese moralists believed that human moral ideas were actually reflections of human depravity and the idea of filial piety served as a solution to impiety. It was typical of Confucius to praise the ancients for their high moral standards, thus illustrating the shortage of them in his time. The Master continued:

> Our bodies, hair and skin, all have been received from our parents, and so we must not injure or wound them. That is the foundation of filial piety. Establishing ourselves by practicing the virtuous way and making our name famous to posterity, we thereby glorify our parents. That is the ultimate goal of filial piety. Thus filial piety starts with service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; and it is completed by an establishment of character. It is said in 'the Major Odes of the Kingdom' of the *Classic of Poetry*:
>
> Ever think of your ancestor,
> Cultivate your virtue.[4]

The sentence 'Our bodies, hair and skin, all have been received from our parents, and so we must not presume to injure or wound them', has been well quoted by generations of Chinese parents. Even contemporary Chinese moralists strongly argue in support of its positive message, teaching all the importance of maintaining one's body and health. However, when including the ultimate goal of making one's name 'famous to posterity' so as to 'glorify one's parents', the relationship between the notions of bodily ownership and family reputation is made clear within Confucian contexts: to organise social order using superior-inferior statuses within human relationships. Children ought to obey parents, because they, every bit of their bodies, belong to their parents.

The application of filial piety started from a very young age, as shown in the *Three Character Classic* (*San zi jing*), written in the thirteenth century. This text was an important primer in the dynastic period:

> Xiang at nine, warmed his parents' bed.
> Filial piety toward parents should be carried out.
> Rong, at four, yielded his bigger pear.
> It's the younger, who should know
> how to behave, before the elder.[5]

Filial piety is not only restricted to the young: Confucians advocated it as a life commitment towards one's parents. In the children's book *Twenty-four Paragons*

of Filial Piety (*Ershisi xiao tu*), also compiled in the thirteenth century, there is an example of such commitment:

> A filial son, who was 70 years old, dressed up in colourful costume of a young circus boy. He poured water on the ground, before walking like a toddler into the puddle. He then pretended to slip and cry. All this was for entertaining his sick parents, who had reached such a lengthy life span due to his filial devotion.[6]

The application of filial piety is also expected to extend in a horizontal fashion, outside the immediate family to relatives, the clan, and finally to senior members of society and the state. The prevalence of such indoctrination in Chinese children's books was based on the Confucian belief that children were only able to reach their full potential of being benevolent by imitating the proper behaviour of their elders and role models in books. From the Confucian point of view, the dynastic rule is fully justified, as natural as the parent–child relationship. Indeed, the traditional term in the Chinese language for the government officials representing the ruler is *fumuguan* [parent-official], and the term for the ruled, *zimin* [child-people]. In this society, to be a child was an extended period in one's life, in the sense that there was no clear separation between childhood and adulthood. Consequently, moral training texts regarding 'filial piety' were for both children and adults. These texts worked effectively and helped to maintain dynastic reign for about 2000 years, until Western warships and guns shattered Chinese confidence in Confucianism, in the late nineteenth century.

5.2 The Republican Period, from 1911 to 1949

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most Chinese people did not doubt the long-held belief that China was the central kingdom of the world. No other country had a greater population than China, Chinese products were in great demand in foreign countries and its territories had been expanded under the rule of the Manchu Qing dynasty. However, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, after it was defeated by Western powers and Japan, China began to suffer from a number of humiliating setbacks. China had to cede territories such as Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, while also having to open up treaty ports, where foreigners could set up their 'concessions'. After the Qing dynasty collapsed in 1911, young intellectuals began to challenge the long-standing Confucian value of holding one's elders in high esteem, and it was in this climate that May Fourth New Culture Movement was born a few years later. These young intellectuals called upon fellow youths to be aware of the incompatibility of Confucianism and modernity. They claimed that filial piety, loyalty, chastity and righteousness were nothing but slavish morality. In 1919 John Dewey delivered a series of lectures in China on his philosophy of education, and his children-centred educational theory became the foundational idea for modern Chinese children's literature and remained so for the next 30 years. Based upon Dewey's idea, Zhou Zuoren developed what is known in the field as 'the theory of children and their own position' (*ertong benweilun*). The main purpose of this

idea was to emancipate Chinese children from the savage superstition of traditional beliefs, from the madness and immorality of Confucianism, and from retrogression. Zhou Zuoren wrote in his article 'Children's Literature' in 1920:

> Formerly, men did not properly understand children, if not treating them as miniature adults to be nurtured by the classics, then ignoring them as ignorant and incomplete small people. Only recently have we understood that, although children are somewhat biologically and psychologically different from adults, they are still complete individuals, with their own inner and outer life. While the twenty or so years of childhood are in one sense a preparation for adulthood, they also have their own significance and value. Because life involves constant development, we cannot point to any one stage as the 'real' one [as we previously did so with adulthood]. I suggest that we accept each stage of life as all [equally] significant. We must reject both the misrepresentation of children as miniature adults and the view that childhood has no independent existence.[7]

In a sense, this is how Chinese reformist intellectuals in the May Fourth period 'discovered childhood'. In 1920, Zhou Zuoren accomplished the most important task of classifying childhood on the basis of age: babyhood (0–3); early childhood (3–6); later childhood (6–10); adolescence (10–15); and youth (15–20). The basic idea of this classification is still in use in China today. Zhou Zuoren's three main standards for children's literature are based on his theory of a child's right to her or his own position:

1. to meet and satisfy children's own instinctive interest and curiosity;
2. to nurture and guide this interest and curiosity; and
3. to stimulate and to arouse hidden interest and new curiosity in them (Zhou 1920/1988, p. 5).

When Zhou Zuoren was trying to understand the special nature of childhood through his study of pedagogy and evolutionary anthropology,[8] Bing Xin (1923) made her contribution based on her feminine and maternal instinct. She celebrates childhood as a holy symbol:

> Tens of thousands of angels
> Are starting to extol a child:
> A child!
> A tiny body
> Holds a huge soul.[9]

Bing Xin idealises the infant as a great muse, the source of her poetic inspiration:

> An infant
> Is a great poet.
> From his incomplete speech
> Comes the most complete of poetic lines.[10]

Yet both Zhou Zuoren and Bing Xin seem to have forgotten that the concept of childhood had emerged as an ideological tool to reshape China: children's literature had been initially created primarily as a political weapon to save children and to save China. Supporting this genesis, O'Sullivan (2005) has found that the educational status of children's literature is particularly high at times when there are new values to be conveyed in societies in a phase of transition from tradition to modernity.

Ye Shengtao's 'Scarecrow' (*Daocaoren*) (1923) was the first major work of modern Chinese children's literature. This work depicts a scarecrow as a creature with human motivations and the ability to reason. In 'Scarecrow', Ye Shengtao focuses on the destitute lives of peasant women and uses the figure of the scarecrow to express frustration about the enormity of the problem (Bi 2013, p. 36). Mary Farquhar explains that Ye Shengtao's work 'does not necessarily describe children but analyzes society *for* them' and he 'does not separate the worlds of adults and children but sees them as integral parts of a social whole, whether it be the future dream or the present reality' (Farquhar 1999, p. 95). The purpose of stories like 'Scarecrow' was to develop children's social consciousness. However, Marxist-influenced revolutionary writers believed that the descriptive and analytical approach as shown in stories like 'Scarecrow' was not enough to save China. They wanted a prescriptive children's literature to lay down an active role for children to play in social change.

From its negligible yet militant beginning in children's songs in the 1920s, revolutionary children's literature developed into a dominant force in the field in the early and mid-1930s. The modern industrial environment of Shanghai made the relevance of Marxist-Leninist theory to China more obvious to the large number of writers who had moved there, and their writings reflected this new ideological fascination. In his fairytale 'Big Lin and Little Lin' (*Dalin he Xiaolin*) (1932), Zhang Tianyi relentlessly expresses his concern with the plight of child labourers. Sisi Ge, the factory owner, is depicted as someone with atrocious features: he has a green beard that grows so fast, it needs shaving daily, and a mammoth appetite that needs to be satisfied with a hundred eggs and a whole cow for breakfast (Fig. 5.1).

The whip in his hand symbolises his tyranny. After working in the factory for some time the protagonist, Little Lin, discovers a secret: the one hundred eggs that Sisi Ge eats each day for breakfast are actually made from children who,

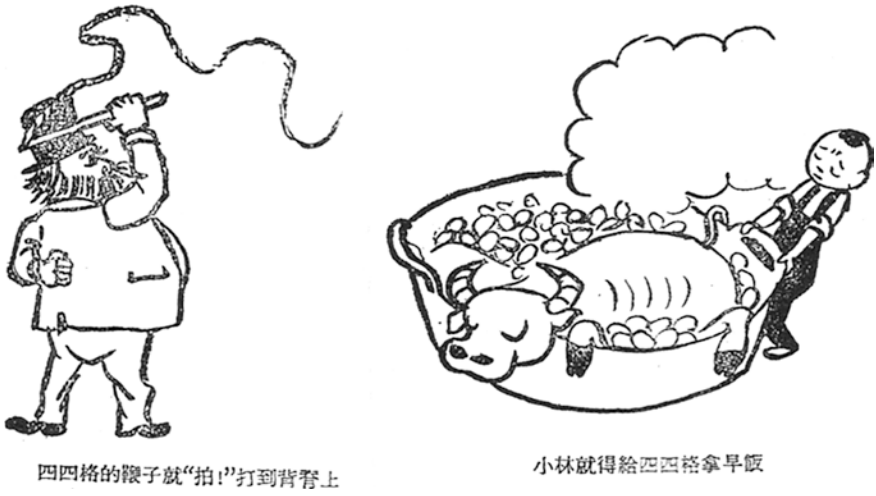

Fig. 5.1 Sisi Ge's whip and his breakfast

after working for him for a few years, are too exhausted and feeble to meet his demands. This horrible news spreads among children workers quickly, and they all become terrified. Sisi Ge eats a hundred children-transformed eggs each day for as long as he tries to make a day's profit. The story presents a burning sense of urgency for saving children. The protagonist, as symbolic of the emerging proletarian children, organises militant anti-capitalist activities.

It was in Shanghai that writers witnessed the miserable conditions of hundreds of thousands of child labourers, their plight demanding literature to voice their need for urgent political action. Revolutionary children's literature produced during this time is characterised by a strong social commitment, with hostility towards the privileged wealthy foreign capitalists, imperialists and their Chinese collaborators. It became a pedagogic instrument to project values concerned with the pursuit of a new nation based on the Marxist ideal of an egalitarian society. Zhang Tianyi perceives Chinese society as an arena of class conflict, a clash between the poor and the rich. He defines childhood solely in terms of each individual's socially meaningful acts and intentions dictated by a purely Marxist social logic. The implication of such a characterisation is only the beginning of the trend to return to the fusing worlds of adults and children.

5.3 Mao's Socialist Phase, from 1949 to 1976

After decades of war, famine and turmoil, China was finally 'liberated' by the Chinese Communist Party under its chairmanship of Mao Zedong, who announced the founding of the People's Republic of China on 1 October, 1949. The sick old society with all the ills was replaced by a new egalitarian society. Education for children was put on the top of the priority list. Indeed, in this new China, children at last were 'saved'. They were 'revolutionary successors' (*geming jiebanren*) and the 'new generation of socialism' (*shehuizhuyi xinyidai*). They faced two most important tasks—to defend the Communist victory, particularly after the Korean War in the early 1950s, and to construct this new China into a powerful nation. Children's literature was assigned the important task of training such revolutionary successors. Li Bokang defined the role of new Chinese children's literature in a socialist system in his speech at the Beijing Inaugural Conference of the Cultural Delegates in 1950 as 'inseparable from that of literature for adults, only playing a more important and special role in the initial stage of the whole process of education' (Li 1950/1988, p. 373). The educational significance of children's literature was stressed and political content was required, but with this heavy content, the demarcation between children's literature and literature for adults began to disappear. Meanwhile, Du Gao called for writers to clearly demonstrate their class allegiance in their work, which 'should educate children about class consciousness in order that they are able to tell who their class enemies are' (Du 1950/1988, p. 377). The general tone and themes of children's literature shifted from exposing a sick old society to reflecting the class nature of social reality. The following words by

Yan Wenjing in his preface to *Selected Works of Children's Literature 1954–1955* reveals the decisive factor for the publication and circulation of children's books in the early years of the People's Republic of China:

> A children's book will not be successful if its author deviates from the socialist realist way of writing, no matter how well the author knows children and understands their needs. The book will be meaningless if it doesn't try to educate children with Communist ideas, even if children appreciate the book (Yan 1956/1988, p. 404).

China's traditional ancestral reverence, family-clan cohesiveness and filial piety had long been eroding, and the Communist victory furthered the process. In children's books of the 1950s, children were praised for denouncing their 'backward' parents, thus spectacularly reversing the ancient stress on filial piety as the highest virtue. In these texts, childhood is portrayed as a battlefield for opposing classes to fulfil the political impetus of training their heirs. In Cui Daoyi's story 'The Road of a Young Pioneer Member' (*Duiyuan de daolu*) (1956), two fourteen-year-old boys, Fang Cheng and Yang Wenbao, are depicted as being from very different families, and hence they behave very differently. The story shows how Fang Cheng, who is from a revolutionary family, helps Yang Wenbao, who has capitalist origins, to overcome the influence of the latter's exploiting-class parents: 'Grow up quickly, so you can join the Communist Party; then, the Party will become your real home. The comrades there are your real family members' (Cui 1956/1979, p. 132). Subsequently, Yang Wenbao feels that 'I must let Mum and Dad know that I am not going to be the son of a capitalist, but a revolutionary youth' (p. 147).

The twenty-first issue of *Little Friend* (*Xiao pengyou*) in 1957 published a group of cartoons entitled 'A Family of Mice', in which a mother mouse gave birth to a group of baby mice in a little girl's shoe. The girl's mother wanted to feed the cat with the baby mice, but the girl wanted to keep them, so she put the baby mice in a cage. She had great pleasure in looking after them and watching them playing inside the cage. Meantime the mother mouse wanted her baby mice to come out of the cage, but they were comfortable there and just wanted to stay on. Eventually the mother mouse had to move in. The whole family of mice lived inside the cage happily ever after. This story caused the first substantial debate about children's literature in China since 1949. Many supported the cartoonist, arguing that the most essential elements of children's literature were 'children' and 'literature'. They pointed out that children were curious and naïve, and literature for children should nurture these qualities. At the other end of the debate, however, He Yi, a leading children's literature theoretician and an eminent children's literature writer of the time, concluded:

> The cartoonist is confused with what is good and what is bad, what is useful and what is harmful, and therefore this work clearly lacks class principle and class stand. We can't love all creatures without principle. We should get rid of anything that is harmful to people such as mice. Harmful creatures in nature are just like class enemies in our society. If we don't teach our children to distinguish things in nature, how can they learn to distinguish people in our society? There is no such thing as love and sympathy beyond class consciousness (He 1958/1988, 642).

He Yi uses 'class consciousness' to depict a brave boy as an example of the new socialist childhood in *Liu Wenxue* (1965). Based on a true story of a

fourteen-year-old Young Pioneer member, Liu Wenxue, the story tells of his death. He was killed by a former landlord when he found the class enemy stealing capsicums that belonged to the people's commune. To die for the interests of the people is extolled, even if these interests are almost insignificant in terms of material substance, such as a basketful of capsicums. Liu Wenxue's heroic story was selected in a Chinese language primer, which claims: 'Liu Wenxue is Chairman Mao's good child, and his glorious death and heroic deeds have educated millions and millions of our nation's children' (Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe 1965, 64).

In order to represent the new socialist childhood, stories for children had to shift their focus to the space of the adult world, where there were more 'socialist revolution', 'socialist reconstruction' and 'class struggle'. In the end, in these stories, while the protagonists were children, they talked and behaved like adult political instructors. These youngsters voiced the whole vocabulary of abstract revolutionary rhetoric. In these stories, the boundary separating childhood from adulthood is dismantled. Jean-Pierre Diény concludes after studying children's books he collected in Mao's China in the 1960s:

> In China… there is no break in continuity between the literature for children, adolescents and adults. All three, being three branches on the single trunk of the official ideology resemble each other: China treats children as adults and adults as children (Diény 1971, as cited in Farquhar 1999, p. 3).[11]

The Cultural Revolution shook China for 10 years from 1966 to 1976, and all the institutions governing children's literature collapsed. Children were urged to follow Mao's instruction to 'go out and face the world and brave the storm, tempering themselves and transforming themselves in the mighty storm of class struggle' (Farquhar 1999, 283). They were Mao's 'red little guards' (*hongxiaobing*) and fighters for the cause of his continuous revolution. In this brutalised nation, children, as well as adults, all sang: 'Father is close, mother is close, but neither is as close as Chairman Mao' (Chang 1992, p. 339).

5.4 The Post-Mao 'new era', from 1976 to 2000

Mao Zedong died in 1976. After a power struggle, Deng Xiaoping became the paramount leader of China in late 1978. The focus of the nation shifted to the program of 'four modernizations'[12], adopting policies of *gaige kaifang* [reform and opening door]. It was the beginning of the renaissance of Chinese literature and art. In children's literature, the centre of gravity moved to children simply being children.

The success of *Stories for 365 Nights* (365 *ye gushi*), which was published in 1980 and had twenty-one editions with a total print-run of 4.3 million copies in the following 8 years, reflects a severe shortage of children's books free of overt political indoctrination (Bi 2003, p. 60). This book includes new stories tackling problems associated with the one-child policy and old stories written earlier but adapted to represent a reconfigured model of childhood in this new era. The qualities regarded

by the storyteller as those of a 'good' child include being diligent, hygienic, helpful, sharing, tolerant and quiet. In this book, good characteristics are portrayed by contrasting them against their opposite characteristics. Another commonly used technique is contrasting a child's actions before and after a lesson in self-reflection. These stories are designed to show children what is right and what is wrong through the behaviour of the children in the stories in order to transform children to live up to the expectation of adults. In these transformative stories, however, those who are deemed as 'bad' or 'naughty' characters are usually depicted behaving more naturally, like children we are familiar with. They love to play. When they play, they often forget about everything else. For example, a short walk back home from school could take them a few hours, stopping in the market for an hour, playing with shop displays. They would be attracted to flying birds or singing cicadas. They are usually late for dinner and have little time to do homework. They hate to practice piano or calligraphy. In class they are usually too tired and sleepy to concentrate.

Published in 1977, Liu Xinwu's 'The Class Teacher' (*Banzhuren*) was the first major work of children's literature in the post-Mao era. The story exposes the failure of education during the Mao's Cultural Revolution as embodied in the dynamics of a secondary school classroom. The female student, Xie Huimin, refuses to wear a colourful skirt to shun the decadent 'bourgeois influences' (Liu 1977). The story reveals a childhood distorted by political dogmatism and extreme puritanism. Liu Xinwu, like many writers of the time, was not opposed to the Communist educational system but, instead, relied on the system to rectify the past extremism. Liu Xinwu further explores the concept of childhood in his story 'I am not afraid of being thirteen years old' (*Wo ke bupa shisansui*) (1984), in which the protagonist declares:

> Adults, including parents, teachers, neighbours and all other adults we meet, are not fair at all towards us. I don't know why, but I just feel like contradicting them. Whatever questions they don't want me to ask, I shall ask; whatever they don't want me to know, I shall find out; and whatever they don't allow me to do, I shall do it. (Liu 1984/1988, p. 713)

These stories reflect a continuous conflict between the growth of children and the need to educate them from the perspective of adults. Contrary to the above statement by the thirteen-year-old boy, the dominant trend of the time was the strong conviction that the child reader is uncritical and literature exerts a direct influence on the child reader. After the 1989 students' pro-democracy movement, in which young people revealed absolute contempt for the state authority, the state, once again, resumed its role as the absolute moral authority in regulating human relationships by publishing the *New Three Character Classic* (Xin san zi jing 1994). The values of 'filial piety' and 'fraternal submission' are restored into the core of children's moral training as the foundation of a new national ideal: 'patriotism'. Childhood is closely tied to nationhood as shown below:

> A young pupil
> should show respect
> to senior generations,
> and practice etiquette.
> ….
> Filial piety and fraternal submission

must pass on.
Family love me
and I love family.
Extend this love
to our China.[13]

The current Chinese adaptation of Confucianism recognises the importance of the role of filial piety, re-adopting it as the base for other moral qualities. Promoted in the 1990s, Neo-Confucianism stresses that the notion of loyalty stems from the idea of filial piety, which is demonstrated in the individual's ultimate responsibility and duty to the nation. However, the fundamental difference between traditional Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism is that the former traditional construction of children's moral character derives from a long-term value-oriented ideology, which aims at achieving a tranquil and happy world of benevolence, whereas the latter contemporary form aims at strengthening the subject-sovereign relationship through regulating the child–adult relationship.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, discussions in the field of children's literature have become vibrant and dynamic. Zhou Zuoren's status as the founding father of modern children's literature in China has finally been recognised. His notion of childhood and his theory of children and their own position (*ertong benweilun*) have been regarded as having profound guiding significance in contouring the early development of modern Chinese children's literature.[14] The new generation of theorists has harshly repudiated the utilitarian approach that treated children's literature as an educational tool and a political weapon. Some consensus seems to be reached by this new generation of theorists, who are determined to make Chinese children's literature compatible to the rising status of China in the international community. They want to start from the very beginning, to 'save children', and this time to '*genuinely* save children'. They regard this task as vitally important to China as well as to children, because they believe that 'the core theme of children's literature in the new era is to mould the future national character' (*xinshiqi ertong wenxue de zhuti hexin shi suzao weilai minzu xingge*) (Cao 1988, p. 311).

A new generation of writers take little notice of the views of these theorists. Widely acclaimed by Chinese critics as one of the best in the genre of avant-garde juvenile fiction in the 1990s, *Cries in the Drizzle* (*Zai xiyuzhong huhan*), Yu Hua's debut novel (1993), depicts an abused child. The complexity of the father-son relationship dominates the undercurrent of the novel, with no explanation offered as to why the father hates the son so much, and why he is considered as a degenerate and an embarrassment by the father. Yu Hua's novel is only one of many similar works, written at the turn of the century, that bitterly attack the father. The avant-gardism of these novels lies in their loud protest against the patriarchal authority, which violates the innocence of childhood. In the new century, moreover, children seem to know how to save themselves, because they have already become active consumers of modern network of communication, voicing their own preferences and opinions, no longer a passive audience to be fed with a prescribed diet.

5.5 Conclusion

To use what children read for political-moral training has had a venerable tradition in China, originating with Confucius 2,500 years ago, who regarded 'filial piety' as the root of all virtues and the foundation of a harmonious society. Modern Chinese children's literature emerged in the early twentieth century as an independent and identifiable branch of literature, reflecting China's embrace of the notion of childhood. Chinese writers of children's books, Confucian or Communist, considered themselves as the vanguard of society, and they believed that it was their social responsibility to educate the young. Thus, literature became their tool, with a transformative power to cure social ills and improve society to a purportedly higher level. Their writings, regardless of their different political persuasions, shared a faith in youth: improve yourselves and you can improve China. On the one hand, the explicit representation of ideology in the texts for children reveals the implicit assumption of the child as an incompetent reader, prone to uncritical absorption of represented values. On the other hand, the trend of representing the young as being deeply concerned for the well-being of their nation in many stories reflects an important ethical shift in literary works, in which the moral authority of elders is gradually eroding, as it is often the young who lecture their elders on issues of national interests. In a way, a chronological reversal of Confucianism has occurred, because these works esteem youth over age and innovation over the established authority.

In the twenty-first century, Chinese children have more power than their predecessors to choose from a repertoire of timeless literature that transcends cultural and national boundaries. Hence, they are also in a position better than ever before to appreciate the aesthetics of childhood presented in literary works. This chapter ends with a short poem written by Bing Xin nearly 90 years ago:

> O childhood!
> You are the reality in dream,
> The dream in reality,
> The faint tear stained smile in remembrance.[15]

Notes

1. For example, see Feng Xin-ming (2007), p. 1.
2. 'All virtue' means the five virtuous principles, the constituents of humanity: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge, and fidelity.
3. Many scholars believe that the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing*), a Confucian classic treatise giving advice on filial piety, was composed sometime between the Qin (221–206 BC) and Han (206BC–220 AD) dynasties, but some scholars attribute the book to Confucius, probably dating to about 400BC. The English translation of the *Classic of filial piety* discussed in this chapter is adapted from Legge (1899), pp. 465–488, available at http://www.chinapage.com/confucius/xiaojing-be.html. Accessed 17 September 2011.

4. Ibid.
5. Our own translation. For the original, see Wu Meng (1991), p. 12.
6. Cited in Fang (2003), p. 17.
7. Adapted from English translation by Farquhar (1999), p. 28. For the original, see Zhou Zuoren (1920/1988), p. 3.
8. Zhou Zuoren was strongly influenced by anthropologists such as Andrew Lang (1844–1912) and Jane Harrison (1850–1928), who belonged to a school called evolutionary anthology.
9. Our own translation. For the original, see Bing Xin (1923), available at http://www.5156edu.com/page/08-03-09/32033.html. Accessed 28 September 2012.
10. Ibid.
11. Translated by and cited in Farquhar (1999) p. 3.
12. Four modernisations in industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defence.
13. Cited in Fang (2003), pp. 21–22.
14. For example, see Du Chunhai (2000).
15. The English translation is taken from Lin (1972).

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Chapter 6
Imagination: Imaginations of the Nation—Childhood and Children's Literature in Modern China

Xu Xu

Benedict Anderson suggests in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* that the nation is 'an imagined political community' (1991, p. 15). Anderson argues that 'It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (p. 15). Anderson emphasizes the imaginative nature of the nation. That is, the nation is a particular kind of imagination—an idea of connectedness, coexistence, and belonging to a geographical location conjured up in the minds of a group or groups of people identified as fellow beings. For Anderson, such image of the nation was formed culturally through capitalist print, particularly the novel and newspaper that functioned as a unified field of communication.

Especially significant about Anderson's argument here is the cultural roots of the nation. That is, the nation does not naturally exist but is constructed by its citizens. The concept of the nation should be distinguished from that of the nation-state. Ernest Gellner defined the nation-state as 'the institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order' (1983, p. 4). While the nation-state is essentially a political entity represented by the ruling power, the nation is more of a cultural concept in the minds of the people. Although the nation is not reducible to the political state, it can consolidate into a political state depending on historical contingencies. The nationalization of a society is thus not simply political indoctrination of its members, but is a complex sociocultural process taking considerable collective imagination rooted in reality. This chapter explores the cultural roots of a particular nation, China. It examines the kinds of cultural imagination that constitute a modern China. I suggest that the imaginations of a modern China are intrinsically entangled with the imaginations of modern Chinese childhood represented in children's literature. The figure of the child

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and children's literature, I argue, plays indispensible roles in the nationalist-oriented political and social imaginations of a modern China.

Like the nation, childhood is also a kind of 'imagination'. In his now classic work *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1962), Philippe Ariès suggests that the concept of childhood is historically specific and socially constructive. Sharon Stephens makes a connection between childhood and nationhood when she argues that constituting either childhood or nationalism 'takes considerable "imaginative ideological labor"' (1997, p. 5). More specifically, just as modern constructions of childhood are 'neither natural nor inevitable reflections of biological dimensions of sex and age', national identity does not 'develop naturally or inevitably out of pre-existing commonalities of territory, language, religion, customs or world-views' (Stephens 1997, p. 6). Childhood and nationhood share a constructive nature at the most fundamental level, and their constructiveness also makes them and their relationships historically contingent. To illustrate such relationships, the chapter studies the correlation between childhood and nationhood at three historical moments in modern China, the Republican period (1912–1949), the Maoist period (1949–1976), and the Post-Maoist period (1977 onward).

6.1 Building Chinese Children's Literature for a New Republic

From the mid 1910 to 1920s, China saw an unprecedented explosion of discourse about and for children. Prominent Chinese intellectuals and writers all began to pay considerable attention to the issues concerning children. Zhou Zuoren, for example, first systematically conceptualized childhood and children's literature in his seminal 1920 essay, 'Literature of Children'. Zhou argued that Chinese ancients mistreated children as 'miniature adults' and indoctrinated them in saints' classics and legends (1998/1920, p. 682). Zhou stated that only recently did the Chinese people come to know the differences between children and adults in physiology and psychology. He suggested that childhood is not merely an immature stage of adulthood but an important stage of growth possessing its own independent value.[1]

Based on this new idea of modern childhood, Zhou conceptualized a 'literature of children' as children's natural need. While Confucian reading materials, such as *The Three Character Classic* (*Sanzi jing*), *The Thousand Character Classic* (*Qianzi wen*) and *The Classic for Girls* (*Nǚ'er jing*), impose adult morals on children and produce 'miniature adults', Zhou argued, children's literature embodies children's unique characteristics and satisfies their present needs. This idea of children's literature was revolutionary in the early twentieth century in China. Not only was the concept itself new to the Chinese people during the time, but it signified the advent of a modern Chinese nation in contrast to a degenerate and retrogressive Confucian society.[2] For Chinese intellectuals, civilized and advanced society values childhood and develops children's literature, whereas Confucianism represses children's true nature, let alone the development of children's literature.

The discourses on childhood and children's literature during the period in fact operated within the ongoing nationalist movement in China.

The Republic of China was founded in 1912 and declared the end of the Chinese dynasty. But the newly established state had much difficulty in acting as a forceful central authority in the tumultuous Chinese society troubled by pervasive warlordism and foreign imperialism. From the mid 1910 to 1920s the new Chinese intellectuals, usually Western-trained or Western-influenced, led a New Culture movement aimed to create a new social order by dismantling Confucianism. The movement introduced Western cultural, political, and scientific knowledge to the Chinese people, and promoted individual freedom and autonomy. The intellectuals believed that a democratic Chinese nation is constituted by free individuals, not submissive subjects as produced by Confucianism. Thus central to the movement is liberating human nature from the shackles of Confucianism—'discovering man'. Zhou Zuoren was a major leader of the movement and wrote an influential essay 'Literature of Man', published in 1918 in the flagship journal of the New Culture movement, *New Youth*.

Zhou Zuoren argued that 'Now we should promote a new literature, simply put, "a literature of man". What should be discarded is inhuman literature' (1998/1918, p. 31). Zhou argued that whereas Europe discovered the truth of 'man' first in the Renaissance and next in the French Revolution and women and children were discovered relatively late in the nineteenth century, China had never touched on the issue of man, let alone that of women and children. Zhou urged his countrymen to 'discover "man"' and to 'open up the wasteland of man', although 'it sounds ridiculous' because man in fact came into existence four thousand years ago (1998/1918, p. 32). While 'inhuman literature' refers to moralistic Confucian classics, 'literature of man' liberates human nature. As part of the human race, children, according to Zhou, had never been 'discovered'. In other words, children's 'true' nature had never been recognized and valued in Confucian society. Then recognizing children's unique characteristics and needs was integral to the nationalist project of 'discovering man'. Children's literature, which values and embodies children's characteristics as Zhou promoted in 'Literature of Children', was an important manifestation of the 'humane literature' essential to establishing a democratic Chinese nation.

The Chinese intellectuals perceived the modern Chinese nation as a complete break with the past. Children, seen as innocent and pure during the period, held the adults' hope for a new bright future. Guo Moruo, for example, made clear the significance of innocent children in creating a desirable social order in his 1921 essay 'On Children's Literature': 'One of the steps to fundamentally transform human society is to transform men. The transformation of men should start from the education of children's affective selves and of aesthetics. Only graceful and pure individuals can bring a graceful and pure society' (p. 3). Guo argued that to create children's literature is first to 'remove impurities' (p. 4), which mean adult vices. While adults were believed to be corrupt subjects of an old society, innocent children were seen as the embodiment of "graceful and pure individuals"—ideal citizens of a new nation.

Writings for children of the period thus exalted innocence as children's essential attribute. Ye Shengtao's *Scarecrow*, published in 1923, is the first collection of fairy tales created by a Chinese writer. This work is usually seen as the mark of the beginning of indigenous children's literature. Ye's very first story 'Little White Boat' unambiguously celebrates children's innocence. Set in a beautiful countryside, the story is about a boy and girl playing happily in a white boat. But a strong blast of wind blows the boat away, and the children lose their way. Suddenly a little white rabbit hops out of the bushes and jumps to the children. The rabbit is unwilling to leave and becomes the children's good companion. Later the children run into an adult, who claims that they have stolen his rabbit. The boy argues that the rabbit came to them by itself and that they like anything lovely. The adult does not blame the children but snatches the rabbit away from the girl. The boy ventures to ask the adult the direction home. The adult promises to take them home on the condition that they answer his three questions correctly. The last question is that why they were riding a little white boat. The girl responds: 'because we are innocent, and only we deserve to be riding in the little white boat' (Ye 2006/1923, p. 9). The adult is satisfied and takes the children home.

The girl's answer about their innocence ironically betrays her innocence. But the story obviously tries to construct innocence as an essential virtue of children lacking in the adult. Diametrically opposite to the turbulent reality, the children's space in the story is a dreamlike world in which fish play music, frogs sing along, flowers dance, and children themselves sing delightful poems in harmony with nature. The images of the little white boat and little white rabbit also signify children's 'purity' and 'innocence'. Even though the adult claims that he owns the rabbit, the rabbit is naturally only fond of the children. The adult's action of taking the rabbit away from the children symbolizes his own desire to reacquire innocence. But that the rabbit does not really connect with the adult only further attests to the adult's very lack of the much desired quality supposedly inherent in children. Embedded in this seemingly simple and didactic tale is thus a kind of self-reflexivity that the adult's desire for returning to innocent childhood can never be really fulfilled.

Bing Xin's *Letters to Young Readers* is also characterized by her Romantic 'idealization of childhood' that children's 'natural innocence and sensitivity decreases with age' (Farquhar 1999, p. 120). *Letters to Young Readers*, also an influential work for children in China, is a collection of letters Bing Xin wrote between 1923 and 1926 to Chinese children while studying in the United States. The letters cover diverse subjects such as personal health, childhood anecdotes and traveling experiences. Bing Xin addressed her child readers as 'little friends' and treated them as her intimate friends. Her lyrical prose focuses on life's trivialities, and creates a happy and innocent world for her child readers and herself insulated from the harsh reality in China. In one letter, for example, Bing Xin told her little friends that adults are preoccupied with power, killing, and war, but she and her child friends are not interested in these matters. And she pleaded with adults to 'not interfere with our play' (2007, p. 21). By contrasting innocent children with corrupt adults, Bing Xin was in fact embracing the children's world as an ideal social order characterized by peace and happiness.

The seemingly innocent Chinese children's literature, which Chinese writers and intellectuals strove hard to construct in the early twentieth century, only contradicts its deep involvement in the nationalist-orientated political imagination of a new China during the period. Chinese intellectuals of the time believed that only innocent and autonomous children would form a democratic nation. But as foreign imperialism intensified and the Second Sino-Japanese War fully broke out in 1937 in China, the Chinese people became disillusioned with the liberal humanist approach to establishing a modern China. Meanwhile, since its founding in 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rapidly spread its influence in the country and eventually achieved dominance in modern Chinese history. Although children also played an important role in the Chinese communists' imagination of a modern Chinese nation, the adults no longer valorized the innocent child. This time the ideal child is an agential proletariat actively engaged in communist revolution.

6.2 Constructing Proletarian Childhood in Socialist New China

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 by the CCP marks the beginning of the socialist construction of a New China. Chinese communists dismissed the preceding era as Old China characterized by the 'old' factors of feudalism, capitalism and imperialism. To build a socialist New China was to eradicate these old factors through class struggle. In 'On Correctly Handling Contradictions Among the People', a speech given in 1957, Mao Zedong stated that 'although the large-scale and turbulent class struggles of the masses characteristic of the previous revolutionary periods have in the main come to an end, there are still remnants of the overthrown landlord and comprador classes, there is still a bourgeoisie, and the remoulding of the petty bourgeoisie has only just started' (Mao 1992/1957, p. 331). As Mao's remarks suggested, the founding of the People's Republic of China does not mean the complete demise of the old ideologies and practices. Thus battling against the 'old factors' was still the primary task of the newly established nation-state, and the proletarian revolution would continue.

For Chinese communists, crucial to the success of the proletarian cause is the growth of Chinese children, for they are the future host of the nation and will continue to advance the cause of socialism. On International Children's Day 1966, Beijing guangming ribao *(Peking Kuang-ming Jih-pao)*, for example, published an editorial concerning children, which stated that, 'Teenagers and children are successors to the revolutionary cause of socialism and communism. The Party Central Committee and Chairman Mao have always shown deep concern for their sound growth' ('Actively Guide' 1966, p. 14). Therefore only by guaranteeing children's growth along the right revolutionary road can China progress toward a socialist, and eventually communist, nation. According to Chinese communists, literature and art should serve the revolutionary cause. Mao Zedong made it clear in his important talks on art and literature given in 1942 in Yan'an, which laid the theoretical

foundation for all revolutionary art in the following three to four decades in China. Mao stated that we need to 'ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind' (Mao 1967/1942, p. 71).

Children's literature, as part of the revolutionary literature Mao discussed, became an important political apparatus of the nation-state, and was produced by state-owned publishing houses such as the Adolescents and Children's Publishing House in Shanghai and Beijing. Worth noting is the particular significance of children's films in the nation-building during the period. Film functioned as the main conveyor of a new, mass culture to all corners of China in the period (Clark 2008, p. 109). As a more conspicuous art, potentially available to a much wider and diverse audience, film was an ideal medium to establish and promulgate the new mass culture (Clark 2008, p. 110)—revolutionary culture for the masses of the people. Some of the most popular films produced in the period are children's films, such as *The Letter with Feathers* (1954), *Red Children* (1958), *Little Soldier Zhang Ga* (1963), and *Sparking Red Star* (1974). These films invariably celebrate child heroes making important contributions to the victory of communist revolution.

The Letter with Feathers, which won both national and international awards, is set in the Anti-Japanese Resistance War period of the 1930 and 1940s. Based on real stories, the film is about a 12-year old shepherd boy Zhao Haiwa successfully delivering an urgent letter from the local guerrilla force to the Eighth Route Army of the CCP stationed in another village. The letter's urgency is signalled by the feathers attached to it. It carries important military information pivotal to the Eighth Route Army's defeat of the Japanese army at the end of the film. On his way to the destination, Haiwa encounters the Japanese army, and the Japanese soldiers capture Haiwa and his sheep. In order to prevent the enemy from discovering the letter, the boy hides the letter under a sheep's tail. Having attempted several unsuccessful escapes and endured the enemy's relentless beating, Haiwa finally delivers the letter to the Eighth Route Army.

Similarly *Sparkling Red Star* is a revolutionary film featuring a young peasant boy Pan Dongzi growing into a Red Army soldier in the 1930s, during a time when the antagonism between the ruling Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party intensified.[3] Dongzi's father leaves the village to join the Red Army, and his mother dies in a fire lit by the landlord Hu Hansan's militia. Dongzi is taken care of by the masses represented by Red Army soldier Wu Xiuzhu and the peasant Grandpa Song. The boy learns to become an active participant and later a capable leader in the class struggle against the enemy. Toward the end of the film, Dongzi devises and executes clever plans to help the Red Army defeat the enemy, and proves himself ready to become a Red Army soldier.

The films uniformly portray smart, determined, and agential children, who play pivotal roles in helping the CCP defeat the enemies. Though these stories are set in pre-1949 war time, the child heroes were meant to be imitated by children in the New China, who would continue to advance the proletarian cause not yet accomplished. These politically informed and active children are a stark contrast to the innocent child valued in the Republican era. Rather than being insulated from

the political world, the children in the films are left alone to face the enemies but capable of saving both themselves and the revolution. Although these revolutionary children's films aimed to produce legitimate national subjects for the socialist nation-state, they ironically promoted children's agency and independence.

Also worth noting here is the correlation between children's development and the national history led by the CCP. Speaking of Chinese communist revolution, Ban Wang suggests that the contour of revolutionary history is 'presented as an intimate psychic process of growth and maturation, a politico-cultural initiation, an acquisition of revolutionary identity' (1997, p. 127). This theme is especially pronounced in revolutionary children's films. Both *The Letter with Feathers* and *Sparkling Red Star*, for example, are about the young protagonists' acquisition of revolutionary identity. At the beginning of the films, Haiwai wants to become an Eighth Route Army soldier, and likewise Dongzi desires to be a Red Army soldier. The boys mature into exemplary revolutionaries through a series of tests in the revolution. As they successfully acquire revolutionary identity, the victory of the CCP-led communist revolution arrives, no matter whether it is against the bourgeois Nationalists in *Sparkling Red Star*, or against the Japanese invaders in *The Letter with Feathers*. The tortuous but triumphant history of Chinese communist revolution is thus embodied in the difficult but successful growth of children into admirable revolutionaries.

6.3 Revamping Nationalism in Contemporary China

As the apogee of the socialist construction the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 with Mao Zedong's death, China's national mission shifted from class struggle to economic development. China reopened its door to the rest of the world at the end of the 1970s and undertook an economic reform initiated by Deng Xiaoping. The dogmatic communist ideology cannot serve the rapidly developing market economy in China. The CCP leadership faces a new challenge of filling the ideological void of the Chinese people. Meanwhile, an increasing number and variety of Western products and ideas are flowing into China. What constitutes the Chinese national identity becomes ambivalent. In such a new historical condition, communist leaders reutilize nationalism and reconceptualize it as patriotism. As Zhao Suisheng suggests, 'Rediscovering the utility of nationalism, pragmatic communist leaders began to stress the party's role as the paramount patriotic force for and the guardian of China's national pride' (Zhao 2004, p. 214). Patriotism is conceptualized as the national cement of the Chinese people, who otherwise would be fragmented and corrupted by capitalist materialism.

The CCP Central Committee defines patriotism in 'Outline for Conducting Patriotic Education' issued in 1994. The outline states that, 'The patriotic spirit of our people was forged and developed in the long history of the making of the Chinese nation. It is through Chinese history, particularly the teaching of modern and contemporary history, that the people get to know the development of an industrious and persevering Chinese nation, to know the contributions we Chinese

people have made to human civilization, to know the important events and figures in our history, and to know the struggles of the Chinese people against foreign invasion and oppression, and against domestic bureaucracy for national independence and freedom' (p. 3). This official discourse emphasizes a distinctive Chinese history and its importance in patriotic education. What is conjured up is 'a narrative of historical events, heroes, traditional values, ethnic myths and historical memories to form a distinctive repository of Chinese culture, or a spiritual source for the Chinese to tap' (Guo 2004, p. 2). In this light, patriotism operates culturally and does not necessarily mean political loyalty to the CCP. Identifying with Chinese culture and history is patriotism in contemporary China.

At the new historical juncture, children again emerge as the central concern of the nation-state. The outline clearly states, that 'The important target of patriotic education is children'. The outline also advises that 'since school is the prime site for education, patriotic education should be incorporated into school curricula from kindergartens all the way through to universities'. In 2004 the central government issued 'One Hundred Patriotic Films, One Hundred Patriotic Songs, and One Hundred Patriotic Books' (or 'Three Hundreds'). As part of the patriotic education, the list recommends 'patriotic' materials to contemporary Chinese children. Revolutionary works of the Maoist era such as *The Letter with Feathers*, *Little Soldier Zhang Ga*, and *Sparkling Red Star* all appear in the list. Rather than being dated propaganda, these revolutionary works are redefined in contemporary China as 'red classics', which become part of a glorious national history contemporary Chinese children should feel proud of.

Worth noting is that contemporary Chinese children's literature is no longer a coherent ideology promulgated by the state. While certain materials like those revolutionary works obviously operate within the official discourse of patriotism, there exist many other works for children that express the writers' individual responses to the changing Chinese society. Qin Wenjun's *A New Biography of the Boy Jia Li* (2010), Yang Hongying's *Girl's Diary* (2000), and Cao Wenxuan's *Straw Hut* (2006) are among the most popular and critically acclaimed literary works for children in contemporary China. These works do not simply sing praises of a glorious national culture but reflect on what contemporary Chinese childhood is or should be. Qin and Yang set their stories in urban cities of contemporary China, and use a light-hearted tone to represent various facets of contemporary Chinese children's school lives. They highlight trivialities of life unique to the new time and explore themes such as friendship, familial relationships, and teacher-student relationships.

Different from Qin and Yang's stories, Cao Wenxuan's *Straw Hut* is set in the late 1950s and early 1960s in a rural area Youmadi in China. Although the story appears to portray a past, it embodies the writer's imagination of an ideal childhood and national community in contemporary China. The novel tells the stories of the boy protagonist Sangsang and his classmates at the Youmadi Elementary School. The writer depicts a closely-knit rural community constituted by genuinely kind and mutually caring members. The children in the story are exuberant, mischievous but kind. Sangsang is known for his 'unexpected eccentricities' (Cao 2006/1997, p. 8) but is 'forever a kind child' (p. 311). The boy saves his classmate Zhiyue from out-of-town bullies; and he gives the money, which he earns from

selling his own pigeons, to Du Xiaokang. Du is the richest child in Sangsang's class, but has to support his disaster-stricken family toward the end of the book. The adults depicted in the story are also kind-hearted. Grandma Qin, for example, is an old lady living by herself at the Northwest corner of the school. While the teachers and students of the school take care of Grandma Qin whenever necessary, she also sacrifices her own life saving a girl from drowning in the river.

The Youmadi community in *Straw Hut* epitomizes the ideal national community for Cao Wenxuan. It is materially impoverished, signified by the title *Straw Hut*—the kind of dwelling the Youmadi people reside in, but morally noble. This fictional community presents a sharp contrast to the reality in contemporary China. The increasingly prosperous Chinese society becomes increasingly ambivalent about moral values. Cao laments in 'Beautiful Pain' that we are now trapped in 'frivolous hedonism' (2005a, p. 244). Cao believes that the pursuit of vulgar material pleasures make the Chinese people unable to cope with difficulties and challenges in a changing society. As Cao suggests, the deep-rooted reason is that contemporary Chinese children are spoiled and growing up emotionally and mentally vulnerable. Having tasted considerable bitterness in their childhood, contemporary parents try their best to shield their children from hardships and create a 'happy' world for them. The children in *Straw Hut*, by contrast, experience various hardships, disasters, and tragedies, which are made the essential lessons for their growth. For instance, when Du Xiaokang's family loses their fortune, he drops out of school and takes up the responsibility to support his family. The boy faces the new life with courage and dignity. The hardships educate Du Xiaokang: 'Sky, reed, flood, wind, thunderstorm, duck, loneliness, melancholy, sickness, cold, hunger…. all of these, trouble and torture Du Xiaokang, but also educate and illuminate Du Xiaokang' (Cao 2006/1997, p. 335).

For Cao Wenxuan the mentally strong and morally noble children in *Straw Hut* serve as the exemplars for contemporary Chinese children. If contemporary Chinese children acquire the same moral qualities embraced by the novel, they will become responsible citizens and capable of building a strong nation in the future. Cao argues in 'What Should Literature Bring to Children' that 'children's literature writers shape the future national character' and that 'the mission of children's literature is to provide the human race with a sound moral base' (2005b, p. 1). Cao's idea is in fact not new; he shares the same belief with his predecessors of almost a century ago. But in a new era the rapidly developing economy poses new challenges for building a modern Chinese nation. The hope to build a desirable Chinese nation remains, however, Cao suggests, as long as we understand the importance of children in building the national character and effectively utilize children's literature to educate them.

6.4 Conclusion

Since China embarked on a path to modernizing itself following the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in the early twentieth century, children, along with children's literature, have become an important object of national investment and functioned

as a critical site for the hopes of Chinese society. What it means to be a modern Chinese nation is closely intertwined with the meanings of childhood throughout modern Chinese history. In the beginning years of the Chinese Republic Chinese intellectuals endeavored to transform China from a Confucian society into a modern nation. They perceived Confucianism as retrogressive in contrast to a democratic nation, and thus led the New Culture movement in order to dismantle Confucianism and establish a new social order. Such hope to build a modern nation having a complete break with the past was embodied in the innocent children represented in the emerging Chinese children's literature during the period. Chinese writers and intellectuals of the period constructed innocence as a moral virtue unique to children but lacking in adults. While adults were seen as corrupted by Confucianism, innocent children would regenerate Chinese society and constitute a desirable new nation.

This kind of imagination of the nation and childhood in the early twentieth century underwent a fundamental change as the CCP gradually assumed political leadership in China. The entangled relationship between nationhood and childhood in the Maoist New China both retains and revises aspects of the previous one. While children continued to figure prominently in the nationalist imagination of the period, Chinese communists valorized proletarian children committed to communist revolution. In Maoist China the nation and the state became conflated and both were represented by the CCP. The nation building during the period was not a voluntary populist movement as it was in the Republican period but led by the ruling party to consolidate its leadership. For Chinese communists, children were the successors of the proletarian cause and thus their acquisition of legitimate proletarian identity became crucial to the success of Chinese socialism. Popular works for children produced during the period, particularly children's films, uniformly portray child heroes growing into exemplary revolutionaries. These works not only depict Chinese communists' imagination of ideal proletarian childhood, but also recapitulate the triumphant history of the CCP.

As China entered into a new era characterized by economic development at the end of the 1970s, the state offered a new understanding of the nation defined in cultural terms. Nationalism is patriotism, which means identifying with an officially defined distinctive Chinese history and culture. To educate the Chinese people, especially children, about the national culture, and to make them participate in building it is a primary means for the state to unite its people. Certain children's books operate within the official discourse of a glorious national culture and history, and aim to arouse children's patriotism. But many children's literature writers in China also offer different views on contemporary childhood in their works. Like their predecessors, contemporary Chinese writers for children also believe that children's growth holds the key to the development of a modern Chinese nation. The importance of children's literature resides in not only its aesthetic value but also its social function. A site of social imagination, children's literature creates possible alternatives to transforming society.

Notes

1. Zhou's such view of modern childhood was influenced by American philosopher John Dewey. I explore in detail the influence of Dewey on the Chinese view of modern childhood in the early twentieth century in my essay 'Translation, Hybridization, and Modernization: John Dewey and Children's Literature in Early Twentieth Century China'.
2. Mao Dun noted that the Chinese term 'ertong de wenxue' (children's literature) originated from Zhou's 'Literature of Children'. See Jiang Feng and Han Jin 1998, p. 96.
3. I provide a detailed discussion of the film *Sparkling Red Star* in relation to the socialist construction of the period in "Chairman Mao's Child" (2011).

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Chapter 7
Migrancy: Rites of Passage and Cultural Translation in Literature for Children and Young Adults

Ingrid Johnston

> I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering at the edge of "foreign cultures" … the gathering of people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant…. (Homi Bhabha 2000, p. 292).

7.1 Definitions and Deliberations

Human migration is an age-old phenomenon, with the level and direction of movement dictated by a range of factors that may be economic, political or personal. While a dictionary definition of "migrancy" as "the fact, condition, or phenomenon of habitual movement from one place of residence to another" (Merrian-Webster 2012) appears linear and uncomplicated, the experiences and imaginaries of migrancy are much more complex.

There are diverse reasons for large-scale migration to the west. For some, migration is a voluntary decision made in search of a better life; for others, is it a forced circumstance brought about by war or other violent occurrence. According to Krishnaswamy (2005), the rhetoric of migrancy in contemporary discourse owes much to the uprooting of peoples from so-called 'third world' countries over the past 50 years, following large-scale decolonization. He suggests that "as the euphoria of independence and the great expectations of nationalism gave way to disillusionment and oppression, emigration increasingly became the supreme reward for citizens of impoverished or repressive ex-colonies" (2005, p. 96).

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No matter what a person's rationale for moving countries may be, migration is clearly a significant form of life-altering experience. As Teather (1999) explains in *Embodied Geographies: Spaces, Bodies and Rites of Passage*: "Migration, of all possible life crises, is a rite of passage in which place, mind/body and identity are bound up in complex ways" (p. 18). Rites of passage, she suggests, "involve using and learning about new types of spaces and places…. Because our identity evolves through the experiences involved as we encounter new spaces/places, our identities and space/place are inevitably closely linked" (p. 22).

Any form of travel, of course, can bring with it insecurity or anxiety, with the possibilities of misfortunes along the way. But alongside the danger of loss, travel also proposes the possibility of gain, either through enhanced experience, new cultural knowledge, or material benefit. Migration, as a form of travel, participates in these possibilities of loss or gain, but also presents its own particular dangers, nostalgia, and visions of a more hopeful future. Chambers (1994), in his book *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, explains his understanding of the differences between travel and migrancy:

> For to travel implies movement between fixed position, a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an itinerary. It also intimates an eventual return, a potential homecoming. Migrancy, on the contrary, involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation (2004, p. 5).

Chambers acknowledges the limitations of making direct comparisons between enforced migrations of peoples and a more intellectualized metaphorical journey of the mind. Yet, even for those whose movement is set in motion by the need to escape from brutal regimes, or the need to move for economic reasons resulting from the effects of the global economy, their physical migration is also one of the intellect and the emotions, inextricably linked with recollections of their past and dreams of the future. Chambers elaborates:

> To come from elsewhere, from 'there' and not 'here', and hence to be simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside' the situation at hand, is to live at the intersections of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and subsequent translations into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routes. It is simultaneously to encounter the languages of powerlessness, and the potential intimations of heterotopic futures (2004, p. 6).

Chambers' notions of potential heterotopic futures are reminiscent of Michel Foucault's (1989) view of heterotopic spaces as 'other spaces' of potential disorder, experimentation and subversion, creating visions of a postmodern world that he contrasts with an untroubled image of a utopia with its sense of perfect order. For migrants, a sense of a new life of perfect order is rarely achieved and there is no guarantee of a safe return to 'home', only shifting points of reference that offer new ways of being and new forms of identity. Trinh Minh-ha (1994) comments, that "the boundaries of identity and difference are continually repositioned in relation to varying points of reference. The meanings of here and there, home and abroad, third and first, margin and centre keep on being displaced according to how one positions oneself" (p. 20).

7.2 Notions of 'Home' and Translation

The notion of 'home' is an important concept for any discussion of migrancy, largely for its inevitable fluidity and its sense of impermanence for many migrants. According to Mishra (2005), the reality of living in one place and belonging elsewhere has made the idea of 'home' a damaged concept. He considers that 'home' now signals "a shift away from homogenous nation-states based on the ideology of assimilation to a much more fluid and contradictory definition of nations as a multiplicity of diasporic identities" (p. 112). Within these diasporas, migrants must negotiate and fashion a hyphenated identity, often seeing themselves constructed by national policies such as multiculturalism, as subjects-in-hyphen. Even when a country has an official policy of welcoming newcomers, migrant communities, and particularly diasporas 'of colour', often do not fit neatly into what Mishra contends is a "barely concealed preference for the narrative of assimilation" within many western societies (p. 112). He continues:

> The trouble with diasporas is that while the reference point is in the past, unreal as it may be, there is, in fact, no future, no sense of a teleological end. Diasporas cannot conceptualize the point towards which the community, the nation, is heading…. The absence of teleologies, this intense mediation on synchronicity, thus opposes the tyranny of linear time and blasts open the continuum of history to reveal moments, fragments, traces that can be recaptured and transformed into another history (pp. 112–113).

Migrants, haunted by a sense of loss and the desire to reclaim the past, can never completely reclaim what was lost, but instead create fictions or, as Rushdie (1991) has suggested, "imaginary homelands" of the mind. Rushdie eloquently describes his own experiences of being a migrant from India:

> It may be that writers in my position, exiles or immigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back….But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind (p. 10).

7.3 Narratives of Migrancy for Adults and Children

Writers such as Salman Rushdie, through their autobiographical reflections and fictions, offer us insights into the forms of cultural translations experienced by migrants who are living in what Homi Bhabha (1994) has described as "the migrant culture of the 'in-between'" (p. 321). Most of Rushdie's protagonists in his novels, for example, are migrants who learn to construct new hybrid cultural identities in their chosen countries. Migration, for them, is conceived of as a form of translation, both in terms of culture as well as language. Jenni Ramone (2011) comments on the significance of this notion of translation:

> Just like a text which is translated and therefore reveals the traces of both original source and translated target language and culture, the individual who migrates is translated into a new place and operates through a new language, becoming a translated individual bearing traces of both locations and languages (p. 115).

Rushdie is among many international authors whose literary texts have offered imaginative insights into migration as a rite of passage that incubates culturally-translated and hyphenated individuals. V.S. Naipaul, who migrated to England from his native Trinidad, is recognized as one of Britain's most respected and also most controversial authors of migrant fictions. His autobiographic novel, *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) is one of his saddest and most eloquent. He describes the difficulties his narrator encounters in his efforts to settle in England, and speaks to the notion of migration as a form of rebirth. His novel offers a moving account of how he was able to bring his new world into being by detailed descriptions of the rural landscape of his new country, seemingly inventing a new earth alongside a new persona.

A more contemporary and urban portrayal of migration to England is presented in Ali's (2003) *Brick Lane*, in which her protagonist Nazneen is forced to leave Bangladesh for an arranged marriage with a much older man in the East End of London. Speaking no English when she arrives, Nazneen moves from being totally dependent on her husband to learning how to create a new identity for herself, one that can deal with the ways of the world and her own needs and desires.

These examples are two of countless narratives by writers across the globe that speak to issues of migration from a variety of narrative styles, and in diverse formats and languages. While many of these are aimed at adult readership, many others are part of a growing market of texts for children and young adults, and, increasingly are books whose readership encompasses a range of ages from children to adults. I think immediately of the Australian author and illustrator, Shaun Tan, whose imaginative and evocative wordless graphic text of moving to an unknown land, *The Arrival* (2007), is becoming a classic among narratives of migration.

Beverley Naidoo, originally from South Africa and now residing in Britain, is another internationally recognized author of migrant fiction. Her children's novel, *The Other Side of Truth* (2000), is a moving story of a brother and sister smuggled into Britain from Nigeria after their mother is shot for political reasons. The narrative eloquently describes the children's traumatic experiences with bureaucratic procedures when they apply for refugee status.

A novel written in French by the Quebec writer, Michele Marineau, *La Route de Chlifa* (1992), winner of the Canadian Governor General's Award for Children's Literature, is a hard-hitting look at the challenges faced by Karim, a refugee from the Lebanese war, trying to cope with the trauma of losing his young sister en route to Canada, and the indifference he encounters in his Quebec school. Framed by Karim's diary and in alternating chapters by the outsider voice of a sympathetic classmate, the novel has been translated into English as *The Road to Chlifa* (2003) and into several European and Scandinavian languages.

Books about migration written specifically for children and young adults have been published in increasing numbers over the past 20 years as countries in the west come to terms with how their sense of nation has been shifting with immigration,

and new immigrant writers in these countries have reflected on their own experience of migration in literature for young people. One young adult book on migrancy, *The Frozen Waterfall*, by Hicyilmaz (1993), is enjoying a revival of interest since being selected as the winner of the 2013 Phoenix award by the Children's Literature Association. This award is given for the best book published 20 years earlier that did not receive awards at the time but is deemed to have been worthy of an award.

At the beginning of the novel, 12-year-old Selda is overjoyed finally to be reunited with her father and brothers who have been working in Switzerland, while Selda and her sisters have remained in Turkey with her mother. She quickly finds, however, that life as an immigrant in Switzerland is far from easy. She faces prejudice from a number of Swiss neighbours and fellow students who dislike Turkish people coming into their country and she struggles to understand a new language and a different way of life. The novel very effectively articulates Selda's inability to understand anything her teacher at school is saying and her frustration at being unable to communicate her own thoughts, ideas or experiences during the first few months in her new country.

With its dramatic plot and well-drawn characters, the novel offers a poignant and realistic portrait of a migrant trying to create a new identity for herself amidst extreme culture shock. She is befriended by two young people who face their own challenges: a classmate, Giselle, who is wealthy but comes from a dysfunctional Swiss family; and Ferhat, an illegal Turkish immigrant, who lives in constant danger of exposure and who has experienced even more complex difficulties of being a foreigner in a strange country. Selda's intelligence and resourcefulness help her to triumph over numerous difficulties and the novel ends on a hopeful note for Selda and her family.

7.4 Narratives of Migration in the Context of Canadian Multiculturalism

I now focus attention specifically on books for children and young adults that are concerned with migration to Canada. Many of these books offer nuanced stories of migrants whose experiences have not always been as positive as Canada's official policy of multiculturalism and respect for difference would suggest. These narratives reinforce the viewpoints of some adult Canadian writers who critique a simplistic view of the assimilation and cultural integration of immigrants into Canada. Vassanji (2006), in his essay, "Am I a Canadian Writer?" eloquently critiques these assumptions:

> Traditionally, a new Canadian or American was someone who left the shores of Europe, and later China and Japan, set foot on the new soil, kissed the earth, and adopted the new land; forgot the old…. The succeeding generations were adapted, spoke the language and idiom, played baseball or hockey or football, had integrated. That is the traditional model of immigration; it still makes a lot of people very comfortable. It makes the sociologists of immigration feel like mathematicians. There is a QED-ness to this picture of immigration (2006, p. 8).

Here, Vassanji reflects the views of earlier theorists I have quoted, such as Bhabha (1994) and Chambers(1994) who remind us of the fractured and hybrid identities

of migrants, trying to negotiate new ways of being as they live in-between languages and cultures.

The writer Bissoondath (1994) makes a similar argument against stereotypical assumptions about immigrants in relation to Canada's official multicultural policy:

> I have lived in Canada for over twenty years, longer than I have lived anywhere else. I have built a life and a career here. I know who I am, know my autobiography, am at ease with it. But I also know that the specifics of my personality did not freeze, upon my arrival in Toronto, into a form suitable for multicultural display…. To pretend that one has not evolved, as official multiculturalism so often seems to demand of us, is to stultify the personality, creating stereotype, stripping the individual of uniqueness: you are not yourself, you are your group. It is not really a mosaic that one joins - the parts of a mosaic fit neatly together, creating a harmonious whole - but rather a zoo of exoticism that one enters (p. 211).

Bissoondath is just one of a number of critics who have spoken out against the notion of Canada as a mosaic into which migrants' differences are put on display and stereotyped. In the following three Canadian narratives, authors have challenged these same simplistic views of migration through stories that vividly illuminate the complexities of settling into a new country and the possibilities for creating new hybrid identities.

7.4.1 Showcasing Experiences of Dissonance and Assimilation

Toten's (2010) edited young adult anthology, featuring stories of migration from 14 of Canada's better-known writers, challenges many of the stereotypes of how migrants fit into Canada. *Piece by Piece: Stories about Fitting into Canada*, describes the writers' shock of arrival, their difficulties of living through cultural and often linguistic dissonance, and the writers' efforts to feel connected to their new country. Feelings of alienation and the desire to belong are common to all adolescents, but these stories highlight how the experience of migration presents particular challenges for young people. Toten, already well-known for her earlier novels, including *The Onlyhouse*, (1995) which details a young girl's migration from Croatia to Toronto, introduces the anthology with her own thoughtful reflections on immigration and belonging. She writes:

> Wanting to belong must be a primal kind of thing, whether we admit it or not. The newly arrived immigrant, like so many young adults, just has a harder time hiding it. Immigrants tend to wear that need on their sleeves, but the rest of us are too busy and distracted by our own yearnings to notice…. Who hasn't felt alien, isolated, or awkward, often all at the same time? Now stir in the added burden of knowing what was left behind – the aunties, the grandmas, the colours, the aromas…the *familiar.* No matter how the exit took place, under dire threat or with a sense of adventure, the immigrant always wrestles with memories of some irreplaceable treasures, forever lost. Those stories are here (p. 1).

Toten goes on to describe her own family's poignant story of immigration to Canada from Yugoslavia. Her father was working in Toronto, Canada, trying to bring his wife over to join him. When Teresa was just days old, her mother finally

received a 20-h visa to leave Zagreb. They arrived in Canada when Teresa was 13 days old, and 6 months later her father died. Her mother couldn't cope with being in a strange country by herself with a young baby. Toten (2010) writes:

> The language was impenetrable, there was no family, and there had been no time to make friends. The colours here were too bright and harsh, and the sounds of Canadian life, with all its clamouring machinery and cars, too noisy. And she was alone – well, except for me (p. 2).

Two months after Teresa's father died, her mother walked into the frigid waters of Lake Erie with Teresa in her arms. She could not swim and was determined that both of them would die. At the last minute, she felt the wind on her, seemingly urging her not to go ahead and that life in Canada would be good. So Teresa and her mother were saved and moved on to live a productive life in their new country.

Not all the stories in her book are as heartrending as Toten's, but each one tells an intriguing tale of how the writer was able to break through barriers of language, accent, culture, indifference and occasional racism to create a new life and identity as a Canadian. The authors of the stories come from countries as diverse as Russia (Svetlana Chmakova), China (Ting-xing Ye), Grenada (Richard Keens-Douglas), Ethiopia (Boonaa Mohammed), Hungary (Eva Wiseman), India (Rachna Gilmore), Iran (Marina Nemat), Japan (Rui Umezawa) and South Africa (Richard Poplack). It is fascinating not only to read about these migrants' stories of coming to Canada as young people, but also to gain insight into how these experiences shaped their own writing as adults.

The anthology is also noteworthy for its imaginative foray into varied formats in two of the 14 stories, genres that privilege the particular creative abilities of the authors. Svetlana Chmakova, a graphic artist, describes her experiences of moving to Canada from Russia in the form of a comic strip she names "Red Maple Leaves" (p. 7). Through the interaction of image and text, she offers a moving and often amusing account of her life in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes at high school and her efforts to learn English through the subtitles on television programmes.

Boonaa Mohammed, a spoken-word poet, whose family originated in Ethiopia, uses free verse to capture the feelings and despair of being bullied at school for his African heritage. His blunt and evocative scenarios speak to the experiences of many migrants for whom school becomes a place of fear and torment. He writes:

> He would trade his nappy hair for approval if they let him, remove his parents' accents and replace them with acceptance. But most of all he wanted everyone to stop asking him where he was from (p. 83).

Toten's anthology is an innovative reminder of the many different backgrounds, talents and experiences of Canadian writers who come from elsewhere.

7.4.2 Mythologies of Early Chinese Settlers

While the stories in Toten's anthology offer reminiscences of migrations to Canada from the recent past, Paul Yee's (Yee and Harvey 2002) collection, *Dead Man's Gold*

and Other Stories, draws on ghost stories told by early Chinese migrants to Canada. His ten stories, each one preceded by an eerie illustration by Harvey Chan, dramatize the dreams, hardships, loneliness and loss experienced by immigrants from Southern China to North America from the mid-1800s to 1955. Drawn to 'Gold Mountain' by the lure of the gold rush, by the promise of adventure and a better life, or by their desperation to make enough money to raise a family back in China, most of these early migrants faced harsh discrimination. When workers were needed to help build the Canadian Pacific Railway, Canada brought in more than 17,000 low-paid Chinese migrants. Once the railway was completed, many Canadians complained that Chinese immigrants were competing for scarce jobs, and the government responded by imposing a "Chinese Head Tax" on each Chinese person entering Canada between 1885 and 1923 (CBC News 2006). Those migrants who were able to pay the tax, still faced the challenge of finding employment, mainly dangerous work in the coal mines, or poorly-paid shift work in restaurants and laundries.

Yee's plot-driven, exciting ghost stories, at times ironic and often tragic, are aimed at younger readers and bring these experiences of early Chinese migrants to life. In a "Note to the Reader" at the end of the book, he writes:

> I wanted to dramatize the history of the Chinese in North America and create a New World mythology where immigrant stories can be told and retold.
>
> Although I invented all these stories, they are tales much like the ones the early Chinese immigrants told one another in bachelor halls or shared with their children during family banquets. These tales described the very real occupations and immigration laws that the early Chinese experienced when they first came to North America (p. 112).

In one of Yee's most poignant stories, "Digging Deep," Chung, a timid young Chinese man, under pressure from his parents to marry, agrees to go to the New World to gather enough gold to support a wife. But his expectations are quickly dashed on arrival:

> Chung reached the New World and saw Chinese waiting at the docks with cloth-tied bundles. When he asked directions to the newest gold fields, the men laughed. Young fellow, haven't you heard? The gold rush is finished! All the gold is gone, shipped to bank vaults in big cities. All you'll find here is gray rock and wild animals (p. 24).

Rather than letting his parents down by returning home, Chung goes to work deep underground in a coal mine, where he is terrified by the dark, the dirt and the danger: "I have arrived in hell, he thought. Hundreds of ghosts must have been here at their death sites. Again he muttered, 'I would give anything to have courage!'" (p. 26). A ghost of Chinese miners killed in the mine offers to remove his fear in exchange for a promise that Chung's body would be "a strong new resting place for my soul and all the memories I carry" (p. 27). Chung may stay alive with his new guardian spirit to protect him until such time as he takes a bride. Chung agrees, and for the next few years works productively in the mine, kept safe from all disasters by the ghost, and ignoring all entreaties in his mother's letters to come back to China and find a bride. One day, though, in a mine explosion, he is poisoned by the fumes, and his body never recovered. A letter from China arrives a few days later, announcing that a bride has been chosen for him and a marriage ceremony performed.

Each of Yee's stories in the collection begins in the same way as "Digging Deep" with a journey from China to North America, and each features an other-worldly presence, a ghost that holds memories of the Chinese migrants who have gone before. The symbolic presence of these ghosts might be seen as a parallel to Rushdie's (1991) fragments of memory that can evoke a partial and provisional reconstruction of the past, As Rushdie describes, "The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities" (p. 12).

7.4.3 From Gdansk to Toronto: Culture Shock and Adaptation

For 11-year-old Gosia, the protagonist of Maksimowska's (2012) powerful first novel, *Giant*, immigration to Canada is both the realization of a dream and a poignant reminder of all she has left behind in Poland. Gosia's ironic voice and intimate details of her life both in Poland and Canada, suggest this is a cross-over book for both adults and teenage readers. The first half of the novel is set in Gdansk, Poland in 1988. Gosia's parents are divorced; her father works at sea and only comes home twice a year, and her mother, a former schoolteacher in Poland, has gone to work in Canada, promising to return as soon as she has earned enough money to support her children. Gosia lives in a grim concrete apartment block with her younger sister and her embattled grandparents with a democratic revolution happening around them. As the tallest, heaviest, and most developed girl in her class at school, Gosia sees herself as a misfit, a giant amongst her peers. She longs for her mother to return to Gdansk and dreams of visiting her:

> I've had dreams recently in which I'm still a little kid and I'm swimming across the Atlantic towards Mama…. If she doesn't come home, I will go to her. As I swim I grow heavier and heavier and drop to the bottom of the sea like a cannon ball. But I root my toes in the sand and rest of me shoots up, breaking the surface of the water with a colossal splash. I am a true giant, a creature of fictional proportions (p. 37).

Gosia gets her wish when her mother sends money for Gosia and her sister to join her in Canada. The second part of the book describes Gosia's early years as an immigrant in Toronto. Her ironic voice chronicles her shock at finding her mother reduced to being a house-cleaner in Canada, and her efforts to come to terms with a stepfather who bores Gosia with his stories of being a second-generation Polish–Canadian. She finds the new food strange and inedible and she feels mortified in school because of her poor English skills and being labelled as a foreigner:

> Finch Valley Middle School might as well be for little kids. Everyone here is a gibberish-speaking midget. I don't understand a word, written, spoken or sung. School sounds like all the English pop songs I've ever heard, played simultaneously on fifty-four different cassette players, full blast…. At Finch Valley, I don't know if someone is saying something malicious to me, or something helpful, something idiotic or something useless (p. 113).

Maksimowska, herself a Polish immigrant to Canada, rarely puts a step wrong in describing the culture shock and dissonances experienced by Gosia as a young girl trying to fit into a new society. Gradually, Gosia adapts to the school and to a new language. At the same time, she retains a nostalgia and sense of loss for what she has left behind, sharing with Salman Rushdie in creating an imaginary homeland of the Poland she can no longer see. When she discovers her grandfather's bravery during the Second World War and his narrow escape from death in a concentration camp, she shares the story with her classmates and writes her first 'proper' letter to her ailing grandfather in Poland:

> I talked about you at school last week. (I hope you don't mind.) Even though I was so nervous that I almost had to go the bathroom. I didn't stutter once. I pronounced all the words perfectly. My teacher, Mrs White, said I was "very composed." The poster I drew of Pomerania and the Bay of Gdansk, with colourful maps and arrows showing the German advance, hung behind me during the speech. In a weird way it was kind of like having you and Babcia stand behind me…. I included information about Stutthof, as well as other concentration camps, as well as a small portrait I drew of you in pencil (p. 160).

Through Gosia's maturing years, she learns to feel comfortable with her physical size and with her new environment. Her return to Poland for her grandmother's funeral, as for many migrants visiting the 'home' they left behind, is a reality check that the Poland she lived in that has remained as a constant in her dreams and imagination is no longer the same country and that her own identity as a migrant to Canada has also undergone significant changes. The novel leaves the reader with the hope of a bright future for Gosia as she matures into a confident adult.

7.5 Narratives for a Changing Population

The texts for children and young adults that I have discussed above, present varied perspectives on the issue of migration to the west, offering readers insight into the fears, traumas, and the resiliency of young people as they face challenges of culture shock, language difficulties, discrimination and hardships. Books such as these, now published widely across North America, Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand and beyond, are crucial resources for young people to see their own or their peers' experiences of migration articulated in imaginative narratives. Increasing immigration into countries across the west is rapidly changing these nations' demographics and the population of readers in schools and libraries. Canada, for example, if current trends continue, will rely predominantly on immigration for its population growth. A 2007 article in the country's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail,* explained the changing trends:

> Statistics Canada's 2006 census shows that the country's foreign-born population soared 13.6 per cent between 2001 and 2006 — four times higher than the Canadian-born population. …. As of last year, more than half of immigrants continued to come from Asia, including the Middle East, but a growing number also came from the Americas and Africa. And they're not just sticking to Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. A growing number of immigrants are going to the suburbs surrounding the big cities, along with smaller

> cities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Ottawa, suggesting diversity is spreading across Canada….. Canada continues to have a much higher proportion of foreign-born people than the U.S. and is second only to Australia in having the highest proportion among Western countries (Grant 2007).

Literature for children and young adults will continue to play a significant role for these young migrants and for their Canadian-born peers in reimagining their world and responding to the changing tenor of our times. Tale-telling, as Minh-ha (1994) reminds us, shares with migration the power to alter the frontiers of reality and fantasy. She explains:

> Journeying across generations and cultures, tale-telling excels in its powers of adaptation and germination; while with exile and migration, travelling expanded in time and space becomes dizzyingly complex in its repercussive effects. Both are subject to the hazards of displacement, interaction and translation. Both, however, have the potential to widen the horizon of one's imagination and to shift the frontiers of reality and fantasy, or of Here and There. Both contribute to questioning the limits set on what is known as 'common' and 'ordinary' in daily existence, offering thereby the possibility of an elsewhere-within-here, or-there (pp. 9–10).

Imaginative stories of migration, such as those discussed here, do offer readers these kinds of powerful new ways of imagining our worlds, and, as the writer Manguel (2008) in his book, *The Library at Night*, eloquently suggests:

> Books may not change our suffering, books may not protect us from evil, books may not tell us what is good or what is beautiful, and they will certainly not shield us from the common fate of the grave. But books grant us myriad possibilities: the possibility of change, the possibility of illumination (p. 231).

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Chapter 8
Food: Changing Approaches to Food in the Construction of Childhood in Western Culture

Jean Webb

A recent UK television program, 'Exploring China,' (Hom 2012)[1] followed the culinary journeying across China by two chefs Ken Hom and Ching-He Huang. Ken Hom had spent his early years in Mainland China before his parents immigrated to the USA settling in Chicago. Ching-He Huang's infancy was spent in Taiwan, then her parents moved to South Africa and finally to England. The series of programs was far more than a journey to collect recipes; the two chefs, through the experience of food, were undertaking a spiritual journey to, as they both said, find their sense of identity. Ching-He Huang spoke of wanting as a child to be 'English' and to have blonde hair. Hom had visited China under the restrictions of Communist rule, whilst Ching-He Huang had several times visited relations in Taiwan. They both noted the rapid changes in the environment and the influence upon the lifestyle of the Chinese people. Regional food traditions had survived in cultural memory despite the impact of Mao's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s which suppressed local food traditions, combined with the contemporary sweep of modernization which redesigned cities and took away the street markets and indigenous eating places. Nonetheless, traditional foods and recipes were still 'alive' under the political embargo, emerging to define what it is to be 'Chinese'. Hom and Ching-He Huang were rediscovering family memories and connections through their food experiences and learning about other areas of China by sampling the cuisine from different regions as they travelled. The series was 'proof' of the ways in which food, and food experiences from childhood are deeply rooted in a sense of identity, culture and class, and are a component of the construction of 'the self', or as in the case of these chefs, 'the selves'.

Unsurprisingly, in Western culture, food operates in books for children as an integral part of the construction of childhood, being used by authors in different ways in differing time periods to re-imagine and comment upon childhood.

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This chapter will discuss how authors from a Western cultural perspective have variously employed food as a signifier in their constructions of childhood from the nineteenth century to contemporary times. The areas considered are under the following headings: Food, Morality and the Nation, Greedy Appetites, In A Manner Of Eating, Class and Food, Changing Approaches To Obesity and finally Recipes For Change. The concluding section on Recipes For Change discusses the ways that attention to the question of food and childhood has moved into a more applied approach by raising the awareness of children to food in an attempt to improve their dietary health.

8.1 Food, Morality and the Nation

During the early nineteenth century in Britain there was a growing consciousness of national identity and the state of the nation as typified in the 1832 Sadler Commission that investigated the conditions of child labourers. As Levene and Webb note: "This [Commission] captured public attention since the condition of youth was already coming to be a marker of civilisation and social well-being (as well as a reflection of national strength and productivity)" (2012). The state of the nation was associated with the state of childhood. Writers for children mirrored this notion in their work: work which also reflected their Evangelical and moral outlook. Mrs. Sherwood (1775–1851) was one of the most well-known and prolific of the Evangelical women writers who, through her writing, tried to reform children's manners and morals. Sherwood's influence was considerable as she wrote over four hundred books, tracts, magazine articles, and chapbooks mainly for child readers, who at this time would have been principally from the literate middle classes. By the 1820s, the "Evangelical Movement had drawn in a wide cross-section of middle and upper class members" (Cutt 1974, p. 6) whose children would also have provided part of the readership. "As an observer of the working classes, Sherwood, not surprisingly, took a middle class point of view. Her most influential work, *The Fairchild Family* produced between 1818 and 1847 (1831), typically projects a comfortable, protected environment and focuses on a middle class family. The children are well-cared for and generally enjoy good health, except for when Emily who is a central protagonist, 'wickedly' (in contemporary terms this would be seen as childish mischief not wickedness) and illicitly eats damsons, stains her skirt with the red juice, and falls ill with a life-threatening fever because her clothes were wet for too long from where she tried to wash away the evidence. This misdemeanor falls into the realms of a childish prank, yet had taken the child close to death from which she was spared. It also highlights the precariousness of childhood at a time before modern medication protected children against an unhealthy domestic environment. Food, behaviour, morality and health are linked to act as a warning to the child reader. This seems a mild transgression by Emily and a stern punishment by modern standards; however, it was a way taken by Mrs. Sherwood to induct a morally-sound approach into a middle-class situation.

Such fortunes were not the case for all children for there were high levels of poverty and hardship in nineteenth-century Britain as observed by writers such as Hesba Stretton who, amongst others, wrote works that were classified as 'Waif Stories'. Stretton's *Fern's Hollow* (Stretton 1864), for example conflated moral and religious messages for middle-class readers with the physical and moral health of the working classes. *Fern's Hollow* is the story of a working class mining community. Stephen Fern, whilst still only a boy, works in the mines to support his family after his father, also a miner, dies from silicosis. Their poverty is exacerbated by the effects of the Acts of Enclosure of 1801, 1836 and 1845 that took away the Common Lands formerly open to the working classes for hunting game (such as rabbit and partridge) to supplement their diet. It also criminalized such activities as this kind of hunting as poaching upon the estates now owned by the wealthy, which had previously been open access Common Land. Stephen, the young hero of *Fern's Hollow* brings home a leveret that he has poached. He is, however, stricken by remorse and is unable to allow his family to eat of the stew made from his illicit gains. For Stephen starvation is a more acceptable option than the guilt ensuing from an immoral act. Shortage and lack of food in nineteenth-century fiction for children was thus linked with morality, as was greed, a moral signifier that was continued into the twentieth century.

8.2 Greedy Appetites

A common fallacy is the assumption that sexuality is not an appropriate subject for inclusion in books for children, especially for younger readers, and therefore does not appear in fiction for this age group. Charles Kingsley, however, associated greed with sexual attraction and pleasure in *The Water Babies* (Kingsley 1863/1995). Tom, the focal character, is sorely tempted by the sweets kept in the cupboard of the fairy Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid. By engaging in the pleasures of over-indulgence, Tom risks rejection from her soft warm lap where he loves to luxuriate in her attentions:

> Now you may fancy that Tom was quite good, when he had everything that he could want or wish; but you would be very much mistaken. Being quite comfortable is a very good thing; but it does not always make people good. Indeed it sometimes makes them naughty, as it has made the people in America; and as it made the people in the Bible who waxed fat and kicked like horses overfed and underworked. And I am very sorry to say that this happened to little Tom. For he grew so fond of the sea-bull's eyes and sea-lollipops, that his foolish little head could think of nothing else: and he was always longing for more, and wondering when the strange lady would come again and give him some, and what she would give him, and how much, and whether she would give him more than others. And he thought of nothing but lollipops by day and dreamt of nothing else by night… (Kingsley 1995, pp. 115–116).

The passage continues with the scene of Tom succumbing to temptation, described as follows as a frenzy of guilty secret and stealthy gorging:

> And then he would only eat one, and he did; and then he would only eat two, and then three, and so on; and then he was terrified lest she should come and catch him, and began

> gobbling them down so fast that he did not taste them, or have any pleasure in them; and then he felt sick, and would have only one more; and then only one more again; and so on till he had eaten them all up. (p. 116)

Kingsley makes a direct link between morality and gluttony (and by implication, sexual desire) as part of Tom's journey of moral education from being an ignorant and un-Christian boy chimney sweep, to a water baby who finally emerges as a Great Man of Science to take his place in the formation of the British Empire through industry and application.

The trope of gluttony and greed has continued into the twentieth century as a means of identifying flawed and unlikeable characters who may by overcoming their over indulgence (and sexual appetite) be transformed into more likeable and responsible persons. Although Edmund in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Lewis 1998) is not described as being overweight, he is fixated on food; for example, when Lucy suggests that they rescue the Faun he remarks: "'A lot *we* could do!' said Edmund, "when we haven't even got anything to eat!'" (Lewis p. 59).

Edmund's fatal flaws are his preoccupation with food and his greed, for he is so tempted by the Turkish delight offered by the White Witch that he is prepared to betray his family and friends. Turkish delight is a sweetmeat flavoured with attar of roses; it thus represents the sensual and the exotic, as well as an irresistible temptation. Edmund is overtaken by greed, forgetting his manners and any sense of protecting his family and friends during what was actually an interrogation by the White Witch.

> While he was eating, the Queen kept asking him questions. At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one's mouth full, but soon he forgot about this and only thought of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat, and he never asked himself why the Queen should be so inquisitive. (p. 39)

8.3 In a Manner of Eating

Lewis uses food in this episode to demonstrate how Edmund abandons his social training, that is, his manners in order to satisfy his craving. Each culture has its own etiquette surrounding food. In India, for example, it is customary to eat using the fingers of the right hand, often using naan bread, or an equivalent, instead of a knife and fork. Nineteenth-century upper and middle-class English society saw the development of afternoon tea as a social gathering which was then extended to the nursery and had its own etiquette which Lewis Carroll satirises in *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll 1992). The behaviour of the March Hare and the Hatter is certainly not acceptable as illustrated by the way in which they treat the Dormouse, who has himself broken the conventions:

> There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and

> the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. (Carroll 1992, p. 54)

Alice also flouts convention as she sits down although she has been told that there is 'No room! No room!' (p. 54). As the tea party progresses Carroll highlights the ways in which the rules of etiquette are being broken. The March Hare seemingly wishes to make Alice feel more comfortable when he offers wine with an 'encouraging' tone, yet in itself this is a mark of rudeness, for there is no wine. The conversation degenerates into a series of personal remarks and mild disagreements, hardly pertaining to the expectations of polite conversation. Finally Alice leaves the chaotic social gathering when the Hatter declares that Alice 'shouldn't talk' (p. 60). The irony here is that the tea-party, as a set of conventions, was designed around the perceived need for a light meal with tea and the social opportunity for polite conversation. Alice has had neither tea nor food and is barred from speaking by the Hatter whose acts of 'rudeness' were 'more than Alice could bear' (p. 60).

Lewis Carroll was not the only writer for children to make critical reference to the social niceties surrounding the expectations of behaviour at meal times of middle class English society. In the following extract from *Seven Little Australians* (Turner 1894) the Australian author Ethel Turner drew attention to the fact that English middle class children often ate in the nursery in the care of their nanny rather than with their parents:

> Nursery tea is more an English institution than an Australian one; there is a kind of bon camaraderie feeling between parents and young folks here, and an utter absence of veneration on the part of the latter. So even in the most wealthy families it seldom happens that the parents dine in solemn state alone, while the children are having a simple tea in another room: they all assemble around the same board, and the young ones partake of the same dishes, and sustain their parts in the conversation right nobly. (Turner 1894, p. 2)

Turner is highlighting the differences in behaviour to demonstrate the distinctiveness of the Australian family from their English rulers. Ethel Turner's *Seven Little Australians* was one of the first novels for children to strongly identify a sense of 'being Australian'. As Rosemary Ross Johnson points out:

> The book emphasizes the nationality of its children in the title, and in the first few paragraphs overtly declares national difference and particularity, noting that it is this "lurking sparkle of joyousness and rebellion in nature here" that, depending on circumstance, will "go to play will o' the wisp with the larrikin, or warm the breasts of the spirited, single-hearted, loyal ones who alone can `advance Australia." (Johnson 1999, p. 14)

Written during the final decade of the nineteenth century, Turner's novel reflects the growing sense of an Australian national identity, which was to lead to the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. The cultural differences are emphasized by Turner through her references to the Australian freedom at mealtimes, when food and conversation constitute a communal gathering. Turner catches and depicts the energetic sprit of what it is to be Australian.

Turner also recorded life on the sheep stations, one of which the children visit. Supplies are seen to be plentiful when they look into Mrs. Hassal's store-room: "Hams and sides of bacon hung thickly from the rafters. 'Those are mutton hams,' she said,

pointing to one division. 'I keep those for the stockmen.'" (Turner 1894, p. 83) An indication is given of the size of the operation when Mrs. Hassle points out that there are:

> "Twenty to thirty men, counting the boundary riders and stockmen at different parts of the place; and double that number at shearing or drafting times, not to mention daily sundowners–it's like feeding an army, my dears," she said. (p. 83)

The children's curiosity is aroused as to how provision for the men is made and the practicalities of looking after such a workforce. They ask:

> "And have you to cook every day, for all those men?" Meg said, wondering what oven could be found large enough. "Dear, no!" the old lady answered. "Dear, dear, no; each man does everything for himself in his own hut; they don't even get bread, only rations of flour to make damper for themselves. Then we give them a fixed, quantity of meat, tea, sugar, tobacco, candles, soap, and one or two other things." (pp. 83–84)

A specific reference is made to the independence of the men and their ability to cook for themselves, as in the making of damper, which is traditionally an unleavened soda bread cooked in the hot coals of the campfire. The inclusion of such details emphasises the self-sufficiency of the Australians; this self-sufficiency is reinforced when Mrs Hassal explains that she would not 'dream of' buying soap or candles, but makes them herself (p. 83).

For many Australian readers at that time, these references would have been an affirmation of national identity that was especially potent considering the overwhelmingly English nature of reading materials then available for Australian children which were not devised as a means of teaching children to read, but as an "introduction to children's cultural inheritance" (Nimon 1999, p. 35). The readers included extracts from the English canon of classical writers including those for children such as Charles Kingsley, Robert Louis Stevenson and A.A. Milne (Nimon p. 34). The experiences of the Australian readership is thus unrepresented, being 'Australian' is masked by its absence. Through her inclusion of approaches to life, cooking and eating, Ethel Turner was effectively involved in re-shaping an Australian consciousness through her revision of what had been a norm for the Australian reader in her re-imagining and recording of Australian culture.

8.4 Class and Food

In the reference to the men working on the sheep station making provision for themselves, Turner does not make any reference to a sense of class difference, yet food has been consistently used in English writing for children as an indicator of class difference. The poverty of the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries is emphasized by references in children's books to the lack of food, as in Hesba Stretton's *Little Meg's Children* (Stretton 1905) where the family are near destitution, despite their working hard.

> But when Kitty's shilling was gone to the last farthing, and not a spoonful of meal remained in the bag, it was not easy to be happy. Robin and baby were both crying for

> food; and there was no coal to make a fire, nor any candle to give them light during the long dark evenings of November. (p. 24)

Class differences are also indicated by surfeit as well as lack. Kenneth Grahame describes a scene in his *The Wind in the Willows* (2010) where the middle-class gentleman Ratty takes the working class Mole for a picnic. The picnic basket contains:

> Coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollscresssandwichespott edmeatgingerbeerlemonadesodawater (Grahame 2010, p. 8)

Mole's response is one of ecstasy, in a more innocent way akin to the sensual pleasures experienced by Tom in *The Water Babies*. A hard-working animal, he has begun the day white washing his humble home and then he has the prospect of a feast of such bounds beyond the purse of a working class family in the early years of the twentieth century when a well-paid working person would earn a guinea (£1.05p) a week at most: (the current minimum wage in the UK is circa £240 per week.) The adventures of Mole and his woodland friends are punctuated by sumptuous feasts. After his frightening experience of being lost in the Wild Wood, Mole is rescued by Ratty who then finds their way to Badger's home deep in the woods. It is snowing and the animals are cold and hungry so the comfort and culinary splendours of Badger's home are a delight to behold, for:

> In the middle of the room stood a long table of plain boards placed on trestles, with benches down each side. At one end of it, where an arm-chair stood pushed back, were spread the remains of the Badger's plain but ample supper. Rows of spotless plates winked from the shelves of the dresser at the far end of the room, and from the rafters overhead hung hams, bundles of dried herbs, nets of onions, and baskets of eggs. It seemed a place where heroes could fitly feast after victory, where weary harvesters could line up in scores along the table and keep their Harvest Home with mirth and song, or where two or three friends of simple tastes could sit about as they pleased and eat and smoke and talk in comfort and contentment. (p. 38)

Badger is representative of the yeoman class, which was an intermediatory status between the gentry and the labourer. A yeoman might well be a landowner, and was perceived as a trustworthy, conservative and stable member of society. Ratty knew that they would find shelter and a bountiful feast with Badger. The ways in which Badger's provisions are described emphasize a sense of community between the classes, belying the threat stemming from the rising working classes that was felt at the time by the moneyed classes. Mole certainly enjoys his time, but is also kept in his place. The food experiences offered him are beyond his means and he is always, as it were, in debt to the better off. The feast is luxurious and sumptuous; however, it is also a means of demonstrating power and control, since he will always remain the humble and lowly Mole in this company.

Food and feasting have variously been associated with denoting power relationships and challenges to the status quo. Midnight feasts in boarding school stories such as Elinor Brent-Dyer's *Chalet School* series, or Enid Blyton adventures or contemporaneously J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books all represent a luxuriating in food and at the same time a challenge to power. Children meet at times when they should be sleeping and then undermine adult rules, often planning another

part of their adventure. Harry Potter and his friends meet at the Hogwarts' feasts or drink together in the tavern. Food brings them together in a communion of power. Food can, however, be a dividing factor if the character in question is overweight.

8.5 Changing Approaches to Obesity

There are two streams of development regarding the obese figure in British fiction for children: firstly representations of the overweight child as unpopular, and secondly, since about the 1990s the reaction to the increasing incidents of obesity and anorexia in teenagers. The overweight child does not really come into children's literature until the early twentieth century because child health and nutrition were more likely to produce an underweight child. (An exception perhaps is the boy in Catherine Sinclair's fairy tale in *Holiday House*, 1839. The boy is Master No-Book). Mary Lennox in F.H. Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (Burnett 1911), for example, is presented as being more likeable and healthy when she gains weight and has the energy to play, that is, she becomes more 'childlike'. Acts of Parliament such as the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act ensured that children of parents who could not afford to pay were given a nutritious meal at school during the day; this was extended to free milk in school for children in 1921 and in 1946 a third of a pint of milk for all children. In addition the 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act introduced a schools medical service that monitored and improved the health of children. Following from these interventions the 'Food, Health and Income: Report on a Survey of Adequacy of Diet in Relation to Income', 1937, provided evidence that children in the lower income groups were malnourished, affecting their growth, health and overall well-being. The evidence was stark as there could be almost three inches difference in height between the same age group of children in differing economic classes plus associated diseases of rickets, dental caries, anemia and tuberculosis. Supplementary feeding projects proved that these conditions were associated with diet rather than genetics. The question then arises as to how authors constructed the overweight child in their fiction and why such figures were of interest to them.

Early twentieth century overweight boys were constructed as a principally comic antithesis to the fit and athletic muscular Christian model prevalent in the boys' adventure stories from the mid nineteenth century as in the works of R.M. Ballantyne and G.A. Henty. Billy Bunter, a comic creation by Frank Richards, was dull, devious, overweight and very greedy. He was also an upper middle class child attending a public school, which was a private, fee-paying institution. Overweight and devious Bunter is the butt of jokes, but also an anti-hero who attempts to undermine the school rules and conventions of what it is to be a 'good' subject by his self-obsessed antics. Whilst Bunter is the obese comic opposite to the moral child of nineteenth century children's literature, his less admirable characteristics have been incorporated into notions of the obese literary child *per se*. The dastardly schoolboy sidekicks of Draco Malfoy in J.K. Rowling's *Harry*

Potter series are overweight as is Dudley Dursley, Harry's over indulged and unlikeable spoilt cousin. Whereas this mode of characterisation situates them as bullies, the overweight child can also be the victim. The classic example of this is Piggy in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954). Golding's novel can be read as a critique of the conservative upper middle-class attitudes which had been typical of the generation which had taken Britain into two world wars. Piggy's family is working class, and he has brought up by his Aunt who owns a sweetshop and indulges him as a sense of comfort. He is asthmatic, non-athletic, weak of eyesight and overweight, the 'ideal' victim for bullying, which finally leads to his death.

The problematisation of being overweight has developed in literature and popular fiction for children, especially girls, since the 1960s as the work of Kate Flynn (2012) has demonstrated. Following the austerity of rationing post World War II and the increasing development of a media industry, how girls and boys looked, what diets they should follow and their sense of confidence and identity came to the fore, as Flynn as demonstrated in her analysis of British juvenile fiction and *Jackie* magazine from the 1960s. The increasing sense of the psychological effects of being overweight has been considered by authors such as Chris Crutcher in *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* (1993) and Catherine Forde in *Fat Boy Swim* (2003). Forde's protagonist Jimmy suffers badly from his physical appearance. He has a psychological battle regarding himself as: 'just fat. Lardy. Ginormous. Clinically obese…' (Forde p. 21). In both *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* and *Fat Boy Swim*, the causes of the teenager's weight problem are 'diagnosed' in the text as being socially related, that is, as a symptom of their deep unhappiness and lack of confidence which stems from matters outside their control.

In Angela Jariwala's novel *Fatty Rati* (1997), Rati's situation is compounded by being British-Asian. Rati's sense of self revolves around the demands of her family, her desire for a boyfriend, her low self-esteem, and her desire to be physically slim and attractive, in the mode of her friends and the images depicted in the popular teenage magazines which she avidly reads. Rati finds herself caught in a maelstrom of conflicting cultural pressures from within herself and externally. She desires the culturally ideal physical model of the slim and fashion conscious teenager, yet is very resistant to making the efforts required to achieve such. Her family want her to do well at school and make a good career for herself within the Westernized British culture in which they have chosen to bring up their family, yet Rati is not a scholar nor does she apply herself. In addition, there are the pressures from outside the family on her to conform to contemporary teenage popular culture, both Asian and British. All of these demands circulate for Rati around the question of body size. Rati knows that she is decidedly overweight, and finds herself in a state of perpetual torment:

> Rati Rana lay in her three foot single bed with very little space to manoeuvre, The mounds of jelly-like flesh poured from the sides of her hips, thighs and stomach whilst her enormous bottom created a canyon within the depleted mattress….
>
> However, the weight problem wasn't Rati's fault. If food had not been such a temptation then she wouldn't have been in double figures today. Ever since starting on solids at

> 3 months old, she had been eased by trifles, captivated by cream cakes, seduced by sausages, debauched by doughnuts and not to mention, corrupted by curries. (Jariwala p. 5)

The list of fattening foods is a combination of Western and Indian. When she attempts to slim down, initially half-heartedly, she is exhorted by her mother to eat. The cultural model for Rati's mother is that of the well-rounded figure for a woman:

> "So?" snapped Mrs. Rani. "I'm fat and I still cook. Everybody has to eat, you just need more food." … God bless the Indian mothers for coming up with this line of reasoning. They make you feel so much better, even if it is only for a split second.
>
> Mrs. Rani was cuddly also, but she did have three kids and years of experience under her sari belt. She must have been a slim chokri back in India but those dar bhat dinners were definitely showing around the lower half of her body. (p. 13)

Body size for her mother is not a problem, since she falls within cultural models of expectation. Rani is living in a different world where image is all, where superthin models set standards and attractiveness is not necessarily associated with personality, intelligence or achievement, but with looking like a slim ideal magazine image. Finally Rani, like Jimmy in *Fat Boy Swim*, loses weight by eating healthily and she then becomes socially adjusted. One might question how far this text is culturally inclusive, since Rati, caught between two cultures, critiques the foods of her Asian culture.

8.6 Recipes for Change

The matter of suitable foods and a healthy diet for children and teenagers has become of increasing concern in western culture as the problems of obesity in particular have become increasingly widespread with the shift from home-cooked regulated diets to reliance upon fast foods and take-away convenience eating. In 2001, Jamie Oliver, a well-known chef in the UK, campaigned for healthier eating starting by rejuvenating school meals, which had been rejected by children and teenagers in favour of unhealthy fast foods. His campaign engaged directly with the young and included introducing them to attractive healthy eating recipes. This very successful effort attests to the power of the media as another form of influential text. The rise of cookbooks for children and teenagers related to children's literature is also another interesting phenomenon as there are now several that are connected to high-profile children's books. For example, *The Unofficial Harry Potter Cookbook: From Cauldron Cakes to Knickerbocker Glory—More Than 150 Magical Recipes for Wizards and Non-Wizards Alike* (Bucholz 2010) promises recipes which link with the ambience of the Potter books.

For younger children, there are delights to be found in *Green Eggs and Ham Cookbook Recipes Inspired by Dr Seuss* (Brennan 2006). Whilst green eggs belies the healthy nature of the food produced by these recipes, the awareness of health matters is reflected in such recipe books as *Simply in Season* (Kennedy 2006) which has the publicity tag line: 'help with childhood obesity'.

The focus on children as cooks extends beyond the recipe book since cookery competition programs for adults such as 'Masterchef' and 'The Great British Bake Off' have been produced for child participants. 'Masterchef' has a focus on fine dining and the precise cooking which produces both classical and imaginative foods describing the young chefs as 'budding gastronomes'. Of note is the fact that these contestants are in the UK series, as opposed to the Australian version, in the main, Caucasian and middle class. Furthermore since this type of cooking is quite expensive and demanding there would have to have been a good deal of time spent by parents or grandparents with their children to teach them the high levels of skill and knowledge required to compete. 'Junior Bake Off' has 'humbler' recipes and more culturally diverse participants. In both series the child participants are supported by the judges whilst testing their culinary skills. Cooking and eating are important to these youngsters, becoming part of their sense of self, and their identity.

In conclusion, food is an essential for life, health and enjoyment; for indulgence, exploration, social interaction and singular pleasures. Food reflects culture and individual taste in relishing those we like and rejecting what is to the individual unpalatable. In short, food has a multiplicity of purposes in human life beyond the necessity of survival. Children's literature employs food and the surrounding ramifications to explore, express, and critique matters such as politics, poverty, morality, life style, health, social interaction, identity and culture. How authors have and continue to use food in their creations and re-imagining of childhood has, and will certainly continue to, provide the reader with plenty of food for thought.

Note

1. See for example Claudia Mills' review of *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations. Lion and the Unicorn* 33(1):121–126.

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Chapter 9
Empathy: Narrative Empathy and Children's Literature

Kerry Mallan

The term empathy has only existed in English for a little over a hundred years, but the idea of *feeling with another person* is an old one. Keen has written of the term's origins in the German word *Einfühlung*, meaning "the process of 'feeling one's way into' an art object or another person" (Keen 2007, p. 64). Empathy's relationship to the reading process was already being discussed as early as 1915. Because of its perceived connection to moral behaviour, empathy and its development are of great interest to educators, policy makers, psychologists, and philosophers. The workings of empathy are also of interest to neuroscientists, who report the discovery of 'mirror neurons' that fire in the brains of onlookers in response simply to witnessing the actions and reactions of another (Iacoboni 2008). Various psychological studies show that we are more inclined to empathise with people who are closer and more like ourselves than with those who are more distant and more unlike ourselves (Gallaher 2012). This type of empathic response is termed the 'similarity bias' and it operates in children's literature to assist readers in seeing the world through either a self-reflecting or an other-reflecting lens. However, Davis (2005) makes the argument that empathy is always egocentric and self-serving: "We may think that when we empathize we see and feel through the eyes of the other, but in fact what we are doing is reducing their Otherness to what can be misrecognized as their sameness to our imagined Selves" (unpaged). These different perspectives support Taylor's point that empathy remains "slippery" and in some cases "highly romanticized" (Taylor 2007, p. 300).

Reading children's literature is often considered important for developing (among other things) children's ethical and empathic understandings of society and its people. However, claims as to the impact of reading on readers' ability to become more empathic, tolerant, and better people are divided. As noted above, empathy is studied from different disciplinary perspectives, and all would seem to

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emphasise its significance for moral action (or lack of) and aesthetic understanding. Boler (1999, p. 157) is skeptical about the relationship between empathy and reading, and suggests that students' empathetic readings of difference may in fact "flatten historical sensibility" through selective, self-serving and politically sanitized reconstructions of the complexity of human experience. In defence of empathy, philosophers Rorty (1989) and Nussbaum (1997) argue that literature helps to cultivate the imagination and thus create a more empathetic, moral, and compassionate society. Nussbaum asserts that the "narrative imagination is an essential preparation for moral interaction. Habits of empathy and conjecture conduce to a certain kind of citizenship and a certain form of community" (Nussbaum 1997, p. 90).

While many readers may attribute positive influences that authors and texts have had on shaping their attitudes and actions, there is no guarantee that a desirable affective and cognitive response will follow the reading experience. The complexity of readers and texts refuses to be reduced to simple universal statements about the capacity of narrative empathy to create a particular kind of empathic reader or person: fiction that engages a reader with the emotional plight of a character does not necessarily translate into actions in the real world towards people who are similarly suffering, marginalized, or victimized. In fact, one perspective is that narrative empathy "might actually serve as an escape from real-life ethical demands, allowing readers to congratulate themselves for feeling with fictional characters while simultaneously doing nothing for people in need" (Harrison 2011, p. 259).

These competing ideas and claims about empathy beg the question that this chapter attempts to explore: Does children's literature foster empathy? There are two implicit features of this question: one concerns narrative empathy; the other concerns empathic reader response. These two features are gaining attention in both literary studies and children's literature studies (Jurecic 2011; Nikolajeva 2012; Harrison 2011; Stephens 2011; Keen 2007; Dudek 2006). In terms of narrative empathy, Suzanne Keen considers a list of "narrative techniques—such as the use of first-person narration and the interior representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states—as devices supporting character identification, contributing to empathetic experiences, opening readers' minds to others, changing attitudes, and even predisposing readers to altruism" (9). However, Keen notes that there is little evidence that reading literature can produce desired affective outcomes in readers, stating that "[e]mpathetic reading experiences that confirm the empathy-altruism theory, […] are exceptional, not routine" (Keen 2007, p. 65). According to Batson (2012), the empathy-altruism hypothesis argues that empathy is a virtuous trait that should be encouraged, because it enables subjects to understand the perspectives of others—and, the reasoning goes, to respond altruistically to others' situations. However, the relationship between empathy and altruism is not straightforward, and when we further consider the relationships between readers and texts, the complexity is striking.

This chapter therefore questions the tacit assumption that by reading literature a reader is able to 'put oneself in the shoes of another'. This empathic viewpoint has been challenged by many, including postcolonial, feminist and queer scholars who argue that such an assumption of being able to know what it is like to be Other falsely oversimplifies understandings of social and cultural relationships (Jurecic

2011; Bradford 2007, 2001; Mallan 2009; Taylor 2007). Harrison recounts the argument made by some psychologists that the inability or lack of propensity to imagine ourselves in another's place and feel with his or her emotions are "empathy disorders" and severely diminish our sense of ethical responsibility to others (Harrison 2011, p. 256). It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider 'real' readers. Rather, the discussion will focus on how a selection of 'multicultural' picture books attempts to create narrative empathy by focussing on cultural and spatial differences. However, as the following discussion argues in creating narrative empathy, texts may confirm or disrupt the similarity bias.

9.1 The Similarity Bias and Narrative Empathy

Cultural diversity and issues of cultural otherness are thematised through children's literature in various ways, but predominantly as a means to affirm positive models of cultural harmony and tolerance, thereby serving as exemplars of human rights and social justice. Some texts implicitly support the similarity bias, while others overcome this bias in their treatment of cultural difference. The psychologist Hoffman (2000) regards the similarity bias as the inability or unwillingness to empathise with others who are not like ourselves. For Hoffman, similarity bias in multicultural societies can reduce moral motivations between social groups and even "intensify conflicts" (Hoffman 2000, p. 215). However, as the following discussion illustrates, the similarity bias also works where societies use force to ensure conformity and sameness of religious and social behaviour of its citizens. In fiction, empathy can be the basis of compassionate behaviour between characters, it can also be used as a cultural tool for reinforcing existing dominant hierarchies and exclusions in a similar way to Hoffman's argument.

Stephens (2011, p. 13) argues that children's literature has attempted to "intervene in culture to affirm multicultural models of human rights and human equality" and that it has done this through cognitive instruments of schema and script, which he regards as powerful and transformative strategies for "informing social action designed to foster equity and social justice" (34). To illustrate how children's literature "intervenes in culture", Stephens examines a number of texts including the Australian picture book, *Ziba Came on a Boat* (Lofthouse and Ingpen 2007), which he argues uses an internal perspective to narrate the inner thoughts and memories of a child on a refugee boat, thereby prompting a reader's empathic imagination about the status of refugees. For the reader who has knowledge of Australia's immigration policy (during the first decade of the twenty-first century) of indefinite detention for illegal immigrants, this book carries a further dimension to empathy—one which is inextricably linked with ideas of citizenship and transcultural politics. Empathy's capacity to produce an ideal citizenship takes a different turn in the following picture book.

The author of *Nasreen's Secret School*:*A True Story from Afghanistan*, Winter, explains that this picture book came about after she was approached by the Global

Fund for Children "about basing a book on a true story from one of the groups they support" (Jeanette 2009, unpaged). One of these groups was an organization in Afghanistan that founded and supported secret schools for girls during the 1996–2001 Taliban regime[1]. The story that Winter finally wrote and illustrated was told to her by the founder of these schools and it was based on a true story about a girl and her grandmother. This information, which appears in the peritext, positions readers to read this story as a true account and thereby works to align readers with the credibility of the author as someone who can be trusted to tell the story of the secret schools in a truthful way.

The cover of the book shows a young, unveiled Afghan girl holding an open book with story characters emerging from its pages; some of these characters would be familiar to many Western and non-Western readers—Little Red Riding Hood, the Pied Piper, Ali and his magic carpet. These diverse characters from European fairy tales and *Tales from the Arabian Nights* emerging from the one book held by an Afghan girl create an implied association of sameness across cultures: the similarity bias works to inform the implied Western child reader that the character Nasreen is just like them, she reads the same stories that they read. However, *Nasreen's Secret School* works both with and against this universalising identification between textual subject and reader when the narrative tells the story of life under Taliban rule, which forbids girls going to school and reading books. It also demonstrates that sameness of ethnicity does not mean ideological sameness. The framed cover illustration of the girl we come to know as the eponymous Nasreen is repeated on the title page, but in this second image Nasreen is now veiled, wearing a colourful headscarf. The expression of wonder that the cover image conveys is replaced by a different expression, one that suggests fear or apprehension as the girl looks over her shoulder at an unseen point (or person) in the distance.

Nasreen's Secret School privileges an insider perspective, but one that is ideologically outside a fundamentalist (Taliban) standpoint. It tells a story about how a grandmother was able to help her granddaughter overcome the insular existence that came with living under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. As the author-illustrator, Jeanette Winter shapes the narrative from a specific point of view and consideration of her implied readership. The narrator is Nasreen's grandmother, a figure whose familial and cultural status carries narratorial weight. As the narrator, she speaks for her granddaughter, and has intuitive access to Nasreen's thoughts and feelings: "Nasreen stayed inside herself". The presence of the Taliban soldiers is metaphorically expressed as "Dark clouds [that] hang over the city". This association with darkness, and by extension the Dark Ages, is taken further when we are told that "girls are forbidden to attend school" and "learn about the world". While there is a lack of individualised subjectivity for Nasreen, her fear of the Taliban and the limits that they place on her life promote an empathic engagement with the central character, by orienting readers to her plight. In describing their tyrannous behaviour, the grandmother's language is stark yet carries emotional weight: "the soldiers came to our house and took my son away"; "I heard of a soldier who pounded on the gate [of the secret school] demanding to enter". By contrast, Nasreen is described in terms of silence and inaction: "Poor Nasreen sat at

home all day"; "Nasreen never spoke a word. She never smiled. She just sat, waiting for her mama and papa to return". By imagining Nasreen's interior life and emotions, the narrator offers an empathic perspective through a subjective point of view. Given Winter's commission to write this book, there is arguably an authorial empathy at work in this text.

While words deny Nasreen a focalising perspective, the illustrations offer a narrative empathy that mediates Western and non-Western cultural and aesthetic practices. When Nasreen goes to the secret school, the illustrations similarly encode the change of psychological and emotional state and the contrasting characterizations of the Taliban soldiers and the village children. Literally presented as a series of coloured frames, the illustrations imaginatively construct individual windows onto the fictional world of the text where readers glimpse the characters who are placed in specific contexts—home, school, the street. How the illustrations represent the various scenes is similar to how the words use metaphor or metonymy. Dark clouds or shadows consistently accompany images of the Taliban soldiers metonymically linking the two to convey menace and a threatening presence.

Once Nasreen immerses herself in books her learning and knowledge of the world are communicated to readers through a metonymic chain of imagined worlds—the schoolroom becomes a series of windows opening up vistas of other worlds (Egypt, the ocean, a city with skyscrapers); the city of Herat is shown full of colour, occupied by artists, writers, scholars, and mystics; and fairy tale characters emerge from books. While the Taliban remain in the temporal space of the narrative, their control and determination to eliminate all that preceded them are conveyed in the image whereby the reader is placed from behind Nasreen who looks out to a mountain range above her city. Dark clouds cross the sky, but from behind one of them appears the figures of (presumably) Nasreen's parents who have disappeared. Holding hands they look back at Nasreen. Culturally-coded metaphors of peace and paradise are conveyed in this illustration through the images of the white dove and the pomegranates, which according to the Qur'an grow in the gardens of paradise.

Nasreen's Secret School calls upon place and geography to provide perspective-taking as a form of empathic engagement with the main character. There are many aspects of place in this text that are culturally different from many Western child readers' experiences—the architecture, clothing, and to some extent the landscape. The text therefore attempts to thematise empathy across difference by explicitly treating cultural difference in an attempt to overcome the similarity bias. It also thematises empathy within the text repeatedly invoking the difference between the Taliban and children like Nasreen in a way that encourages readers to develop an aesthetic understanding of imagining and feeling with mimetic accounts of loss and oppression.

The Chinese Violin (Thien and Chang 2001) is another example of how empathy serves as a bridge across cultural differences. Whereas books were the means by which Nasreen was able to imagine a different world and understand the world outside her home country, in this picture book the violin serves a similar function. The opening words of the story locate the character Lin Lin and her father in a paradise of sorts—a small village in China where "on Sunday afternoons people came from far and wide with their violins and flutes and mandolins" (unpaged).

The same kind of music and harmony was conveyed in *Nasreen's Secret School* before the dark clouds of the Taliban moved across the landscape. On these idyllic days, Lin Lin and her father "would sit among the butterflies and birds and flowers and listen to the music". Her environment is filled with soothing sights and sounds (music, frogs singing, children laughing, and "the drifting cry of the violin"). From this beginning as a story of home and belonging, the narrative inexplicably becomes a story of immigration and dislocation when Lin Lin and her father migrate to Canada. When Lin Lin arrives in Vancouver she is greeted by different sounds (hollering seagulls, noise of cars, and a new language) and even the sky looks different. This sense of isolation and difference is reinforced by a close up of Lin Lin's face that expresses a sad, downturned mouth and eyes that stare wide-eyed out from the page as if to hold the reader's return sympathetic gaze. This intended momentary visual stasis provokes an interplay of empathy and sympathy between reader and the suffering character.

Both *Nasreen's Secret School* and *The Chinese Violin* take their readers on a spatio-temporal journey through streets, and interior and exterior spaces as a way of building a relationship with the protagonists. While Nasreen remains indoors for most of the narrative, according to Taliban law, she nevertheless manages to venture out into dangerous streets in her journey to her secret school. Lin Lin and father also explore parts of Vancouver: "She followed her father through the city, through the trees, all the way to the ocean", and on one occasion after busking in the street, they set out back for home "through the meandering streets". On this last occasion they are mugged by two men. The scene positions the father at the centre of the struggle with his back to the reader. Two large thuggish-looking males grip his shoulders, while one slips his hand into the father's pocket to steal his wallet. Lin Lin is at the top of the picture and stands with her hands covering her face. The vector that runs from child to father establishes a visual connection between the two and their emotional states. On the next image, both daughter and father are kneeling with the father holding his head in his hands with a similar agonised expression of despair as the subject in Edvard Munch's *The Scream.*

Ideal multiculturalism emerges after this low point supporting Stephens's earlier comment that children's literature intervenes in culture to affirm multicultural models of human rights and human equality. Lin Lin's teacher helps her with her English, and her father gives her a present of a violin. The violin becomes the means for remembering her village and for making friends, and eventually winning recognition as a musician at her school concert. It is the final image where the similarity bias moves into place. Up until this point, Lin Lin was consistently pictured wearing traditional Chinese peasant clothes—a long shirt and trousers and plain shoes. In the final scene, she is pictured wearing a Western-style, frilly dress and decorative shoes. This transition in clothing makes the transition from outsider to insider. It illustrates how narrative empathy is directed back to the implied Western reader who remains the privileged subject, and the textual 'other' is transformed into a figure of sameness to the imagined (Western) Self. This self-reflecting lens supports Davis's argument that empathy is always egocentric and self-serving. While this picture book may succeed in opening readers' minds to

the plight of Lin Lin as someone who feels lonely and unhappy, it also inadvertently prompts a question about empathy that remains unanswered, namely, when we speak of empathy, are we speaking of the ability to understand another's perspective only when we first turn that perspective into one easily understood by Westerners? In her criticism of recent films about Afghan asylum seekers, Gannon asks a similar question: "Does narrative carry with it, in these instances at least, a conservatism where empathy becomes most possible when the other is made over to become like us?" (Gannon 2009, p. 29).

The final picture book is *Marty and Mei-Ling* (Cummings and Smith 1995). The title signals that the story privileges two characters as protagonists. While Marty and Mei-Ling share names that have an alliterative and rhythmical similarity, their differences extend beyond gender and ethnicity, to behaviour. Marty is loud, energetic, and observant. His observational skills extend to watching how ants are different—"Marty noticed one ant was different from the others. It was much smaller with a much faster walk. Marty was good at noticing things like that"—to noticing how the new girl in the class (Mei-Ling) is also different. He notices that her name "rhymed with swing", that she had "different writing on her T-shirt", that she had "different eyes and shiny black hair", and that she had "unusual food" in her lunch box. However, Marty's skill at noticing difference and then sharing these observations with everyone causes Mei-Ling to feel that he is being mean to her. She becomes increasingly "sad and lonely" and "nearly cried" when she thought that the other children were laughing and making fun of her. The illustration depicts a dejected looking Mei-Ling standing alone in an empty space encircled by groups of children laughing, moving, gesturing. Marty is denied an empathic perspective as he remains unaware of Mei-Ling's emotional state of isolation and unhappiness. His behaviour is described as "just being Marty" which has a ring of the all-too-familiar saying of 'boys will be boys' to excuse boys who behave badly. The turning point comes when Marty finds himself standing in the shoes of another.

Marty is the centre of his world but when he comes across a Chinese kite festival on an outing with his parents, he is forced to experience a different kind of embodied understanding of himself and those around him. Instead of the rambunctious character that readers had previously known, Marty becomes quiet, introspective, and feels that he is the subject of ridicule. As he moves among the bustling crowd of Chinese people at the festival with the array of different looking kites flying overhead, he doesn't understand what these talkative, laughing people are saying and in a solipsistic form of reasoning assumes that "they were making fun of him". He also notices at one point that his parents are not there and calls out in a loud voice: 'MY MUM AND DAD ARE LOST!'. At this point of being alone and feeling different from everyone else, Marty experiences similar emotions to those that Mei-Ling felt in the playground. The text reminds readers of this transfer of emotion: "Marty felt sad and lonely. He nearly cried". In his moment of distress, Mei-Ling emerges from the crowd and provides him with comfort and companionship. By the close of the story, Marty and Mei-Ling are not two characters who are characterized by their difference, instead, they have become friends who share a similar interest—kite flying.

This picture book works against the similarity bias by not transforming the Other into an imagined Western Self. While the text does not provide Marty with an empathic subjectivity, whereby he realises how his behaviour had caused Mei-Ling distress, he nevertheless experiences his own feeling of himself as being different. Mei-Ling, however, does enact an empathic response to Marty's situation and takes action to befriend him at his moment of need. One could consider the gendered and cultural implications of this empathic transaction with Mei-Ling being the gentle, caring, Chinese girl who overcomes her own negative feelings towards the Australian boy, who remains self-absorbed but enjoys the opportunity to engage in a new friendship that brings benefits, such as flying Chinese kites. The final lines of the text confirm that little has really changed for Marty: "He was REALLY looking forward to flying a flute kite with her [Mei-Ling] after school. His kite was going to play the loudest tune, so … he told everybody!!!".

The three picture books discussed in this chapter draw on different narrative devices to create narrative empathy. Whereas Keen notes that first person narration is often an important device for supporting character identification and contributing to empathic experiences, the above texts use third-person narration, which is common to picture books because their limited length does not enable developed characterization. Nevertheless, the texts offer what Keen referred to as the interior representation of characters' consciousness and emotional states. This insider knowledge to a character's emotional feelings of sadness, isolation, and difference promotes narrative empathy and may assist readers in gaining an empathic or sympathetic perspective. The illustrations also play an important part in this process.

The texts also demonstrate how the similarity bias mediates narrative empathy. As the discussion of *The Chinese Violin* suggested, the similarity bias may shift throughout a text encouraging different empathic responses. For example, in the conclusion, the image of an assimilated Lin Lin is open to misrecognizing Otherness as sameness with Western readers' imagined Selves. By contrast, the earlier descriptions of Lin Lin's home in China and her experiences in Vancouver provide an emphatic perspective which draws on the character's interpretation of place and state of mind offering an other-reflecting lens to understand her nostalgia and sense of isolation. Both *Nasreen's Secret School* and *Marty and Mei-Ling* take different approaches to narrative empathy. *Nasreen's Secret School* works at showing how the imagination is a powerful means for adopting a different perspective. Nasreen imagines a world that is different from the one in which she is living, a world opened up by books. In turn, the text implicitly asks readers to similarly use their imagination as a way of understanding the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, as well as to feel sympathy for Nasreen. With a combination of symbolic and interior emotional states conveyed through both words and illustration, the picture book attempts to mobilise narrative empathy through the potential impossibility of successfully standing in someone else's shoes and the equally impossible ability to 'know' a space such as the one that is represented in the text: a space that would be geographically and culturally alien to many readers. Finally, *Marty and Mei-Ling* demonstrates that while fiction can convey empathy as the basis of compassionate behaviour between characters (especially in terms

of Mei-Ling's compassionate response to Marty's distressed state), it also demonstrates that empathy can serve to reinforce existing dominant hierarchies, such as white Anglo-Australian masculinity. The empathy-altruism hypothesis operating in this text moves in one direction—from Mei-Ling towards Marty, while Marty remains seemingly oblivious to the 'real-life' ethical consequences of his insensitive behaviour towards another.

9.2 Conclusion

At a time when bullying (cyber and otherwise) is receiving unprecedented attention, and asylum seeker and migration issues remain of significant importance for many countries, a renewed focus on empathy—and the ways in which it is understood by adults and promoted to young people—can provide us with significant insights into some of our assumptions about how we 'do' understanding, how we breach (or don't) cultural differences, and how some of the narratives that reassure us and indeed have come to form part of our national narratives have effectively and invisibly replicated dominant power relations. To consider ourselves empathetic makes us feel good about ourselves, but often in a simplistic way that still requires binaries such as victim and saviour, superior and inferior, and that acknowledges individual and often one-off acts of empathy while failing to address institutional, corporate, systemic abuses of power that are much more toxic, powerful, and oppressive than anything an individual can individually commit or, conversely, repair. So, in valorising the Western cult of the individual, empathy, which takes as its base actor the individual, must always, necessarily, overlook and underestimate the place of the individual within their historical and national contexts, and the vast and powerful forces that bring him or her to the moment which is simplified in empathy narratives down to a simple choice between empathy or not, self or other, good or bad, right or wrong. In the current climate in which issues of identity, belonging, security and safety are paramount, children's literature's role in contributing to an understanding of how these notions can cause children to act in certain ways both individually and collectively is the urgent work of pedagogy and children's literature studies if we are to realize the claims that Rorty and Nussbaum see as the potential of literature for reimagining a more empathic, moral, and compassionate world.

Note

1. Afghan girls continue to be discriminated against in terms of education and for many it remains a fraught and dangerous endeavour. In June 2012, 400 girls from six girls' schools in the Takhar province were poisoned after

drinking from a school well that had been deliberately contaminated. Other attacks include burning down of buildings or throwing acid in girls' faces (*Sydney Morning Herald* June 9–10 2012, World 17). A more recent attack (October 2012) was made on fourteen-year-old Malala Yousafzai, an outspoken defender of Afghan girls' right to an education, who was shot by Taliban gunmen (and two other girls were wounded) while travelling on a bus.

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Chapter 10
Monsters: Monstrous Identities in Young Adult Romance

Clare Bradford

Scenario 1

Fifteen-year-old Sophia is going to her first dance at the school she attends. She has told her parents Ben and Miranda, that her friend Quinn is her partner for the dance. Her parents have not met Quinn and have asked that he visit the family home to meet them before the two young people leave for the dance. The doorbell rings and Sophia ushers in Quinn. He is good-looking and well-dressed, and greets Ben and Miranda politely. After chatting for a few minutes Quinn and Sophia depart. But Ben remains concerned. "What if he's a wolf in sheep's clothing!" he frets. "Don't be ridiculous," responds Miranda. "He seems a fine young man."

Scenario 2

Fifteen-year-old Sophia is going to her first dance at the school she attends. She has told her parents, Ben and Miranda, that her friend Ramon is her partner for the dance. Her parents have not met Ramon and have asked that he visit the family home to meet them before the dance. The doorbell rings and Sophia ushers in Ramon. He looks several years older than Sophia and is dressed in leathers. Ben and Miranda notice the tattoos on his arms and hands and the studs and rings on his face. When they ask him some tentative questions he returns monosyllabic responses. After Ramon and Sophia depart Ben exclaims, "To think of that monster with our little girl! I'm going to follow them to make sure they go to the dance!" "Leave them alone," responds Miranda. "Sophia has to learn how to look after herself."

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These scenarios comprise a meet-the-parents episode reminiscent of equivalent scenes in narratives for the young, particularly in film and television. Banal though they are, they point to some of the thematics and tensions that manifest in Young Adult (YA) romance narratives. The third-person perspective in these scenarios observes events from the outside, offering very little information about the motivations or emotions of the young people, although it enables access to Sophia's parents, Ben and Miranda, by incorporating their conversational exchanges.

In both these scenarios, Ben projects monstrous identities onto two young men who enter the domestic space of home and family in order to accompany his young daughter into the public space of the school dance, with its overtones of romance and sexual activity. Quinn, the first of the two boys, appears "safe" with his good looks and easy manner; in this case, Ben's phrase "wolf in sheep's clothing" discloses a fear of the monster within, the lascivious or threatening presence lurking beneath a suave exterior. The second boy, Ramon, presents as experienced (some years older than Sophia) and his leathers, studs and piercings suggest a tough and somewhat sinister identity. While Ben describes him as a monster, Miranda seems to focus rather on Sophia's capacity to "manage" the apparently monstrous Ramon.

The protagonists who feature in the scenarios above and in many YA romances are: young woman, young man, father (or father-figure) and mother (or mother-figure). In this discussion I consider four monstrous figures that appear in YA romance, the traditions to which they refer, and what they imply about cross-generational relationships. I discuss two monstrous versions of the young man: the vampire, and the werewolf; the monstrous mother of fairy romance, and the monstrous father of retellings of Charles Perrault's "Donkey Skin". Monsters in art, literature and popular culture play out a range of symbolic functions. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says that the monster is an embodiment of "a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place" (Cohen 1996, p. 4). At the same time, the monster always escapes; even if it is killed, it returns on another occasion and place, in a different story. No matter how often the vampire is pierced through the heart with a stake, for instance, he lives on in other narratives. Thus each new manifestation of a monster needs to be examined in relation to the social, cultural and literary-historical formations and practices in which it is produced.

YA romance implies young audiences and generally presents events and situations through the perspective of a young protagonist, either through first-person narration or by focalising part of the narrative through the perspective of one of the young characters. The authors and publishers who produce romance for the young are, whether they are aware of it or not, powerfully influenced by cultural norms and anxieties. In particular, contemporary YA romance, directed in the main to female readers, identifies cultural pressure-points which manifest in representations of young women and their relationships to men. Writing on medieval romance, Geraldine Heng notes that women in literature "constitute a figural presence through which the concerns, ideas, pressures, and values of a culture can be expressed, can signify" (Heng 2003, p. 192). Such significations in YA romance typically centre on relationships between young women protagonists and monstrous figures.

10.1 The Virtuous Vampire of YA Romance

In the Middle Ages many theologians believed that revenants (reanimated corpses) were occupied by the Devil who used them to perform evil deeds (Keyworth 2010). Nineteenth-century versions of the vampire such as Bram Stoker's Count Dracula treat the vampire as an ambiguous figure, a foreigner or stranger whose otherness symbolises his location outside the norms of European society and whose sexuality contravenes gender binarisms; in the 1922 film *Nosferatu* the vampire Count Orlok is associated with disease as all who contact him fall prey to the plague. Vampire narratives of the late twentieth century have increasingly treated the vampire as an oppressed and disenfranchised identity within society, positioning readers to feel sympathy for vampire figures constructed as sites of personal and social transition. The television series *True Blood*, for instance, features a range of vampire figures, including a teenage girl conflicted by her emerging sexuality.

Contemporary YA vampire novels draw upon literary and popular texts, from the gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and they respond to the popularity of vampire fiction from the 1990s, particularly Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series. They commonly feature gothic settings and elements such as decayed buildings, graveyards, religious icons, and various versions of the undead. The commercial success of the Twilight series has brought renewed attention to the many vampire novels which preceded the series, including L. J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries*, published as a trilogy in 1991 and developed as a TV series in 2009; after a break of seventeen years Smith has also embarked on the Return Trilogy, dealing with the characters of the original series. I focus here on *The Awakening*, the first volume of Smith's trilogy.

The novel employs third-person narration and excerpts from the diaries of Elena Gilbert, written after she returns to the town of Fell's Church, Virginia, following a summer holiday in France. Elena's parents have died some years previously after a car accident. The narrative is structured by the development of a romantic relationship between Elena, the golden girl of Robert E. Lee High School, and the vampire Stefan Salvatore, who comes to Fell's Church to begin a new life, seeking to "join the world of daylight" (Smith 1991, p. 11).

The imagery associated with the vampire in *The Awakening* evokes a late-medieval world populated by aristocrats and replete with descriptions of hand-wrought jewelry, garments made of silk and velvet, and the precious objects with which Stefan surrounds himself: a dagger with an ivory hilt, an agate cup, an iron coffer. When Elena first looks at Stefan she sees in him echoes of antiquity: "The dark curly hair framed features so fine that they might have been taken from an old Roman coin or medallion. High cheekbones, classical straight nose… and a mouth to keep you awake at night, Elena thought. The upper lip was beautifully sculpted, a little sensitive, a whole lot sensual" (Smith 1991, p. 19). Elena thus reads Stefan's face as an uncanny combination of classicism and sensuality. He is literally a Renaissance man, born into an aristocratic family in the late fifteenth century and transformed into a vampire by his German lover Katherine.

One of Stefan's functions in *The Awakening* is to offer a corrective to modernity; specifically, to contemporary American urban life. In the world of Robert E. Lee High School, with its predictable panoply of high school types (jocks, nerds, beauty queens, wannabes), Stefan differentiates himself from the other boys because of the cut of his Italian leather jacket, his bearing, and his impeccable manners. Elena's former boyfriend Matt suffers in comparison, although as captain of the school football team he has previously been a desirable and predictable partner. He is, it turns out, altogether too American; too nice; not quite enough: "it was as if [Elena] were always reaching for… something. Only, when she thought she'd got it, it wasn't there. Not with Matt, not with any of the boys she'd had" (Smith 1991, p. 21). Stefan brings the Old World to the New, in the process showing up the New for its crassness and superficiality.

Stefan is, like many versions of the vampire figure, a tortured soul at war with his instincts. After falling in love with Elena he lives in fear that one day he will be powerless to withstand his desire for her blood, and will "find Elena's graceful body limp in his arms, her slim throat marked with two red wounds, her heart stilled forever" (Smith 1991, p. 180). Stefan can be read, then, as a metaphor for the young man struggling with his sexual instincts, the kind of young man who is the object of Ben's mistrust in Scenario 1 at the beginning of this essay. In mapping the vampire figure onto that of the "normal" young man, the narrative evokes cultural myths about young men's sexual appetites, which are traditionally linked with violence in the models of hegemonic masculinity which persist in Western societies (Connell 1995). This treatment of the vampire accords with the version described by Cohen as "the monster of prohibition [who] polices the borders of the possible, interdicting through its grotesque body some behaviors and actions, envaluing others" (Cohen 1996, p. 13). Stefan's desire for violence is presented as natural and normal, and his struggle to overcome his urge is celebrated as heroic. Elena, the object of Stefan's lust, is endangered by his desire; while she is drawn to him romantically she senses his suffering and seeks to alleviate it.

The climax of *The Awakening* occurs when Stefan bites Elena's throat and feeds her with his blood. Andrea Dworkin memorably read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as a pivotal story in the history of discourses of intercourse. The act of vampirism, she said, was a metaphor for sex; but she saw *Dracula* as much more than this; as a manifestation of the "appetite for using and being used… the submission of the female to the great hunter; the driving obsessiveness of lust… the great craving" (Dworkin 1987, p. 118). In *The Awakening*, vampirism is certainly treated as a sex-like act: the pain of Stefan's bite fades immediately, "replaced by a feeling of pleasure that made [Elena] tremble. A great rushing sweetness filled her, flowing through her to Stefan" (Smith 1991, p. 238). In this sequence the narrative focuses on the intimacy of the event and not its violence. Vampirism in *The Awakening* is, then, a kind of safe sex, having no consequences other than an uncanny bond between Elena and Stefan, since Elena has not consumed enough blood to change her into a vampire. Dressed in pre-modern clothing, the vampire of *The Awakening* both promises and withholds sex, so that *The Vampire Diaries* anticipate the effect, associated with the "Twilight" series, where abstinence is sexualized through depictions of longing, yearning and gazing. Heroically controlling his monstrous desire, Stefan functions as a metaphor for the "good boy" who controls his sexuality, thereby protecting female virtue.

10.2 The Werewolf and Ethnicity

If the smooth-talking Quinn in Scenario 1 evokes the vampire Stefan in *The Awakening*, the rough and tattooed Ramon in Scenario 2 has something in common with two figures from traditional narratives: the werewolf, which transforms, either at will or because of a spell, from human to wolf; and the Beast (often a lion or a mixture of animal forms) in the fairy tale "Beauty and the Beast." Reworkings of this fairy tale include a large number of Young Adult romances such as Donna Jo Napoli's *Beast* (2000), Barbara Cohen's *Roses* (1985), Melanie Dickerson's *The Merchant's Daughter,* and Robin McKinley's two versions, *Beauty* (1978) and *Rose Daughter* (1997). The Beasts of these narratives take the shape of the wild and animal-like lover whose taming at the hands of Beauty provides erotic pleasure to readers, while legitimising the idea that violence is a natural and expected feature of hegemonic masculinity.

The werewolf has in common with the Beast of "Beauty and the Beast" an uncanny admixture of animal and human. The "were-" component of the word "werewolf" derives from the Old English "were," or "man," so that the etymology of the word suggests a hybrid combination of wolf and man. The werewolf features in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and is common in European folklore and literature of the Middle Ages, where it functions as a vehicle for investigations into what it means to be human, and for reflections on the relationship of animal to human. Contemporary representations of the werewolf in literature for children and young adults tend to focus on packs and groups of werewolves rather than on individuals, and they frequently treat lycanthropy as "a genetically inherited or inborn feature" (Chappell 2009, p. 22). This view of werewolves readily translates into depictions where they function as metaphors for ethnic and/or racial difference. In Scenario 2 Ramon's name, which suggests Hispanic ancestry, suggests such an interpretation.

In Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series the werewolf Jacob and the vampire Edward are rivals for the affections of Bella Swan. Whereas Edward is of human stock, having been transformed into a vampire at the age of seventeen, Jacob is a shapeshifter who takes on lupine form when he is under the influence of powerful emotion. Significantly, he is Native American, a member of the Quileute tribe and the son of the elder, Billy Black. The contrast between Edward and Jacob is enforced through the novels' descriptions of their bodies and faces. Again and again descriptions of Edward linger on his whiteness, his "chalky pale" skin (Meyer 2005, p. 18), his ineffably European appearance: he looks as if he has been "painted by an old master as the face of an angel" (Meyer 2005, p. 19). Jacob, on the other hand, has "russet-coloured" skin and dark eyes "set deep above the high planes of his cheekbones" (Meyer 2005, p. 119). This description of his skin and facial appearance conforms to stereotypes of Native American appearance common in American popular culture in visual images of the chief or the brave in advertisements, sports insignia, film and television.

Whereas Edward is of human ancestry and is human-like even in his vampire form, Jacob's transformation into a wolf aligns him and the Quileute with animals and with the natural world. This association is consistent with colonial discourses which compare Indigenous peoples and cultures with animals and which

are informed by contrasts between humans and animals, between advanced and primitive humans, and between culture and nature. Even if Jacob is represented as attractive and likeable in his human state, comparisons between him and Edward play out these colonial tropes. Thus, Jacob lives in the Quileute reservation at La Push, in an area surrounded by forests and close to beaches. In comparison with these references to the natural environment, the Cullen family home is a site of culture: its grand rooms are "all varying shades of white" (Meyer 2005, p. 322) and its grand piano, towering bookshelves and oil paintings refer to sophisticated tastes based in European traditions.

The werewolves in the Twilight series are enemies not of humans but of vampires, whom they refer to as "the cold ones" (Meyer 2005, p. 124). If the Cullens are cold and contained, Jacob and his werewolf clan are emotional, volatile and often rash. Again, this comparison underscores the werewolves' marginal location as racialised others: they are the victims of their biological and psychic drives, powerless to resist shape changing whereas Edward and his vampire family control their desire for human blood. Complaining of Bella's preference for Edward, Jacob assumes the petulant tone of a disappointed child: "Well, I'm so sorry that I can't be the *right* kind of monster for you, Bella. I guess I'm just not as great as a bloodsucker, am I?" (Meyer 2005, pp. 306–307). Of the two monsters, Edward and Jacob, Edward is the closer to humans, Jacob to animals. The romantic arc of the series inevitably privileges human over animal, so that it is never really in doubt that Edward rather than Jacob is to be Bella's romantic partner.

In *Breaking Dawn*, the last book of the series, Jacob becomes the guardian of Renesmee, the daughter of Bella and Edward. Reconciled to the fact that Bella and Edward are sexual partners and that Bella has become a vampire, he sublimates his love for Bella by "imprinting" on Renesmee, so forming an indelible psychic link with her. Taking on the obligation of protecting her and of furthering her interests, Jacob behaves like the myriad Indigenous figures in colonial literature who sacrifice themselves for white protagonists, often dying to save their lives. Such relationships always pivot on the idea that self-sacrifice on the part of Indigenous individuals is appropriate and right because it is their role to serve the interests of Europeans (Bradford 2007, pp. 75–77). The werewolf of Twilight is, then, a tamed monster, rendered compliant because his marginal status requires that he serve the dominant white culture.

10.3 Monstrous Mothers in Fairy Romance

Miranda, the mother who features in Scenario 1, is a placatory figure, reassuring her suspicious husband as to Quinn's character. Scenario 2 suggests a less comfortable set of motherly attitudes, since instead of expressing concern for Sophia, Miranda demonstrates a somewhat callous disregard, expressed in her view that girls need to protect themselves. This unsympathetic portrayal of Miranda can be linked to the hard-hearted and/or monstrous mothers or mother-substitutes who

appear in much paranormal fiction, notably in the fairy romances which have become popular during the last decade. This sub-genre of paranormal romance has found a ready market in part because of readers' exposure to fairy narratives and products as young girls, in part because of its appeal to female readers already familiar with other romance genres such as vampire and werewolf fantasy. The fairy romance genre incorporates novels by authors including Holly Black, Maggie Stiefvater, Melissa Marr, Malinda Lo, Lisa Mantchev, Aprilynne Pyke, Cyn Balog, and Lesley Livingston.

Fairy romance directed to female readers typically features narratives where human girls either discover their fairy connections (often linked to dead mothers), access fairy worlds where they become romantically involved with fairies or human-fairy hybrids, or (more rarely) undergo a transformation from human to fairy. These girls always have "the sight," a gift inherited from mothers or grandmothers. As this narrative pattern suggests, a female line of descent is a common explanation for the manifestation of fairy abilities and qualities in human girls. Countering this tendency, the figure of the monstrous mother appears in narratives featuring fairy queens who have ruled empires for hundreds of years. In this segment I focus on Melissa Marr's *Wicked Lovely* (2007) and Maggie Stiefvater's *Lament* (2010), both of which feature romantic triangles where their respective female protagonists, Aislinn and Deirdre, must choose between human and fairy lovers, a narrative played out in fairy realms ruled by ancient, despotic Fairy Queens.

Aislinn's mother has died young, and in *Lament* Deirdre is at odds with her controlling, superficial mother. In both *Wicked Lovely* and also *Lament*, human grandmothers possess insight about fairy practices and are anxious about the dangers their grand-daughters might face if they fall in love with fairies. This emphasis on the knowledge or insight of grandmothers privileges ancient traditions over a rootless and shallow modernity. The two mortal grandmothers, with their fairy connections, are powerless to protect Aislinn and Deirdre, and are contrasted to the monstrous mothers who rule the fairy realms. In *Wicked Lovely,* Keenan is the Summer King who has searched for his Summer Queen for nine centuries, and he has selected Aislinn for the role. If Aislinn, like previous girls he has entrapped, turns out not to be "the one," his malevolent mother Beira, the Winter Queen, will destroy summer altogether, maintaining her control over the dystopian world of the fairies. Humans, then, are in thrall to the fairy realm without realising it, in an uncanny version of climate change. In *Lament*, Deirdre is a cloverhand; the four-leafed clovers that appear wherever she goes signal her capacity to see fairies where other humans do not. Despite the warnings of her grandmother, Deirdre is attracted to Luke Dillon, a former human whose soul has been captured by the Fairy Queen and who performs her bidding as an assassin. Deirdre is his newest assignment, but he is drawn to her and becomes her protector instead.

In *Wicked Lovely,* Beira is identified as monstrous because of her cruelty to her son Keenan, combined with her assumption of the external features of a middle-class human woman. When Keenan visits Beira he sees her as a "mockery of a mortal epitome of motherhood" (Marr 2007, p. 38). She lives in a Victorian mansion that is perpetually shrouded in frost, its front lawn immaculate and frigid.

The extravagance with which the novel describes Beira and her home establishes the sense that Beira is a caricature of feminine monstrosity: the walls of her home are adorned with "black-and-white prints of murders, hangings, and a few torture scenes" (Marr 2007, p. 38), where touches of red are displayed in images of lips and bleeding wounds. These images, yoking together sexuality and violence, are offset by the novel's description of Beira's appearance, which conjures up the gentility of a society matron entertaining guests: she wears "a modest floral dress, frilly apron, and single strand of pearls" her hair caught up in what she calls "a chignon" (Marr 2007, p. 38). This description sets the scene for a description of ritualised torture: Beira's idea of family fun is to torture Keenan by freezing him until he loses consciousness. Her touch produces ice that gradually permeates his body causing horrible pain but not quite killing him.

Beira tortures Keenan for no better reason than that she wishes to assert her power, and the plot turns on her downfall when she loses this power. In the last moments of the novel, after Aislinn has become the Summer Queen, she and Keenan together kill Beira by piercing her with sunlight, but the violence of this episode is undercut because it is treated as inevitable and indeed necessary. The slippery ethics of assassination (or targeted killing) are thus swept aside in the glow of a romantic closure where Aislinn and her human partner Seth, Keenan and his sweetheart Donia, fade into the sunset as happy couples.

Like the Winter Queen in *Wicked Lovely,* the Fairy Queen in *Lament* is a tyrant who maintains power by cunning and violence. When Deirdre first sees the face of the old Queen, she recognises her power, then her age, disguised by the glamour she wears: "She was one of those beautiful girls that made you despise looking in a mirror…. Then her eyelids flicked open and two ancient eyes stared at me…. It was as if I'd peeked in a baby carriage and found a snake looking back at me" (Stiefvater 2010, p. 300). Like Beira, the Queen is killed when it is clear that her control is waning. At the end of the novel the fairy hordes tear her to pieces, and her blood-stained crown is placed on the head of the new queen, Eleanor. In *Wicked Lovely,* Donia as Winter Queen and Aislinn as Summer Queen undertake to work together in the interests of balance and harmony. In *Lament,* however, Eleanor is as ruthless as the old Queen, inaugurating a new era of tyrannical rule. These assassination episodes cater to youthful audiences by thematising the destruction of ancient, powerful females who are supplanted by younger queens. The violence perpetrated on Beira in *Wicked Lovely* and the old Queen in *Lament* is justified by their monstrosity: in effect they are treated as scapegoats for the corrupt, violent regimes over which they reign.

10.4 Monstrous Fathers, Beautiful Daughters

Ben, the father in Scenarios 1 and 2, can in one sense be read as a conventional father evincing protectiveness over his young and (presumably) inexperienced daughter as she embarks on new narratives of heterosexual romance. But is there not

something extravagant about Ben's suspicion of the unexceptionable Quinn? Having no reason to believe that Quinn is other than he seems, Ben immediately assumes that the boy's bland exterior belies sinister intentions. In Scenario 2, his threat to follow Sophia and Ramon betrays his excessive protectiveness of his daughter.

A less benign reading of Ben's behaviour might read him as a patriarchal figure determined to maintain control over Sophia. The most sinister expression of this desire for control and power manifests in incest, where the universal law proscribing sex between father and daughter is transgressed. Narratives dealing with incestuous relationships between father and daughter are relatively common in fairy tales, including Charles Perrault's "Peau d'Ane" ("Donkey Skin"), where the beautiful queen of "the most powerful ruler in the world" (Perrault 2012) dies, leaving a young daughter. Just before she dies the queen asks her husband to marry a woman wiser and more beautiful than she. Having searched in vain for such a woman, the king comes to the conclusion that his daughter is the only eligible partner, and he decides to marry her. Perrault's version of "Donkey Skin" combines this story with the motif of the magical animal—in this case a donkey whose excrement is made of gold. The princess's fairy godmother assists her by suggesting that she ask her father for three gifts, each more extravagant than the last. Finally the princess requests the skin of the magical donkey, but so great is her father's passion that he kills the donkey and brings its pelt to his daughter. She escapes from the castle, dressed in the donkeyskin, and finds menial work in a Cinderella-like setting from which she is liberated by a handsome prince. Finally, the king, having repented of his illicit desire for his daughter, begs her forgiveness and she is reconciled with him.

As Marina Warner observes, Perrault's version skips over the theme of incest by introducing the fantasy element of the magical donkey and by restoring the patriarchal order at the end of the tale. However, the final sentence of Perrault's "Donkey Skin" gestures toward the continuing significance of the story: "The story of Donkey Skin may be hard to believe, but so long as there are children, mothers, and grandmothers in this world, it will be remembered by all" (Perrault). In line with this reference to mothers and grandmothers, Warner regards "Donkey Skin" and similar narratives as "women's stories; they can be seen to reflect women's predicaments and stratagems from their point of view" (Warner 1994, p. 345).

There are relatively few retellings of "Donkey Skin" for young adults; most take the form of short stories such as Jane Yolen's "Allerleirauh" (1995), Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Skin" (1997), and Terri Windling's "Donkeyskin" (1995). The most extended reworking of the story is Robin McKinley's *Deerskin* (1993), in which the princess Lissar is raped and impregnated by her father the king. Lissar flees the castle and wanders alone, miscarrying her father's child. Assisted by a supernatural woman (the Lady) who endows her with magical gifts, Lissar is healed by the ministrations of the various women she meets as well as by the love of Orrin, the prince who presented her with a dog, Ash, when she was a young girl.

The narrative of *Deerskin* follows the progress of Lissar, whose focalising perspective invites readers to align with her. My interest here, however, is in her monstrous father. Far more than in Perrault's "Donkey Skin," the king's obsessive desire for

Lissar is explicated in terms of its familial history. Lissar's mother, too, has been the focus of her own father's affection, to the extent that he invents ever more impossible tasks so as to keep his daughter with him. The old king reluctantly agrees to the marriage of his daughter to Lissar's father and dies, heartbroken, shortly afterwards. The exclusive and passionate relationship of Lissar's parents is built on the obsessive devotion of the old king for his daughter. The novel thus produces an aetiology of obsessive love which at its most extreme manifests in Lissar's rape by her father following her mother's death. This monstrous act is cruel and violent, motivated by the king's unshakeable belief that his daughter belongs to him and that he is entitled to her body: "he was her father and the king, and his will was law" (McKinley 1993, p. 296).

When the king announces his intentions of marrying Lissar, the courtiers and citizens are horrified; but they quickly turn their criticism onto Lissar, blaming her for enticing her father: "How evil the girl must be, to have brought her own father to this pass" (McKinley 1993, p. 74). In this way the novel blends its folktale antecedents with contemporary critiques about the tendency of the popular press to blame victims of rape. During the five years following Lissar's flight from the castle, the king, supported by the conniving courtiers, maintains the fiction that she has died. Whereas Perrault's king reconciles with his daughter at the end of "Donkey Skin," *Deerskin* concludes with a scene in which Lissar throws off the shame she has experienced, and returns this shame and guilt to her father, exposing his monstrosity in front of ministers, courtiers and people. Bereft of his power over her, the king is reduced to "a broken old man," (McKinley 1993, p. 301) incapable now of oppressing other women, disgraced both because of his lust and his greed for power and also because of his solipsism, his lack of insight into the suffering he has caused Lissar.

10.5 Conclusion

The monstrous identities I have discussed assume the anxieties of the times and cultures in which they are produced. The narratives that I have discussed circle around representations of young women embarking upon romantic and sexual relationships, and position readers to align themselves as reading subjects with these female protagonists. The relatively tame vampire figures of paranormal romance play out cultural anxieties about the sexuality of young women. The urbane vampire of *The Awakening* warns female readers about sex at the same time that he invites them to admire the restraint of the good vampire who resists his desire for blood. Jacob the werewolf, Edward's rival for Bella in the Twilight series, patrols the boundaries between white and non-white, us and them, always drawing readers' attention to the unsettling nature of metamorphosis. Having little power over his transformations from human to animal, he functions as a sign of the ascendancy of whiteness and humanness.

The monstrous mothers and fathers of YA fiction comprise metaphors for the tensions that are a common feature of relations between young people and the generation which precedes them. The evil queens of fairy romance, destroyed

when their influence wanes, seem to flatter readers into a sense of the power of the young and the inevitability of cyclic movements which favour the ascendancy of young queens. If the existence of such cycles anticipates the eventual decline of these new orders, fairy romance evades such possibilities by focusing on romantic liaisons between human and fairy. McKinley's treatment of the monstrous father of *Deerskin* maps post-Freudian psychology onto the patriarchal assumptions of Perrault's "Donkey Skin," constructing an agential female hero whose seemingly impossible task is to shake off the internalised shame wrought by her father.

Cohen observes of monsters that they permit safe expression to "fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion… in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space" (Cohen 1996, p. 17). Young adulthood itself is often regarded as a liminal space between childhood and adult, such that the changing bodies and developing subjectivities of young people constitute an almost-monstrous lability. Sophia, in the two scenarios at the beginning of this chapter, is the object of anxiety on the part of her father Ben because of his fear of her becoming the "wrong" kind of young woman under the influence of young men with whom she is romantically involved. He projects these fears onto the figures of Quinn and Ramon. Fantasies of aggression and domination manifest in struggles between young women and despotic fairy queens in fairy romance, and between Lissar and her incestuous father in *Deerskin*. Monsters, says Cohen, "ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place" (Cohen 1996, p. 20). The monstrous identities I have discussed have much to say about how young women are perceived and how they are positioned as reading subjects.

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Chapter 11
Memory: (Re)imagining the Past Through Children's Literature

Cherie Allan

The picture book, *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* (1984) by Mem Fox and Julie Vivas tells the story of a young boy with a rather long name (shortened by his family to Wilfrid Gordon for convenience) who visits the elderly residents of an old people's home next door to his own house. When his father mentions one day that Wilfrid Gordon's favourite resident, Miss Nancy, has lost her memory, the young boy asks a question which has occupied much scholarly endeavour, particularly over the last several decades—"What's a memory?". He receives a variety of answers including something you remember, something that makes you cry or laugh, something from long ago, and something as precious as gold.

Winter (2012, p. 3) contends that the stories we tell about our personal past define who we are in the present. Miss Nancy cannot recall her past and is therefore 'lost' in the present. Wilfrid Gordon, perhaps sensing this, decides to find some memories for Miss Nancy. He goes home and gathers together a selection of mementoes from his own, albeit short, past. As Wilfrid Gordon shows each object or 'relic' to Miss Nancy they activate a response in the elderly resident and she appears to remember incidents from her youth such as a tram ride to the beach, playing with her younger sister, and waving her big brother off to a war from which he never returned. Both Wilfrid Gordon and Miss Nancy are delighted that her memory has been 'found' again. Yet, Dijck (2004, p. 359), in another context, claims that memory objects are representations of our former selves. The objects Wilfrid Gordon has produced are not from Miss Nancy's past and the authenticity of the memories formed is subject to revision. The illustrations seem to confirm the sincerity of the resultant memories but this is no guarantee that they are, in fact, genuine. While the picture book does not problematise the concept of memory it does enact the process of remembering through the use of trigger objects or relics.

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Using picture books as the focus texts, this chapter begins by discussing the processes of remembering and remembrance as they are applied to personal memories, and then moves on to the concept of cultural memory, using the example of the Anzac Legend which has become part of Australia's cultural memory. There has been a renewal of interest in memory during the latter part of the twentieth century within both the public arena and scholarly study, particularly in the Western world. Douglas (2010, p. 20) notes that a range of disciplines has entered the pursuit of memory studies: from science through philosophy to the social sciences. She argues that "meaning and operational value of concepts of memory […] differ between diverse disciplines, disparate academic cultures, and different historical periods". Working alongside these areas are the sciences where a rekindling of interest in memory parallels that of the social sciences and arts. This interest stems from many different factors not least that science now has greater opportunities to study the reactions of the brain to memories through improvements in medical technologies such as the advent of MRI scanning and so on. Whitehead (2009), on the other hand, points to a number of 'events' that have been offered as explanation for this resurgence in memory studies including massive migrations whose resultant displacement has seen people seek roots as consolation (Lowenthal 1996), development of new media technologies (Huyssen 1995), and the need to deal with the painful legacies of wars, genocides, and ethnocides that marked the twentieth century. The most likely explanation is that it is various combinations of all of these motivating forces that have given rise to this unprecedented degree of interest in memory studies.

As late as the first half of the twentieth century memory was still regarded as a stable archive (Winter 2012) able to be retrieved intact, at will, or by a trigger object such as a photograph or relic as seen in *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*. Thinking has changed to the point where memory now is regarded more as a complexity of cognitive and affective processes involving various areas of the brain, stimulated by material objects and cultural influences. Dijck (2004, p. 2) argues that memory is the action of the contemporary brain through which past sensations are evoked and filtered. It is the present which dictates memories of the past by recreating the past each time it is invoked. Similarly, Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (cited in Douglas 2010) see memory as a 'practice' rather than the object of our gaze; memories are produced out of experience and are reshaped by it. It is now acknowledged that memories are reconstructed anew each time they are recalled. This (re)construction of memories is influenced by the remembering subject's position in the present and her/his desires for the future. Thus, memories are unstable, fragile and fragmented; subjected to mediation, revision, and erasure (Douglas 2010; Winter 2012). They are full of gaps and silences, ambiguities and uncertainties. We forget as much as (or more) than we remember. Memories are rarely chronological but rather episodic and fragmentary. While we may recount our personal or autobiographical memories in good faith this is no guarantee of their accuracy. This point is underscored in the picture book *Memorial* by Gary Crew and Shaun Tan (1999).

As its title indicates, *Memorial* is a story about a specific memorial of war (a tree) but it is also about people's memories (and stories) of various wars. The written

text contains two main narrative strands. The first strand is a series of fragmented memories offered by three generations of a family to a young boy of the family. The second strand consists of the boy's comments on the remembered histories. The memories of the boy's parents, grandparents and great-grandparents centre on a Moreton Bay fig tree planted as a living memorial to the soldiers from the town who died in World War I. In the manner of Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*[1] (memory site), the tree continues to be used as a focal point in the town's celebrations at the end of World War II and the Vietnam War. McCallum (1999, p. 167) suggests: "concepts of personal identity are formed, in part, through an awareness and understanding of the past and of a sense of relation in the present to personal and social histories". *Memorial*'s anecdotal 'record' of the past, archived through family stories, is designed to give a sense of the past in relation to the present through a storytelling format (older generations recalling their memories of significant events in their lives). The written text relies on 'I' statements of the witnesses providing a supposedly accurate account of events that have occurred in their lifetimes. However, a number of conflicting memories highlights the instability and unreliability of memory. For instance, when Old Pa says "your grandma" the boy corrects him with "My great-grandma"; later Pa says: "The council's been saying that since they put the traffic lights in," but Old Pa claims it was: "Since they spread the bitumen." These differing perspectives destabilise the truth claims of these stories. The boy's editorial asides such as, "He [Old Pa] remembers the tiny details but forgets […] the big picture" and "I'm remembering that old people forget" also place the accuracy of these claims under review. The uncertainty this creates is reinforced by the visual text which is a pastiche of photographs and artefacts such as medals, tiles, rusted ironwork and hessian. These artefacts implicitly evoke the past, and perhaps represent attempts to authenticate it, but just as the old people's memories are failing so, too, are these relics from the past deteriorating, reminding readers of the instability of both memories and archives.

Silences within the personal narratives are also implicitly evoked. For instance, when the boy asks his father about the Vietnam War his Dad replies: "There's some things you don't want to remember, son…". The three points of the ellipsis lead readers to the next page which contains a close-up illustration of a large black hole in the old tree. This black hole can be read as a metaphor for the psychological traumas endured, and then repressed, by the veterans. The absence or empty space also serves as a reminder that when the very people who participated in these wars (the soldiers, nurses and other paramilitary groups) have not made available their versions of the events (or not been given the opportunity to do so), historical accuracy is compromised. Such editorial and pictorial commentaries undermine the authenticity of the accounts, and readers are positioned to treat them as provisional narratives rather than exact memories. This picture book raises questions about our ability to accurately recall and recount the past from our position in the present. By implicitly disrupting distinctions between memory, history and narrative, the text undermines our ability to provide a true and accurate account of events when our ability to remember experiences from the past is seen to be provisional, partial and unreliable[2].

While the generations in *Memorial* are forced to rely on their failing memories and a few faded photographs to reconstruct the events from their past, we now have a plethora of new media through which to record, transmit and recreate sounds and images thereby creating, according to Winters (2012, p. 3) "mediated memories". Douglas (2010, p. 24) argues that new technologies have provided greater opportunities for documenting our lives through blogs, online photograph albums and social networking sites. In response to the availability of a range of new media through which lives are recorded, van Dijck (2004, p. 373) notes that personal memory is becoming part of the global digital culture. This is in opposition to what was once a personal and relatively private occupation. van Dijck cautions that the 'technologies of self' are rapidly being replaced by digital instruments raising the question: what it will mean for our personal memory when the tools and objects for producing these memories become digital? New technologies readily allow remediation of memories and perhaps cater to the desires of the remembering subject to 'airbrush' representations of their previous selves (or present selves) for future gazing. van Dijck (370) also notes that digital archives are equally vulnerable to decay and may not offer any more authenticity and/or durability to memories of the future. The current obsession with all things to do with memory, however, is not limited to personal memories but also encompasses cultural memories.

11.1 Cultural Memory

Cultural memory studies have evolved out of the work of French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs[3] in the early part of the twentieth century on *mémoire collective* (collective memory). The revival in interest in collective and, now, cultural memory since the 1980s (Meusburger et al. 2011) is not confined to one or two disciplines but has been governed by a transdiciplinary approach. Not surprisingly, definitions of exactly what constitutes cultural memory vary, at times considerably. While a number of scholars still refer to collective memory (Connerton 1989; Whitehead 2009 among others) the more commonly used term now is cultural memory. Assmann (2011) distinguishes between what he refers to as communicative memory (similar to Halbwachs' collective memory) and cultural memory by suggesting that whilst collective memory is bound by temporal limits, usually within living memory, cultural memory can be of a more distant past. Erll (2008, p. 2) labels Halbwachs' *collective mémoire* as contentious, preferring cultural memory for which she provides a provisional definition based on the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts. Douglas's (2011, pp. 16–17) offering is perhaps more inclusive: "the collective ways in which the past is remembered, constructed, and made intelligible within culture".

Cultural memory begins as an exchange of stories or accounts between participants and/or eye-witnesses of a particular event but, through processes of selection, eventually focuses on "canonical" sites which come to have significance

across the generations (Rigney 2008, p. 345). Cultural memory, unlike personal memory, does not consist of a commonly remembered past but rather is a *constructed* memory based on events, personages, and sites that are deemed important to a community or nation. These memories are kept alive through monuments, rituals, acts of remembrance, and commemorative ceremonies. This process of becoming part of the cultural memory of a community or nation is achieved and maintained through the repetition of rituals, parades, erection of monuments (Meusburger et al. 2011, p. 7), the naming of streets, creation of murals, and so on. Connerton (1989) argues that the social process of remembering requires bodily performances such as ritualised acts that reinscribe crucial aspects of the events to be remembered. Rigney (2008, p. 235) maintains that this performative aspect of remembrance prevents amnesia or forgetting.

Ritual and ceremony lend themselves to restricted knowledge and/or secrecy (Assmann 2011, p. 21). Kansteiner (2002, p. 180), on a similar note, suggests that cultural memory owes as much to conscious manipulation as it does to unconscious absorption. This conscious manipulation is evident in the picture book, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* (Briggs 1984) which examines the dispute between Great Britain and Argentina over sovereignty of the Falklands Islands. The story uses the resultant Falklands/Malvinas War as its historical subject to provide a satirical account of war and imperialism through its blending of history and fantasy. The sentiments of restricted knowledge and manipulation referred to above are expressed through the treatment of the returning, injured British soldiers who are excluded from the victory parade "in case they spoiled the rejoicing". The government of the day has a vested interest in creating memories of rejoicing and thus works to erase the image of wounded soldiers from the collective memories. The illustrations in the latter part of the picture book highlight this absence through the choice of charcoal and pencil in which the images are rendered. These media (charcoal and pencil) are impermanent and will fade, as will the public's memories of the soldiers who lost lives or limbs in the war (Allan 2012, p. 112).

Referring to her provisional definition of cultural memory as "the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" Erll (2008, p. 2) argues that this definition allows for a broad spectrum of acts to be considered under the 'cultural memory' banner. These include individual acts of remembering in social contexts, to group memory (of family friends, veterans etc.), national memory with its 'invented traditions', and finally, international *lieux de mémoire* such as the Holocaust and 9/11. The development of particular cultural memories most often occurs over many years and, in some cases, several generations. However, as Douglas (2010, p. 23) points out, cultural memory is never stable but is in a constant state of flux as interpretations of past events and counter-memories are offered, accepted or rejected, only to come under further reconsideration at some point in the future. The sentiment expressed on the Australians at War website[4]: "The Anzac spirit will only remain relevant in the future if the Gallipoli tradition can be reinterpreted" seems to acknowledge and endorse this process. An examination of how the events behind this Anzac legend came to form a significant part of the nation's cultural memory follows.

11.2 The Anzac Legend

One of the most significant events in Australian history, which has since been incorporated into the nation's cultural memory, is the landing of Australian and New Zealand Army Corp (ANZAC) troops at Gallipoli on April, 25th 1915. This landing formed a crucial part of Sir Winston Churchill's plan to defeat the Turkish army, then a powerful ally of Germany. Unfortunately, the troops were inadvertently put ashore to the north of the intended landing place. The small cove, now known as Anzac Cove, proved to be dangerous because the hostile terrain made it difficult to secure, leaving the troops vulnerable to Turkish gunfire. Despite the hopelessness of the situation and the loss of many lives the records show that the soldiers fought with determination and commitment until a withdrawal was undertaken on 19–20 December, 1915. This reported heroism became legendary in Australia and has been honoured every year since 1915 and led to the development in Australia[5] of the Anzac Legend, the formation of which followed the cycle described by Rigney (2008) referred to earlier. It began with informal and personal accounts of soldiers and eye-witnesses and progressed through newspaper reports, representations in literature and the arts, and culminated in official documents and records[6]. Gradually, through Australia's involvement in subsequent wars, the attributes of an ANZAC led to the development of an 'Anzac spirit' which came to epitomise courage and endurance in the face of adversity, rather than referring specifically to those who fought at Gallipoli. The Anzac Legend is commemorated throughout Australia in a variety of ways. Every community in the country has streets named after the events of the campaign: monuments were erected and avenues of trees planted in remembrance of soldiers from the community who died at Gallipoli. Anzac Day, April 25th, has long been a national public holiday, commemorated throughout Australia in small towns, large cities as well as in the capital. The day starts with a Dawn Service and is usually followed by a Street March mid-morning. A more recent phenomenon is the 'pilgrimage' by many Australians, including young people (especially "backpackers"), to Gallipoli in Turkey, for the Dawn Service at Anzac Cove.

The legend of the ANZACs, however, also has generated a great deal of debate over the years since 1915. For instance, in contrast to the children's texts (listed below) written in the aftermath of World War, Alan Seymour's play, *The One Day of the Year* (1962) appeared at a time when many Australians, particularly young people, were questioning the mythology surrounding Anzac Day. This generational shift is played out as (father) Alf participates in the Anzac Day celebrations while son, Hughie, ridicules them. Ironically, the title of the play which was seen as critical of aspects of the commemoration of Anzac Day, has come to be synonymous with the day. Academic Marilyn Lake (2009), who has written extensively on the topic[7], observes that the myth of the ANZACs "seeks to locate our national identity in the masculine domain of military warfare" (unpaged). She argues that this celebration of masculinity marginalises whole sections of Australian society including women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Asian-Australian

volunteers who served in, particularly, World War I and members of the peace movement. While fervour surrounding the Anzac Legend has waxed and waned over the intervening years, it is currently enjoying a period of popularity, especially in the lead up to the Centenary of the landing at Gallipoli which will be celebrated on April 25th, 2015.

As well as being commemorated in a myriad of formal rituals, static displays, and museum exhibitions, the Anzac legend over the years has been celebrated (and occasionally criticised) in literature, art, film, and a number of television series. Literature, according to Renate Lachmann (2008, p. 301) is a culture's memory, not just as a static record but as a body of commemorative actions. This is hardly a surprising premise as Assmann (2011) reminds us that it was the poets (and later the storytellers) who were the first to be responsible for both the composition and the remembering of, cultural memories—the latter through a complex system of mnemonics. Literature forms an essential part of a culture's meaning-making processes which includes recording of those memories deemed important to the culture in which they were produced (Neumann 2011). Rigney (2008, p. 349) argues that literary works can be viewed as "textual monuments" which provide fixed points of reference for particular cultural memories. The interest of the remainder of this chapter, lies in the ways in which the Anzac Legend has been represented in literary texts for children, thereby creating "textual monuments" as points of reference through which younger generations can learn about, and (re)imagine anew, cultural memories associated with the Anzac Legend. The focus of the discussion centres on a number of recent picture books.

A keyword search for either 'anzac' or 'gallipoli' in AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource[8] shows the first mention of either within the children's literature collections[9] as November, 1915 in a Victorian School Paper (similar to a school reader). Other early texts include *A Child's History of Anzac* (1916) by Charles Buley, *The Young Anzacs: A Tale of the Great War* (1917) by Joseph Bowes, and *The Story of Anzac Day: Told for Boys and Girls* (1920) by A.G. Waterworth. A number of texts including *Sun-Raysed Children's Fairy Story Book* (ca1919) edited by C.J. De Garis and *Blinky Bill Joins the Army* (1940) by Dorothy Wall demonstrate an element of larrikinism[10] which is also an integral part of the Anzac tradition. AustLit records indicate children's texts on the Anzac Legend continued to be published throughout the period 1920–1950 but very few after that until the last ten years when there has been a resurgence in interest, probably due to the upcoming centenary in 2015.

The picture book *My Grandad Marches on ANZAC Day* (2005) written by Catriona Hoy and illustrated by Benjamin Johnson exemplifies Connerton's (1989) conviction that the social process of remembering requires ritualised acts. It tells the story of Anzac Day through the eyes of a small girl who attends the Anzac Day parade to watch her grandfather march. Readers are given an account of the rituals of Anzac Day through the girl's observations: "There are sad poems and singing […] The guns fire […] It makes me jump". She explains her grandfather's motivations: "He marches for all his friends who can't march. He marches for us." This comment points to the grandfather's sense of obligation, not only to the dead,

but also to the living and their futures. The girl's father, too, plays a part in the act of bodily performance ("We clap and wave"), commending his father's sense of duty ("I'm proud of you, mate"), and ensuring that his daughter also participates in the ceremonies ("We say, Lest we forget"). The small girl's vow at the end of the book: "One day I will march on Anzac Day and I will do the remembering" points to the passing of responsibility for keeping alive the cultural memories of the Anzac Legend from one generation to the next through bodily performance of ritualised acts. Pierre Nora, on the other hand, sees the establishment of *lieux de mémoire* as equally important for the continuation of cultural memories.

The picture book, *Lone Pine* (2012), written by Susie Brown and Margaret Warner and illustrated by Sebastian Ciaffaglione, recounts a series of events which led to the establishment of national and community-based *lieux de mémoire.* These are the sites which hold great significance for remembering particular events which have become part of a community or nation's cultural memory. Following the Battle of Lone Pine on the Gallipoli Peninsular an Australian soldier searches through the rubble for his younger brother. As he does so he stumbles across a pine cone from the sole pine tree left standing on the ridge. He picks up the pine cone and places it in his pocket. He later sends it to his mother who then places it in a drawer for safekeeping. Sometime later the mother plants the seed from the cone and three saplings emerge from the soil. Unfortunately, just as one of her three soldier-sons has perished so, too, one of the saplings dies. She nurtures the surviving plants until they are well-established then one is sent to Inverell, in New South Wales, where her sons were raised, and the other is sent to a nursery in Canberra awaiting the establishment of the Australian War Memorial.

Cultural memory operates at a number of levels: family, community, national, and international (Rigney 2008). *Lone Pine* operates at levels primarily of family, community, and nation although it could be argued that an international connection is also invoked through the origin of the pine cone in Turkey. Rigney (2008, p. 345) claims that such sites act as placeholders for the exchange and transfer of memories among contemporaries and across generations. Thus, while the tree symbolises personal loss for the mother and her remaining sons (contemporaries of the fallen) and their off-spring (following generations), the tree at Inverell unites a community remembering all the fallen from their district since then. The second tree, finally planted at the newly established Australian war Memorial in 1934 by the Duke of Gloucester, stands as a reminder for the nation, not only of the Battle of Lone Pine but for all subsequent battles and losses (military and civilian) endured by the nation and its people.

A particularly poignant aspect of the Anzac Legend is the story of Simpson and his donkey. It is a narrative which has been retold many times and subsequently mythologised by the tellers through these retellings. Rigney (2008, p. 347) points to the ability of narrative to structure the events of an historical occasion in such a way as to make it perhaps more memorable than a strictly factual account. The picture book written by Mark Greenwood and illustrated by Frane Lessac simply entitled *Simpson and his Donkey* (2008) is based on historical evidence but prefaces the events at Gallipoli with an imaginative account of Simpson's childhood in South Shields, Sheffield, UK. John Simpson Kirkpatrick (known as Jack) grew up here and learned about donkeys while giving children rides on the beach in the

summer. In his seventeenth year Simpson signs up as a stoker on a ship bound for Australia. Here he leaves the ship and engages in numerous occupations until the outbreak of war in 1914. Simpson enlists in order to serve "king and country" but also as a cheap passage home to England. After training as a stretcher bearer he is sent with the Australian troops to Egypt and, subsequently on to Gallipoli.

It is on the slopes of the rugged hills of the Dardanelles that Simpson becomes a legend. He is portrayed as an affable, kindly man who ignores the danger of his own situation to rescue wounded soldiers with the help of his faithful donkey, Duffy. Lessac's detailed illustrations in a naïve style may record aspects of daily life on the battlefield but it is Simpson, and his donkey, who remain centre stage as the focus of the story. However, like many cultural memories, the legend is only a partial truth. While the legend promotes the image of Simpson and his lone donkey tirelessly going about their work, there were a number of stretcher bearers undertaking this dangerous work and equally risking their lives to rescue others. Additionally, history suggests that Simpson used as many as five or six donkeys on his rounds. Perhaps it is the nature of cultural memory to pare the details and in this way Simpson and his donkey represent all the stretcher bearers (and the donkeys) in this campaign. This strategy gives the author the opportunity to focus on the central character of the story and effect a closure beyond what is known to be true. Rigney (2008) argues that techniques such as these give a literary text an added aesthetic value which in turn has the ability to embed particular cultural memories in the readership's memory. A particularly ironic point of the legend is that Simpson was not an Australian but an Englishman towards whom (that is, Englishmen in general) the ANZACs were, at best, ambivalent. As detailed in *Simpson and his Donkey* Simpson supposedly tells his mother, "You'll find out where ah am when the Australians make a start." This reference to the Australians in the third person demonstrates that Simpson identified as an Englishman, thereby destabilising the basis of the legend of an 'Aussie hero'.

The memory-making process, according to Lachmann (2008, p. 304), centres on the inevitable intertextuality of all texts in that: "The memory of the text is formed by the intertextuality of all its references." This is not to suggest that every new text uncritically accepts the memorial premise of previous texts. Every act of (re)writing should construct cultural memories anew, accepting or challenging aspects of previous texts, omitting others, thus participating in the reshaping of cultural memories through which to better reflect the perceived needs and conditions of the present. Each of these recent and award-winning picture books discussed above has recorded features of the Anzac Legend through a series of strategies particular to the development of cultural memories such as bodily performance, *lieux de mémoire*, and homage to an iconic personage. They have not, however, reinterpreted or (re)imagined core aspects of the Anzac Legend. This act of (re)writing is evident in two novels for older (ages 11–14) readers.

The first novel is another account of the Simpson legend told in Jackie French's novel for young readers, *The Donkey Who Carried the Wounded* (2009). This version interrogates the now famous legend of Simpson and his donkey as the events of the story are presented from several different viewpoints. Neumann (2011, 338) suggests that texts that use multiple focalisers or perspectives can problematise the

memory-creation process. Furthermore, the cultural memory surrounding Simpson and his donkey is very much an Australian one. In this book, however, not only do readers hear about Simpson's early life and an account of the landing at Gallipoli and the gruelling months that followed but they also hear from, among others, a Turkish sniper, the New Zealand stretcher bearer Private Richard Henderson who took over from Simpson, an English officer, a letter written to Simpson by his mother (Mrs Kirkpatrick), along with the musings of Duffy as he went about his work. The use of multiple focalisers works to deconstruct the central figure of Simpson as legend and promote possible viewpoints of a variety of characters from a range of backgrounds, all of whom were forced to deal with the realities and/or consequences of the Gallipoli Campaign just as Simpson was.

The second novel is by Turkish author Serpil Ural[11]. *Candles at Dawn* (2000) follows an Australian girl Ellie, as she travels with her mother to Turkey to commemorate Anzac Day at Gallipoli. The pair stays in a boarding house run by a Turkish woman and her daughter, Zeynep. When the two young girls discover that their grandfathers fought on opposite sides in the war this connection creates a bond which leads to a developing friendship. Readers are reminded of the tribute to the ANZACs written by Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1934. Just as President Ataturk proclaimed that "There is no difference between the Johnnies and Mehmets to us […] they have become our sons as well"[12], so too Ellie and Zeynep find more commonalities than differences in the experiences of their grandfathers and in their own lives. Both President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's tribute and the young girls' developing camaraderie in *Candles at Dawn* represents a (re)imagining of the concept of 'enemy' and stands in direct contrast to the depiction of the enemy in *Simpson and his Donkey* In this latter text the written text presents the shooting of Simpson as a deliberate act: "a Turkish soldier took aim and slowly pulled the trigger. His target was leading a donkey …". The illustration accompanying this statement portrays a scene of calm through which Simpson is leading his donkey. There are stunted trees and over yonder some soldiers are squaring off but in the foreground is a lone Turkish soldier pointing his rifle, with intent, towards Simpson who appears to be innocently oblivious to the danger. Furthermore, the red crosses adorning both Simpson's hat and the donkey's forehead are clearly visible to both soldier and reader. Rather than suggest that the bullet that killed Simpson was one of many fired by any one of the countless Turkish soldiers defending their homeland against invading forces, the 'enemy' in this text is portrayed as a calculating marksman prepared to contravene the International Laws of Engagement. This positioning continues the myth that those who fight against us are inherently 'bad'.

11.3 Conclusion

As is evident from the preceding discussion, personal and cultural memory involves processes of remembering and acts of remembrance. These acts of remembrance are governed as much by our present selves (whether individual, communal, or national)

and our desires for the future, as they are by our desires for the past. In examining the nature of personal and cultural memoryin general, and the specific case relating to the Anzac Legend in Australia, this chapter has discussed the ways in which children's picture books reconstruct and perpetuate memories and acts of remembrance. As Rigney (2008, pp. 350–352) observes, on the one hand literary texts are only one form of remembrance, but on the other, because of the 'sticking power' of narratives, they are a particularly effective form of memorial practice. While the picture books examined, particularly those in relation to the cultural memories surrounding the Anzac Legend, contribute to the continuation of defining personal and cultural memories, a number has also missed an opportunity. Rather than (re)imagining the Anzac Legend to reflect a more inclusive and fairer representation, the picture books in this selection reinforce the traditional position of an Anglo masculine, heroic figure, which denies the participation of other women, Aboriginal and Asian Australians who were also part of the ANZAC forces. When we remember the past from our position in the present it should be as much about (re)imagining possible futures as it is about honouring the past.

Notes

1. For more information see Erll (2008).
2. The original version of this analysis of *Memorial* appears in Allan (2012, 98–100).
3. Halbwachs is seen as the father figure of cultural memory studies. See Meusburger et al. (2008) among others.
4. This website was developed in conjunction with the television series of the same name. See http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/.
5. No doubt a similar situation exists in New Zealand but the focus of this chapter is on Australia.
6. For instance, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* is a 12-volume series covering Australia's involvement in the First World War. The series was edited by the official historian Charles Bean, who also wrote six of the volumes, and was published between 1920 and 1942. Source: http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/first_world_war/.
7. Lake has written extensively on this topic. Among her works is the text *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History* Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2010.
8. AustLit: the Australian Literature Resource's aim is to be the definitive virtual research environment and information resource for Australian literary, print, and narrative culture scholars, students, and the public. See www.austlit.edu.au/about.
9. The majority of these texts were referenced from the Children's Literature Digital Resource (CLDR) dataset on AustLit. See www.austlit.edu.au/CLDR.
10. An Australian characteristic of irreverence towards authority.

11. Ural is a Turkish writer who trained originally as a graphic designer. She has been a member of the board of consultants to the Turkish Ministry for Culture, a teacher of children's literature and prolific writer of picture books for pre-schoolers. Ural toured Australia in 2003 to promote her novel *Candles at Dawn*. (Taken from AustLit agent record at: http://www.austlit.edu.au/run?ex=GuidedSearch&type=simple&defaultfed=n&styleSheet=&searchWhere=author&generalSearchString=ural.
12. See http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/2visiting/walk_03anzaccove.html.

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Chapter 12
Future: Nan's Future Expectation and Her Views on Children's Literature

Yan Wu

Fred Inglis defines children's novels as "imaginative forms of life which they work with and turn into their future lives" (qtd. in Gannon and Gay 1983, p. 26). However, this imaginative life is usually modelled by adults with various political orientations. Mary V. Jackson holds that English children's literature, "especially in its early stages, was rooted in complex social, religious, and political conflict. It was yoked to the service of this or that party, faction, class, dogma, or philosophy and was constantly buffeted in controversies over who should control the child's world and mind" (1989, p. 245). Ruth Bottigheimer suggests that the patterns that Jackson identifies in English children's literature are also reflected in France and Germany (1993, p. 165). Jonathan Ball (2011) notes that scholars such as Farah Mendlesohn (2009) and Noga Applebaum (2010) are critical of young adult science fiction saying that the genre adopts socially conservative attitudes toward discussing the future. While Ball disputes this view, one point is certain—children's literature comprises "imaginative forms of life" which offer a window into possible future worlds: the expectations and fears about the future and a vision of Utopia or Dystopia on the part of a social group. In the past 20 years or more, these elements have been addressed in children's literature and its criticism[1].

In looking to the future, children's literature speaks to the concerns and anxieties of the present. As Abby Ventura notes in her discussion of three young adult speculative fictions[2], the futures of the twenty-first century depicted in these texts share similar concerns about "global capitalism through the expansion of the marketplace, excess of commodities, the waste product (or the obsolete commodity), the commodification of the body, destruction of natural resources, and a media-saturated culture" (2011, pp. 89, 90). This concern about the current state of society and its future has been part of futuristic science fiction for young readers since the 1960s. According to Kay Sambell, since that time the genre "has been dominated

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by authorial fears about the violent, inhumane social and political worlds young people seem likely to inherit" (2004, p. 247). It is interesting to note, however, that there are few articles discussing the relationship between the future and children's expectations. So how do children see the future? Are there any connections between children's literature and their future worlds? Will their futuristic observations benefit our new imagination of their future worlds and thus adjust our designs of futuristic worlds in children's novels? I believe these are valuable questions to explore and they are the reason that we need to seek help from children to answer them.

To gain a sense of how a young person might think about the future, I interviewed a 10-year-old Beijing girl, Nan. A female Masters degree candidate Chen (C) also participated in the interview which was conducted in my office by me at Beijing Normal University. Nan's parents work at an NGO and at a university respectively. She has a typical middle-class background, and loves children's literature having read lots of works. Her personality is optimistic and open-minded. The interview took place from 4:00 p.m. to 5:25 p.m. on October 11th, 2012. Nan's mother brought her to my office after school and left after we were acquainted. Her permission was sought and received to make an audio recording. The interview was informal but contained questions relating to children's literature and the future[3]. After processing the data of recording, the contents not correlative with the topic were deleted. Excerpts from the interview are reproduced below. These are clustered under key emerging themes and provide insights into Nan's expectations of the future and her views of children's literature.

12.1 A Child's Expectations About the Future Change Repeatedly

Wu Yan (**W** below): What do you want to be when you grow up?

Nan (**N** below): When I was young I admired the people who worked at McDonald's and made ice-cream cones for me, and that's what I wanted to be back then. After that I wanted to be a doctor, then a teacher, and now I don't really know! (*laughs*)

W: So it's still changing.

N: Yeah. And just recently I wanted to be a writer. (*laughs*)

12.2 Expectations About the Future are Influenced by Current Reading

W: Why do you want to be a writer? Is it because you've read something interesting and impressive?

N: Right!

W: What was it?

N: The Rain Demon's Beast King[4]. It's really great!

W: Who is the author?

N: Zhang Kai.

W: Zhang Kai. Have you read anything about him?

C: No.

W: The Rain Demon's Beast King?

N: The Rain Demon is…

W: Is a demon?

N: Yes, it's the name of the book…no, sorry, not the book's name! Rain Demon is the author's pen name.

W: Rain Demon is the author!

N: Right!

W: *Beast King* is the book name.

N: Right!

W: Could you tell me a little of the story of the *Beast King*?

N: It is hard to tell…

W: Just say anything you'd like.

N: Ok, so there's a boy, uh… a long time ago, one person in a hundred thousand had hidden energy, and… well, we'll just call it "hidden energy." Later, there were two people, one female and one male, who carried out missions in a village. Because of a plague, only that boy survived, due to his hidden energy. Then the woman took him to her (*laughs*) to her old school. The boy's name is Lanhu, and she took Lanhu to her old school, and in the end he got a beast king, his own… what's it called? (*talks to herself*).

W: Is the beast king a wild animal?

N: Yeah, lots of bad guys appeared, and then there was fighting (*claps excitedly*). Anyway, that's up to the last volume of what now Rain Demon has written. The next volume will be *Peerless Wolf*, which brings the number of books to… more than ten! (*talks to herself*). Anyway, what I am reading now is the last volume, *The Dark Beast King*. There will be more after *Peerless Wolf*. And then the sequels: there's a sequel, you know, *The House of the Beast Master*. I've only read the first volume…

W: You think the author's books aren't bad?

N: Right! He had written—Because I was a fan of *Beast King* (*laughs*), I did a PowerPoint—tons of books. Just the *Beast King* series is this thick (*measures with her hands*)! Unfortunately, I lost one book; it might have been stolen by a classmate because I took it to school, and I can't find it any more.

W: Can you replace it? It should be replaced.

N: I can.

W: Tell me and I'll give you a hand. Kongfz.com will carry it.

N: No, thanks. I don't think that volume is very interesting. Then (*returns to* Beast King), the book is really, really thick, every page covered in text. It's about this thick (*gestures*).

W: Does the story take place in the present-day, or…?

C: A long time ago.

W: Oh. A long time ago.
N: Right, and the story and reality…
W: Are unrelated.
N: Not totally unrelated. It's just, uh, the story's pretty bizarre, but other things like spaceships and all that, they're imaginative but haven't been realized yet.
W: Are there spaceships and things like that in the story?
N: Yes, the spaceship even flies to other stars.
W: So it's got that in there! And that's related to things to come, isn't it?
N: Absolutely!
W: It's the stuff of the future.
N: It tells about the things in the year 10,000, wait, the year 11,000, so everything's really advanced.
W: It is about the future?
N: Yeah.

12.3 A Child's Definition of and Attitude About the Future

W: Do you like reading the stories about the future?
N: They're OK.
W: Just OK. Not as good as others stories, about the present?
N: I really don't care. Anyway, I just read.
W: Your focus is the plot, isn't it?
N: Yes. I'm fine as long as it's readable.
W: You brought up the future, so can you tell me what you think about the future?
N: It comes later on.
W: The future is later?
N: Oh, tomorrow is the future.
W: Tomorrow is the future.
N: Right, or the next hour is also the future.
W: OK. Do you think the future is good or bad? Or, would you say you like the future or dislike it? Or perhaps it doesn't matter?
N: Hmm… (*pause*) It doesn't matter.
W: It doesn't matter to you, does it?

12.4 Fear and Coping Strategies for the Macro-Future

N: But I think the future will be very horrible.
W: Horrible?
N: Yeah.
W: Why?

N: The weather's so bad now. Every day is so dreadful and gloomy, so what will it be like in the future? When the odor layer (*means "ozone layer"*) totally disappears, we will change into "toasted cheese people"!

W: (*Laughs*) "Toasted cheese people". You mean you worry about the future?

N: Yes, when we were young they told us, don't waste water, but then we found out that lots of people use it—for example, watering plants at school—and just let it run all over, and it's a waste of water. A little water is OK for your fish, but when it's a big jar of water, it's really wasteful.

W: They say to conserve water, but they actually do the opposite, right?

N: Right. Advertisements talk about environmental protection and conservation, but what's the result? Those people! (*adopts an exaggerated, angry expression*).

12.5 Fear and Coping Strategies for the Micro-Future

W: (*Laughs*) So it's mainly the problem of environmental protection that makes you worry about future?

N: There's another reason: I'm afraid I'll end up forgetting the telephone numbers and addresses of my current friends.

W: Are you afraid you'll lose your friends in the future?

N: Yes.

W: They sound like very good friends. They must be quite happy.

N: Of course.

W: You can stay in touch with them. How would you lose them?

N: Yeah, that's what I think too.

W: Exactly!

N: But they might change their telephone number, and I don't even have a mobile phone right now.

W: Oh, so you don't have a mobile phone.

N: Yeah. Students in Grade Two have their own mobile phones, but my mom said they have radiation and won't let me have one.

W: That's a reasonable explanation.

N: Yeah. (*meaningfully*)

W: OK, so apart from environmental protection and losing friends (don't lose their numbers, of course), is there anything else you're worried about? Isn't there anything at all that's good about the future?

N: There are good things.

W: For example?

N: Uh…(*talks to herself*) Meeting good colleagues, um…A good job, earning lots of money, a nice place to live, being safe and not in danger at all.

W: But you aren't sure if all these things are good.

N: Yeah. I am not a fortune-teller. But my predictive abilities are powerful… (*laughs*)

W: (*Laughs*) How do you know your predictive abilities are powerful?

N: Because to deduce whether we'll have physical activity or exercise at school today, all I have to do is look at any teacher.

W: Physical activity means sports?

N: Yeah.

W: And exercise means that you just do a set of exercises?

N: Yeah.

W: Which one do you like better?

N: Both are OK.

W: So deduction is useless, given your lack of preference.

N: But, but I can tell my classmates. My friends only like physical activity.

W: What do you do for physical activity? Things like basketball?

N: Skipping rope, Tug of War.

W: Physical activity is a little more interesting!

N: Right.

12.6 Good Writers and Works

W: What other books for kids have you read?

N: I've read some Jimmy Liao.

[…]

W: What's interesting about Jimmy's books?

N: There is *Pourquoi, The Private Me, Mr. Wing*, and lots and lots of others. And *A Chance of Sunshine.*

W: What impressed you most in the books?

N: When I was young I didn't have *A Chance of Sunshine*, because my mom didn't buy it for me, so I just read *Mr. Wing* for a long time.

W: You remember *Mr. Wing* most clearly.

N: Yeah, I can retell the story now.

W: Can you tell me an interesting part? Something impressive from *Mr. Wing*?

N: I think it's the part after his wings grow out, but before the operation, the part in the middle. After the wings grow out, people from the whole city come to take his picture. He becomes unhappy and begins to eat and drink a lot, and turns fat. After that his wings fly everywhere, and he has to follow along. He can't take a bath, or go to toilet, or stand in line, and then he can't even have meetings. This part is pretty amusing.

W: It's interesting to you.

N: Right. But I've got this confusion, which is, although the wings might not be obedient, how wonderful would it be to one day have wings and fly! But the first half is told so miserably, and the wings are broken in a fall, so I feel… (*mutters*) swallowing.

W: So you mean that if you were the writer, you wouldn't write it like that.

N: Yeah. I would write about the positive.

W: Oh, I agree. Wouldn't it be great if we had wings and could fly!

N: In *Beast King* Lanhu has a falcon, so he can grow wings and fly.
[…]
W: It feels a little like science fiction.
N: Science fiction, pretty much.
W: Do you like science fiction?
N: Yes, I do.
W: What kind of science fiction do you like?
N: As long as it's not too scary.
W: So you don't like horror, do you? What kind do you like?
N: Horror keeps me awake at night.
W: You like happy stories—
N: Sunny ones. *Beast King* isn't too scary, and although some parts are kind of scary, I can skip those. The book is the sort that reveals its meaning after repeated reading. This book, for example, *Garden of Pet Beasts*, is one I like very much. I bought the first one when I was in Grade One, but I didn't read until Grade Two, when one day I thought, just read it. It took me a year to finish reading this book. So that's why I read it so slowly, but it's so interesting. Then I ordered a whole bunch. (*Imitates flipping pages*) I can read two of the new ones a day.
[…]
W: That's fast!
N: Thirty seconds for two chapters.
[…]
N: Oh, I've read *The Neverending Story*, three-fourths of it. Thanks. (*Takes the book*). The ending is a little scary, so I put it aside. Leave it alone. These aren't so flashy.
W: Yes, *The Neverending Story* is deeper.
N: I also gave it to my friend. Oh, here's another one I've read! *Sophie's World.*
W: Was it good?
N: It's okay.
W: It's pretty abstract, isn't it?
N: "Who are you?"
W: That's right. The first chapter is "Who are you"!
N: And then it's "Where does the world comes from?" isn't it?
W: Right.
N: But it's still scary.
W: Still scary. I see you dislike scary things most!
N: Yes. I don't read anything scary.

12.7 Parents and Friends are the Focus of Future Concerns

W: What else about the future (*talks to himself*)? Ah, about the future, you just mentioned environmental pollution. Is there anything else that concerns you, about the world's future?

N: No.

W: Nothing?

N: (*Laughs*) I'm a carefree sort.

W: So that's what you think. And your classmates? What are they concerned with about the future?

N: (*Thinks in silence*)

W: Not much, either?

N: Yeah, not too much.

W: What about your own future? What are you concerned about? Are you worried about anything?

N: I haven't thought about that before.

W: You haven't thought about it. So you think everything's great.

N: Yeah.

W: You only worry about losing your friends, like you just said.

N: Yeah.

W: How many good friends do you have, best friends?

N: Best friends?

W: Right.

N: (*Thinks in silence for a long time*) At any rate true friends are all good friends.

W: What's your personality, in your classroom?

N: Uh… lots.

W: Are you a happy sort of person?

N: I'm pretty pessimistic.

W: Pessimistic in certain areas?

N: Yeah.

W: Is there anything in your life now that makes you anxious and afraid?

N: (*Silent for a long time*)

W: Or does anything make you particularly happy?

N: That I have lots of books. (*Laughs*) And then the thing I fear most is that my mom and dad might leave me.

W: But now it looks like they won't leave you.

N: Yeah. They're quite healthy right now.

12.8 To Play is the Most Joyful Thing!

W: What do you dislike most at school?

N: See if you can guess.

W: I'd say, exams.

N: No. The whole teaching building, and every aspect related to studying. All of it. (*Laughs*) Leaving just a little garden, the pavilion—we have a vine-covered pavilion—and then the playground, the workout equipment, the ones you play on, and the horizontal bar. That's enough. Oh, and the flagpole!

W: You'd keep the flagpole?

N: Absolutely. There's a flag-raising every Monday. Then we wouldn't need to take our bags, and the only classes we'd go to would be PE and morality and society, and after that we'd play. We've got a thing called a "Game Book", and we draw the game ourselves, including whatever money we need, and then whoever wants to play, they write down their own name and money, and there are pets and a map. And then we play.

W: I don't really understand. Is it some sort of game?

N: Yeah. We draw it by ourselves.

C: I've played it. The girl asked me to write down my name, and then she issued me "money".

N: Right.

W: It is a set of game rules, right?

N: Yeah. Also, everyone will get five hundred notebooks. And they'd be thick and white.

W: What for?

N: For drawing the game. (*Laughs*).

W: That's a good design for a future. Just now you mentioned how, if you were principal, you would vaporize the buildings and anything study-related.

N: Wipe out from the world.

W: Leaving behind things to play with, and the flagpole, and then you'd hand out lots of notebooks!

N: (*Laughs*)

W: Then everyone could play games every day.

[…]

Perry Nodelman (1981, p. 23) remarks that many children's novels "describe a developing future rather than events in the past", which differs from discussions about the past in adult works. My interview shows that the future in this child's mind changes frequently and is easily influenced by current reading, daily life, family and school education. Therefore, a positive direction would be to encourage children's writers and publishers to experiment, offering a variety of alternatives and their results, and to provide more influential and decisive materials and worthwhile actions.

Childhood is a period of exploring one's own abilities. Children also feel astonished about their relationship with the future (for example, Nan believing that she has "predictive abilities"). These explorations of the subconscious will be an important part for individual development of the imagination, creativity, and even daydreaming: necessary capacities for the future. These same capacities in children's publications are not to be underestimated. That is why Janice Alberghene points out that the "fall" of childhood may be a function of contemporary adults' inability to imagine any future at all (1985, p. 189). The development of children's imagination of the future should be encouraged if we want to retain their childhood and optimism.

Children, such as Nan, may have no definitions of the future, but they have strong expectations about happiness, affection and entertainment. This might serve to guide the construction of Utopias in children's novels and science fiction. However, as Nan

notes, children also have fears about possible futures, such as losing friends and parents, as well as environmental pollution. I entirely agree with Kimberley Reynolds' view (2007) that children's literature "provides a curious and paradoxical cultural space: a space that is simultaneously highly regulated and overlooked, orthodox and radical, didactic and subversive" (2007, p. 3). Writers of children's literature need to continue to embrace *serious play*—writing about the seriousness that impacts children's lives while providing them with, as Inglis notes at the beginning of this chapter, "imaginative forms of life which they work with and turn into their future lives".

Notes

1. See for example Claudia Mills' review of *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations. Lion and the Unicorn* 33(1):121–126.
2. M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002), Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* (2002), and Pete Hautman's *Rash* (2006).
3. Interview outline:

   A. Introductory questions
   What do you want to be when you grow up? Why?
   B. Direct narrative questions
   What do you think the future would be like?
   Do you think the future would be better than present or worse?
   What is the future in your eyes?
   If you were to have only one wish about the future, what would it be?
   C. Questions related to children's literature
   Have you read/watched lots of children's novels/films? What are they?
   Are there any inspirations about the future in children's literature?
   What would you write if you were asked to compose a futuristic novel?

4. This refers to a series of network online novels that were published later. Nan read the paper edition.

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