Other Worlds Other Lives

children's literature experiences

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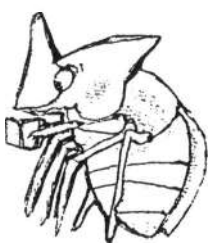
Myrna Machet

Sandra Olën

Thomas van der Walt



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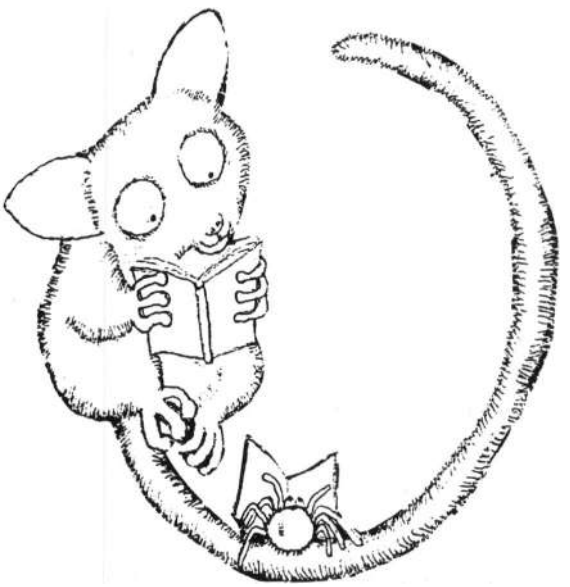


Curricula Vitae

of contributors to this volume

maj asplund carlsson (sweden)

Maj Asplund Carlsson has published several articles in international journals and co-written two Swedish textbooks: *Lara av sagan* (''Learning from the tale'') and *Barnens tre bibliotek: Lasning av fiktionsbocker i slukaraldern* (''The three libraries for children: reading of fiction in the age 9–12''). She is presently busy with doctoral studies in literature at the University of Gothenburg.

tanya barben (south africa)

Tanya Barben is the curator of the Rare Books and Special Collections Department of the University of Cape Town Libraries. She manages 16 very diverse collections, three of which are the Rare Books, the Kipling and the Historical Children's Literature Collections. She is co-chairperson of the Children's Book Forum of the Western Cape.

magdaleen bester (south africa)

Magdaleen Bester is Professor in the Department of Information Studies at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, where she teaches courses in children's literature and school librarianship. She is the editor of the *South African journal of library and information science*, a member of the Children's Book Committee of SAILIS and a member of the Administrative Council of SAILIS. She holds a DBibl from Potchefstroom University.

sandra braude (south africa)

Sandra Braude is the author of *Windswept plains* (poems and stories), *Mpho's search* (a novel for young adults) and various articles, poems and stories published in South African journals. She is an administrative and editorial assistant with COSAW Publishing and holds a MA in English from the University of South Africa.

rhonda bunbury (australia)

Rhonda Bunbury lectures in children's literature at Deakin University in Geelong. One of her areas of specialisation is Australian Aboriginal children's literature. She was president of IRSCL from 1989–1993.

denise diamond (south africa)

Denise Diamond has been involved in the publication of children's books in African languages since 1981; at present she is the publishing director for African languages at Macmillan South Africa in Johannesburg. She is a graduate of the University of South Africa.

philomena osazee fayose (nigeria)

Philomena Osazee Fayose is a Reader in the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan. She has an MA in Library Studies and Education from the University of Technology, Loughborough, UK and a PhD in Literary Studies from the University of Ife, Nigeria. She has published many articles in scholarly journals and has attended conferences, workshops and seminars in many parts of the world. Dr Fayose is a member of several associations including the Children's Literature Association of Nigeria and the International Association for Children's Literature Research.

peter havard-williams (botswana)

Peter Havard-Williams is head of the Department of Library and Information Studies at the University of Botswana, and Emeritus Professor at Loughborough University in the UK For several years he gave seminars on children's story reading (especially the Winnie-the-Pooh books) to children's librarians in Paris, and recently contributed an article on Winnie-the-Pooh to the *Revue des livres pour enfants*. He holds a PhD from Loughborough University.

jenny janisch (south africa)

Jenny Janisch is head of the English department at Pretoria High School for Girls. She has presented papers at conferences and published several articles relating to the teaching of literature in the high school. She is currently registered at the University of Pretoria for a MA.

ann lawson lucas (uk)

Ann Lawson Lucas lectures in Italian at the University of Hull. She teaches Italian language and literature and specialises in 19th and 20th century culture. Her research revolves mainly around Italian children's literature. She has completed a comprehensive volume on Salgari, and is presently working on a new translation and edition of Collodi's *Pinocchio* and a work on Calvino. She is a board member of IRSCL.

marina c le roux (south africa)

Marina le Roux lectures in children's literature at the University of Stellenbosch, her alma mater, and is co-founder and head of ISKEMUS, the Information Centre for Children's Literature and Media of the University.

She reviews children's literature for a variety of periodicals as well as for the radio, and has published several articles on the subject. She received the Carl Lohann Award for her contribution to the promotion of children's literature in South Africa.

johannes m lenake (south africa)

Johan Lenake is Professor of African Languages at the University of South Africa. He is a member of several educational and language associations, has published about 50 books and articles and read numerous literary and educational papers. In 1989 he received the Qwaqwa Government Award for his contribution to the advancement of the Sesotho language and culture. He holds a DLitt et Phil in African languages from the University of South Africa.

myrna p machet (south africa)

Myrna Machet lectures in the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa and holds a DLitt et Phil from the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg. Her areas of specialisation include the child reader and the effect of multiculturalism on reading. She has published many scholarly articles, one of which was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award by the Educational Press Association of America in 1993.

ingrid pramling (sweden)

Ingrid Pramling is Associate Professor in the Department of Methodology and Teacher Education, Primary Education, at the University of Gothenburg. She holds a PhD from this university, has published scholarly articles,

written several books in Swedish on preschool education and children's thinking, and is the author of *Learning to learn: a study of Swedish preschool children*. She is the chairperson of the Swedish Committee of the Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescholaire.

lilia ratcheva-stratieva (bulgaria)

Lilia Ratcheva-Stratieva, a graduate of Sofia University, has written five children's books, several articles on children's literature, and translated over 25 books from Polish and English. In 1992 she founded Zlatostrouy, a private publishing house for children's literature. She has hosted a television programme on children's books, received several awards (including the Polish IBBY Section Award) and is the president of the Bulgarian Section of IBBY.

f e m k senkoro (tanzania)

FEMK Senkoro is a senior lecturer of Kiswahili and Comparative Literature at the University of Dar es Salaam. He has published nine books (including a Swahili novel), translations into Kiswahili, and more than 50 articles on African literature. The theme of his PhD covers the journey motif in folktales from Zanzibar. His current projects include a translation of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the chocolate factory* into Kiswahili.

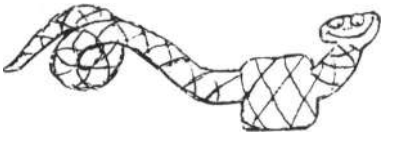
john stephens (australia)

John Stephens is an Associate Professor of English at Macquarie University in Sydney. A graduate of Melbourne and Sydney Universities, he is the author of three books (including *Language and ideology in children's fiction*) and numerous scholarly papers. He is currently working on a study of the relationships between Australian children's literature and cultural practice.

Multiculturalism in recent Australian children's fiction:

(re-)constructing selves through personal and national histories

john stephens



Multiculturalism has been a recognised facet of Australian life for about 30 years, and has been expressed as official government policy for over 20 years. It is not yet a fact of life, however: its conceptual existence does not guarantee equality or tolerance amongst all cultural groups within society; there are ongoing debates about its shape, its effects, and its future direction;[1] Australians in general are confused about the meaning and consequences of multiculturalism (McAllister 1993:71); and within the 50 percent of Australians who might be described as "British Australians" (Castan 1990:77) there are often stirrings of a nostalgia for the more monocultural life-style which pertained around the middle of the century. Australian children's literature has responded in two ways to this situation: on the one hand there are some inexplicit expressions of nostalgia, especially in picture books (Stephens 1994:102–6); on the other hand, when multicultural themes are explicitly evoked, the effect has been unequivocal promotion of a multicultural ideology, either by self-consciously producing it or by "reflecting" it as a tangible social condition. In the six years from 1989 to 1994 about 90 "multicultural" children's books were published in Australia;[2] the

winners of the Office of Multicultural Affairs award for 1994 were chosen from a list of 29 books published in 1993.

This paper deals with some examples of fiction for children which overtly promote an ideology of multiculturalism. To do this, I will be examining two kinds of texts: historical fictions, which discover inherent multicultural tendencies preceding modern multicultural policy, and hence function to naturalise modern policy (O'Neill, *So far from Skye*; Alexander, *Mavis Road medley*); and personal histories, in which exploration of a protagonist's background functions to construct a multicultural subjectivity (Marchetta, *Looking for Alibrandi*; Baillie, *The China coin*). These novels still pivot on the dominant theme of children's books, that of personal identity development, but the construction of individual subjectivities is pursued in interaction with the idea of a minority culture's sense of identity, and functions as an analogy for a national development of multicultural awareness and agency.

In 1991, OMA, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, established the Multicultural Children's Literature Awards, with the intention of fostering books which reflect Australia's cultural diversity. The Office has since articulated six criteria against which entrants are judged. These are that a book should:

1. include insights into a non-Anglo culture within Australia;
2. present a comparison/contrast of an Anglo culture with another;
3. depict an active, conscious integration of cultures;
4. include insights into racism or clash of cultures;
5. include insights into issues of social justice/social harmony;
6. include insights into the immigration experience/loneliness/alienation.

The (elusive) metanarrative underpinning these criteria conforms to the very general principles expressed in a 1982 paper issued by the Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs, which outlines four principles perceived as essential for a multicultural society: social cohesion; respect for cultural identity and awareness of Australia's cultural diversity; equal opportunity and access for all Australians; and equal responsibility for commitment to and participation in Australian society (Hawkins 1989:233). The OMA Award criteria are in essence based on these principles. How these are put into practice is by selecting books where the issue is naturally integrated into the story line, or, put another way, where the multicultural society is depicted as "just a fact of life" (Austin 1993:203). These are loose criteria, and enable awards to be made to books which actively advocate multiculturalism: thus of the four books I have chosen to talk about in this paper, all have either won the OMA award (Baillie 1992; Marchetta 1993) or been shortlisted for it (Alexander 1992; O'Neill 1993). The judges examine only the content; questions of value or of effective narrative method are deemed to be already solved because of the initial process of selection: the short-list is chosen from books referred to OMA by the Australian Children's Book Council Book of the Year Award judges. Not to put too fine a point on it, what we have is a somewhat ineptly operated award for political correctness, and while I do not have any difficulty with awards going to books like those I am concerned with here, I think that we are seeing some very uneven outcomes, especially at the picture book end.

I argued in a 1990 paper that only a small number of books published in Australia by the late 1980s had dealt with multicultural issues in any radical way – that is, in a way which articulates multiculturalism at the heart of the book, rather than more cosmetically. Although in the period since then the representation of inter-cultural experience has, with very few exceptions, continued to be mediated by

British Australians, there has been a perceptible shift in the treatment of positionality, with the result that the experience of members of minority communities is more frequently depicted from an insider perspective. Novels depicting migration experiences or experiences anchored in a minority culture still usually pivot on the dominant theme of children's books, that of personal identity development, but in each of the novels discussed here the construction of a character's individual subjectivity is now inextricable from the character's sense of cultural affiliation and intercultural positioning. As a consequence, development of a personal identity functions as an analogy for a national development of multicultural awareness and agency.

A pervasive problem in the fiction dealing with multiculturalism in the 70s and 80s was that it inadvertently re-inscribed the marginalisation of minorities by reproducing the limited focalisation strategies generally characteristic of children's fiction and positioning the focaliser within the dominant culture. In practical terms, this meant that while the novels pivot on notions of alterity, minority groups were excluded from focalising roles and hence from the privilege of narrative subjectivity. The consequence is that so-called multicultural experience could only be represented from a British Australian perspective. The absence of significant migrant voices, of subject positions for children from minority groups, ultimately leads to a partial, and hence false, representation of the Australian experience of multiculturalism. Further, the practice of focalising through the perspective of the majority culture sustains a problem of representation, insofar as ethnic otherness is implicitly depicted as deviating from a norm and hence inevitably subordinate. As soon as this is pointed out it seems blindingly obvious, though practice is still slow to change. It might have been expected that a more sophisticated sense of cultural perspective would have been enabled by the international fashion for multiple focalisation over the past decade, but this does

not seem to have happened. Rather, many authors appear to have grasped the simpler principle of presenting events and perceptions as narrated or focalised by a member of a cultural minority. Thus of the four novels to be discussed here only *Mavis Road medley* employs more than one focaliser. Its two focalisers are in fact British Australians, but because Alexander has used her genre – time-slip fantasy – to project them half a century into the past she is able to replicate the acute displacement of migration, so that Didi and Jamie experience feelings of social exclusion equivalent to those felt by the actual immigrants they meet. *Looking for Alibrandi* employs the simplest expedient, first person narration – perhaps an obvious strategy for Marchetta to use because she is herself a product of an Italian Australian community. In the other two novels processes of displacement, entrance into intercultural spaces, and the emergence of a multicultural subjectivity are focalised by a single character: Morag in *So far from Skye*, and Leah in *The China coin*.

In addition to this principle of focalisation, two other important elements are setting (both time and place) and the process of discovering, telling and recuperating history. Both *So far from Skye* and *Mavis Road medley* continue a process I identified in my earlier paper: successful "multicultural" books are often those which explore the theme by focussing on aspects of culture-contact in Australia preceding the mass migration which has transformed Australian society into what it is today. Hence they advocate an ideology pertinent to contemporary Australia but probably anachronistic for the earlier historical periods. The process can be described as one of rewriting social and cultural history for the purpose of reshaping the present. In contrast, *Looking for Alibrandi* and *The China coin* depict characters in quest of histories which may help to explain the present and tell them who they are. On a wider level, *The China coin* reflects Australia's ideological tranformation from a policy of wanting immigrants to assimilate into

a dominant monoculture to a policy of multiculturalism. Leah, a child with little or no knowledge of her mixed origins, is the paradigm of total assimilation. Her journey through China in quest of her mother's ancestral village and the other half of the broken coin which is her mother's "heritage" is also a quest for a self who inhabits, and is made meaningful by, history. *The China coin* thus makes a significant contribution to multicultural children's literature in its concern with origins and aftermaths, since, obviously enough, the difference between assimilation and multiculturalism resides in the mediation of these moments. It offers the possibility that displacement and relocation will lead to a recuperation of origins through a reconciliation of "now" with "then" and "here" with "there", and thence into the constitution of a new self which belongs simultaneously to both places and times.

Subjects function within social formations largely in terms of their personal histories, in the sense that we interpret our experiences by evoking the meanings which have developed within our particular social formations. Such structures of meaning may be immediately interpersonal, or familial, or regional, or national, and so on. History, in this sense, has a crucial operation in multicultural contexts or communications: whose history is accessed or accessible, that is, is ideologically dominant? How does one person's history relate to larger social formations? These questions are generally important in narrative fictions, but have specific bearing in two aspects: whose voice tells the history of the characters? and which characters are endowed with agency, and which are only subjected to social and ideological formations? Or, in other words, which singular histories enter into larger social formations as active agents?

The four novels all to varying extents illustrate how the forms of fiction – especially shape, pattern, and closure – function to confirm a particular ideological perspective

on multiculturalism. All four trace a trajectory from states of displacement and alienation to a state of community and belonging, although this state is seen to be very contingent in *Mavis Road medley* and suffers severe rupture at the end of *The China coin*.

The historical romance *So far from Skye* is a saga of migration, and it paradigmatically reflects the nexus between multiculturalism and migration by portraying a journey – both literal and metaphoric – from a condition of displacement and alienation to a new state of belonging within a society which is more benevolent economically and more cosmopolitan. The process which the book narrates is both a specific example and a general pattern. Its specificity is rendered even more particular by the dedication to the author's own great-great-grandparents, who emigrated to Australia with other displaced Skye crofters in 1852, and whose names are used for the parents of the central family. A more general pattern emerges as the small community from Talisker evidences a characteristic range of markers of ethnicity – self-identification as a community and a sense of difference from others, and, more specifically, language, religion (exclusive and often intolerant), customs and folk beliefs, music (Gaelic songs, fiddle, bagpipes), and particular artifacts (for example, the *cas chrom*, or foot-plough, which Donald MacDonald brings from Skye to Australia), most of which have a symbolic function within the framework of the novel.

These markers are an inevitable aspect of an historical novel, but O'Neill skilfully presents them in such a way as both to elicit their attributes as nuances of ethnicity and to articulate several of them as specific socio-cultural forms of general human behaviour. In doing this, she evokes a national myth which Alan Mayne has characterised as the Australian "settler psyche":

> In [Australian] representations of ourselves in literature, history, and popular culture, our national myths are drawn from the fellow feeling that we claim was born as we settled the land (1989:80).

O'Neill transforms the ethnically specific into the settler psyche by two quite obvious means. The first is by an accumulation of incidents which serve to modulate ethnically specific traits. Not only do the emigrants develop a tentative bilingualism, learning the English they will need to find employment, but Donald MacDonald suffers discomfiture when, to mollify the drunken Irish bullock-driver, he assents that "Irish and Gaelic ... [are] much the same really" (138), which raises the question of whether the crucial elements in such cultural forms as language are the similarities or the differences.[3] It is a small example of how the whole novel tends to pivot on the balance and interplay between similarity and difference.

An example of another kind, now bearing on custom and, indirectly, religion, occurs with the baptism of a baby girl born during a fierce storm on the voyage over. The baby is given the name of the ship, Georgiana, to commemorate their survival, but Angus MacRae grumbles that "There's never been a child on Skye called Georgiana ... It's not a Skye name at all. Why can't they give the girl a proper name like Kirsty or Catriona or Flora?" (p 88). Symbolically, the birth and the naming represent the emigrants' transition from one life to another. But MacRae is the traveller who will never make that transition: the purpose of his journey is to find his wife, who had been transported after he had denounced her for theft. MacRae is overbearing and tyrannical, practising a narrow-minded and intolerant religion; it is thus not only a satisfactory outcome that, at the end of the novel, his wife should have assimilated into Australian society and taken another husband, and his brow-beaten son, Rory, should have run away, but

that the families from Skye find that they can approve of this behaviour. Hence the only dislikable character in the novel functions to represent an extreme of intolerance within the culture which the other characters transcend through an opening out of cultural attitudes induced by a wider experience of the world. They have come a long way from the acute "insularity" of their origin, a progress thematically disclosed in, for example, a conversation between Morag and Allan, the two elder MacDonald children, on the evening before leaving their home in Talisker. Confirming that people from neighbouring islands will also be forced to leave, Allan continues:

> One day we might even meet someone from South Uist or Barra out in the Colony. But I don't think we'd really want to be meeting them, Morag. We'd do better just to stick to the Skye folk (p 6).

Alan's statement is palpably naive, but O'Neill seems concerned to display such thematic implications quite prominently.

This latter example unfolds into the second means of expressing the transformation of ethnically specific into settler psyche, through a structural relationship and pattern of replication between the novel's first two chapters and the two final chapters. An obvious symbolic link is made by parallel descriptions of eagles. Immediately following the passage quoted in the previous paragraph, the children's attention is caught by "a great sea-eagle" which "soared in slow circles far above their heads" and eventually "plummeted to earth" (6). On the final page, between a Gaelic psalm and a snatch of an old folk song, lies a description of a second eagle: "Far above their heads a wedge-tailed eagle soared into a blue sky, circling and circling, higher and higher" (204). The novel's close replicates, in a pattern of sameness and difference, that earlier moment, brought together with the moment which concludes Chapter two (a psalm and another verse from the

same folk song) as the steamer carries the islanders away from Skye. The earlier mood of grief tinged with hope is recuperated at the close, as Island culture is celebrated in the new setting.

The exploration of cultural sameness and difference is also focused in the concluding chapters through Morag's friendship with Kal-Kal, a local Aboriginal girl. This friendship takes Morag a long way from "sticking to the Skye folk", but the effect is intensified by its transformation of two motifs which conclude Chapter one – the "old songs and stories" which embody a more essential culture than the culture recognised by religion, and "the small white shell" which Morag picked up in Talisker and carries in her pocket (14–15). In Chapter 14, Morag and Kal-Kal discover a shared experience: "My grandma ... taught me all the old songs and the old stories" (175). That is, while the actual details may be different (different songs, different stories), the two girls have identified a common, essential human process: the transmission of a culture through song and story from generation to generation. They then embark on a process of cultural exchange which leads them to another contiguity, as they discover that both of their peoples have been dispossessed to make space for sheep. The novel does not pursue this more superficial analogy, however, and it may have to be read as an awkward false note. That the exploited labourers from Skye become implicated in the continued dispossession of Aboriginal Australians is a fact too disruptive to enter a settler narrative posited on an ideology of self- and social-advancement through migration. Attention falls rather on the friendship between the two girls and their process of cultural exchange which culminates in an exchange of gifts on New Year's Eve, when Kal-Kal gives Morag an emu feather necklace and receives in return the white shell which Morag brought with her from Skye.

One of the central issues in Australian debates about the form and nature of multiculturalism is the status to be accorded to the British Australian "host" culture, since definitions of "multicultural" tend to imply "non-Anglo" – see, for example, the Hirst Schauble-Castan exchange (1990) or Gunev (1993: 448–449). *So far from Skye* has a complex relationship with this issue, inasmuch as it not only portrays the settler psyche affirmatively, but also acts as a reminder to British Australians that some of their ancestors spoke a language other than English, had experienced "third world" living conditions, and were often narrow and intolerant. In doing that, though, it also asserts that early migrants to Australia were not just ethnically and linguistically diverse, but that their *ad hoc* multiculturalism was the basis for a distinct new culture.

So far from Skye used the genre of historical romance to depict a transition from displacement and alienation to a state of belonging within a more benevolent society. *Mavis Road medley* introduces its historical perspective through a different genre, that of time-slip fantasy. When two teenagers (Didi and Jamie), virtually strangers to one another, are transported from the late 1980s to 1933, the temporal displacement they experience transforms them into outsiders, pseudo-immigrants in their own country. The representation of a society in transition involves other social issues beside cultural diversity, though the most notable are its inclusion of issues of individual development, gender issues, and ideas about political diversity. The novel is also about using the past to understand the present, as a way of grasping cultural difference across time as well as ethnicity. In this last aspect, the novel makes very clear how historical fiction grounds its account of multiculturalism in a depiction of a society that is always in transition. On the one hand, in 1933 Didi assures some Jewish immigrants that "Migrants will come to this country from every single continent in the world ... We've become a very multi-cultural nation" (p 159), thus linking

them into an inexorable chain of immigration. On the other hand, the novel gives short shrift to "old" Australians who oppose change and want to preserve an imaginary monoculture: thus a proto-fascist group of the 1930s, known as the New Guard, is depicted both as thuggish and as situated outside the tide of history, the recourse to violence by some of its supporters ultimately futile. There is an implication that the neo-fascism of the late 20th century is of the same order:[4] for example, the minority, extreme right *Australians Against Further Immigration* party opposes the policy of multiculturalism, asserting that if it were abandoned "our proud and unique Australian culture can once again prosper without the threat of drowning in a sea of opposing cultures" (propaganda pamphlet, 1995). The Great Depression setting of *Mavis Road medley* is also pertinent, because the long recession of the 80s and 90s has produced a comparable response (amongst a small minority of people), in Australia as in other parts of the world.

Mavis Road medley is at times shamelessly heavy-handed in its presentation of such themes, though the process is readily enabled by the constant and pervasive sense of "how different everything was" (p 33). In Didi and Jamie's focalising of the people they meet, everybody is different and at least slightly alien: for example, social custom and interaction, body language, and dress codes are all strange, regardless of ethnic origins or orientations. From their outsider perspective, they learn how in a multicultural society individuals can belong to several communities with overlapping memberships, a situation which is figured by the inhabitants of the house at 54 Mavis Road. Mrs Finkelstein's boarders all speak at least four languages (p 126), and come from various countries and from both urban and rural communities. Conversation, banter and argument amongst the boarders, and talk of their fears and aspirations, represents the operation of community in diversity. A sharing of music underscores this depiction of community in diversity,

especially through Jamie's ability as a harmonica player to pick up a melody and harmonise. The musical exchange gives body to the metaphor of the novel's title, a medley, or "a piece of music combining airs or passages from various sources".

The other two novels, in which history is now linked with contemporary individuality, focus their multicultural themes through versions of *Bildungsroman.* In such novels, multiculturalism functions as an ideological formation within which a divided or fractured subjectivity achieves unity of being. *The China coin* is a *Bildungsroman* in the form of a travel narrative and here, as I remarked earlier, displacement and relocation lead to a recuperation of origins and hence to the constitution of a new self. *Looking for Alibrandi* pursues the same process and outcome, and is able to be very explicit about its handling of multiculturalism as theme because it is mapped onto the genre of contemporary romance. The title, in a rather obvious way, declares that the narrative will centre around a quest for selfhood,[5] and in this quest the presuppositions and assumptions of the main character, Josephine Alibrandi, are systematically dismantled so that she can piece together a new sense of self from the fragments. Unlike the other novels I am discussing here, the process of dislocation is not physical in the sense that Josephine moves from one place to another, but is rather a sense of rupture both within and across social boundaries. Indeed, the notion of somehow moving away is used to figure a failure to achieve an agential subjectivity. At a point early in the novel, chafing against the circumscribing social conventions of her Italian community, Josephine expresses a desire "to run one day. Run for my life. To be free and think for myself. Not as an Australian and not as an Italian and not as an in-between. I'll run to be emancipated. If my society will let me" (p 40). The desire, and the inevitable social constraint on that desire, expresses the dilemma of what might be termed "the intercultural subject", someone who feels out of place in both the cultures she moves between in her day-to-day

existence but also perceives that being "in-between" is the most radical displacement of all. The possibility of seeking some other possible space is thematically negated because that is what Michael Andretti, Josephine's natural father, had done, and on his return 17 years later he can only become an emotionally whole person by forming a relationship with the daughter he did not know he had. Josephine's sense of alienation is increased because of her illegitimacy, a severe stigma in the eyes of a traditional Italian community. By including this issue, and then further compounding her character's alienation by placing her in an exclusive school in which she feels she belongs to a different social class,[6] Marchetta has intensified Josephine's sense of never belonging, of being a fractured self in every social context. Generically, the novel draws on teen romance,[7] perhaps influenced by soap opera in the sheer excess inherent in the components of the main character's situation, an excess which also pervades many of the novel's events,[8] but the objective seems to be to use excess to enable the novel's themes and issues to be stated overtly and, by assuming familiarity with such generic codes, to assure readers that textual outcomes are transferable to actual lived experience. The novel's strategy of using first-person narration is an important factor here. In principle, first-person narration by a member of a minority community has the potential to be a powerful means of expressing subjectivity; Josephine's propensity to melodrama and overstatement in describing her sense of lack of agency enables her transition from an intercultural subject to a multicultural subject to be articulated very overtly.

Romance characteristically charts a primary character's progress from a state of lack to a state of plenitude. This progress has useful potential for advocacy if desirable social change can be mapped onto it. The effect is clear in Josephine's case, as initially her desires and ambitions appear to be impeded by her status as a particular kind of intercultural subject and the barriers this involves. In

romance advancement forward for the heroine is usually achieved through marriage to a hero of higher social and economic status. *Looking for Alibrandi* reworks this formula as a multicultural theme by displacing it into a quest for the father. Thus Josephine's first disastrous date with Jacob Coote, which quickly breaks down over issues of cultural differences and expectations, becomes transmuted into a pseudo-date with her father, during which the basis for a relationship is formed while sharing "Italian" food (pizza, garlic bread, coffee). Further, teen romance, as distinct from *Mills and Boon* novels, recognises that romantic relationships achieved by the end of the novel are temporary (see Pausacker 1993:5), but Josephine is denied even that. The possibility of her early dream of upward socio-economic movement through a relationship with upper-class John Barton is foreclosed when he commits suicide; in a parallel movement, her romance with "lower"-class Jacob Coote has ended and remains no more than a vague future possibility. Neither is offered as a pathway towards a multicultural subjectivity – before that can be possible, Josephine has to find reconciliation with her originary culture, through reconciliation with the father, who represents an actual path to social and economic advancement, and with her grandmother, whose secret transgression against her culture and inability to pursue the consequences of that transgression deprived her of personal agency and left her in a life-long situation where, subjected to her culture, all she can do is go on implementing and transmitting its restrictive codes.

The mapping of multicultural progress onto romance occurs still more radically in the novel. The suggestion that female readers of romance "may identify with the powerful, active lover as well as with the passive, innocent heroine" (Radford 1992:16) explains reader responses both to Josephine and to Michael. The latter is a puzzling figure, until we see that his early indifference and even hostility is the equivalent of the romance hero's, where such behaviour conventionally masks

a powerful attraction to the heroine, and his transformation into a figure of power and authority comes to signify a capacity to cross cultural boundaries. Josephine is constituted as a passive, "innocent" heroine by the constraints of her Italian community, reinforced by her sense that as an illegitimate child she must be seen to conform or else she confirms her society's prejudices. Innocence is a somewhat specific quality here: while in many ways she is a feisty and rebellious character, going so far as to break the nose of a classmate who offends her by making racist slurs, her innocence is encoded through her essential compliance with the mores of her culture and especially through the preservation of virginity, in contrast to her friends. Up to a point this reflects Australian *Dolly* romances, where the heroine tends to stand firm while virginities tumble all around, though it also relates archetypally to older forms of romance in which a father finds a lost daughter – Shakespeare's *A Winter's tale* is an excellent example, especially insofar as finding the lost daughter also results in reconciliation with the wife, and because the usual pattern is for the daughter to be raised from a lowly to a royal state. I am not suggesting that these more arcane romances (at least arcane for adolescent readers) are particular pretexts for *Looking for Alibrandi*, but that the novel conforms to common romance patterns as well as more specific features of contemporary popular romance fiction. It is thus a good illustration of how multiculturalism can be advocated by harnessing the forms of a popular genre.

The movement from lack to plenitude which informs the use of romance forms in *Looking for Alibrandi* also shapes the development of multicultural awareness in the other three novels, though in *The China coin* it is rendered as more contingent, its expression beyond personal experience fissured by the events of Tiananmen Square in June, 1989. Each is grounded in an assumption that has been neatly formulated by CL Ten: "We make choices as persons who have been

shaped by our cultures and our historical experiences. Our culture helps us to map out the available options and to give significance to them" (1993:8). A common qualifying strategy, though, is to depict originary cultures as marked by lack as well as plenitude. Characters, and by implication readers, have to learn to accept the possibility that any culture has limitations and that it might be desirable to transcend them. Exposure to other cultures increases the chance of recognising and transcending the limitations of our own, and hence a growth in autonomy of choice that offers the plenitude of agential subjectivity.

Books such as those I have been discussing assume this principle as a grounding truth. They do not envisage any problems with the notion of multiculturalism; nor, implicitly, do they see as an issue the question of whether social intervention is needed to encourage the development of a pluralist, multicultural society. The problem, rather, is how to disseminate and inculcate the ideology of multiculturalism. Each book finds ways to do this, either by disclosing inherent multicultural tendencies in earlier Australian history, or by delineating personal histories which plot a transformation from an intercultural subjectivity to a multicultural subjectivity.

Notes

1 See for example the 1990 exchange amongst Hirsh, Schauble and Castan in Overland about the origins of tolerance in Australian society, or Kukathas's argument that there is no need for a policy on multiculturalism, but that "People from particular religious or cultural or intellectual or moral backgrounds should have every right and the freedom to speak or to play a role in public affairs. But they enjoy these rights and freedoms as individual citizens, rather than as members or representatives of particular groups" (1993:28).

2 There are some issues of categorisation which make a precise number indeterminable. This is not just the problem of "What is a multicultural book?", but also involves the question whether to include books by or about Australian indigenous peoples who, as Gunew points out (1993:455), "have distanced themselves from multiculturalism, which they see as being defined in terms of cultures of migration".

3 Language is, of course, a vital factor in minority culture experience: to have one's own first language set aside, or, as often, pejorated, and to be unable to understand, to reproduce, and to use the discourse of the dominant culture is an exacerbation of otherness.

4 One of the characters describes the New Guard as "crackpots" (p 127), and their representation in the novel confirms this, but also indicates that they are a social threat. Political groups of the extreme right in contemporary Australia replicate some of these attitudes, and presumably Alexander is glancing at this. The remark, bordering on parody, by the offensive, fascistic George that "Those Yid bastards steal jobs from dinkum Aussies like me" (p 68) is only slightly cruder than "One in four jobs (25%) created between 1982 and 1990 were taken by immigrants. The Government's reverse discrimination practices which emphasise the employment of persons of ethnic background will ensure this will continue" (propaganda leaflet from the *Australians Against Further Immigration Party*, 1995).

5 The author's preferred title for the novel was *The Emancipation of Alibrandi*, which points even more directly to Josephine's growth towards agency (Ridge 1993:19).

6 Josephine's sense of exclusion from wealthy Anglo society generates a desire towards that society: "I want to belong to [Ivy's] world. The world of sleek haircuts and upper-class privileges. People who know famous people and lead educated lives. A world where I can be accepted. Please, God, let me be accepted by someone other than the underdog" (p 33). Conveniently, she is moving towards that world: a marker of her trajectory is when she gives up her part-time job at Macdonald's for part-time office-work in her father's law firm.

7 The romance genre explicitly cited in the novel, though, is *Mills and Boon* romance (p 198). Despite the apparent rejection of this paradigm here – "Josie, life is not a *Mills and Boon* book. People fall out of love. People disappoint other people and they find it very hard to forgive" – *Looking for Alibrandi* comes very close to achieving a *Mills and Boon* closure.

8 Especially: the revelation that Josephine's narrow-minded grandmother had an extramarital affair during which she conceived Josephine's mother; the suicide of John Barton.

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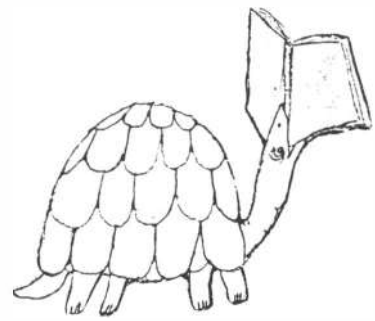
Teaching tolerance through children's books

lilia ratcheva-stratieva



The problem of tolerance and intolerance is not recent. It has existed for thousands of years. The refusal to accept the unknown, and the different, is as old as the world. It is inherent in people. Everyone is affected by the syndrome of not accepting the other, having been at some point either unaccepting or unaccepted, and in most cases both.

This creates a pedagogical opportunity, as the syndrome may be influenced, in order to facilitate the acceptance of others.

Literature for children is one of the important tools in overcoming this syndrome. This problem has been treated in a number of books for children. There is a passage in Alan Alexander Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* when Kanga and Baby Roo come to the Wood. In spite of being a Bear of Very Little Brain, Pooh feels that something is not quite right, the question "Where did they come from?" bothers him and he starts feeling a vague unease and aversion to their coming. Rabbit puts this feeling into words. He says that that is precisely what he does not like. They wake up one morning to find a strange animal among

them. An animal that they have not even heard about. An animal that carries its children in its pockets. What will happen if Rabbit, too, started carrying his children in his pockets ... how many pockets would he need!

This episode shows a typical feature of human behaviour – the fear of the unknown and the reaction to it. Something is fearsome when it is unfamiliar. In adults the reaction may not be fear but unease, which will subsequently turn to unfriendliness, hostility and intolerance to what is different and what therefore may be a threat.

Milne divides the animals' reaction into stages. At first they are alarmed and turn unfriendly, then they feel an urge to defend themselves by chasing away the cause of their anxiety. The urge to defend themselves is realised in an act of aggression – they kidnap Baby Roo thinking that this will make Kanga leave the Wood forever. Yet Milne goes on to finish this episode with the acceptance of Kanga and Baby Roo, that is he differentiates and analyses the stages in the behavioural process towards the unfamiliar – intolerance, acquaintance, acceptance.

So Rabbit starts playing with the kidnapped Baby Roo and likes Roo more and more. Pooh likes Kanga's leaps and sadly reflects that "Some can and Some can't" and that is precisely why he comes to admire her and tries to imitate her. Kanga, on the other hand, when giving Piglet the spoonful of medicine, explains that the medicine is "very tasty once you get used to it. "Those words give the reader a key to overcoming the fear of the unknown, the anxiety, hostility and intolerance to what is different – getting used to it, getting acquainted with the other party, is the solution.

A similar episode is used by Tove Jansson in *Enchanted winter*. In the cold winter, at sunrise, the whole Moomin Valley is awakened by the distinct, deafening sound of a horn. In the pale light of the morning winter sun a big Hemul is skiing down the slope. He blows a shiny brass horn and is evidently feeling great. Not so with the several freezing creatures who pat their paws in the snow and are not quite sure if they should approve of this show.

With Tove Jansson the mechanism of behaviour is yet more distinct as compared with Milne's. Too-tiki says that there will be no more peace and quiet in the valley. While Moomintrol (who has longed for somebody as merry and extrovert as the Hemul, and not distant or secretive) asks himself worriedly why he does not like the Hemul. Further on, dazed by the Hemul's yellow-and-black sweater, Moomintrol momentarily realises the cause of his hostility – how very different we are from each other, he thinks. And again the negative feelings crystallise into an urge to chase away the cause of these feelings, because he will not go away on his own.

From the moment when Salome overhears by chance Too-tiki and Moomintrol conspiring in the dark to lure away the Hemul with better skiing slopes to the moment when Moomintrol tells him "Please stay with us!", Moomintrol has gone through the whole range of emotions – from anxiety and hostility, the desire to get rid of the Hemul as soon as possible, through the pangs of conscience, to this undefined feeling that makes him say "Please stay with us!". Thus Moomintrol rids himself of the accumulated anxiety and suddenly feels relieved. He is seized by the same exhilaration he feels when he wades into the sea in the summer.

The child, in which the boundary of conscious and unconscious are not as clearly defined, does not experience things in this way. This is the way an adult sees them. The young reader re-lives this differentiated mechanism of acceptance by instinctively identifying with the character – in this way the young person both achieves self-knowledge and learns the way to overcome the above-mentioned negative emotions. The way to overcome them is through acquaintance, which replaces fear and indifference with attachment, negative with positive emotions, anxiety, alarm and aversion with a sense of needing the other party.

In the fairy tale *The Beauty and the Beast*, to take another example, every evening at the appointed hour the Beast comes to the girl and they talk and talk. The Beast's outer appearance has not been specified in the fairy tale, and it becomes more and more horrible in the reader's imagination as a result of the fact that it can only be deduced from the girl's reactions. Having agreed voluntarily to live with the Beast, she has made a great sacrifice in order to save her father. Every evening his ugly body and fearsome voice make her tremble; and to the Beast's question "Am I so ugly?" she replies with "Yes" and steadfastly refuses to marry him. However, when she goes home for a short time, she realises how much she has grown attached to the Beast. This process of overcoming indifference or hostility has been called "taming" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. The fox refuses to play with the Little Prince because it has not been "tamed". To his question what "taming" is, the fox replies: "It means to get in touch with the others".

The importance that children's authors attach to the processes of "taming" and gaining mutual knowledge is suggested by the fact that many children's books are wholly devoted to tracing these processes, these mechanisms of "taming", of "getting used to the others". I shall mention only a few instances of this. The plot

of *Der Findefuchs* by Irina Korschunow may be summed up in a sentence – a fox gradually accepts a small fox cub that she has found as her own cub. The book actually is an analysis of the process of getting used to the fox cub. At first the fox does not even want to let the lonely cub she has found suckle. It is not her cub. She has not given birth to it. She has to take care of her own three cubs who will soon need meat and will make her life even harder. However, when she sees the cub shivering with cold and crying, she lies down by it at first with the idea of just warming it. Then she lets it suckle. Finally she carries it home. And only after she has run away from the hunter's dog with the small fox cub, after she has fought the badger for it and convinced the neighbour that she will keep it, does she start feeling that it is as her own child. She accepts it so thoroughly that it ceases to be the foundling and becomes just another cub, and the fox its mother. The whole story is in fact an analysis of the gradual process of building a relationship – from indifference to mutual knowledge as a result of the common experience, care and selflessness for the sake of the other. And because this process is most frequently two-sided, authors present the development of parent and child simultaneously, and ultimately the book helps both in finding their own identity and overcoming indifference and hostility. *Sonntagskind* by Gudrun Mebs is about the long way that a small orphan girl and a young woman must travel before before developing affection for each other. That is the reason they meet in the beginning of the book. From the outset they intend to stay together. Nevertheless, they go through the evolving range of mistrust, disapproval, doubt, mutual appraisal, until they reach the final decision to stay together.

An identical evolution is experienced by the characters of *Sarah, plain and tall* by Patricia MacLachlan. A father who is widowed sends an announcement to the paper that he is looking for a mother for his children. Then Sarah comes; she on

the one side and the father and two children on the other go the long way from indifference and curiosity to mutual affection and the acceptance of compromise and sacrifices for the sake of their staying together.

This aspect of human behaviour is viewed from a slightly different angle by the famous Bulgarian fiction writer Yordan Radichkov, known for his depiction of the type of primitive character (marked by a primitive, simple and limited thought) with irony and warmth. In his children's book *We the sparrows* he presents a number of situations revealing the conservatism of human nature, its inborn fear of the unfamiliar, and refusal to accept what is different. For example, the curious sparrow Chiku collects all kinds of eggs. Eventually one egg hatches to yield a snake, another a turtle, a third spiders, of which the sparrows count 100 (because they cannot count above 100). From the sparrows' viewpoint all this is senseless and irrational. It is senseless to break one shell, only in order to come into the world with another shell on your body, they reflect when they see the turtle. It is equally senseless, they decide, to put 100 children in one egg; no bird would put 100 sparrows in one egg as they would jostle like people in trams.

The sparrow called "My Dear Sir" gives expression to this conservative thinking by summarising their arguments: "Why on earth did you collect reptiles, my dear sir. Have you by any chance heard of, say, a reptile collecting sparrows?"

The Polish humorist Ludwik Jerzy Kern in his *Ferdinand the Magnificent* places his character the dog Ferdinand constantly in situations where he confronts the unfamiliar, and consequently meets with hostility and ridicule that are like an unbreakable wall. However, Ferdinand's reaction of openness, politeness,

benevolence, a good word or compliment for everybody, his desire to help whenever possible, enable him to finally break down that wall, which people all too often erect between each other. In each of the above-mentioned books the authors build up psychological tension page after page, which in the end is relieved and that is the source of the reader's catharsis and aesthetic delight. But, more importantly, these books give the developing child the opportunity to gradually learn to understand him or herself and their motives in doing things, and therefore to understand other people better and treat them not with fear, hostility and intolerance, but approach them in a way that is acceptable to both the child and the others. Most authors, in fact, go further than that – the movement from indifference or negative emotions to positive emotions ends with strong friendship and affection, a need which answers the child's desire to feel needed by others. "To me", says the fox to the Little Prince, "you are just another boy that looks just like one hundred thousand other boys and I do not need you. And you do not need me either. To you I am a fox that looks just like one hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, we will need each other. To me you'll be the only one in the world, to you I will be the only one in the world ... You can understand only what you have tamed. People do not have time to understand. They buy ready-made things from traders. But because nobody trades in friends, people have no friends anymore. If you want a friend – tame me!"

The mechanism of taming, of getting used to each other, of turning negative emotions into positive is used by authors most often in books for younger children. In books for adolescents, however, authors focus on the darker side of human nature and its destructive power, on aggression, which according to Sigmund Freud is the main obstacle to life in society. They thus affirm the values of tolerance, understanding and respect for the others by negation, by

exposing aggression. The repression of aggressive urges is the first and foremost sacrifice that society demands from the individual. That is why authors usually do not tackle the theme of the brutal, repulsive nature of aggression until adolescence. According to Bruno Bettelheim the "unconscious" is the main determining factor of human behaviour and many things in life go wrong only because of people's inclination to aggression, egotism and antisocial behaviour. However, when the unconscious impulses are at least partly realised and experienced in the imagination, their harmful potential is decreased.

In books for adolescents aggression is most often seen in the parent-child conflict. It is based on the parent's refusal to accept that the child is an individual with a free will of his own who may oppose the parent's will; it is also based on the parent's refusal to understand the needs and desires of his or her child and the attempt to impose the parent's own needs and desires on the child. It is precisely a mother's aggression that causes a similar reaction in the daughter in *Ilse Janda – 14* by Cristine Noestlinger. (Out of all Noestlinger's numerous books on the theme I chose this one because, apart from its strong impact on the reader, I have had the opportunity to observe the way it was received.) In the afterward to the Bulgarian edition of the book I urged the readers to write to me about possible outcomes for Ilse. Of the 30–odd letters that I received (written only by girls, which is normal with this book) only three replied that they were happy with their families and respected by their parents. The other letters were full of pain, real confessions about the aggression of their parents which was preventing them from becoming independent individuals.

Not surprisingly, running away from home is the usual response of the main characters in many books. The escape gives them the independence so vitally required in order to establish their own identity. People who have read such

books as children will probably grow up to be better parents, understanding how senseless it is to impose their own will on the child or to be afraid of opposition from their children. Incidentally this is why the books dealing with the parent-child conflict can equally well teach both children and parents.

As far as *Ilse Janda – 14* is concerned, readers do not interpret it as fiction, but as reality which is very much like their own. "I wonder", writes one girl, "if this story isn't real." Another says: "I am happy that in Bulgaria there are books about the problems of contemporary children."

Violence becomes more and more evident in books for adolescents even outside the parent-child conflict. *The Chocolate war* by Robert Cormier reveals that in today's world aggressive means are increasingly used, including physical destruction, in order to subdue children and to suppress and destroy individuality. Yet, just as in fairy tales, there will be the solitary fighter (Jerry Renault in *The Chocolate war*), who resists the attempt to be destroyed and subjected. What is more, the lonely heroes and heroines of those books usually resort to violence themselves, but in order to save something. In other words the violent and aggressive strain that is part of human nature can be turned to constructive purposes. Adolescents identify with the lonely fighter, experience his or her revolt, win the battle with the darker side of human nature together with the main character similarly to fairy tales (even realistic books for adolescents have a happy ending) and achieve a better understanding of this dark side of human nature.

Some books exploring the mechanism of human aggression have already become classics – like William Golding's *Lord of the flies*. The danger for the boys who find themselves on the uninhabited island after the crash (a perfect place for

playing games and having adventures) does not come from the outside, but from within the boys' nature. They re-enact the history of mankind in microcosm, only to reach the conclusion that leaders must be both powerful and evil; one of those qualities is not enough. Those who are rational are isolated and, like Golding's Ralph, perceive the source of danger: "I am afraid of ourselves". Fear, one of the mainsprings of human behaviour, lets loose aggression, cruelty, and works on mob psychology in which your belonging to a certain community hostile to the others is the only thing to save you.

"I have often been shocked," writes Golding, "when learning what we people can do to each other ... and I cannot get rid of the thought that humanity is sick." He says he looks for the illness and finds it in the most accessible place – in himself. In our nature, he says, there is a layer that we have to understand in order to control it. That is why he writes with such passion, saying to people to look for the nature of this most dangerous beast – man.

The Polish writer Alexander Minkowski in his book *Valley of the light* explores the same theme – a group of children are isolated from the adult world in a sanatorium and have to set up a society of their own with a hierarchy of values and of individuals. Again human nature, and more precisely its negative aspects, is closely examined. The Russian Vladimir Zheleznikov also places the centre of action of his novel *The Scarecrow* in a group of children isolated from the adult world – and examines the way children attack the unfamiliar, the different, the intelligent, the rational, the decent – and adults are too preoccupied to notice the children's problems. The hero of this book – Lenka – takes on the responsibility for a seemingly insignificant cutting of classes. Yet this gives the author the opportunity to draw conclusions about the nature of good and evil, about spirituality versus narrow-mindedness, about fear and cruelty latent in

human nature, culminating in the ritual burning of the dummy of Lenka, to enact her destruction. Lenka is broken – "Those are no children, no friends but jackals, foxes and wolves", she thinks. Again central to the book is the self-analysis, the gradual penetration into the secrets of human nature, and the end solution is again understanding of the problem. Lenka goes away from the small town forever, but an inscription appears on the blackboard saying "Dummy, forgive us!".

Yuri Polyakov, another young Russian fiction writer, examines apathy, indifference and cynicism, as well as aggression and cruelty in adolescence and finds them equally dangerous. In his book *100 days to discharge* he reveals that the cruelty and perversions in the Army are a result as much of inborn human cruelty as of the perverted environment in which the adolescents have grown up.

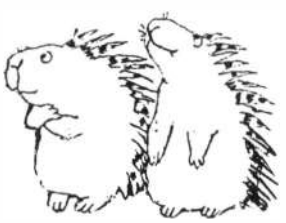
The theme of tolerance, of the fight against negative responses to the unfamiliar, against violence, is so important to literature and tied up with so many other problems discussed in children's books, that it can be illustrated by numerous examples from every national literature. The choice of works that I have quoted is to a large extent subjective, my aim being to show how children's books and later adolescent books lead the young step by step towards a knowledge of the mechanisms of human behaviour, towards building their own superego, towards the mastering of the darker impulses of human nature by developing their imagination and helping them to mature as individuals.

Before concluding I would like to tackle one more aspect of the problem. However good the books are they will be able to fulfill their function only if they reach the young readers of all countries and languages. The availability of

information, translations of those books, interaction between different cultures will not be sufficient. The real formative and educational value of these books will be realised only with the active participation of the teacher and tutor – the intermediary between children and books. There should be direct discussion of the theme of tolerance, which is the most important theme in our modern world. The lack of tolerance in all aspects of human relationships – and the differences in racial, religious, political, intellectual, material aspects – are one of the basic sources of conflict in the modern world, and probably in world history as a whole.

Literature should be used to teach tolerance in school curricula in close conjunction with – geography, history and the additional materials used in those disciplines. The better you know something, the closer you feel it. Keeping this in mind, I think that curricula should not pay so much attention to, say, the industry and raw materials of a given country but concentrate more on its people, their ways, customs and rites, their religion, their folktales, their festivals and holidays. Some American publishers have taken a great step forward and gained much experience with these types of multicultural books.

Only people that know each other, and respect other cultures, ways and customs, can live peacefully together.



Literacy in a multi-cultural environment

myrna machet

In this talk a particular aspect of literacy in a multicultural society will be discussed, namely the accessibility of Western literate stories to black children from an oral environment.

It is often assumed that a good story will cross any borders and a book judged to be good literature will be accessible to any child. However, it must be kept in mind that stories are reflections of social values, beliefs and goals that underlie and involve human interaction. Each culture will have its own stories with themes that are relevant to that particular social group. The underlying structures, as much as the stories, will reflect cultural norms and thought patterns (Stein 1988:282–283).

The African culture in South Africa is largely an oral one as indicated by the high levels of illiteracy (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:17) and research (Finnegan 1988; Ong 1982) indicates that oral and literate cultures differ radically. Thought and expression in oral cultures, even residually oral cultures, is often highly organized but this organisation differs from that of a literate culture. These differences are evident in narrative structures and affect understanding and response to literature. This factor could affect accessibility of text written within

a literate tradition to children living in an oral tradition. An oral culture, such as that of black South Africans, will look for different structures, characters and types of discourse in their literature. It cannot be assumed that those structures present in the Western literate story are accessible to the African child coming from an oral environment and that these children will relate to the same books as Westernised children. This may be true but it ought not to be accepted without investigation, especially taking into account variations in socialisation.

Story schema

Stories are a particular category of text which have a conventional structure. This structure or story schema helps the reader or listener comprehend and remember the text and can be represented in a story grammar. However, if the structure differs from that which the reader or listener is familiar, the reader or listener will be unable to identify the significant elements of the story or recognise the structure.

The story schema is important as it acts as a general framework within which detailed comprehension processes take place during encoding. This framework performs several functions. Firstly, it directs attention to certain aspects of the incoming material, for example the words "once upon a time" indicate to the listener or reader that the story will be a traditional fairy story. Secondly, the framework helps the listener or reader keep track of what has gone before and increases the predictability of what is coming. Finally, the framework indicates to the reader or listener when a section of the story is complete and can be stored, or is incomplete and must be held until further material is encoded (Mandler &

Johnson 1977:111–112). Adequate comprehension of a story requires familiarity with the particular underlying structure of the story.

Children do not automatically understand story structure. They are taught the particular structure used within their culture by parents or caregivers when they start to tell or read stories to a child.

In Western mainstream societies children are usually trained to listen for the essential elements of a Western story by their parents. Initially the parents encourage interaction and questioning from the child but gradually the parent will encourage the child to listen to a story all the way through and ask questions at the end. The parent will teach them what to listen for by asking directed questions, such as what do you think will happen now? Why did that happen?

Children coming from an oral environment will have been taught different structures and as a result listen and look for different elements (Heath 1982; 1983; 1984). Children are exposed to a stream of conversation rather than having elements of their experience isolated for them. Stories may be told by any member of the community and there is great competition to tell one's stories. Children from an early age may also act as storytellers. Stories seldom have a formal beginning or ending. The listeners often act as a chorus encouraging and responding to the storyteller. Children listen for as long as they are interested and then wander off. There is no interactive questioning in order to highlight important elements of the story.

In order to test African children's understanding of Western literate story as compared to traditional African stories two stories, a Western literate story and a

traditional story, were read to children in Standard 5. The children were between 11 and 15 years old. They were then asked to give a summary of the story. These summaries were then analysed according to a story grammar. In this research various differences in the story structure were found to influence their ability to access a Western literate story. I would like to briefly mention those particular differences (Machet 1993).

Differences between oral and literate story structure

Form of story

Oral story structure is usually cyclic whereas the literate Western story's structure is linear and connections are causal (Kaplan 1988). Research shows that the ideal form of story for Westerners is a goal based story with strong causal and temporal connections. An oral narrative does not have the controlled temporal and causal chain ordering conventions of literate narrative (Michaels 1986). Oral stories are episodic in structure and utilise a topic-associating style, which consists of a series of sections or episodes which are implicitly linked together by emphasising some person or theme. It has no plot in the way it is understood in literate societies, that is a climactic linear structure (Ong 1982). Oral stories are usually experiential in that the events happen to a person rather than the protagonist initiating and in some way controlling the action. In oral stories the protagonist is reactive rather than proactive whereas in Western stories the reverse is true.

In the research the respondents had a problem seeing logical and causal connections in a story. Whereas Western children will recall incidents which are

linked causally better than other aspects of the story this was not the case with these children (Applebee 1978:58–72; Stein 1988:290). Their recall of the stories was random. Many of the structural elements that Westerner's take for granted were not understood or perceived by these children. They recalled the stories according to an episodic structure rather than the linear structure and as a result often missed the point of the story altogether.

In Glenn's (1978) research with Western children, she found that those elements of the story that form the causal centre around which the story is organised were better recalled than other types of information. The results from this study were in fact the opposite of those of Glenn. One must conclude that these children did not organise their story around a causal centre. Respondents also seldom indicated causal connections or motivation.

A large percentage of the respondents did not include a goal which is an essential element of a Western story. Research with American English-speaking respondents (Trabasso & Nickels 1992) and Hebrew-speaking respondents (Berman 1988) indicates that by the age of nine, the vast majority of respondents include goals.

Channel constraints

In both oral and written discourse there are channel constraints, that is conditions on communicative form which are the result of the nature of the medium. However, if you consider what is involved in a speaker or writer estimating an audience's ability to make an inference, you can see the differences in spoken and written language. For example, in written language there is little information as to intonation, or gesture, or information conveyed through movement or expression

on the narrator's face. There is also no immediate feedback – no way of telling whether the audience agrees or disagrees, or has understood what is being said. One of the problems for a reader who comes from an oral background is the lack of familiarity with the conventions used in written discourse to convey emotions, or movement, to group together pieces of information so as to emphasise certain sections and to downplay others, to indicate a shift in theme or subject, and to establish and maintain perspective within a topic (Collins & Michaels 1986). These would be conveyed by an oral narrator by using facial expression, movement and intonation. Children from a predominantly oral culture may not have the background knowledge or schemata to understand or perceive the connections or structures in a piece of written text.

This in fact did prove to be the case. The children did not understand or perceive the shifts in the text indicating psychological shifts or changes in characters. For example, they were able to understand anger when it was displayed through physical aggression but not internal reactions or state of mind.

They were also unable to identify important sections of the text. They failed to centre on a single topic or series of closely related topics and there was little thematic development or lexical cohesion. Their summaries had few lexicalised markers other than "and" between topics which made them difficult to follow if one was expecting the summaries to focus on a single event or object.

Formulaic

Oral "literature" is made up of formulas or clichés which have accumulated meaning within the society (Bynum 1978; Foley 1981). Although an oral story teller will tell the story differently each time, the story will be composed of set

formulas which already exist in the culture. The individuality lies in the storyteller's ability to combine these formulaic elements effectively and dramatically rather than to display literary originality, as would be expected in a literate society (Opland 1983:52, 164). Redundancy is closely related to the use of formulas. The elements of oral thought and expression tend to be groups of similar or antithetical terms, phrases or clauses (Bowerman 1981). For example, in oral discourse the soldier will be the brave soldier; the princess will be the beautiful princess.

These factors are important when considering accessibility of text because in a culture with a high residue of orality it is possible that readers will relate better to works that display a formulaic character with familiar clichés which they can recognise. This in fact did prove to be the case in terms of clichés and structure. Fourteen children were interviewed in depth and all the children except one preferred traditional trickster tales or fairy tales to other forms of story books even though they were past the age that most children have stopped reading fairy stories. They also used redundant expressions in their own summaries, such as the wicked wolf.

Emphasis on action

In oral literature the emphasis is on actions and incidents – to tell the story – because of the relatively short attention span of the listening audience. Dialogue is also used extensively to advance the plot. The narrative style concentrates on presenting a clear visual picture of outward appearance and movement (Ho 1990). In literate stories the emphasis is often on inner growth and character development rather than action *per se*. This was substantiated in my own research (Machet 1993). The elements of the story that had a high level of activity were better remembered than descriptive elements.

Physical violence

Oral stories concentrate on physical behaviour rather than focusing on interior crises and often portray gross physical violence. To a certain extent the excessive amount of violence found in oral literature can be explained by the physical hardships of life in many oral societies. In a world where events, such as drought, floods, disease and other disasters, take place without any apparent cause, it is easier to blame the personal malevolence of another human being – a magician or witch (Ong 1982).

In the one book which was used in the testing there was a fight with some robbers. This incident was remembered very clearly by most respondents. The children all enjoyed violence, such as the wolf eating the grandmother in *Little Red Riding Hood*. But they did not enjoy violence that too clearly reflected their real situation, such as a story[1] which closely paralleled the situation in the townships at the time. This was surprising as one would have expected that stories which enable the children to work through their anxieties about the violence would have been popular. However, this was not the case and they all responded negatively to the story which had specifically been chosen because it seemed relevant to the conditions in South Africa. But the children's reaction was negative even though the book had a strong message of hope.

Characters

The characters in oral narrative are usually flat, heroic and stereotypical as these types of characters are easier to remember (Bowerman 1981:162). This differs from the more rounded character typically used in literate stories. In my research the respondents summaries showed the characters as one dimensional and no attempt was made at characterisation in any of the summaries.

Ending

In the Western framework no story would be considered complete without a final event that ties all the threads of a story together and indicates the relevance of the other events. However, this may not be an essential element of an oral story framework. Research indicates that although all stories in oral tradition have a dramatic structure (Fischer 1963:237) they do not necessarily include some form of resolution of conflict. Conflict may be created and deliberately not resolved (Finnegan 1967:30). A number of stories from oral tradition have "bad endings" from the point of view of a Western reader (Brewer 1985:183). This was very clear in the empirical research where a number of traditional African stories were given to Westerners to read. They all found the endings very unsatisfactory.

The respondents in the empirical research also failed to include a cogent resolution or to provide evaluative comments both of which have been identified as a common trait of Western narrators (Michaels 1986). The children did not see a final resolution as an essential part of a story. They failed to use devices that would have enabled them to evaluate, interpret and conclude the stories adequately by Western standards. The children did not attempt to make their summaries meaningful but simply listed those events they could remember. Many omitted the last event or failed to complete the sequence as they did not see its relevance. Because they did not understand the underlying meaning of the story they failed to recognise and remember which elements were important. The emphasis of the summaries was on action and there was no attempt at evaluation or interpretation.

In the second part of the research project children were interviewed in order to find out more about their likes and dislikes as related to an oral culture.

Communal orientation

Respondents preferred characters who were communally orientated and disliked characters that displayed individualism. The book liked least by the respondents was one that focused on a person's attempt to be different rather than conforming to the group. This is consistent with strong communal values which have been identified as being present in African communities as opposed to the value "individualism" which is an important value in Western communities (Machet 1989). This finding was consistent with other research (Wilson & Ramphele 1989) which has been carried out amongst African groups in South Africa, where the value "ubuntu" (caring for other people; humaneness) has been identified as a major African value.

The importance of this value was also reflected in the children's choice of favourite character in a number of books. The majority of children indicated that their reason for choosing a particular character as their favourite character was that the person was helpful. In particular, the children liked characters who were shown to be helpful to older people.

The strong respect for elders and for males (common in oral societies) also had an effect on the children's response. In one of the stories which was used the children move the father who is snoring outside because his snoring disturbed them. This was not acceptable to many of the children as it showed disrespect to an important authority figure. Westernised children on the other hand found the incident amusing.

An interesting aspect of this is that children especially from the rural areas were very chauvinistic and regarded males as superior. In one of the stories used in the

tests the younger sister saves an older brother by using karate. Children found this unacceptable and changed the story so that either the brother saved the sister or both were saved by the father.

Conclusion

Based on the above research it can be concluded that Western story structure is largely inaccessible to children from an oral environment. It must be stressed, however, that children who had the Western story structure mediated to them were then more able to access Western literate stories. However, without active mediation children from a predominantly oral environment will not be able to access many of the structures in Western literate stories. This is important as not only are stories structured this way but most forms of discourse reflect this structure. If one thinks of history one of the first things that is taught is the reasons for things happening and the result. The same applies to scientific discourse. In an experiment one is expected to identify the aim or goal, the method, the results. The understanding of a causal linear structure is essential in understanding most forms of Western discourse. The research indicated that active mediation in teaching children this structure was effective in helping children access a Western story.

Western thought structures are often perceived as superior to those of other cultures and it is therefore perceived as right to impose these structures on other cultures as an improvement (Havelock 1976). Western paradigms, however, should not simply be imposed on children from a predominantly oral culture. These children may have alternate cognitive structures which may be more creative than the linear Western models. In studies with children from an oral environment it was found that although these children did not have linear

cognitive structures they were able to see connections that teachers themselves were unable to see because they were limited by their linear thought processes. There is a growing disillusionment with linear cognitive processes in the West and an increased perception that lateral thinking skills can increase creativity and enable new and imaginative solutions to problems. The emphasis on lateral thinking rather than linear thinking is an indication of the shortcomings of Western linear thought structures.

The school curriculum should build on the children's strengths. By starting from where the children are teachers can increase their abilities. This does not mean that Western methodologies should not be taught to these children, as these methodologies are essential for many disciplines such as science and mathematics, but not at the expense of their indigenous thinking patterns. By teaching children additional thinking skills, their repertoire is broadened, by replacing one paradigm with another, their abilities are reduced.

An issue that must be kept in mind is that frequently in an attempt to simplify text for second language readers causal structures are taken out because these tend to lengthen sentences and make them, superficially at least, easier to understand. However, for many African readers these causal structures are not self-evident and need to be highlighted.

The multilingual situation in South Africa has meant that most books available to African children, besides school books, are in a second language. Children, especially young children who are not yet fluent readers, need books which are easily accessible as cultural inaccessibility may put them off reading permanently. Literacy must be culturally specific in order to be culturally meaningful (Fishman 1989:30).

The findings do show, however, that mediation whether in libraries through story hours or in schools can make a difference and help children to internalise this schema which is essential not only for Western story structure but also for other forms of Western discourse.

The way in which text is read and interpreted will depend on social and cultural factors and these factors will influence the way in which a text is understood. People from diverse backgrounds will not necessarily understand a text in the same way as they bring their background, expectations and values to the text and understand and interpret it in the light of that schema.

Note

1 The story used was *The Cherry tree* by D Ikeda (1991). This book was donated to READ by Soka Gakkai International to "promote peace, culture and education".

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The Structural and social significance

of the journey in children's folktales from Zanzibar

femk senkoro

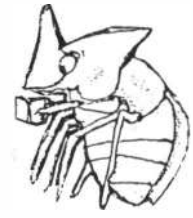
Introduction

There is an old literary truism which insists that the soul of every great work of literature is a journey. Indeed, the journey motif is as old as literature itself. With the acquisition of speech, man's journey towards the world of fantasy started, and with the ability to walk began man's spatial movement within time.

In this paper two major overlapping planes evident in the folktales from Zanzibar which utilise the journey motif are examined. The first is the External Journey. The second is the Internal Journey which does, at the same time, have some existential dimensions.

Although the external journey precedes the internal one, most of the time the two overlap a lot; and the fact that there is no clear dividing line between the two journeys in the children's fairy and folktales from Zanzibar, makes this motif a complex literary phenomenon in relation to the child and the world around him.

In this paper we first of all examine the nature of the motif by analysing its exemplification through the external journey. This is essentially a structuralist approach. After that we look at the use of the internal journey as a medium of instruction to the child on the process of growing up. This part uses psycho-analysis in its approach. The main thrust of the paper is to see the relevance of the journey motif to the Zanzibari child's growing-up process.



The external journey

The journey motif is a literary device through which we can discover in a fairy or folktale, a number of interconnected occurrence-patterns similar to *some* of those observed by structuralists such as Daniel Kunene and, before him, Joseph Campbell, Lord Raglan, and V Propp. Although in this paper we have utilised the ideas of Joseph Campbell and Lord Raglan, since these have not really dealt with the African folktale as such, our main point of reference is Daniel Kunene who has specifically looked at the theme in connection with African written literature in general and the African epic in particular in his two major articles.[1]

Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a thousand faces* has divided his formula of the folktale hero's life into three parts: separation – initiation – return. As he himself puts it:

> The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return: which might be named the nuclear of the monomyth. A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from the mysterious adventure with power to bestow boons on his fellow man.[2]

Lord Raglan, who in *The Hero* has divided the basic pattern of the journey of a hero into 22 incidents, supports Campbell when he regroups the 22 incidents into three major groups. He says:

> The incidents fall definitely into three groups: those connected with the hero's birth, those connected with his accession to the throne, and those connected with his death. They, thus correspond to the three principal *rites de passage* – that is to say, the rites at birth, at initiation, and at death.[3]

Although the division made by Campbell and Lord Raglan does help in the elucidation of the journey motif in the Zanzibari folktale, some of the details which the two theorists give are not prominent in the tales from Zanzibar. For example, the details of the birth of the hero/es are treated very marginally in these tales. Indeed, most of the time such details are not dealt with at all. In most of these tales it is only when the hero has come of age, ready to go out into the world of adventure, that the tales begin. A typical formulaic beginning of a tale will just mention that there was a man and his wife, or a king/sultan and his wife, who either did not have a child for a long time, or had such and such a number of children. Thus, in the Zanzibari folktale, the detailed description of the birth of such children is inconsequential.[4]

Kunene's Loci theory

The external journey in folktales from Zanzibar shows the spatial movement of a tale's character from one point to another. Kunene calls these points *loci* which are joined by the journey's curves. Since Kunene has dealt at length with the physical journey, that is, the spatial movement, it is worth testing his theories of the different loci. Kunene has stated the summary of his theory thus:

> It goes without saying that most of the action in a "journey story" takes place during the journey, and can be plotted systematically along the journey curve which comprises two arcs, the going away arc A.....B, and the coming-back arc, A.....>B, which describe a circle ... We see then that action can take place at four major points, namely, A, A > B, B, B < A.[5]

Our research into the use of the journey motif in the Zanzibari folktale has shown that the spatial movement of the heroes has complex patterns which do not always describe a full circle. The patterns fall mainly into four groups, which incidentally, Kunene also acknowledged in his earlier writing on this motif.[6] These are: firstly, narratives whose heroes travel and come back victorious, or whose return is implied. This kind of return forms a major phase during which the hero or heroine has to consolidate the powers gained during the quest. This is mainly in loci B and BA. Secondly, tales whose heroes' return is thwarted. Thirdly, stories whose heroes have no intention of returning, and fourthly, pieces whose heroes have a false return.

It seems that in the Zanzibari folktales even the three major parts/loci mentioned by Kunene do not necessarily follow the pattern of *separation – initiation – return* from point A to B and then back to A again. Point A can be recreated and even combined with point B to form a new locus altogether. Here we can cite one Zanzibari tale as our example. In *Kisa cha Mtu na Wanawe Watatu* (The tale of a man and his three sons) we have the typical story of three sons who are called to the deathbed of their father. The father is not rich, and he tries to play a trick on the sons and their mother, so that they do not blame him for the meagre inheritance which he has reserved for them. He tells each one, separately, that he is dying, and that his money, to be inherited by the one he is presently talking to, must only be inherited *after* he has managed to inherit the wealth of the Sultan of Mauritius.[7]

While the dead father had instructed each of the sons not to tell the others about the inheritance, finally they all get to know the "secret" and decide in unison to go and do all they can to inherit the wealth of the Sultan of Mauritius. So, they set off on a journey which takes them through a number of trials and tribulations. On the way they encounter three riddle-like incidents and episodes which they manage to unravel, with the youngest of them untangling the most obscure aspects. Finally they are able to outwit the Sultan of Mauritius and they inherit his kingdom, after which they also inherit their father's "wealth".

The picture that one gets here is:

POINT A–1: Home: Sanctuary at First, Then Source of Sibling Conflict and Reasons for the Journey.

to

TRANSITION POINT AB: The Journey's Curve Full of Riddle-like Trials and Tribulations.

to

POINT B–1: Kingdom of Mauritius: Conflict, Confrontation and Final Victory.

to

POINT BA–2: Double Inheritance, Harmony, Living Happily Ever After

From the above illustrations, it is clear that in effect, the sons move from point A–1 and point B–1 to a new point A and B which we can call point BA–2. So, while Kunene talks about the return of the hero to locus A2, in this tale what Kunene would term locus A2 is a combination of new loci A and B. It combines two "kingdoms" where the sons achieve double inheritance. Unlike most tales, in this one not only the youngest, but all the sons, inherit the kingdom, and the initial sibling rivalry is smoothed out through compromise and understanding.

Key points of the journey in the Zanzibari folktale

By far, a single return journey is the most common type of the external journey. In this journey, a character travels away from home and then ultimately comes back home or to a replica of the old home (minus the initial conflicts), after lengthy trials and tribulations. However, almost all the types of journey have similar departure points, although the social forces in operation in those loci can differ from one tale to another.

Locus A: Departure point

Most of the time, the original point of departure is the home where the parents of the heroes or heroines live or lived; and so, by making a full circle through a return journey, the idea of the importance of the family unit is expressed.[8] However, we must emphasise, and as mentioned earlier, in the Zanzibari folktales locus A treats the details of the birth of the hero/es, if at all, very marginally. Indeed, even the details of the death of a hero or heroine are not given. Death is usually mentioned at the beginning of a tale to show the passing away of one generation and the take-over by another, new generation.

Naturally *Locus A* prompts the question: Why does a character travel? The answers to this question vary depending on the nature of the journey. Although most of the heroes and heroines on journeys in the Zanzibari folktales do seem to just go out there for mere adventure; it is actually through the journey that the characters reveal themselves.

Kunene has broadly classified two major types of heroes' or heroines' departure from home. The first is voluntary or unforced, and the second one is involuntary or forced departure. Kunene states the following concerning the latter form of departure, which mostly suggests some form of exile:

> Where the protagonist is still too young to know what is going on, those who are responsible for fleeing with him to a place of safety act on his behalf and their intent to bring him back fulfills the same role in the analysis as the protagonist's own declaration of such an intent ... In oral narratives such child heroes are found in many stories, notably the ones where a father declares that any male child born to him should be destroyed.[9]

In spite of the presence of the flight and exile motif in a number of world oral traditions that Kunene mentions, involving such figures like Jesus Christ, Chaka the Zulu, and Sundiata, it is noteworthy that such a motif is present in very rare cases in the Zanzibari folktales. In fact, it would be very strange indeed to find in Kiswahili oral literature, a father who declares that a male child born to him should be destroyed, for Swahili fathers are very proud of begetting sons. Incidentally, in most of the few tales that have this motif it is the female characters who have to go into exile. This is the case, for example, in *Watoto Saba* and in *Ndugu Wawili*. In the first tale, a sick father calls his six sons and one daughter to his deathbed and asks each of them to choose between inheriting his wealth or his blessings. Only the youngest daughter chooses her father's

blessings. Later on, after the father is dead and the sons have inherited the wealth while the daughter inherits only the blessings, her two hands are cut off after she is caught "stealing" her brothers' sugarcane. She is consequently thrown out by her brothers and is forced to go into exile as the story states:

> Yule msichana masikini ya Mungu, mikono ikakatwa ikabakia mapigi matupu, na nyumba wakamfukuza. Yule msichana alifanya *safari ya kuhama* na alikwenda mbali ... (my emphasis)
>
> (That poor girl, her hands were chopped off at the elbows, and only *mapigi*, the useless parts of the hand remained. On top of that she was chased away from home. That girl set on a journey into exile, and she travelled very, very far.)

In *Ndugu Wawili*, the travellers are a brother and his sister who finally part as the brother amputates all his sister's limbs, leaving only her head and stomach under a Mbungo tree. More on this story later on when we look at the social significance of the journey motif in the Zanzibari folktale.[10]

The above departures aside, the majority of the other departures are voluntary and unforced on the part of the heroes and heroines. A few examples will help to illustrate this. The tale called *Mfalme na Wanawe Watatu* (The King and his three sons) clearly demonstrates this point: It begins thus:

> Hapo kale alikuwepo mfalme na wanawe watatu wanaume ambao ni watu wazima. Wakakaa katika milki yao kwa muda mkubwa. Hata siku hiyo mfalme akapata maradhi makubwa akaona haponi, ndipo alipowakusanya wanawe wote akawaambia hivi, "Wanangu, miye naumwa sana, nanaona maradhi haya yatanichukua. Lakini nikifa mujue kuwa hapo chini ya kitanda changu pana pesa nyingi. Lakini musizirithi kwanza mpaka mukamrithi mfalme wa Misri." Wale wanawe wote wakakubali. Siku ya pili mfalme akafa, na wanawe wakamzika ...
>
> Sasa wakatoka kwenda Misri kama walivyousiwa na baba yao huku wakiwa na elimu nyingi vichwani mwao. Hapo walitoka kwenda safari yao.

(Long long ago, there was a king with his three grown-up sons. They stayed in their kingdom for a long time. Then, one day the king fell seriously sick, and he instantly realized that he was not going to survive. That's when he called all his sons to his deathbed and said to them, "My sons, I am very sick, and I think this illness will be the end of me. When I die, know that under my bed there is a lot of money. Do not inherit the wealth until you have conquered the kingdom of Egypt." All the sons agreed with their father's wish. The following day the king died and his sons buried him.

Then they left for Egypt as instructed by their father. These were learned travellers ...)

Although in this tale the three sons are "forced" to travel to Egypt before they can inherit what their father, who was a King, has left for them, this is not exactly an exile, but rather an adventure. Besides showing their respect to their father's wish, the sons also prove that they are worthy and capable of inheriting and ruling the kingdom.

A typical departure point in the Zanzibari folktale will involve the hero or heroine actually begging his or her parents to be allowed to travel. A departure of this type can have the sole aim of finding a bride as happens in one of the Makame wa Makame stories from Pemba island. A similar departure is that of the husband and the wife in *Kitambi cha Pembemeuli.* In this love tale, each of the two characters go on a parallel journey in search of something to prove his or her love to the spouse. The husband has to get "kitambi cha pembemeuli" for his wife. This is a dress made from a spider's web. The wife has to get "maji yasiyolia chura" for her husband. This is water fetched from a well in the bush, but there must be no frogs in the surroundings of the well. While it is impossible to get a dress made from a spider's web, and while in rural Zanzibar there will always be frogs near the wells, the love tale shows how these two characters undergo so much trouble, even to the extent of being involved in

nerve-wracking chases against trolls, to prove their love to each other. Of course, eventually they are able to get the impossible items.[11]

Unlike this type of departure, most other departures will be motivated by a mere urge to go on an adventure as testified to in the following quotation taken from *Watoto wa Maajabu*:

> Hapo zamani za kale paliondokea mtu na mkewe. Wakazaa watoto wao wawili, mmoja aliye mwanamke akiitwa Ramli, na yule mwanamume akiitwa Zarba. Wakakaa, wakakaa; hata siku moja wale watoto wakaaga kwa wazee wao kwenda kutembea sehemu za mbali. Wakatayarishiwa vyakula aina aina na mama yao wakaondoka kwenda safari yao.
>
> (Long long ago there was a man and his wife. They were blessed with two children, one, a girl called Ramli, and the second one, a son called Zarba. They lived and lived, until one day those children bid their parents goodbye. They were headed for far off lands just to see what was happening out there. Various types of food were prepared for them by their mother, and then they went on their way.)

Kunene has subdivided Locus A into two major parts. The first part is Locus A1 in which there is the home as a sanctuary where happiness prevails. Life here is like that of paradise; but the story has not yet begun. The second part is Locus A2 which is the same home, but with an element of dissatisfaction introduced. According to Kunene, this is what prompts the character's departure. However, in most of the journey folktales from Zanzibar, such a subdivision does not really apply. It is not always the element of dissatisfaction that will prompt the character to travel since, as previously mentioned, the elements that prompt such departures will vary from mere desire for adventure to the urge to find out what is happening out there in the world.

Finally, still on the departure point, Kunene has drawn up a very interesting list of motivations for the departures of the heroes and heroines of the travel tale which we find equally quite relevant to our discussion on the Zanzibari folktale. He has listed six types of motivation, namely The Call for Adventure, Conflict in Familial Relationships, The Quest for Something of Value, In Search of Education, Cultural Alienation, and Involuntary Exile. Although Kunene has based his classification on written literature, it applies quite well to the Zanzibari oral tale. The call for adventure is the most common type of departure in which the hero or heroine, on his or her own volition asks for permission to travel and see what is happening out there in the world. The second type, conflict in familial relationships, appears also in several tales from Zanzibar. The two tales which were mentioned earlier, involving the female characters who have to travel away from home after quarelling with their brothers are typical examples of this type of departure. The departure which is prompted by a quest for something of value is sparingly present in the Zanzibari folktales. One very good example of such a tale is narrated in Jan Knappert's *Myths and legends of the Swahili.* The tale, titled "The Island of the snake and the land of gold,[12] tells the story of a young girl whose "father" informs her on his deathbed that her family stems from a people who lived in a land where everything was gold, and that he is not her real father but ... And before he has completed the sentence he dies. After her "father's" death, the girl is "lucky" enough to catch the eye of the Sultan who marries her and she becomes queen. Now she is in a position to request anything that she wants. So, one day she requests permission to go and see that land. After many days of difficult travel, and finally with the help of a snake, she reaches the golden land. There she meets her real father who is, incidentally, a king. She stays for one year with her father and her husband who has joined her. After which they are given a golden ship as a present. They return to their home via the island of the snake where the girl had promised to sacrifice to the

snake whatever child she would have in exchange for the directions to the land of gold. The tale has a happy ending as the snake finally does not only hand the baby boy back to his mother, but also gives the mother many blessings so that "she had many more babies, as her husband was always good to her".

As for the search for education, if education is taken in its broadest sense, then there are many Zanzibari tales with this kind of departure. Most of the tales dealing with pubertal initiation rites which are examined in the next section of this paper, would fall under this category. The heroes and heroines in these tales have to undergo an educational process which will help them graduate from childhood to adulthood.

The type of departure which is prompted by cultural alienation is, indeed, alien to the Zanzibari folktale although it is quite common in Swahili written literature.[13] As we have already indicated, the last type of departure is also present in the Zanzibari folktale, although not very prominently.

Curve AB: Trials and tribulations

The journey's curve from Departure Point to point B in the Zanzibari folktale is full of trials and tribulations. It is very interesting that most of the tales will talk of the difficult journey in the forest, very much unlike what one would expect from islands surrounded by a great mass of water.[14] Thus, in such tales like *Radhi Au Mali*, *Watoto wa Maajabu*, *Kitambi cha Pembemeuli*, and a host of other tales a statement like "Akenda msitu na nyika, msitu na nyika, msitu na nyika kwa siku sita ..." is a very common expression.

Besides travelling through thick forests, the character also has to face a number of tests in the AB Curve. One of the most common tests for young travelling characters is the request from very old, dirty women to lick the discharges from their dirty eyes. Narrators will sometimes describe such scenes in nauseating detail such as in the following part again taken from *Kitambi cha Pembemeuli*:

> Hata siku ya sabaa akafikia pahala akakikuta kibibi kikongwe sana hata haoneshi kuwa yuwaona, kwa sababu aligubikwa na matongo mazito machoni mwake. Yule bwana akamshitua yule bibi kwa kumgusa, na kumwita. Kile kibibi kikaitika na kumuuliza yule bwana, "Weye n'nani uliyekuja huku na kwahala kwenyewe hakuji watu? Kila ajae yuwafa, kwa sababu hapa ni pahala wakaapo mazimwi, na wakija wakikukuta hapa watakula, na miye hapa ni mpishi wao. Lakini hebu nirambe tongo nikuone."
>
> Basi yule bwana akaziramba ramba tongo zote kavu na akakiuliza kile kibibi, "Jee, niziteme au nizimeze?"
>
> Kibibi kikajibu, "Zimeze!" Akazimeza.
>
> Hayaa! Kibibi kikamwambia, "Nirambe tena mwanangu, sijakuona."
>
> Yule bwana akawamo kuziramba. Mara hii akaramba zile mbichi mbichi, na akauliza tena, "Nimeze au niteme."
>
> Kibibi kikajibu, "Tema mwanangu. Uchungu wa mwana naujua weee!" Yule bwana akatema na tayari kibibi kikawa chaona.
>
> (And then, lo and behold! On the seventh day he reached a place where he met a very, very old woman. It was clear that the woman was not able to see owing to piles and piles of dirty discharges from her eyes. The young man startled the old woman by touching and calling her. The old, old woman responded and asked him, "Who are you who has dared to come to this forbidden place? People are not allowed to come here, for, anyone who comes this way dies! This is the dwelling place of ogres, and should they come and find you here they will surely eat you up. I am their cook. However, please, can you lick these discharges from my eyes so I may see you?"
>
> The young man started by licking the dry discharges and then asked the old, old woman, "Should I spit out the discharges or swallow them?"

The old, old woman answered, "Swallow them!"

The young man swallowed.

Well then, the old, old woman told him, Please my son, lick me again, I still cannot see you."

The young man started licking the old, old woman's eyes again, and this time he licked the watery discharges, and then asked the old, old woman, "Should I swallow them or spit them out?"

The old, old woman answered, "Spit them out my child. I know the pains of birth pangs, my son!"

The young man spat out the discharges, and already the old, old woman was able to see.)

The moment the young man passes this test the old woman gives him some very important clues which will help him overcome all the obstacles and achieve his goals. Such helpers can also be old men. In some stories Such as in *Ndugu Wawili* and in *Dege* the helpers are in the form of birds while in others the helpers can even be snakes, such as happens to the heroine in *The Island of the snake and the land of gold.*

The other common types of tests in the AB Curve which the heroes and heroines of the travel folktale have to face are riddle-like events and phenomena which they have to be able to interpret. The chases in *Kitambi cha Pembemeuli* and the tricks which the wife and the husband play to outwit the trolls are an example of the tests. In *Mfalme na Wanawe Watatu* we have typical riddle-like tests which the three sons have to pass before they can inherit the kingdoms of Egypt and that of their father. For example, they have to be able to tell so many facts from a mark left by someone who had sat somewhere along their way:

Hapo walitoka kwenda safari yao. Walipokuwa njiani waliona alama ya kikao cha mtu. Hapo wakasimama. Yule mkubwa wao akasema, "Huyu ntu ni mwanan'ke." Wa pili akasema, "Tena ana ntoto." Na wa tatu akamalizia, "Na huyo ntoto yu wenda."

(They were then set for their journey. On their way they saw the marks of a person who had sat somewhere. They halted. The eldest said, "It is a woman who sat here." The second said, "And the woman had a child." And the third one added, "And the child is a toddler.")

This equally riddle-like explanation of a mere sitting mark left by a traveller manipulates the audience's feelings keeping them in suspense until finally when the three sons disentangle its web in front of the King of Egypt:

Yule mtu aliyepotelewa na mkewe akaanza, "Enhe! Nyie ndiye mulionichukulia mke wangu; kwa dalili mulizonipa."

Wale watoto wakakataa. Wakaanza kusema hivi, akianza wa mwanzo, "Tunamjua sio kwa sababu tulimchukua mkeo; ila ni kwa sababu hizi: Kwanza mwanamke anapokaa pahali hukatakata vijiti." Wa pili akaendelea, "Hivyo vijiti vilichakurwachakurwa." Wa tatu akasema, "Tuliona alama za njuga."

Ha! Yule mtu aliyeshitaki akawaza kimoyomoyo na kukubali kuwa ni kweli maneno yao.

(The man whose wife had disappeared said, " OK! You guys are the ones who stole my wife, judging from all the evidence that you have given."

The three brothers denied the charges. The eldest brother then responded saying, "We know her not because we stole her but for the following reasons: First, wherever a woman sits she is bound to cut little sticks of grass into tiny pieces." Then the second one said, "The little pieces of sticks were scraped and scratched." The third added, "We saw a mark of a small bell usually tied to the legs of a toddler."

Well, well! That man who had accused the three young men thought to himself and even found their explanations to be true.)

By being able to prove to the King of Egypt that they are innocent and, of course, very intelligent gentlemen, the three sons prove that they are worthy of inheriting the Kingdom of Egypt.

Several qualities of the hero/heroine are, thus, put to task in this AB Arc. Intelligence and also humility are among the common qualities. For example, in trying to show one's humility, it is very common to have heroes or heroines giving the following answer when they encounter the helpers mentioned above, who ask them who they are, where they are coming from and where they are going: " *Sijui ninakotokea wala ninakokwendea. Lakini natumai nitapata msaada wako.*" (I do not know where I come from, nor where I am going. However, I hope I will get your help.) By pleading ignorance the heroes and heroines are easily accepted and assisted by the helpers.

Sometimes, as we have seen, the hero or heroine has to prove his or her physical prowess, willpower, and even wit and a sense of humour in order to be able to outwit the evil forces which are typically found in this outgoing curve of the journey.

Curiously enough, it is also in this outgoing AB Arc that the Zanzibari folktale has some of its heroes either falling into deep sleep, or being carried by huge birds to far off lands, just like in a dream. Sometimes instead of a hero or heroine falling asleep he or she is entombed in a hole or cave. The act of the sister being left alone under a Mbungo tree in *Ndugu Wawili* is one of the many such acts which involve the travelling character falling into a state of unconsciousness or deep sleep. Eventually the sister is saved by some little birds who, like doctors, give her back her limbs.[15] She then lives happily ever after in a castle of her own, away from her original home.

It is thus in the AB Curve that the heroes or heroines are immersed in a world full of adventures and even dangerous encounters. It is mostly in this arc that these heroes and heroines have to prove their worth.

Locus B: Consolidation point

In some tales, Locus B is the place where the above events in Arc AB will take place, in which case the arc becomes just a pathway leading to Locus B where the real action will happen. Many of the ogre tales where young men have to single-handedly fight some ogre in order to release the villagers who had been gobbled up fall under this category. This point is not only a consolidation point for such heroes, but first the attainment point and then the place of consolidation. Indeed, in some tales this locus also turns out to be the permanent home for the hero who is invariably made the king of the village which he has freed. In this case then, such heroes do not return to their former points of departure. Such is the case, for example, in *Nunda Mla Watu* and *Ndugu Wawili* and *Watoto Saba*. One can add, therefore, that in the tales where the heroes or heroines do not return to their points of departure, this point is a kind of freedom locus.

Locus B is the middle point where the journey out more or less ends, and the journey back to the original point begins. Kunene refers to this point as the Place of Foreign Sojourn.[16] After a long period of trials and initiation in which the traveller's courage and temperament are put to test, whatever was gained is consolidated in this locus. As we stated earlier, rather than just using this point for consolidation, some of the tales from Zanzibar have the heroes or heroines turn this "foreign sojourn" into their permanent homes. Perhaps that explains why most of the time this point is marked by a building/castle to show the qualities of a new home which it represents.

The BA return curve

The Return Curve from Locus B back to A is used by most of the heroes and heroines for further consolidation of their victories. Most of the time this is an uneventful journey back, although sometimes it includes major events which will affect the hero's or heroine's future as happens in *Kisa cha Hamadi na Babu Akili*. This is a good example of a story with multiple patterns. Hamadi, an orphan, decides to leave home for far off lands in search of a better life. He travels for six days without meeting anyone; and then on the proverbial seventh day he arrives in a town where he meets an old man who gives him some advice and a warning. Soon afterwards, however, Hamadi fails the test as he forgets the advice and the warning, and draws his knife in public thus catching the attention and envy of the King's son. The Prince orders Hamadi's arrest falsely accusing him of stealing his knife. Consequently he is arrested and sent before the King. Again it is Mzee Akili who teaches Hamadi the way to overcome his problems. This time Hamadi heeds the advice given to him by Mzee Akili and, as the story says, he is freed:

> Hamadi alitulia tuli huku anaendelea na kula. Hata ilipofika siku ya kuhukumiwa, Hamadi alieleza yale yote yaliyotolewa na Mzee Akili kwa kumfundisha paka. Hivyo, baraza la Mfalme lilitowa hukumu kwamba mtoto wa Mfalme ndiye mhalifu, na sharia ilimlazi-misha anyongwe kwa tamaa ya kisu.
>
> (Hamadi paid a lot of attention while eating. Then, when the day of judgement arrived, Hamadi explained all that Mzee Akili (lit. "The Old Brainy Man") had trained him to say through Mzee Akili's word to the cat. Thus, the King's court passed the verdict that the Prince was the culprit, and the laws of the land stipulated that he must be hanged for stealing the knife.)

Somehow, this story comes to a dead end as we are not told what happened to Hamadi, although we might assume that as a result of his innocence he probably lived happily ever after in the King's castle.

The pattern of this story does not take Hamadi back to his original place of departure. It is more of a multiple journey style which looks as follows:

HOME: Departure point

to

TOWN ONE: A – Encounter with Mzee Akili

to

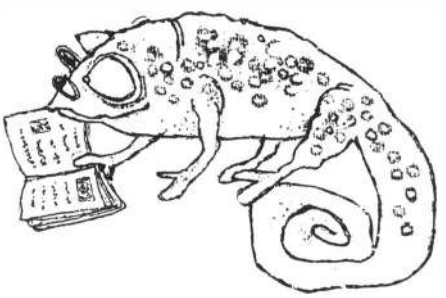
TOWN TWO: A – Hamadi is arrested

to

BACK TO TOWN ONE: Coaching by Mzee Akili

to

BACK TO TOWN TWO: Successful defence and freedom for Hamadi



The pattern of this tale: from A to B to C, then back to B, and then C again makes its return curve different from the others in that it retraces the departure curve, but does not retrace it right to where the departure began; for that point is not important to this story. The most important locus is the dwelling of Mzee Akili who is, in effect, Hamadi's saviour.

Locus A Again: Arrival and further consolidation

Most of the Zanzibari folktales do not give details of this locus. The victory won by the hero or heroine in the AB Arc and also in Locus B seem to be enough since it fulfills the aim of the journey. That is why most tales from Zanzibar will end at locus B. However, some tales treat this locus as the concluding part of the story, in which the hero or heroine will consolidate whatever was gained. It is in this locus where the ensuing results of the return will manifest themselves. Where the journey has been a form of pubertal rites, the arrival locus will show the characters reasserting their positions; in which case the locus will imply the casting aside of the old world of childhood and the establishment of the new world of maturity and of adult life. This is the locus of the coronation of kings and queens who will then live happily ever after.

The social significance of the journey

In all societies the passage from childhood to adulthood is a big challenge and may even be a problem for parents. Adolescents experience biological, physiological and hormonal changes and social obligations which means they experience different moods which are not always compatible with what parents and society at large expect. A crisis of this kind is dealt with in most African societies by means of initiation rites and ceremonies. This part of the paper analyses the way the journey motif dramatises in a symbolic manner the different phases of transition from childhood to adulthood.

Folktales show the child how he or she can relinquish his or her infantile dependence and attain a more independent existence. Talking about the same issue, Bruno Bettelheim has this to say:

> Today, children no longer grow up in the security of an extended family, or of a well integrated community. Therefore, even more than at the times when fairy tales were invented, it is important to provide the modern child with images of heroes who have to go out into the world all by themselves and who, though originally ignorant of ultimate things, find secure places in the world by following their right way with deep inner confidence.[17]

Fairy and folktales carry a very strongly felt need by the child to find answers about life in general, and childhood experience in particular. At the same time the adventures narrated in the tales fulfil the child's wishes to be able to fly and do other suchlike wondrous feats. The narratives take the child through different stages of development, step by step, so that initiation into adult life is, most of the time, gradual and very rarely sudden. Talking about the same issue, Eliade writes:

> It is impossible to deny that the ordeals and adventures of the heroes and heroines of fairy tales are almost always translated into initiatory terms. Now, this to me seems of the utmost importance: from the time – which is so difficult to determine – when fairy tales took shape as such, men have listened to them with a pleasure susceptible of indefinite repetition. This amounts to saying that initiatory scenarios – even camouflaged, as they are in fairy tales – are the expression of a psychodrama that answers a deep need in the human being. Every man wants to experience certain perilous situations, to confront exceptional ordeals, to make his way into the Other World – and he experiences all this, on the level of his imaginative life, by hearing or reading fairy tales.[18]

The "initiatory terms" of the Zanzibari folktales can be determined by looking at the role of their use of the journey motif as *puberty rites of passage*. In dealing with the subject, the fairy and folktale from Zanzibar has also incorporated different outlooks and philosophies of the people of Zanzibar regarding life in general, death in particular, and also about different roles played by different people in the community at different stages of their growing-up process. The

physical journey of a hero or heroine in the Zanzibari fairy and folktale represents an intellectual and emotional initiation to maturity. The traveller's goal is to achieve or acquire the knowledge and/or power that will allow him or her to rejoin the community and enjoy heightened status in it. Thus, it is clear that the journey motif in the Zanzibari folktale does, at the same time, represent the socialisation process which is very necessary for young members of the community to undergo. This socialisation process can be traced from Point A of the journey to the arrival point as summarily indicated below.

Departure Point: The deathbed as the beginning of new life

Most of the tales from Zanzibar begin with the deathbed scene of one or even both parents. The deathbed scene signifies the passing away of the older generation and the new duties and responsibilities that have to be shouldered by the new generation. Already it indicates to the child that the *rites de passage* it is about to embark on imply taking over the custodianship of the homestead which was, up till then, in the hands of the parents. The first step on the road to one's initiation into maturity is the death of an older generation which symbolises the necessity to relinquish one's dependency on one's parents.

Death then, in the Zanzibari fairy and folktales, is taken for granted as a fact of life which must be borne and even accepted by all from the very beginning. Thus, in making most of the Zanzibari tales which utilise the journey motif start with the death of one or both parents, the child is, in this way, instructed that his or her life's journey must, from the start, be prepared for the inevitable to come: death.

Death in these tales, however, must be seen from an African cultural context. Although, in effect, the deathbed scene at the start of a tale implies the end of

an old life and the beginning of a new one, this new life, however, does not signify the cutting off of the umbilical cord that joins it to the old one. That accounts for the name-giving ceremonies in most of African societies. Quite often, the names given to children, are those of the forefathers. This indicates that the old and dead are still very much alive in the young ones. This is where the world of the unborn can even be older than that of the living, to borrow Soyinka's statement;[19] and the cyclic reality of traditional African thought must be related to this outlook. Death, in this case, is actually the beginning of life.

Touching on the same issue of death in fairy tales, Bettelheim has stated as follows:

> Fairy tales were derived from, or give symbolic expression to, initiation rites or other *rites de passage* – such as the metaphoric death of an old, inadequate self in order to be reborn on a higher plane of existence.[20]

While Bettelheim is referring to the hero or heroine who emerges as a newborn at the end of the journey, it is interesting that the Zanzibari fairy and folktale begin with an actual *physical* death of the parents and only ends with the *metaphoric* death of those who have just completed the feats of dangerous journeys. The cyclic reality of traditional African thought here means that the physical death is the beginning of the metaphoric life, and the metaphoric death turns into the beginning of a new physical life. The beginning of a journey is, therefore, the start of the struggle for self-realisation. This is so because the journey in fairy and folktales can be both an adventure and also a search for self-identity and recognition by others around the one who is undertaking the journey. In the Zanzibari tales, the travellers set out on their adventurous and even dangerous journeys *willingly* though with uncertainty and anxiety. In fact, as we have mentioned already, in most of the tales the initiates beg their parents for permission to travel and see the world.

This urge and even request indicates the anxiety to leave childhood and grow up. The journey's circular nature is, essentially, a rite of passage which leads, via trials and purification, to a new life, and ends more or less where it began: at home.

In *Watoto Saba* which we mentioned above, it is very interesting to note that the sister's hands are cut off after she steals the sugarcane. While this punishment can be related to the Muslim system of retribution, in this case it is very likely that this was meant to be symbolic of a warning against not only relying too much on the warmth and comforts of the idyllic life of the homestead when one is already supposed to have shed his or her infantile dependencies; but also it signifies another equally important warning; it is an admonition against incestuous desire, an opposition against sibling incest.

Curve AB: Trials and tribulations in the wilderness

The stages of development of a young member of family are depicted very well in a short, but very interesting, folktale from Zanzibar known simply as *Umoja*. Here there is an old couple with two children: a son and a daughter. The father dies after a short illness: and soon, the ailing mother calls the children to her deathbed bidding them goodbye with these final words:

> Siponi, ila ninachowaomba ni kuwa muwe pamoja kwa hali na mali. Musisikitike kwani kila chenye mwanzo hakikosi kuwa na mwisho.
>
> ("I do not hope to survive. However, one thing which I beg of you is to stick together in whatever circumstances. Do not feel sad, for whatever has a beginning must have an end.")

A few days after the passing away of their mother, the brother embarks on a journey in search of food. This is obviously the first test of adulthood: to be

able to fend for one's family. After a long journey through the forest, the young man comes across a very dirty, old woman:

> Akamkuta bibi mmoja alie na hali mbaya. Yule bibi akamwambia, "Ewe mjukuu wangu, nirambe tongo nikuone."
>
> Yule mtoto akafanya kama alivyoambiwa. Akamwuliza, "Sasa mjukuu wangu umekuja huku kufanya nini?"
>
> Akamwambia, "Nimekuja kutafuta chakula ili nikale na ndugu yangu. Hivi sasa nimeona nyumba ile kubwa nakwenda kuomba."
>
> Yule bibi akamwambia, "Ile ni nyumba ya zimwi. Mle ndani kimo chakula kingi sana, lakini ukenda tu atakuua."
>
> (Then he met an old, old sickly woman.
>
> That old woman said to him, " My dear grandson, please lick the discharges on my eyes so I may see you."
>
> That child did as he was told. Then the old woman asked, "Now my grandson, what have you come to do here?"
>
> The young man said, "I have come in search for food so that I go and eat it with my sister. Now, I can see that house over there. I am going to beg for food."
>
> That old woman said to him, "that is a house of the ogre. In there there is plenty of food. However, the moment you attempt to go there you will be gobbled up!")

The helper in this tale, an old, dirty woman, is a typical character in most of the Zanzibari fairy and folktales which have utilised the journey motif. Although in this case the helper is actually a positive character, in some cases as will be seen later, the helpers themselves are meant to mislead the hero/heroine so that he or she may discover on his or her own, the trick that has been set up to test his or her maturity. In the case of *Umoja*, the trial of the hero begins with the request from the old, dirty woman. The moment the boy agrees to lick the mucus-like,

dirty discharge from the eyes of the old woman, his maturity is strengthened. The licking of this puss-like discharge from the eyes of the dirty old woman carries a moral which celebrates humility. By being able to lick the nauseating discharge he has shown the necessary respect for old age. His second trial is how to deal with the *troll* which inhabits the castle in which there is the food he needs so much for his own and his sister's survival. Luckily, even here his respect pays off:

> Yule bibi akamwambia, "Sikiliza mjukuu wangu; nenda ikiwa saa kumi na mbili wakati zimwi huwa anakwenda kuchunga. Panda mpaka orofa ya juu, utapata hicho unachotaka".
>
> (That old woman advised him, "listen my grandson. You should go there at six in the evening when the ogre usually goes to graze. You climb up to the top floor, you will get that which you want.")

After the *troll* has left, the boy goes to its house, eats all the cooked food and collects the rest for use at home. The *troll* comes back when the boy is still in the house, which forces the boy to quickly hide in the attic of the house. The *troll,* finding no food in the house, and foolishly suspecting that its fat tail is to blame on seeing a grain of rice on it, burns its own tail, and the fire spreads so that the whole *troll* is destroyed. The boy who has witnessed all this while hiding in the attic, dances happily and goes to collect his sister and also the old woman who had helped him. They live in that house happily and enjoy the wealth that had belonged to the *troll* for a very long time. After some time the old woman passes away.

There is quite a substantial number of fairy and folktales from Zanzibar in which there are trolls and giant snakes or dragons which swallow whole villages. These are finally defeated by, usually, young men who have to travel from other far off villages. These tales suggest a ritual of purification and the rebirth of a

community. This is, for example, very well-illustrated in a fairy tale known as *Tovu*. In this tale a very prosperous and fertile village which has prosperous farmers, is invaded by an ogre who keeps on claiming one of the villagers every year. Eventually the ogre has swallowed all the villagers who, incidentally, belonged to one and the same clan. The ogre inherits all the wealth that had belonged to the villagers and, for a time lives very happily. However, in another village, there are people who are of the same clan as the ones who have been swallowed. Among them is a boy child who insists to his parents that he wants to visit the scene of the fatal events. The parents are against the idea, for they are sure that if their son goes he too will be swallowed. The boy persists in his demands, and so, eventually the parents give their half-hearted consent. So he sets out on a journey. By doing this, the boy is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his kith and kin. This readiness is finally rewarded as he manages to outwit the ogre which, in the same manner as happens to the troll in *Umoja*, foolishly kills itself by burning its navel when it accidentally discovers a grain of rice on it and accuses its own navel of stealing the food. The self-sacrifice transferred from the young boys to the *zimwi* and *troll* is indicative of the maturity of the boys. The initiates must be able to conquer their animal lusts and become conscious of their other responsibilities in their societies. As is usual in fairy tales, the boy in *Tovu* cuts open the stomach of the ogre and releases all his clanmates. As a reward, he is crowned and made king of that community.

Concluding remarks

In trying to describe the journey in the Zanzibari folktale, this paper has shown how, in spite of a number of theories which would divide the folktale into even more than 30 "functions" as propounded by structuralists like Lord Raglan, Propp, and Levi Strauss, for our purposes, the most appropriate division of the Zanzibari travel tale is into four major parts whose terms have been borrowed

from Kunene, namely, Locus A, Curve AB, Locus B,and Curve BA. These loci and curves have helped us in decoding the journey in the Zanzibari folktale by deliberating on the reasons for a character's departure, the Arc AB trials and tribulations faced by such a character before reaching the foreign land contained in Locus B, the consolidation of power and victory by the hero or heroine in that locus and also in the returning Arc BA. The paper has indicated that most of the heroes and heroines in the tales do not return to their original points of departure. However, when they do so, these and those who remain in Locus B turn those loci into new homes as they start life afresh.

This paper has also shown that the journey motif in the fairy and folktale from Zanzibar is, essentially, ritualistic. The rites of passage in the motif are, at the same time, a codified idiom which, through creative excursions tend to reveal social processes which sustain and modify the conduct and behavior of individuals of a given community. This has been shown to be done through manipulation of various symbols. The paper has also indicated that the initiation rites represented by the journey undertaken by heroes and heroines are cosmogonic not only in structure but in their very nature. The journey then represents the birth of a new world with new hopes. It ends with the most reassuring manner to the child, similar to what Bettelheim has stated:

> At the story's end the hero returns to reality – a happy reality, but one devoid of magic ... As we awake refreshed from our dreams, better able to meet the tasks of reality, so the fairy tale ends with the hero returning, or being returned, to the real world, much better able to master life.[22]

The paper has, hopefully, proved that contrary to John M Whiting's contentions that initiation ceremonies are social instruments through which the older, especially male, generation dramatises its disciplinary power and control over the younger

generation or even their power to destroy any inclination of rebellion by those in the initiates group;[23] the Zanzibari case, both in the actual initiation rites and also as portrayed in fairy and folktales does *not* support this viewpoint. Fatherhood and motherhood in Zanzibar, as in many other African societies, does not generate any feeling of insecurity or any excessive rebellion among children. Children do belong to more than the immediate, nuclear family.

This explains why the character who travels in the fairy and folktales from Zanzibar is not forced out of the homestead; and this is why the hero or heroine, ultimately returns to the family or starts a new family which replicates the old one. Initiation rites in the actual lives of the Zanzibaris, and as portrayed in the Zanzibari fairy and folktales are neither aggressive nor hostile in intent to the initiates as such. The method of disciplining the initiates, such as secluding them from the comforts of the homestead as represented by the journey into the wilderness does not indicate aggressiveness or hostility. Rather it symbolises the shared struggle to grow up and take responsibilities in one's community. Thus, the sister in *Watoto Saba*, the boy in *Dege*, and all others who undergo this struggle do not regret having undergone it. On the contrary, they are thankful that they passed through it and that it finally brought them to a happy ending.

This paper has indicated that to have heroes and heroines sent out to encounter the dangerous forces out there in the world is to mark the end of infancy. This is the initiation into another kind of life whose process the child has to begin in the long march towards adulthood. One can, thus, say that the journey motif as utilised in the fairy and folktale from Zanzibar is, at the same time, the story of manhood and womanhood achieved.

Notes

1 See Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a thousand faces* (Princeton: Bolingen, 1973); Lord Raglan, *The Hero* (New York: Meridian, 1979); V. Propp, *Morphology of the folktale* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958); and Daniel Kunene, "Journey as metaphor in African literature", in Arnold, Stephen ed., *African literature studies: the present state/l'etat present* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1985) pp 188–215, and "Journey in the African epic", in *Research in African literature*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer 1992), pp 205–224.

2 Joseph Campbell, op. cit., p 30.

3 Op. cit., p 186.

4 Curiously enough, unlike in the Zanzibari folktale, childhood is one of the recurrent themes in African written literature where African writers, like their counterparts in other continents, remember and re-create childhood in an attempt to recapture a lost world. In the Zanzibari folktale, the presence of that "lost" world is taken for granted and, thus, not described in detail. For an interesting paper of visions of childhood in African literature see Burness, Donald, "Three visions of childhood in African literature: Camara Laye, Luandino Vieira, Geraldo Bessa Victor", paper presented at the African Literature Association Meeting, University of Indiana, March 21–24, 1979. Available in ALA Archives, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Alberta, Canada.

5 Daniel P. Kunene, "Journey in the African epic", op. cit., p 206.

6 See his earlier article, "Journey as metaphor in African literature", as mentioned above.

7 I am told by my informants that the island of Mauritius is used just as a metaphor that indicates long distance. In fact, as we mention later in the paper, some other versions of the same story use Egypt and even Arabia istead of Mauritius.

8 Kunene has expressed a similar idea in his "Journey as metaphor in African literature", op. cit., p 188, as he says:

> The wide prevalence of the travelling hero, or hero who ventures forth away from home must be seen in the light of [sic] African's attitude to home, family and communal cohesion. Out there is a jungle. The hero who turns his back on the courtyard and cattle-folds and grazing fields of his home is entering this jungle with all its beasts and monsters. If he comes back alive and unscathed he will have learned some lessons of life. If he comes back scarred in body and soul, he will have tasted the hazards of being away from home, and will appreciate all the more the advantages of maintaining his links with his family and his society.

9 In his "Journey as metaphor in African literature", op. cit., p 189.

10 At a glance this type of punishment might lead one to conclude that it is based on the Muslim system of sin and retribution where whoever is caught stealing have their hands cut off. However, its use in Ndugu Wawili where the sister agrees with her brother's demands that her hands be amputated in payment for loaves of bread does not exactly tally with the Muslim influence for there is no theft involved here. Although my informants tell me that this was just used to emphasise the cruelty of the brother, the coincidence of the hand-cutting incidents calls for more research for it might have some further symbolic significance.

11 This is one of the many tales from Zanzibar which uses the motif of the quest for the absurd which is widespread the world over, Stith Thomson (1946:341) mentions how the motif appears quite often in the tales from North Pacific coasts and even in Europe where, for example, the hero is told to look for berries in the midst of winter; which goes to show how folktales cut across different continents and cultures.

12 See Jan Knappert, Myths and legends of the Swahili (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1970) pp 104–106.

13 Most of the literature that tackles the question of the conflict between culture of the countryside life and that of the city does, invariably, deal with this theme.

14 Incidentally, in our current collection of more than 350 folktales only two utilise the journey motif through sailing, confirming the fact that most of the storytellers/narrators must have come from the Tanzanian mainland without having undergone the experience of being seafarers.

15 See Kunene's article, "Journey as metaphor ..." (p 193), which talks about Chaka who is in the wilderness after several days of wandering. Due to fatigue and hunger, Chaka succumbs to a deep sleep under a tree by a fountain. Waking up in the late afternoon, he finds a tall "doctor-man" standing near him. This "doctor-man" helps Chaka in the process of cleansing and strengthening himself, similar to the girl's strengthening which is done by the little birds.

16 Ibid., p 190.

17 Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of enchantment: the meaning and importance of fairy tales* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p 11.

18 See Mircea Eliade, *Birth and rebirth* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958); and also his *Myth and reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963). Here Eliade is quoted by Bettelheim (1977), p 35.

19 In trying to show how the African system of naming can make a child's father refer to him as "my father", and how the father's conduct towards the child might be so differential that he might never call him by his real name, Wole Soyinka adds the

following regarding this issue in his *Myth, literature and the African world* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p 10:

Thus, the world of the unborn is older than the world of the living, and the world of the living is older than the world of the ancestors, and the same is true if put the other way round.

20 See Bruno Bettelheim, op. cit., p 16.

21 Curiously, this parallels a lot with the role given to Kijana (Mtu) in E.N. Hussein's *Jogoo Kijijini* (Dar es Salaam; Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976) in which a young boy, trying to save a village from the dangerous *Joka*, a dragon which is threatening to devastate the whole village unless each year a virgin is sacrificed to it. This young boy is called by the author, "ng'ombe wa kafara", a sacrificial cow, as he states:

Kiitikio:
Masikini kijana masikini
Masikini lahaula masikini
Haya yote yanajia nini?
Hata ye kujifanya ng'ombe alia

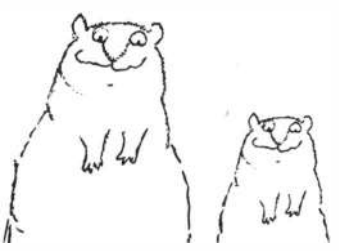
Ng'ombe wa surat al-bakari
Ambae aso na dosari
Au wa Keats mshairi
Endae machinjoni huku alia

Maisha yake hivi hivi
Kuyapoteza
Ndivyo hivi?

Au tabu 'lizozipata
Mashaka yalomkuta
Dhiki zilizomkamata
Kuja kuwang'ombe wa kafara?
(p 28)

22 Op. cit., p 63.

23 See Whiting, John W.M., "Comment", in *American journal of sociology*, 67 (1962), pp 391–394.



Cinderella: other worlds, other versions

magdaleen bester

(This paper is based on illustrations of different versions of Cinderella to a large extent. As it was impossible to obtain permission to use the illustrations from all the copyright holders, these have been omitted, but references are provided to the works containing the illustrations – Editors).

> There was once upon a time a gentleman who married for his second wife the proudest and most haughty woman that ever was known. She had been a widow, and had by her former husband two daughters of her own humour, who were exactly like her in all things. He had also by a former wife a young daughter, but of an unparallelled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world (Perrault 1961).

★

> In a great palace by the sea there once dwelt a very rich old lord, who had neither wife nor children living, only one little granddaughter, whose face he had never seen in all her life. He hated her bitterly, because at her birth his favourite daughter died; and when the old nurse brought him the baby, he swore, that it might live or die as it liked, but he would never look on its face as long as he lived.
>
> So he turned his back, and sat by the window looking over the sea, and weeping great tears for his lost daughter ... And, meanwhile, his granddaughter grew up with no one to care for her, or clothe her; only the old nurse, when no one was by would sometimes give her a dish of scraps from the kitchen, or a torn petticoat from the ragbag; while the other servants of the palace would drive her from the house with blows and mocking birds, calling her "Tattercoats" (Jacobs 1968:185).

★

There are some men who are loving, fearless and brave. There are others who are kind-hearted enough in their way, but as gutless and spineless as a jellyfish. The Nobleman in this story was definitely one of the latter.

The Nobleman's wife adored him, however, and he knew he was lucky to have her. She was young and beautiful, and did everything for him. So much so that, when she died, he could scarcely tie his own shoelaces, let alone look after himself and his daughter.

I must find a new wife at once! he decided. If she was rich, so much the better (he had lost his own money long since)!

He married a rich widow with two daughters (May 1992:21).

★

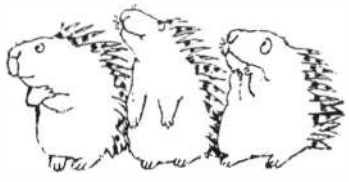
There once lived a young woman named Cinderella, whose natural birth-mother had died when Cinderella was but a child. A few years after, her father married a widow with two elder daughters. Cinderella's mother-of-step treated her very cruelly, and her sisters-of-step made her work very hard, as if she were their own personal unpaid labourer.

One day an invitation arrived at their house. The prince was celebrating his exploitation of this dispossessed and marginalized peasantry by throwing a fancy dress ball (Garner 1994:31).

... Every head in the ballroom turned as Cinderella entered. The men stared at and lusted after this woman who had captured their Barbie-doll ideas of feminine desirability (Garner 1994:33).

★

I guess you think you know this story,
You don't. The real one's much more gory.
The phoney one, the one you know,
Was cooked up years and years ago
And made to sound all soft and sappy
Just to keep the children happy.
Mind you, they got the first bit right,
The bit where, in the dead of night,
The Ugly Sisters, jewels and all,



Departed for the Palace Ball,
While darling little Cinderella
Was locked up in the limly cellar (Dahl 1982:3).

The examples I have quoted are from tales known collectively as Cinderella stories. They prove that folklore is living literature. They echo the voices and values of past storytellers, of other cultures and other times. The stories are kept alive in the nuances of retellings by new tellers for new audiences, Cinderella can be whatever size, shape, nationality, or age we wish (MacMath 1994:29).

The Cinderella stories are perhaps the most widely recorded of all traditional narratives. Now considered a children's story, and censored to fit adult ideas of what is and is not suitable for children, tales of Cinderella and her cousins were once told by adults for all members of the community. The evils that befell the heroine in oral tales were frightening, even gruesome. But Cinderella survived unharmed and triumphant, with the help of strange and magical beings.

What is a Cinderella story?

The story of Cinderella is best known as a children's story by the French writer Charles Perrault, *Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre* (1697). However, other forms of the tale exist in the oral and written traditions of many parts of the world. The different versions are not independent of one another. Their structure and message is similar and they have detail in common.

Almost all tell the story of a young woman persecuted by her family who receives magical help from unusual sources, so that her true worth can be known by a potential husband of higher rank. The core images include association of the heroine with hearth and ashes, help from the dead mother; gift-giving tree; helpful animal; food magically produced by an animal; magic tree; clothing produced from remains of a dead animal; impossible tasks accomplished with the help of animals or a strange old woman; threefold visit to dance or church with threefold flight, proof of identity through shoe, ring, or other item of adornment; marriage (Sierra 1992:161).

The origins of Cinderella

Folklorists devoted their lives to compiling and analysing all known versions of Cinderella, trying to discover the oldest form of the story and to trace the development through time. In 1893 the English Folklore Society published the astonishing research effort of Marian Roalfe Cox entitled *Cinderella: three hundred and forty-five variants of Cinderella, Catskin and Cap o' Rushes, abstracted and tabulated, with a discussion of medieval analogues and notes*. More than half a century later (1951) the Swedish folklorist Anna Birgitta Rooth wrote her doctoral dissertation on the tale, identifying 700 versions (Sierra 1992:161–168).

Gradually the quest for origins were abandoned and the folklorists' were substituted by comparative studies of illustrated versions, et cetera.

The purpose of this paper

No child should be brought up without learning the story of Cinderella or Red Riding Hood. The purpose of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of how a folktale may vary as it is told in different cultures and different times. Each century tends to create or recreate folktales after its own taste. Each teller and illustrator brings to the tale something of his or her own cultural orientation.

For this discussion I have chosen versions that represent a broad range of cultures and geographical areas, styles and variations on the basic theme of the persecuted heroine. I will pay particular attention to the illustrations, as it is through illustrations that the enquiring mind gets insight into different periods and different cultures. However, I would first like to give a short overview of different versions of Cinderella, originating from different cultures.

Yeh-shen

The first complete Cinderella story to be written down, comes from China. It tells of Yeh-shen who was mistreated by her stepmother and stepsister after her father remarried. Like the heroine of several other Cinderella tales, Yeh-shen was helped by a magical being, in this case a talking fish.

The tale of Yeh-shen though set in China and differing in some details, is basically the same as the familiar European fairy tale of Cinderella. But surprisingly, it is at least 1 000 years older than the earliest known Western versions of the story (Jameson 1932).

Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slipper

The French author Charles Perrault published Cinderella (Cendrillon) in 1697 in a collection of fairy tales under the title *Histoires au contes du temps passé* (Dundes 1988:14). When Perrault first wrote down these fairy tales they had already existed, in one form or another, for years, some for centuries, as part of the unwritten tradition of folklore handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. Perrault's version is the story most people recognise as the "real" Cinderella, and if one were to select the single most popular version out of all the hundreds of texts of Cinderella that have been reported, it would be this one. Walt Disney's animated film is based on Perrault (Dundes 1988:110).

In the Perrault version a stepmother requires the girl to clean for her two daughters. She lives by the hearth. Her godmother turns a pumpkin into a coach, mice into horses, a rat into a coachman and six lizards into footmen. She provides a gown and glass slippers for Cinderella. The prince dances with Cinderella at the ball. She must leave by midnight. Thrice she attends the ball and flees at 12. Her glass slipper is lost. The slipper is tried on by all the maids of the kingdom. It fits Cinderella and she weds the prince.

Perrault's version demonstrates the well-bred 17th century female traits of gentility, grace and selflessness, even to the point of Cinderella graciously forgiving her wicked stepsisters and finding them noble husbands.

Ash Girl / Cinder-fool / Aschenputtel

No two individuals did more to stimulate the study of folklore than did Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The publication of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1812

and 1814 burst like a literary bombshell on the European scene. The Grimms frequently combined different versions of the same tale, thereby producing what modern folklorists call a composite text. The published versions of Cinderella reported by the Grimm brothers may well be as popular and well-known as the Perrault versions, but are not necessarily the most authentic in terms of the oral versions of the tale (Dundes 1988:23).

In the Grimms' corpus one can find different forms of the Cinderella story: Aschenputtel, Allerleirauch and The Dress of gold, of silver and of stars (Cap o' Rushes).

In Grimms' Ash girl the stepsisters try to make the slippers fit them by cutting of parts of their feet. Gruesome detail is included in many versions. Other elements found in this tale, but not in Perrault's Cinderella, are the magic tree on the mother's grave and the impossible task of picking up thousands of peas or tiny grains before going to the ball. Cinderella gets pidgeons to help her.

At the wedding the pidgeons sat on Aschenputtel's shoulder and, if the stepsisters had not suffered enough by cutting off their toes and heels to fit their feet into the glass slipper, the pidgeons pecked out their eyes while they were acting as bridesmaids – this is a Grimm story!

Other versions on the Cinderella theme from the Grimm collection are *Cat-skin/Allerleirauch* and the *Many-furred creature*. The heroines of this type of tale are usually kings' or rich men's daughters. The dying queen asks the king to wed only one as fair as she. He decides to wed his daughter. The daughter covers herself with a cloak and goes forth disguised as a poor woman.

Tattercoats and Rushen Coatie

These two versions are published in *English fairy tales* (1968) which were collected by Joseph Jacobs in the English countryside in the late 1800s.

The Indian (Native American) legend

The collecting of North American Indian tales began with the sporadic records of missionaries and explorers, but not until the 1830s was there any serious attempt to bring together the rich body of existing material. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, a government agent for the Ojibwa Indians, recorded their myths and legends. Since then ethnologists and folklorists have collected a wide variety of Native American folklore.

A rich variety of tales came to America with immigrants from Europe and Asia, and their stories can be seen to have overlaid Indian folklore. Native variants of European tales are often found. Rafe Martin retells the Algonquin Indian version of Cinderella in *The Rough-face girl* (see *Die Aspoester-meisie*).

Modern versions

In the 1970s feminist writers began to attack the heroine tales, and Cinderella in particular, as bad role models for young girls. If the tales are accepted literally, the argument must be valid. Fairy tales originated in societies in which a

woman's possible roles were very limited. Careers were not an alternative to marriage. In the past years efforts have been made to produce "modern" fairy tales. Retellings and parodies have become the order of the day and many adaptations of Cinderella are available that show a young girl as having many choices. In many instances modern writers have written farcical versions of the old fairy tales.

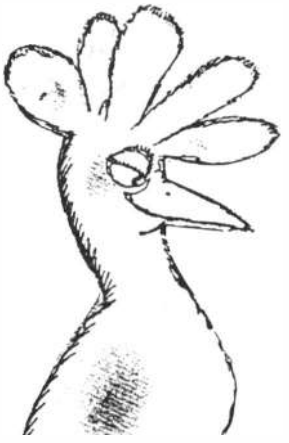
African folktales

While the folktales have African settings, many of their motifs are common to European fairy tales.

As stated, the purpose of this paper is to explore how a folktale may vary as it is told in different cultures and different times. By examining the illustrations in different versions one can see how each teller and illustrator brings his or her own cultural orientation to the interpretation of the Cinderella story and tries to make the story meaningful to a new audience.

I have selected common incidents recognised by folklorists, namely the portrayal

- ★ of the ill-treated heroine
- ★ Cinderella at work
- ★ birds to the rescue
- ★ the ugly sisters
- ★ the shoe fitting episode.



The Heroine

1. *Yeh-shen, a Cinderella story from China*. 1982. Retold by Ai-LingLouie. Illustrated by Ed Young. New York: Philomel.

   This is the complete Hsueh Chin T'oo Yun edition of the Chinese Cinderella story recorded from the Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1912). Chinese characters on block printed pages are shown. The illustrations are set in panels like those of the Chinese folding, painted screen. The style of clothing, jewelery worn and hairstyles establish the story's setting. The magic of the Cinderella motif comes from the bones of the fish that Yeh-shen loved and her stepmother killed.

2. "Cinderella; or, The Little glass slipper", in *The Classic fairy tales*. 1974. Edited by Iona and Peter Opie. London: Oxford University Press:123–127.

   In a coloured wood engraving from an 1876 edition of Cinderella, she is shown dressed in a beautiful, and very stylishly tailored ballgown.

3. *Cinderella and other tales from Perrault*. 1989. Illustrated by Michael Hague. London: Methuen Children's Books.

   The artist has paid meticulous attention to detail such as the fraying dress, the stone floor, kettle, chairs and beautiful border. The illustrator pictures Cinderella as a tired peasant girl.

4. *Aspoestertjie*. 1982. 'n Sprokie van die Grimm-broers, oorvertel deur Linda Rode met illustrasies deur Bernadette. Verskyn onder die titel *Aschenputtel*. 1977. Mönchaltorf: Nord-Süd Verlag.

The expressionistic painting of Cinderella has an air of tranquility. She is neatly dressed and pictured in a middle-class, quite modern looking home.

5. *Cinderella; or, The Little glass slipper*. 1972. Charles Perrault. Illustrated by Errol le Cain. London: Faber & Faber.

   Cinderella is a picture of grace and feminity. The beautifully composed scene has an aura of elegance and charm and is filled with a wealth of detail. Every object in the kitchen has been painted with the greatest care.

6. *Cinderella and the little glass slipper*. 1971. By Bernadette Watts. London: Franklik Watts.

   The superbly executed picture of Cinderella in rich colours gives a completely different version of the little ash girl.

7. *Prince Cinders*. 1987. By Babette Cole. London: Hamish Hamilton.

   Here we have a contemporary Prince Cinders who was not much of a prince, because he was small, spotty, scruffy and skinny. He had three big hairy brothers who were always teasing him about his looks. They spent their time going to the palace disco with princess girlfriends and made Prince Cinders stay behind to clear up after them.

8. *The Starlight cloak*. 1993. Jenny Nimmo. Illustrated by Justin Todd. London: Harper Collins.

   Oona, the youngest daughter of an Irish King is shown carrying frozen branches up the winding staircase of their castle.

9. *Rainbow warrior's bride.* 1981. By Marcus Crouch. Illustrated by William Stobbs. London: Pelham Books.

   Originally published in 1884 as "The Invisible one" in *Algonquin legends of New England.* A collection of the myths and folklore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribes.

   The beauty of Marcus Crouches' illustrations evoke the mystery and magic of Native American culture. The illustrations depict a village typical of that period.

10. *Chinye, a West African folktale.* 1994. Retold by Obi Onyefulu. Illustrated by Evie Safarewicz. London: Frances Lincoln.

    Far removed from her European namesakes, this West African Cinderella is shown working in the garden and fetching water in a lush African forest.

11. *Alex and the glass slipper.* 1991. Written and illustrated by Amanda Graham. Flinders Park: Keystone Bocks.

    Alex was the kitchen hand at the Flinders' Cellars restaurant. He was a hard and honest worker and it was not long before the chefs took advantage of this. Besides peeling the potatoes and washing the dishes, Alex also had to wash and press the two chefs' uniforms.

Birds to the rescue

In the Grimm's version of Cinderella, she is given an impossible task in order to delay her so she will not be able to attend the ball. Through magic intervention birds flock in to help her pick up lentils/peas/stones.

12. *Cinderella*. 1978. Illustrated by Svend Otto S. Translated by Anne Rogers. London: Pelham Books. First published in Denmark by Glydendal in 1978 as *Askepot*.

    A fragile Danish Cinderella watches as the birds help to pick lentils from the ashes and put them in the bowl.

13. "Cinderella" in *Grimm's fairy tales*. Illustrated by Pauline Ellison. Selected and introduced by Richard Adams. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul:34–41.

    A Flemish Cinderella helps the birds to pick up the lentils. The illustration is filled with a wealth of detail capturing the earthiness of 15th century farmhouse kitchen.

14. *Aspoestertjie*. 1988. Verteller: Roelf van Rensburg. Illustrasies: Agusti Asensio. – 1991. Parramo'n Ediciones, Spanje. Afrikaanse uitgawe. Pretoria: J.P. van der Walt.

    In this modern Spanish version, Cinderella gets help from birds to hang the washing so that she will be finished with her chores and be able to go to the ball.

The ugly sisters

15. *Aspoestertjie*. 1990. Deur Charles Perrault. Vertaal en geïllustreer deur Diane Goode. Kaapstad: Anansi. Oorspronklik uitgegee onder die titel *Cinderella*. 1988. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Diane Goode dresses the ugly sisters in beautiful dresses, showing the humour and elegance of 17th century France.

16. *Cinderella; or, The Little glass slipper*. 1972. Charles Perrault. Illustrated by Errol le Cain. London: Faber & Faber.

    The beautiful glassware on the dressing table and the elegant gown worn by the ugly sister is typical of nobility of the 15th century.

17. *Cinderella*. 1981. Illustrated by Moira Kemp. London: Hamish Hamilton.

    The ugly sisters are depicted in a style suggestive of period Flemish art.

18. *Chinye, a West African folktale*. 1994. Retold by Obi Onyefulu. Illustrated by Evie Safarewicz. London: Frances Lincoln.

    The ugly sisters are wearing colourful African clothing and accessories.

19. *Rainbow warrior's bride*. 1981. By Marcus Crouch. Illustrated by William Stobbs. London: Pelham Books.

    Two ugly sisters cut the hair of Soft Breeze, the Native American Cinderella.

20. *Die Aspoester-meisie*. 1993. Deur Rafe Martin. Illustrasies deur David Shannon. Kaapstad: Anansi. Oorspronklik uitgegee onder die titel *The Rough-face girl*. 1992. New York: G.P. Putnam.

    Two ugly sisters from the Algonquin Red Indian tribe are beautifully dressed in colourful traditional clothing.

The shoe fitting scene

21. *Aspoestertjie.* 1990. Deur Charles Perrault. Vertaal en geïllustreer deur Diane Goode. Kaapstad: Anansi. Oorspronklik uitgegee onder die titel *Cinderella.* 1988. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

    The illustration shows the verve and grandeur so typical of the Baroque style.

22. *Cinderella and the little glass slipper.* 1971. By Bernadette Watts. London: Franklin Watts.

    The simplicity of this shoe fitting scene stands in complete contrast to the illustration in the previous work. We see a peasant girl trying on the magic shoe.

23. *Cinderella.* 1981. Illustrated by Moira Kemp. London: Hamish Hamilton.

    Moira Kemp captures the earthiness of 16th century village life, reminiscent of a Bruegel painting.

24. *Prince Cinders.*

    A modern Princess Lovelypenny decreed that she will marry whoever fits the trousers lost by the prince who saved her from being eaten by the big, hairy monkey.

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that folklore is virtually indestructable. We have Cinderella stories today to make use of and to enjoy as we think best, yet we need to retain a sense of respect for and responsibility towards them. What others, in future ages, may, in their turn come to find in them and get out of them, is in their hands (Adams 1981:11).

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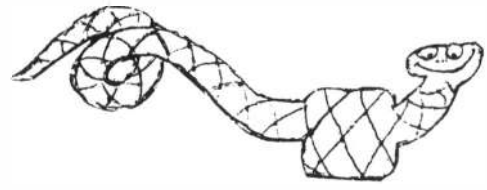
The Implications for humour in children's literature,

with particular reference to the contemporary South African situation

sandra braude



Introduction

Humour may be defined as that quality of action, speech or writing, which excites amusement, or the faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing (Sutherland ... *et al* 1991:966). To be able to see humour in a situation is to add a dimension to experience; to find a thing funny is to remove the threat from that thing; to be able to laugh is to find a way of moving away from pain.

Sigmund Freud (1985:428–429), in his essay on Humour, commented on some of the characteristics to be attributed to it:

> Like jokes and the comic, humour has something liberating about it; but it also has something of grandeur and elevation ... The grandeur ... clearly lies in the triumph of narcissism, the victorious assertion of the ego's vulnerability. The ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality, to let itself be compelled to suffer. It insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows, in fact, that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure.

Writing for children in South Africa is still a fairly new phenomenon, with relatively few books having been published in English, the number of publications having risen from just a handful to approximately 100 a year in the last part of the 20th century (Jenkins 1993:1). Even this small number has been difficult to sustain in view of the limited readership consequent upon socio-historical circumstances, but there is an increasing desire to achieve a truly South African literary voice.

In the past South African literature has been seen mainly through white eyes. In many cases nature and the environment has provided subject matter, as has also the cultural heritage of the black in the form of folktales. The criticism that such literature has been colonial in nature is not without foundation, and one of our best-known writers, Es'kia Mphahlele has stated:

> I appreciate that there is a dearth of reading material for our children. What exists conveys most unwholesome images as the focus is mostly on the nurturing of the white child and is condescending towards other races.[1]

Another thing is that South Africa and its literature are presently in states of change and development. South African writers for children have, from early on, attempted to find an authentic voice by "doing the South African thing". Unfortunately they have been involved in a Catch-22 situation. For historical reasons most South African writers to date have been white, and have brought European attitudes into their writing. What is regarded as colonialism is widespread, and it only now that South African writers are beginning to express themselves with relevance, in the language of their choice, under the influence of such writers as Ngugi wa 'Thiongo, Njabulo Ndebele and Es'kia Mphahlele. This attitude has been supported by Nadine Gordimer, who has commented on the desirability of social realism in the novel.

It is not difficult to understand therefore that humour, which is a relatively new phenomenon in children's literature anywhere, is not a priority in South African children's literature at the present time. It is worthwhile, however, to consider the phenomenon of humour in children's literature, and attempt to assess its importance for South Africa.

Humour in children's books

To determine what children find funny is not an easy thing, and the adult has to approach this subject with humility, for the passage of time tends to dull memory of the past.

It is averred that appreciation of humour probably begins at the age of seven or eight (*Horn book sampler* 1959:152), before which age the child has difficulty in differentiating between fantasy and reality. The consequence of this is that episodes such as that in which Alice falls down the rabbit hole would appear exciting rather than fantastic.

From about the age of seven the ability for differentiation grows, and the child is entranced with practical jokes and various types of coarseness. Bawden (1994:5) comments that

> until they become sophisticated adolescents, children laugh at the same awful jokes they always did. Bottoms, farts and belches, the very thought of a teacher – or the Queen – going to the lavatory, can guarantee hysteria.

It has been ascertained that older children do not look so often for funny books: they prefer humour *in* the book itself, whether this be in school stories, family stories or fairy tales. But it seems that humour must be a part of the totality of the book, and not simply for its own sake.

Children delight in slapstick but, like anything else that is written for them, it must be spontaneous and honest. Children are indefatigable judges of honesty, and will not tolerate being spoken down to. It is for this reason that Billy Bunter and Anstey's *Vice Versa* have not moved into the contemporary child's reading sphere, whereas the Gauls smashing up the Romans in *Asterix* never fails to inspire mirth.

Absurdity also goes down very well. A warm favourite here is Norman Hunter's Professor Branestawm, whose incredible adventures rely on absurd machines, or the stereotypical absent-mindedness of Branestawm. Perhaps the fact that we are now clearly in the Age of Technology is a factor in the popularity of these books. Take for example the episode in "The Pancake Day at Great Pagwell", when the pancake machine runs amok:

> The Professor struggled out of his pancake just in time for another one to drop over him. Two pancakes were on the clock, four were draped over the light. The Mayor was eating his way through a complete set of pancakes of varying sizes that had fallen in front of him. The four firemen put their helmets on and brandished their axes, but only succeeded in smashing two cups, one saucer and the sugar basin. Mrs Flittersnoop put her head gingerly out from under the table and was immediately gummed to the carpet by a three-foot pancake two inches thick, that had just shot out (Hunter 1979:123).

Children also like wit, particularly when there is a nonsense aspect to it. Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and, on the more contemporary scene, Shel Silverstein, are masters of this aspect of humour.

Edward Lear

Edward Lear who was, at another level of his creativity a superb painter, produced some of the most charming nonsense in the English language, including poems such as "The Owl and the pussycat", limericks, and nonsense recipes. These, together with his naive illustrations, continue to provide a source of joy for both child and adult reader. His first *Book of nonsense* was published in 1846, and his *Nonsense songs and stories* in 1871. His characters, for example the Pobble who has no toes, the Dong with the luminous nose, and the adorable Owl and Pussy-cat, who eat slices of quince with a runcible spoon and dance to the light of the moon, are unforgettable.

Lewis Carroll – Nonsense logic

Lewis Carroll, whose real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, is the master of nonsense logic in English literature. Although the Alice books – *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking glass* are not the only ones he wrote, they are certainly the most famous.

Lewis Carroll was, in fact, an acclaimed mathematician who lectured at Christ Church, Oxford. (The story is told that Queen Victoria was so captivated by *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* that she asked Dodgson to send her his next book, which he

did – a mathematical treatise). Many readers (and this includes myself) have found the Alice books more pleasing at a later stage. If young children are to enjoy them they will probably do so because an adult has read the books aloud to them, in which case episodes such as the baby turning into a pig, or the Cheshire cat disappearing – all but for its grin – will be seen as fun and laughable.

Carroll's books incorporate various aspects of humour, including fantasy, absurdity and verbal wit, of which he was an undisputed master. The poem "Jabberwocky" contains a number of "portmanteau" words, which are best described by the character Humpty Dumpty as having two meanings packed up into one word, and produced by saying two words simultaneously. "Brillig", for example, is made of the words "bright" and "light", and the other strange words in the poem (some of which can be seen in the following stanza), are constituted according to the same rule:

> Twas brillig and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
> And the mome raths outgrabe.
> (*Through the looking glass*, chapter 1.)

It could be suggested that Carroll's nonsense logic is peculiarly valid for the present day, when values are so uncertain and relative. Both in the Alice books and the contemporary world it is difficult to assign precision, and words can change their meanings. Again Humpty Dumpty has something to say in this respect:

> "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."

And herein lies a whole deep philosophy of linguistics and life.

Animal characters

The presence of animal characters in stories follows an ancient tradition. Even in the Bible it is possible to find Balaam's ass, who talks like a human being, and the Fables of Aesop, the first collection of which was made by Demetrius of Phalerum about 320 BC, is filled with talking animals.

One of the best-known and popular animal characters of the 20th century, who live and speak like human beings, is Winnie-the-Pooh. The Pooh books were written by AA Milne for his son, Christopher Robin. The first were poetry books – *When we were very young* and *Now we are six.*

The characters have all too human traits and failings. Pooh is a happy-go-lucky bear of "little brain", who is so addicted to honey that he consumes a quantity guaranteed to expand his girth so that he is unable to get through the door of Rabbit's house. Owl the verbose, Piglet the nervous, Eeyore the depressed, Kanga the caring, Roo – who likes everything until he has tried it – and all the other characters, belong to and are subservient to Christopher Robin. This omnipotence on Christopher Robin's part is valuable for children who can relate to it and thus also feel their own powers.

Richmal Crompton – The human element

There would be an inadequacy in children's literature if all the characters were animals. So it is that, to the great joy of those brought up on *William*, Richmal

Crompton's books are currently experiencing a come-back and a new wave of popularity.

William Brown is a dirty-faced, sock-becrumpled boy, of the sort acceptable before sexism reared its head. When I was a girl there was no literary character I loved more, and I would sincerely hope that the children of today would permit themselves to feel similarly.

Nina Bawden, author of serious books such as *Carrie's war*, feels the same way, having been confused by her own children's lack of interest in William, who takes life very seriously from his own point of view, and cannot understand why adults so seldom agree with him. Bawden (1994:5) comments:

> I hope my grandchildren will enjoy them, although I remember that when I pressed them on my own children, they didn't find them funny. (This had puzzled me until I compared the nice new editions I had bought them with my own battered originals, and found they had been bowdlerized. Most of William's long, philosophical soliloquies had been deleted, losing, as a result, the whole essence of the comedy.)

It is important for the purposes of this essay to understand that William lives in a time of stress – World War II. Although, living in an English village, he does not undergo the trauma foisted on the less fortunate children of his era, the war has nonetheless a reality for him.

In one instance he and his chums (the Outlaws) set themselves up as archers, with a view to protecting their country from the enemy. It just so happens that military maneuvers are set up in the village, and General Bastow, in charge of these, is construed by the Outlaws as being an enemy agent and therefore fair game. The Outlaws decide to get his map from him, thereby confusing the maneuvers:

General Bestow, walking peaceably down the road studying his map as he went, was amazed to see a boy suddenly scramble up out of the ditch by the roadside. A moment later he was still more amazed to receive the full force of the boy's bullet-head in his stomach, and to be forced by its sheer iron weight into a sitting posture in the dust. For a moment physical agony blinded him to everything but the outrage committed by that dastardly boy upon his digestive organs. Then his vision cleared. He found his map gone and a boy disappearing on the horizon. It was not General Bastow's habit to receive any outrage sitting down (except as in this case inadvertently). With a roar of fury he set off in pursuit, less in order to recover his map (of which he had other copies) than in order to inflict condign punishment upon the person of his assault. But it was not for nothing that William was pursued regularly and unfailingly by all the local farmers. William's life had perforce been largely spent in throwing off pursuers.

... "Well," chuckled (William) "*now* they'll be in a nice fix. They jolly well won't know what to do without the map. They won't know where they are or anything." ("William and the archers", in *William the good* [London: George Newness, 1935])

Mark Twain – Realistic humour

Mark Twain (pseudonym for Samuel L Clemens) has been accused of racism, but on this I would like to take issue. The "nigger" Jim is one of the most human characters in American fiction, and the term "nigger" is not so much pejorative as one in use at the time.

Huckleberry Finn (1884), acknowledged by many as the definitive American novel, is not clearly intended for children, whereas *Tom Sawyer* (1886), is.

Tom is friendly with Huck, son of the town drunkard. Together the two have some exciting adventures, and eventually come into a fortune as a result. The important fact of the book is not so much the adventures, as the humour. An

incomparable episode occurs when Tom, set to whitewashing the fence by way of punishment, manages to get the job done by all his friends, who actually pay him to do it. The philosophy emerges that what one *has* to do is work, whereas what one *wants* to do is play.

Maurice Sendak – The wild world

Maurice Sendak is undoubtedly the finest artist/writer of children's fiction in the Western world. His books are captivating, compelling, and replete with humour tinged with sadness.

His best-known book is the 1964 Caldecott prize-winner, *Where the wild things are*, in which Max is accused of being a "wild thing" by his mother, on account of his noisy ebullience. His retort, "I'll eat you up", results in his being sent to his room, where he vaults into the imaginary kingdom of the Wild Things. They proclaim him their leader, and a massive frolic begins. Eventually Max is obliged to leave his wild "subjects" and return to his room, where a hot supper awaits him.

This delightful book latches into the fears and frustrations of the young child, and demonstrates the restorative power of the imagination.

Humour and South African children's literature

The writers and books discussed above are simply a few amongst many who have contributed to humour in children's literature. All of them emanate from either

the American or the English situation. The question arises as to whether South African children would find them relevant, or appreciate their humour. This is not easy to answer. It would be advantageous if research were done in this area.

There are doubtless many children who would appreciate the humour, but South Africa is a highly complex society, and it is neither possible nor desirable to attempt to fit all its children into one mould. The strength of South Africa lies in its diversity: its children come in different forms, and from different cultures and backgrounds, and it is almost a truism that humour tends to be culture-specific. There are 11 official languages, apart from those imported from Europe and Asia. There are different religions, different educational and socio-economic standards, and people live at various levels, from the first world to the third world. In the former I have heard children talking seriously about fairies whilst, in the latter (a streetchild's environment), I have listened to pre-adolescent children making jokes about female genitalia. The differences can be extreme, and it is clear that there is no single humour that will raise the mirth of all.

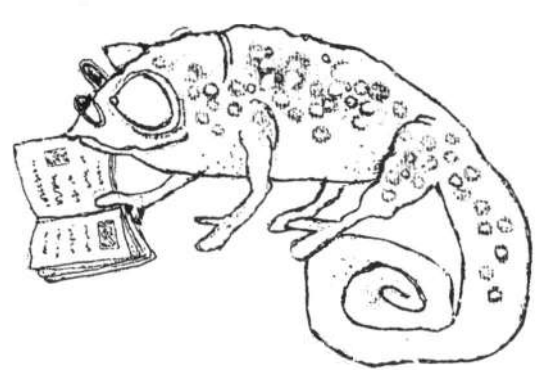
It must not be denied, however, that humour fulfils a valuable function in life. There are those in South Africa, particularly from the disadvantaged sectors, who deem that humour is frivolous and irrelevant, and that social reality demands a more serious view of life. This attitude does not take into account the healing qualities of humour.

Laughter provides a release from tension and, in a society – nay, in a world – fraught with tension and suffering, this is most necessary. Freud's view that humour has something liberating and elevating about it should not be forgotten.

It is now accepted in literary circles in South Africa that the time for protest literature has passed. The old order has given way to the new, and now is the time for reconstruction and development. And what better way than through laughter?

There is indeed a need for books for our youth that portray social realism: the ills of society, the sadness of poverty and homelessness; the inability to attain empowerment. But there is also a need for our youth to gain release through laughter – as William did during World War II, As Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn and Jim did when confronted by the social inequities of the deep South, as Max the ebullient did when having to deal with the prospect of punishment.

This is the time for our writers to draw upon the well-springs of humour, in order to offer the gift of laughter and creative imagination to the children of South Africa.



Note

1 Personal correspondence

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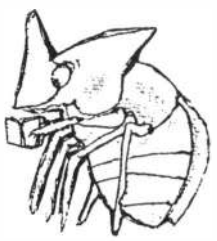


Children's books in African languages:

an overview

johan lenake

African people in general are regarded as poor readers. This might be true to some extent and the reasons might be as follows: most of them have to rise early in the morning to go to work, travelling long distances of between 20 to 65 km, work the whole day, at times doing manual labour, late in the afternoon they have to travel back home, get there late and tired, eat and sleep.

Those who have been to school have read most of the books available and do not feel like reading them again after leaving school. Until recently the libraries in most townships were poorly stocked and in rural towns there were no libraries at all. About 80 percent of the libraries in the Free State, for example, were built between 1990 to 1994.

With regard to children's books the position is as follows: In Southern Sotho the first school readers were written by the missionaries. Franz wrote *Mmulakgoro* for Sub B (second year at school), Germond published *Paliso tsa Sesotho* (1939) (Sesotho Readers) for Standards 1 to 4 (third to sixth year at school). In 1942 the Khabele brothers published *Beisang mabeoana* for Standards 1 to 4 (1946). Maile wrote *Re tswela pele* for Standards 1 to 4 (1946). In the early 50s the three

Engelbrecht brothers wrote *Matima-Lenyora* – Sub A to Standard 6 (first to eighth year at school). Most of the stories contained in these readers are almost the same as those in the Lente-reeks (Afrikaans readers). Malie, who is the fourth author, might have translated the stories. Thejane and Engelbrecht published *Ntataise* – Sub A – Standard 6 in 1955. Moiloa and Nteo published *Mmulakgoro* – Sub A – Standard 6 in the 60s. Of all these readers, only *Ntataise* and *Matima-Lenyora* are still read in all the Sesotho schools. In 1989 Lenake and Moeketsi published *Mapetle* – Sub A to Standard 5.

Apart from these readers, there are no other children's books besides translations. Most translations were done in the 80s and early 90s. The following publishers seem to be leading in this field: HAUM-Daan Retief, De Jager-HAUM and Educum. Translations cover seven African languages, namely Sesotho, Setswana, Sesotho sa Leboa, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Tshivenda and Sitsonga.

Translations in these languages were done by mother-tongue speakers who are knowledgeable, but here and there one finds some problems. In our languages we have the problem of sounds that differ in pronunciation such as "ng", "g", "tsh" in Sotho and "tj" in Zulu. In Zulu and Xhosa the "ng" is not a single phoneme, whereas in Sotho it is a single phoneme. There is a book which won a prize, entitled *Songololo*. This is a Xhosa word for a millipeet, and is pronounced "Son-go-lo-lo". The book is also translated into Setswana, but the translator forgot that in Setswana "ng" is a single phoneme, pronounced "So-ngolo-lo". This to a Motswana child is meaningless. The sound "g" is also problematic. In Zulu and Xhosa it is a voiced sound, for example "ugogo" (granny). In Setswana and Northern Sotho its pronounced softly, "go bona" (to see) and "ugogo" is "koko". "Gogo" in *Songololo* is wrong. "Gogo" is a bogeyman to frighten children.

Another problem that most translators encounter, is that of names. Names in African languages have meaning. For happiness we have "Thabo", "Njabulo", "Mbulelo" in Sesotho, Ndebele and Xhosa. "Sipho", "Mpho" in Zulu and Sesotho. If you translate into Sesotho "Sipho" should be "Mpho".

Some translators also forget to adapt the milieu to suit the readers.

One Motswana translator translated stories meant for the Basotho children where the environment is Qwaqwa and Lesotho with mountains, snow and very cold winters. These things are strange to most Batswana children because they do not occur in their regions.

But on the other hand, we should not be too rigid about the question of environment because as Snyman (1983:61) rightly states:

> Daar word dikwels uitsprake gemaak soos: die stadskind sal hierdie verhaal nie begryp of geniet nie, of Kleurling – of Swartkinders kan nie identifiseer met Witmense nie, of die kind uit 'n minder gegoede buurt het stories nodig uit soortgelyke omstandighede, of wat sal ons kinders hê aan 'n verhaal uit die Viktoriaanse tyd, hulle weet tog niks daarvan nie.
>
> (Often pronouncements are made like: the city child will not understand or enjoy this story, or coloured or black children cannot identify with white people, or the child from a less affluent neighbourhood needs stories from similar circumstances, or what would our children get out of a story from Victorian times, they do not know anything about it after all.)

Snyman goes further and indicates how children react when you converse with them, watch their movements in the library, how they react when told a certain story. To her children's literature is international and children behave in a similar manner throughout the whole world.

Earlier I indicated that most translations were done by mother-tongue speakers. There was, however, a period when some nonmother tongue speakers also tried their hand at translations. In one case the translations were done hurriedly and so badly that the translator was threatened with court action. Another translator who thought that he knows our languages set out to translate some of Dick Bruna's books. These books are an indication of how contemptuous the translator is towards African languages: the titles are wrong and literal, the sentence construction is hopeless, spelling mistakes abound, the tense, concords, punctuation are all wrong, for example

Nkgelli ke borakana *ya* mahlo	Nkgelli ke borakana bo mahlo
a matsho o ka re ke mosidi	a matsho a kang mosidi
ho tloha hloohong yo ya *maoto*	ho tloha hloohong ho ya *maotong*
ke e *tshootho.*	e sootho.
Ha a na lerata	ha e na lerata
Hoseng ha nkqegelli	Ke hoseng, nkgelli
a dutse a shebela ntle	o dutse o shebile ka ntle,
a bona mosajana a eme	o bona mosetsana a eme,
a bonala a swabile	mme a tadimeha a hloname
A matha ka ntle kapele	Bo mathela ka ntle
A mo botsa hore molate keng	bo mmotsa hore molato keng
Nkgelli, ngwanana wa ka o	Nkgelli, ngwanana o
lahlehetswe –	lahlehile –
O ne a le kwano honajwale!	O ne a le mona hona tjena!

The series is meant for the children from six to nine years of age and the aim is to teach them to read and appreciate the language. But how can a child appreciate a book with so many mistakes: wrong sentences, words which do not occur in the language, wrong concords, et cetera. To date these books are found in most of our libraries – public and school libraries – and apparently they are there to stay.

Another common problem found in translations is literal translation. In the two books published by Educum, the names *Bongani* and *Vuyo* are taken as they are from Zulu and Xhosa, whereas their Sesotho equivalents are *Teboho* and *Thabo*. The translation itself is fair, but here and there one encounters literal translation and foreign words ... "ke se nahannweng ke moshanyana" for "the boy thought"; "ya fofela e tobile ho Vuyo" for "ya fofa e tobile Vuyo"; "o ne a na le mohau" for "o ne a le mohau".

Despite the few negative ideas indicated above, translations play a vital role in children's books in the nine African languages of the Republic of South Africa. The publishers who appear to have published a sizeable number of translations in these languages are HAUM-de Jager and HAUM-Daan Retief. The books translated from English and Afrikaans texts cover fiction and nonfiction on a variety of topics: animals, birds, insects, parts of the human body, wild life, adventures, folktales, et cetera.

In the past few decades some language committees and boards were not in favour of translations. The idea is characterised by the few translations found in almost all the African languages: in 1983 for example, translated works numbered a mere 30. This was despite the fact that translation commenced

immediately after the arrival of the missionaries in the 19th century. Among the 30 works we have mentioned, the one which played a decisive role in vernacular literature, was John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Swanepoel (in Gerard 1983:61) has this to say about translation:

> Bunyan's work foreshadowed two additional complementary features of vernacular literature in this region: the role translation would play in initiating creative writing, and the appearance of a so-called "rambling character" in novels with rather episodic structures.

Swanepoel's view is relevant to the many translations of children's books produced by the quoted companies. This is further supported by Snyman's comments on the initial attitudes on translations of Afrikaans children's books:

> Eerstens word gesê dat die kind nie boeke met 'n vreemde agtergrond sal begryp nie. Tweedens word aangevoer dat vertalings die Afrikaanse skrywer "dooddruk" (Snyman 1983:76).
>
> (Firstly, it is said that the child will not understand books with a strange or foreign background. Secondly, the opinion is expressed that translations "squeeze the life out of" the Afrikaans writer.)

Snyman (1983:76–77) concludes as follows about the two statements:

> Albei hierdie argumente is uiters kortsigtig ... die feit dat die kind nie aan die historiese werklikheid gebonde is nie, is teoreties uitgewerk en prakties getoets. In die praktyk is dit verder 'n bekende feit dat die kinderliteratuur in 'n baie groot mate internasionaal is.
>
> (Both these arguments are extremely short-sighted ... the fact that the child is not bound to historical realities has been theoretically developed and practically tested. Furthermore, in practice it is a well-known fact that children's literature is, to a very large extent, international.)

But despite all the good work the publishers did for our languages, they had very serious problems: first they had to tender to the former Department of Education

and Training, have the translations done and processed to the stage of an almost complete book. The manuscripts were then submitted to the Department who in turn submitted them to the various committees and language boards for their perusal and acceptance, and only then the publishers were informed to go ahead with the publication or the manuscripts were rejected. In an effort to cater for all publishers or give each one a slice of the cake, each publisher was allowed a certain quota of the books to publish.

With regard to the literacy of the author there is no question. But a question could be posed on the competence or training of authors. Here a lot is still to be done. Before a manuscript can finally be printed for example, it has to go through the hands of a few reviewers and finally an editor who at times almost has to rewrite the manuscript for the author. This process we may refer to a reshaping. Reshaping may also include texts produced by anonymous authors such as folktales, myths and legends, or texts collected by researchers by means of tape recordings or consulting archives.

Reshaping may be done in three ways. Jason (1988) states the following:

(a) **Upgrading**

Where works are improved so as to fit the need of a higher social class or modern trends. Today we have the radio and television which seem to have taken over the role of the old story tellers around the evening fires. For such stories to survive the modern onslaught, they ought to be upgraded and edited in such a way that they will be readily accepted by the audience they are meant for.

(b) **Downgrading**

In downgrading works are retold in a simplified manner for a lower social class, semi-literates or children. Examples of such downgrading are found in the study guides for schools on some classical works such as those of Shakespeare and other well-known English authors. In the case of our folktales, downgrading may have a degrading effect on such tales because of over simplication and depriving them of their distinctive features which mark their peculiarities when matched against other types of literary works. Examples of such watered down tales are those of "Mabuya" and "Khati" in Zulu, and "Moiloa" in Southern Sotho.

(c) **Compiling**

Compiling an anthology from the various works is another way the author may employ to produce a work of literary art.

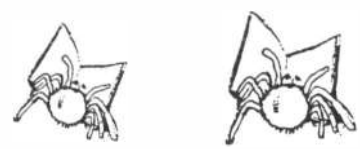
Compilation of such anthologies has the great advantage of giving the readers a bird's eye view of the literary gems found in a particular language. This forces the reader to want to know more about other works of the authors whose texts are contained in the anthology.

In conclusion, the diversity of the population groups holds a lot of good for all of us: we can learn a lot from the various languages and cultures which in turn will enrich us all spiritually and in our knowledge. In the new South Africa this can only bring happiness and satisfaction to everyone.

The notion that books by African authors in the vernaculars are written for school children, appears to be a myth and is not supported by the necessary research data. It is a mere public opinion.

We further referred with regret to the few unfortunate translations which filtered through into our libraries and hopefully the concerned institutions will look into the matter seriously and put the record straight.

Our gratitude goes to the publishers who have done meritorious work in the translation of the English and Afrikaans texts into our languages, and maintained the same standard throughout. We hope that the other publishers will follow their example.



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Children's books in African languages:

translations, adaptations or new materials

denise diamond

How many African Language Children's Books, WRITTEN BY MOTHER-TONGUE SPEAKERS have you seen in the past 10 years? 100, 50, 10, five, one? I sound a bit like Abraham reasoning with God about the number of righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah BUT the fact is that you would probably have to answer five or even one. I have not been able to find even one actual Children's Book. Juta has published some anthologies at about Standard 5/6 (school year 7/8) level.

"But," you may say, "what about all the African Language titles one sees around? Where to they come from?" They are mostly direct translations of works originally written in English or Afrikaans with some retellings or adaptations.

Accurate research does not seem to be available (happily Jay Heale has started on this) but the following table will give you an idea of the situation.

Current state of affairs

Estimated Figures

Original works in African languages	5?
Direct translations of local materials	400? : 40 books in 9 or 10 languages
Adaptations of local materials.	150? : 15 books in 9 or 10 languages.
Translations/adaptations of overseas imports	200? : 20 books in 9 or 10 languages
Children's books in English written by African language mother-tongue speakers	20?

What about the rest of Africa? I quote Chinua Achebe: "Let me make a plea to every serious writer in Africa to make a commitment to African children of at least two stories." I have not been able to ascertain whether he stuck to his commitment to write in African Languages but was happy to see at this conference that Tanzania has a Children's Book Project in kiSwahili. They are aiming to publish 220 children's books by the end of 1996.

The books are simply produced – certainly not the glossy, high cost titles we consider to be children's books BUT they are there and can be utilised by children, teachers, librarians and parents. Funding was obtained from organisations like DANIDA and SIDA and this avenue must be investigated by Southern African publishers.

Let us look at translations and adaptations. As a publisher I can assure you that there is no such thing as a simple translation or even a direct translation. There

are many pitfalls in producing translations and most of these apply to adaptations as well.

1. The lack of suitably qualified people: They are expected to not only know both the relevant languages BUT they must keep the level of the translation or adaptation consistent with the original.

2. It is imperative that the idiom of the original language is understood by the translator/adapter. I always think of the lovely Afrikaans idioms used to describe a person who has had too much to drink: hy loop twee rye spore; hy is hoog in die takke (literal English translations: he walks two rows of tracks; he is high in the branches) – imagine what direct translations of such idioms would produce. The reverse also applies, the African Languages have wonderful idioms but the meaning could be totally lost in the translation process.

3. Translations/adaptations should be accompanied by the artwork to avoid problems.

In the past materials have been produced mainly by white women. Is this necessarily wrong? I am not saying that. In fact, as an example, the author of more than 15 South African children's books which were translated into African Languages, Rosalie Liguori-Reynolds grew up on a farm near Ladybrand in the Free State and speaks Southern Sotho fluently. If she writes about dinosaur prints in the Malutis, you can go and check – they will be there. Bronwyn Jones of Itemba Publishers, goes to the area where her stories take place and takes the illustrator with her, sometimes for three weeks, in order to obtain authenticity.

But, are mother-tongue speakers writing children's book materials at all, and if they are, why are they not being published? Well, Damaria Senne submitted a title in Setswana to us and it received very good reviewer's reports but when it came to costing the title, we realised that it would not be viable. In fact, the only way in which we could make such a project work would be to have it translated into English and then retold in three or four other African languages and run them all together with black plate changes. Even then, one would merely break even or possibly show a small profit. It is, however, imperative that these authors be published which will encourage other mother-tongue speakers to attempt children's books in their own languages.

Amanda Steyn of Van Schaiks tells me they are publishing a Venda Children's Book BUT it is a speculative "trial".

An additional avenue of new material, is the bilingual and multilingual route. The first few attempts were not very good but of late I have seen some very promising materials in this field.

The illustrators of a children's book can make or break it and it is heartening to see that more and more black artists are illustrating books often lending ingenious nuances to complement the texts.

In line with the Conference theme "Other Worlds, Other Lives" we need to ask: "What about the marvellous children's books which are produced overseas? Are we going to deprive our children of such books because of bias? Is the reading of such books not exactly how one learns about the wide world?" I have some

examples here – our children would surely love the pop-up or "window" books. This could also encourage reading, which is a separate issue.

This example: *On the move* sells for R9.95. If we were to do adaptations, they would sell for R15 but if we were to produce a similar book from scratch, it would probably sell at R35. There is the question of whether South African printers can produce books requiring dyecutting and other techniques but "where there's a will, there's a way".

The following is an example of costs involved in producing local titles versus imported titles.

Comparison of pre-press costs

		Artwork	*Cover*	
Imported title	32 page	Colour	Limp	R5 940
Local title	32 page	Black & White	Hard	R15 818

You will note that the prepress costs on the imported title are quite low. One would probably be paying a 17 percent licensing fee but this would almost be offset by the author's royalties.

Translations, adaptations or new materials? I am sure there is room for all three cases as outlined in the following table.

Ways forward

Direct translations of local materials	Rarely – maybe dictionaries
Direct translations of overseas titles	Yes – dictionaries
Adaptations of local materials	Yes – cost effective to run 11 languages with plate changes
Adaptations of overseas materials	Yes – access to marvellous books
New works	To be encouraged – using local artists – publishers to find cost effective ways

Whichever option is chosen, it is essential that we keep publishing children's books while trying to ensure that they will be not only educationally sound, but provide a lot of fun.

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Adolescence, morality and reading guidance

marina le roux

Introduction

> Our youth now loves luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise. They no longer rise when others enter the room. They contradict their parents before company, gobble their food and tyrannize their teachers.

Does this sound familiar? If it does, you are quite correct in assuming that it is a definition of teenagers by an adult. It was written by the Greek philosopher Socrates, about 500 years before the birth of Christ. This definition, critical though it is, is considered by many of today's adults as far too mild for modern teenagers. Adults point out the startling increase in alcohol and drug abuse, assault, vandalism, violence, serial killings, gender bending, contempt for all forms of authority, et cetera in support of their arguments.

Are teenagers then the affliction of modern day society? Is it actually harder to be a teenager today than it used to be in the past? Are today's teenagers under more pressure and stress than their peers of the past? If so, what can we as educators offer to alleviate stress, build meaningful relationships and support today's young people. Before we can formulate any goals or offer any solutions to the problem, we have to define at least three concepts very briefly: adolescence, morality and reading guidance.

Adolescence

1. The well-known psychologist Stanley Hall, 1844–1924, referred to the period 12 to 25 years as adolescence, a term derived from the Latin "adolescere", to grow. Hall said that adolescence is a time of storm and stress, contradicting tendencies, violent mood changes and marked variations in especially the following areas:

   energy and enthusiasm
   versus
   indifference and boredom

   gaiety and laughter
   versus
   gloom and melancholy

   vanity and boastfulness
   versus
   humiliation and bashfulness

2. Konopka, as quoted by Boshoff, concurs with this definition: "The feeling of omnipotence tangoes with the feeling of helplessness and inadequacy. The cocksure conviction that it won't happen to me plays hide and seek with the fear that it will" (Boshoff 1980:21).

Teenagers themselves are sensitive to these mood swings and inexplicable feelings of ambivalence. It is only too obvious from their behaviour, their pastimes and social pursuits, their relationships, the lyrics of their music and their preferred literature. The following poem by a 16-year-old sums it up:

No one can describe me the way I am
No one can enter my brain
At least no mortal man

For if you say you know me please sir look again
For no man knows who I am but me
And then ... do I really?

3. At least one "mortal man" did try to enter the brain of the adolescent. Sigmund Freud, 1856–1938, stated that the stage of puberty from 12 years upwards is marked with hormonal changes and an increase in sexual awareness. Freud's daughter, Anna, regarded the continual restoration of the psychological balance as one of the major problems and tasks of adolescence. Because teenagers so often suffer from feelings of internalised guilt and conflict, two typical defence mechanisms come to the fore when trying to restore a psychological balance:
   - asceticism, by which the adolescent becomes extremely religious as if in defence against the "sinful" sexual drives of youth;
   - intellectualisation, by which the adolescent becomes extremely intellectual and logical about life as if in defence against emotionality of any kind.

4. Social anthropologists Ruth Benedict, 1887–1948, and Margaret Mead, 1901–1975, both argued that the behaviour of adolescents depends to a large extent on their socio-cultural environment. This is especially obvious in moral development, sex roles, responsibility and dominance. Which reminds us of the nature versus nurture school and the theories of Goddard and Watson and Arnold Gesell's observation that although culture may inflect and channelise, it does not in itself generate the progression and trends of development. But more about this controversial and challenging topic in Mark West's warmly recommended recent study *Children, culture, and controversy*.

5. During the 1950s social psychologists RH Peck and Robert J Havighurst postulated important theories as regards adolescent behaviour and development. In opposition to environmentalists they stated that not only the environment, but a meaningful interaction of maturation plus environment produces the personality of the adolescent.

   Both Peck and Havighurst believe that in order to satisfy the needs of the individual and meet the expectations of society, the adolescent must accomplish specific developmental tasks for the period of adolescence, 12 to 18 years. The nine main developmental tasks which are marked in certain peak periods are the following:

   - Accepting one's physique and accepting a masculine or feminine role
   - Forming new relations with peers of both sexes
   - Emotional independence from parents and other role playing adults
   - Achieving the assurance of economic independence
   - Selecting and preparing for an occupation
   - Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence
   - Desiring and achieving socially responsible behaviour
   - Preparing for marriage and family life
   - Building conscious values in harmony with an adequate scientific world picture.

6. According to Harvard psychologist Erik Erikson, 1902–1994, the individual is constantly pressured by his own internal needs and the external demands of society. Human life progresses in eight stages or phases, each stage marked by a crisis which needs to be resolved before significant and meaningful development can occur. Each stage has two possible resolutions, one positive, one negative. Unresolved crises or failure at any stage, can lead to anger, frustration,

unhappiness, or even adverse development at a later stage. Although Erikson's developmental stages form the ideal picture of adolescence, it is hardly possible to ever complete all these stages perfectly:

Infancy	1–1½ years	basic trust	*versus*	mistrust
Childhood	1½–3 years	autonomy	*versus*	shame
Play Age	3–5 years	initiative	*versus*	guilt
School Age	5–12 years	industry	*versus*	inferiority
Adolescence	12–18 years	identity	*versus*	identity confusion
Young Adult	18–25 years	intimacy	*versus*	isolation
Adulthood	25–65 years	generativity	*versus*	stagnation
Maturity	65+ years	integrity	*versus*	despair

The first four stages refer to the preschool, primary school and pre-adolescent child. The last two stages do not concern us at present, but the fifth and sixth stages reflect on adolescence and deserve close scrutiny. The fifth stage, 12 to 18 years, has as its positive the achievement of identity and as its negative identity confusion. Erikson, who coined the now well-known phrase "identity crisis" maintains that an adolescent with an ideal state of identity would experience little or no internal conflicts and anxieties. During adolescence young people must be allowed to experiment with different identities the better to reach a personal identity, even and also vicariously through literature. Adolescence must provide a moratorium, a time out. But if adolescents persistently steer clear of commitments or if they refuse to make choices, they fail to achieve a cohesive personality and identity confusion and crises occur. Remember the anguish of Biff in Arthur Miller's *Death of a salesman* : "I just can't take hold, Mom, I can't take hold of some kind of life".

Although Erikson's sixth stage is partly concerned with adulthood, it is discussed briefly because it refers to intimacy with others, and in a far more

comprehensive sense than just physical or sexual intimacy. Erikson implies that the essential ability to relate one's deepest fears and hopes to another person is to accept that person's need for intimacy in return. The identity of the adolescent may be more successfully and easily achieved and fulfilled by the loving intimacy with another person:

> No man is an island entire of
> itself;
> Every man is a piece of the
> continent
> a part of the main (John Donne)

7. More recently, during the 1980s, a clinical psychologist, John Coleman, completed a longitudinal study of 800 teenagers, boys and girls of 100 each at the ages of 11, 13, 15 and 17 respectively. Like Stanley Hall the "focal theory" in Coleman's research highlights periods of storm and stress. Coleman's research makes it clear that adolescence is not an either/or phenomenon, but a life cycle with its unique problems, problems which often go unnoticed by parents and teachers. According to Coleman feelings of unhappiness and frustration occur most often in the following developmental areas: self-image, heterosexual relationships, parental relationships, friendships and peer group situations, including loneliness.

   All those areas are of considerable concern to adolescents at all developmental stages, but each area peaks at a different age level. Thus conflict with parents refers to less than 20 percent of 11-year-old boys, whereas it escalates to 60 percent of all 17-year-olds.

   In summary, then,

> adolescence is a period of rapid personal development beginning at puberty and ending at adulthood, at which time most people have achieved employment and a relatively permanent relationship with another person, or both (Dacey 1982:28).

Morality and moral development

Ethics, morality and moral philosophy is the study or discipline which concerns itself with judgments of approval and disapproval, judgements as to right and wrong, good or bad, virtue and vice, the desirability of actions, objectives, states of affairs. Three main groups of questions come into play when morality is discussed:

- Moral questions: Is polygamy wrong?
- Questions about opinions: What did Christ say about polygamy?
- Questions about moral concepts: right, good, duty, patriotism, celibacy, monogamy, et cetera.

These are all abstract ideas and according to Jean Piaget, eminent Swiss psychologist, adolescence is exactly that particular developmental phase which is characterised by the ability for abstract thinking, generating alternatives, forming hypotheses and for testing opinions against evidence. Thus during adolescence, the concrete operational stages of childhood is replaced by the stage of formal operations, with a shift from the real and concrete to abstract and deductive reasoning. This newly acquired ability enables the adolescent to conceptualise personal thoughts as well as the thoughts of others.

The cognitive abilities of the formal operational stage enables the adolescent to question existing values and mores, to notice and criticise discrepancies between

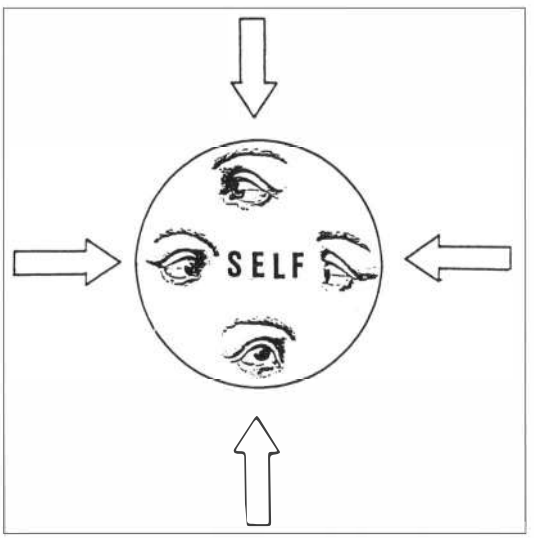
actual and possible in social, political and religious systems. Diverse points of view are considered, situations are weighed and carefully examined in order to arrive at general guidelines. Dilemmas are resolved by universal acknowledgement of principles of justice, freedom, democracy, liberty, equality – to name but a few. Needless to say that this stage has far reaching implications for all adults who communicate with young people.

Apart from Piaget's investigations during the early 1930s into the nature of morality and the process of moral development, it is only fairly recently that psychological research has attempted in depth research as in the studies of Rest (1973; 1976), Kohlberg (1969; 1976), Aronfreed (1976) and Nucci and Nucci (1982). Kohlberg claimes that moral development is universal and can be facilitated. Moral development occurs in six stages:

Stages 1 and 2 are based on a sense of preconventional morality. Obedience and moral descisions are based on physical and material power, the desire to avoid physical punishment or disapproval from a superior person and in satisfying one's own need.

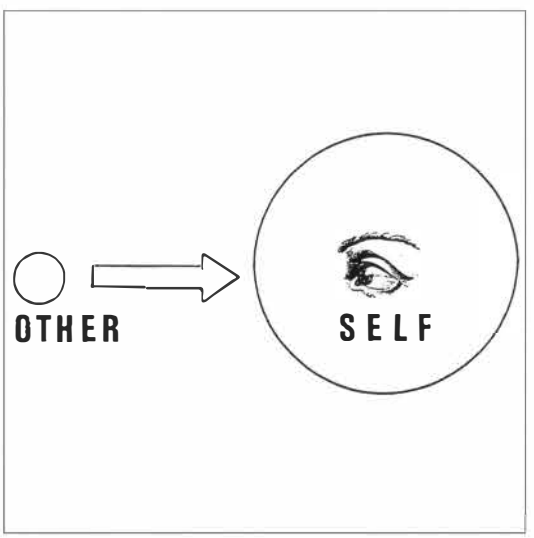
Stages 3 and 4 are social conforming. Moral judgement is based on what is considered acceptable by others and what pleases them. The individual looks to rules, codes and laws for guidance.

Stages 5 and 6, the stages of postconventional morality, is the time when individuals reach the highest moral development. They behave according to social contract and universal principles of judgement.



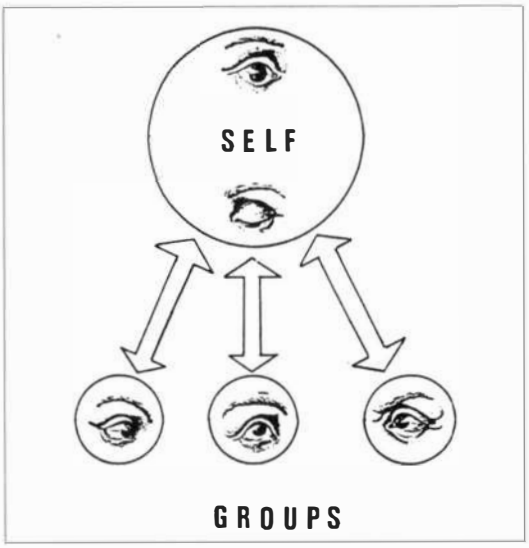
Preconventional moral values

Stage 1
Concern about self



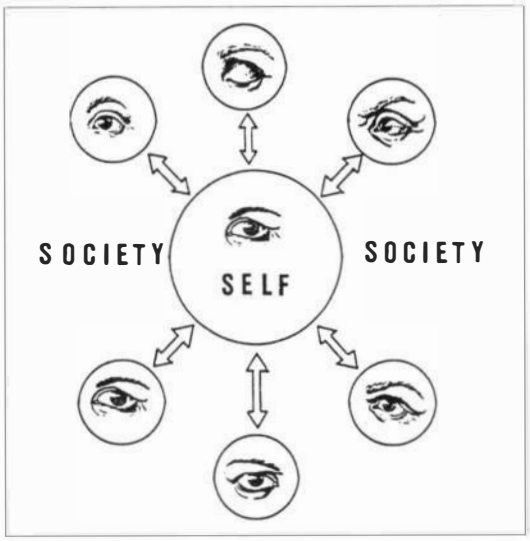
Preconventional moral values

Stage 2
One-way concern about others



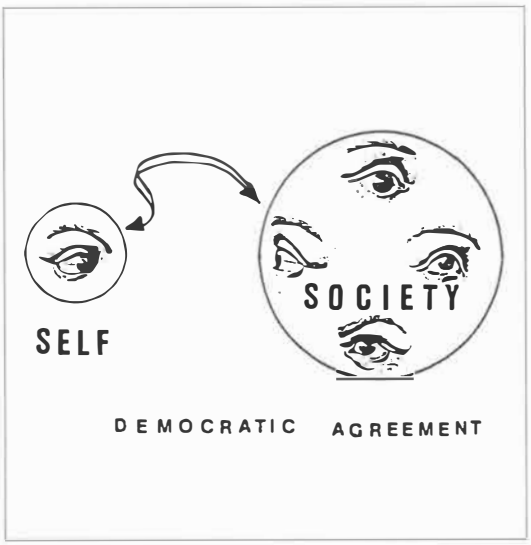
Conventional moral values

Stage 3
Concern about groups



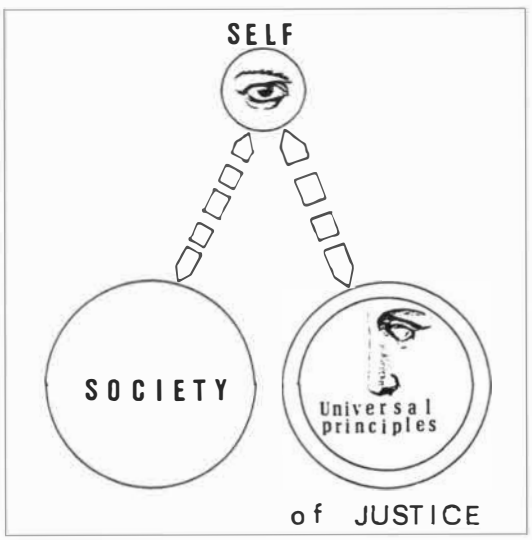
Conventional moral values

Stage 4
Concern about society



Postconventional moral values

Stage 5
Free agreement and contract



Postconventional moral values

Stage 6
Universal ethical principles

Postconventional morality is characterised by a major thrust towards autonomous moral principles and a willingness to conform to the universal principles of justice. Although teenagers in South Africa may differ in culture, they will all follow universal sequences of moral development. Hence teenagers of different cultures have the same notions of justice. Kohlberg's findings about cultural diversity and age related patterns of moral reasoning seems to be of special relevance and significance to all educators in South Africa.

In summing up adolescence and morality, the theories of well-known researchers are compared:

	Piaget	**Peck & Havighurst**	**Kohlberg**
1.	Individual	Amoral	Obedience vs Punishment
2.	Egocentric	Expedient	Instrumental hedonism
3.	Cooperation	Conforming	Good boy/good girl
4.	Codification	Irrational – conscientious	Authority and social order
5.		Rational – conscientious	Contractual legalistic Universal ethics.

Kohlberg's studies, as supported for instance by Lieberman & Selman (1974) and Maqsud (1982) indicate that radical external changes in the moral judgement of teenagers is not possible. It seems possible though to promote positive moral development in discussion groups such as sex education, social studies and reading and career guidance.

Reading guidance

At the onset of this discussion the challenge was posed of how best to support adolescents in moral growth and development. The generation gap – and it definitely exists! – between adolescents and adults may be partly bridged by a wholehearted, honest commitment to positive and constructive reading guidance and reading programmes. The generous sharing of literacy and literature is a time tested way of communication and it can and will enhance moral development. According to Beard's research, 1988, with a group of 240 multicultural teenagers from different urban areas, young people do benefit from discussion groups about moral dilemmas. Beard found that after intervention discussions the Kohlberg test for moral judgement showed a mean increase of 0,5 and Rest's test for defining issues recorded a mean increase of 0,7 (Beard 1988:398).

In addition to Beard's research, it could be useful to adapt the work of Blatt, Colby and Speicher on hypothetical dilemmas for discussion groups. Maybe it is advisable to concentrate initially on one moral dilemma only, although YA books often investigate more than one moral or social issue. For instance in *On my honour*, by Marion Dane Bauer, the main theme is that of honesty versus dishonesty, but self-preservation, loyalty, obedience and the trauma of death are also interwoven.

Consider *On the edge*, by Gillian Cross, a highly suspenseful novel which poses some very relevant ethical questions about, *inter alia*, identity, shifting family relationships, powers and privileges of the press and survival at all costs. The central critical dilemma revolves around the decisions of the main character. Tug tries to survive on his own terms, rather than submit to the brainwashing

manipulations of his kidnappers. Cross pits a select group of individuals against a highly charged political crisis. Tug's moral struggle makes for rivetting reading and challenging discussions.

Religious stories have almost become anathema and religious belief is rarely portrayed as a desirable moral choice for young adults. Educators have become so liberal in providing "safe" books that they have closed their minds against the deep-rooted psychological needs of readers who crave the reassurance of "good, godly books" in the finest sense of the word, excluding didacticism and moral pontification. For adults must ever be careful of the thoughts which are presented to young minds; like hand-down clothes they do not always fit. Consider, for instance, the uses and abuses of prayer in *Izzy, willy nilly*, an uplifting story by award-winning Cynthia Voigt and in *See you Thursday*, by Jean Ure. Consider also the firm religious belief that the conquest of South Africa was justified as a divine mission, as portrayed in *Waiting for the rain*, by Sheila Gordon. I quote Frikkie, the main character:

> They were truly religious people. They travelled with the gun in one hand and the Bible in the other. They believed it was God's will that they should trek north and settle in the Promised Land.

Religious workers like clergyman, revival leaders, nuns, priests, et cetera are often either ridiculed or romanticised in YA literature. A fair portrayal is appreciated as in *A Solitary blue*, by Cynthia Voigt. Brother Thomas is central to the plot, as he is more perceptive to Jeff's problems than his father, the professor. "Brother Thomas had a deep stabilizing faith; although he didn't talk about it, it was always there in him."

In *Waiting for the rain*, Tengo is tutored by a white Methodist minister who feels helpless before the violent tactics of the comrades who "have been forced into existence by the cruelty and injustice" of the apartheid government. In the Afrikaner churches funds are raised for the upliftment of poor whites, because "we cannot allow our own Afrikaner people to live like kaffirs". Tengo cannot help but be sceptical about the teachings of the Bible, when he considers how the white people use it at random to support racist politics, "finding their justification for maintaining blacks always as menials by regarding them as the children of Ham who were to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water".

During the last decade many schools have opted for moral education rather than formal religious instruction. Although the former neither excludes nor includes mandatory religious instruction, the ultimate connection between moral education and a religious inclination is obvious. Moral education can easily be part and parcel of religious instruction and or reading guidance.

Fortunately reading guidance is no longer the sole prerogative or responsibility of librarians. Teachers, parents, peers, staff in bookshops, publishers, authors, community workers – in short all educators partake in the process. The success of their combined efforts are largely dependent on adequate knowledge of their target group – adolescents, available reading materials and ways and means of bringing readers and books together in a meaningful process of reading enjoyment and moral development.

> If brief periods of classroom discussion can have a substantial effect on moral development, a pervasive, enduring and psychologically sound concern for the schools influence upon moral development should have a much deeper and more positive effect (Blatt & Kohlberg 1973:51).

Beard's research proves this theory. After intervention, such as the application of the Moral Developmental Approach, devised by Kohlberg, Turiel and Blatt, Beard's research indicates that exposure to discussion in itself has significant influence (1988:302). The manipulation of the environment, as with discussion groups and reading guidance programmes, can and will stimulate growth in moral development.

Regrettably adults often regard reading guidance to adolescents as either impossible or redundant. According to Edwards many adults experience adolescents in the library as beasts intruding into a fair garden. Indeed, says Edwards, the teenager may be "a hooligan, a rebel ... a drop out, a loner, a gang cultist, a dabbler in the latest trends, a revolutionary, given to giggling and exhibitionism, irreligious, vulgar, inarticulate and utterly selfish". And yet they expect "life on the mountain tops". Instead adults give them "plains of boredom and valleys of misery" (Edwards 1975:13). It is, therefore, not surprising that teenagers decline to read and consequently suffer from reading problems. Readership surveys like the Whitehead Report (1974) and the Heather Report (1980) provide conclusive proof of reluctant and sometimes aliterate readers.

WHITEHEAD SURVEY : 10–15 years : 7800

1969–1974

10^+ →	3 books per week
12^+ →	2,2 books per week
14^+ →	1,9 books per week
36 % 14^+ →	no books at all
50 % 10^+ →	books based on television
50 % →	non-readers are of average or above average intelligence

HEATHER SURVEY : 13–14 years : 60

1979–1980

Time spent reading per week

9 → 15 % →	Do not read books
15 → 25 % →	Do not read every week
8 → 13 % →	Under two hours
15 → 14 % →	Between two and four hours
4 → 11 % →	Between four and eight hours
4 → 11 % →	More than eight hours

We, the educators, owe these young people powerful reading experiences, experiences which engage their normal judgement in a critical and vital way. Great thinking can emerge from great questions and inspiring book discussions can be memorable reading experiences. There is a rare sense of pleasure in a book that is enjoyed and savoured privately, but there is an even greater sense of elation watching young people discuss books with pleasure and passion, long after a book talk. Books which offer a variety of moral choices will foster moral growth.

Many teenage novels are written with genuine respect for the reader and their authors have a perceptive eye to authenticity and sincerity. Regrettably, there seems to be a trend towards writing about gratuitous sex, violence and taboo subjects. Today's young people need books which do more than just entertain. Readers must be challenged, must be made active participants in the text, must be drawn in on cognitive, emotional and moral levels. They are, after all, the inaugural generation of our democracy.

If educators want to introduce such meaningful reading programmes, it is necessary to take serious note of the fields of interests of young people and their various ways of communication, bearing in mind that reading is but one of many such ways – and often not even a popular one.

Reading profiles for mixing and matching will contain information on, *inter alia*, the following aspects of communication:

- What do teenagers read?
  Paul Zindel, Judy Blume, Wilbur Smith, *Scope, Asterix, Mad, Surfer*.
- What do teenagers listen to?
  Luciano Pavarotti, Prince, Julio Iglesias, Little Sister, UB 40, Rolling Stones, Rap.
- What do teenagers watch?
  Music videos, computer programs, virtual reality, pornographic films, plays at the Nico Malan, art exhibitions, Beverley Hills, The Piano.
- What do teenagers do?
  Disco-dancing, slimnastics, water aerobics, rugby, boardsailing, shooting smack, rollerblading, ballroom dancing.

From these grassroots levels we can maybe then progress to novels which complement the developmental tasks of adolescents, as illustrated in the appended reading list. There is such a wide variety of teenage books that educators can provide for an extremely broad spectrum of reading interests and reading levels, ranging from abortion to zootherapy. They can, so to speak, shop for reading matter in the supermarket of life. But whether or not reading guidance can enliven, and maybe replace, the sterile pop culture teenagers have come to know, can only be hoped for.

In fulfilling our educational and moral obligations to young people, we share in exciting and challenging reading experiences. Erik Erikson, who died last year at the age of 91 and still obsessed by the ideal to serve young minds, urges us towards a common goal:

> We are now working towards and fighting for, a world in which the harvest of democracy may be reached. But if we want to make the world safe for democracy, we must first make democracy safe for the child ... We have learned not to stunt a child's growing body with child labour; we must now learn not to break his growing spirit ... If we will only learn to let live, the plan for growth is all there!

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Selected reading list

Accepting one's physique and sexual roles

Blume, Judy	*Deenie*
Chambers, Aidan	*Dance on my grave*
Hautzig, Deborah	*Second star to the right*
Kingman, Lee	*Head over wheels*
Lowry, Lois	*A Summer to die*
Rees, David	*The Milkman's on his way*
Scoppettone, Sandra	*Happy endings are all alike*
Townsend, Sue	The Adrian Mole diaries
Wersba, Barbara	*Crazy Vanilla: tunes for a small harmonica*

New relations with age mates of both sexes

Anderson, Rachel	*French lessons*
Banks, Lynne Reid	*My darling villain*
Hinton, S.E.	*Tex*
Rosenberg, Sandra	*Will there never be a prince?*
Ure, Jean	*See you Thursday*
Voigt, Cynthia	*David and Jonathan*
Wersba, Barbara	*The Dream watcher*

Emotional independence of adults

Campbell, R. Wright	*Where pigeons go to die*
Cormier, Robert	*After the first death*
Moggach, Deborah	*You must be sisters*
Peck, Richard	*Father figure*
Voigt, Cynthia	*A Solitary blue*
Wersba, Barbara	*Run softly, go fast*

Achieving economic independence

Ashley, Bernard	*Break in the sun*
Ball, Donna	*The Winners*
Darke, Marjorie	*Comeback*
Kamm, Josephine	*The Runaways*
Lingard, Joan	*Into exile* and sequels

Selecting and preparing for an occupation

Hinton, Nigel	*Buddy*
Kennemore, Tim	*The Chosen few*
Leach, Christopher	*Searching for skylights*
Le Guin, Ursula	*Very far away from anywhere else*
Paterson, Katherine	*Lyddie*
Potok, Chaim	*The Chosen; My name is Asher Lev*
Zindel, Paul	*A Star for the latecomer*

Developing intellectual skills and civic competence

Adams, Adrienne	*Into the road*
Darke, Marjorie	*A Kind of courage*
Hinton, Nigel	*Getting free*
Hofmeyr, Dianne	*A Sudden summer*
Pointon, Barry	*A Song for the disco*
Zindel, Paul	*I never loved your mind*

Desiring and achieving social responsibility

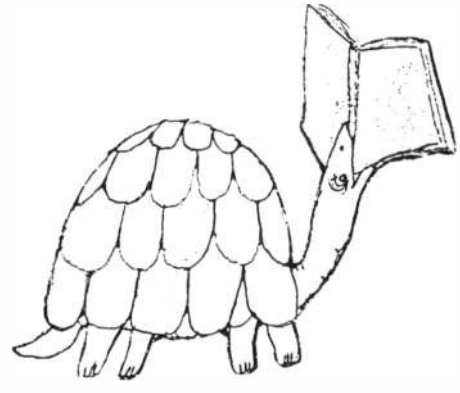
Bransby, Lawrence	*Down street; Homeward bound*
Cormier, Robert	*The Chocolate war; We all fall down*
Harris, Marilyn	*Hatter fox*
Townsend, John Rowe	*King Creature come*
Zindel, Paul	*Confessions of a teenage baboon*

Preparing for marriage and family life

Arundel, Honor	*The Longest weekend*
Cookson, Catherine	*Hamilton*
Doherty, Berlie	*Dear Nobody*
Gabel, Wolfgang	*Breakfast together for always*
Guest, Elissa H.	*Over the moon*

Building conscious values

Bauer, Marion Dane	*On my honour*
Bosse, Malcolm	*Ganesh*
Bransby, Lawrence	*A Mountaintop experience*
Chambers, Aidan	*Now I know*
Cormier, Robert	*The Bumble bee flies anyway*
Craven, Margaret	*I heard the owl call my name*
Stewart, Michael	*Grace*
Watson, James	*Talking in whispers*



Children's literature in Swedish pre-school education

maj asplund carlsson & ingrid pramling

The Swedish preschool[1] curriculum is traditionally based on the ideas of Friedrich Fröbel and his followers, relating preschool education to children's own world of experience. Teachers have the role of being organisers of a supportive and respectful environment based on knowledge of children's development. The preschool teacher should thus enhance development by giving the child an opportunity to meet new influences and new experiences. However, in the last decades, this main tradition has in some places been replaced by an artificial dichotomy, where learning can be seen as the opposite of development, and education as the antithesis of care. The preschool in general solves this inherent conflict in their programmes by having a portion of the day allocated to structured activities, often focussing on a particular theme of content, with the purpose of transferring knowledge and skills, and this curriculum is seen as satisfying a need for education and learning, while another portion of the day is allocated to creative activities and free play, where the children have the initiative.

In an experientially oriented preschool education (Pramling 1989), children encounter a pedagogy where this unnatural dichotomy is dissolved and where

children work in an atmosphere where learning and development are seen as one, as in the early preschool based on Fröbel. The role of the teacher in this approach is to give children rich opportunities to express their ideas of the world around them, and also to change their ideas when confronted with alternatives. The teacher's aim should be to structure activities that will give children room to think, and reflect on the structure and content of the subject matter, as well as on their own learning. In this context, children's literature could play an important role in showing children an extended world of experience. Narratives are also by nature neither more nor less connected with one or the other of the two main goals of preschool; education and care.

According to the official documents in Sweden (Socialstyrelsen 1987), children's literature should form a natural content of preschool education in order to make children develop literacy and language, as well as to facilitate children's emotional and social development. In practice, studies (for example Williams-Granеld, 1989) have found that children's literature is used mainly as a sedative, as a means of regression rather than development. That is, in order to calm down a large group of restless youngsters, the children are read to before going home, or before sitting down to a meal, or even before going to sleep. Thus, since preschool teachers seldom speak to the children about their reading and the stories they read, they take children's understanding of literature very much for granted.

In order to find out how children, six years old, who are on the verge of entering the formal school system, but still belong to the preschool environment of supported free development, understand a literary narrative, its structure and content, how they relate it to the world around them and also how they relate listening to narratives to their own learning, we interviewed two groups of children about their response to Shel Silverstein's *The Giving tree* (1964). One

group had been subject to an experientially oriented pedagogy and the other to "ordinary" preschool education (Pramling, Asplund Carlsson & Klerfelt 1994).

In this our first study, we were primarily interested in children's understanding of a tale, related to two differing kinds of preschool pedagogy, but we also found some implications for preschool didactics. These implications were realised in a development project "Children, narratives and books in preschool" where children's literature was to be used in order to make children reflect on the structure and content of narratives, on the world around them and the process and content of their own learning. It seemed that even in a study of an experientially oriented pedagogy, the main focus of children's development was placed on traditionally "academic" fields of learning such as literacy, arithmetic, society and nature. Children's literature was still used very much in order to get children's attention, calm them down and make them relax. We will in this paper present one example of how this work was carried out in the form of a literary theme "The characters of Moomin Valley".

The aims of the project and the themes developed

In the project, four different schools were selected, from different areas in and near the city of Gothenburg. Two of the schools were day-care centres, where children from the age of two up to six years spent a large part of the day, while their parents were at work, and two schools were part-time preschools or kindergartens, where children, aged six years, stayed for a few hours in a kind of school preparation programme. Two of the schools, one day-care and one kindergarten, choose to work with the "Moomin Valley", a well-known series of children's books by the Finnish author, Tove Jansson.

The day-care teachers wanted to work with the concept of character in the whole series of books. Therefore they read nearly all the books in the series and worked with the characters in a number of ways. The goal of the theme was to make children aware of the fictional characters, how the fictional characters appear in these books and how they are related to the "real" world of friends, parents, teachers; that is, the child's own world of characters. In fact, fictional characters form a large part of the child's world of experience, and the goal of this theme was to discern and problematise the phenomenon "fictional character" in general and the characters of the Moomin world in particular.

The other school was mainly interested in the structure of "Finn Family Moomintroll" (Jansson 1968) as a novel or "chapterbook"[2] and the phenomenon of magic. However when the theme was completed the teachers found that the children had taken such a great interest in the characters that a new theme had begun, before the school year ended.

What do we then actually mean by "character" in fiction? Docherty (1983) points at three different and contradictory concepts of character; firstly, the emblematic, or allegorical, secondly, the realistic or mimetic and thirdly, the (post-)modern, or phenomenological character. The allegorical character has only one interpretation and is the personification of a single attitude, of certain moral implications and can be summarised in one word: for instance Evil or Good. We found (in Asplund Carlsson 1993) that children and adolescents read the story *The Giving tree* in an allegorical way, where the two protagonists, the tree and the boy were interpreted as symbols of Jesus and mankind, Giving and Taking, Spiritualism and Materialism, et cetera.

Adolescents (average age 17) also preferred to read a short story by Franz Kafka "Before the Law" as an allegory (Asplund Carlsson, Marton & Halasz 1993), thus interpreting the figures of the man from the country as everyman and the doorkeeper as an emblem for the Law.

The mimetic or psychological character can be described and understood in the same way as a "real" human, with the same demands on psychological probability and coherence, on development and conflict et cetera. The (post-)modern character is often absent in the text according to Docherty. This character, also discussed as "point of view", describes the events, the other characters and the setting in a narrative and makes the reader experience the narrative through this character although the character itself is transparent.

These three types of character, following the development of the concept of character in the history of epic, can all be found, brought forward and problematised in the books about Moomin. They also have relevance for the child's conception of character, both fictional and nonfictional, "real".

Procedure of the theme work

In an experientially oriented pedagogy, it is essential to start with children's own world of experience. The books about Moomin and his friends and family have been translated into animated film by a Japanese film company. These films were shown on Swedish television at the time when the schools were about to choose their themes. Therefore, it was not surprising that the children were playing Moomintrolls at school. In a game, initiated by the teachers, where the children

were asked to give examples of characters in books, the Moomin characters were mentioned repeatedly. The teachers found that even though they themselves were more interested in working with a theme of folktales, the Moomin Valley and its inhabitants could not be disregarded.

The schools decided on books to read and started reading them aloud to the children. They had to make alterations in their daily routines of reading so that the reading could be followed up by creative work in order to make the children reflect on the texts. Before the daily reading session started, the children were asked to retell what they had listened to the day before. If someone had been absent this was an excellent opportunity to discuss the importance of the events in the preceding sections and to recapitulate the story. It was also necessary for the teachers to observe what children had focussed on in the previous section and what they thought was of less importance. The teacher also had an opportunity to bring forward what she thought was remarkable in the previous events. During the reading aloud, the children were allowed to interrupt if they had remarks to make and questions to ask. Other children were invited to discuss matters raised by the children. After reading and discussing some of the more complicated words and events in the new text, the children were given a task to be carried out which was supposed to reflect what had been brought up in the text read that day. They could be asked to make drawings of a particular character, or of their own favourite character or of a feeling expressed by one of the characters.

The techniques that were used to make children express and reflect on their own thinking were drawing, painting, clay modelling, drama, song and dance et cetera.

At one such instance three children, two boys and a girl, painted their own favourite characters and while painting expressed their experiences of the

character in question. In this work the teacher made the observation that the girl was more concerned with the outer appearance of her character: that Moominmamma had a striped apron and a black handbag. This girl also made a series of paintings with Mymble doing all kinds of mischief, but in response to the teacher's question whom she liked most, she said she preferred Moominmamma, because of the apron and the handbag. The two boys on the other hand chose their characters from these characters' favourite occupations: fishing (Snufkin) and collecting plants (Hemul). When more children had taken part in the painting sessions, these preliminary observations were confirmed and the children discussed with their teacher why the female characters, whom the girls preferred, wore things and owned things, while the male characters whom the boys chose were more likely to do things. Why did the girls not favour Mymble? In this work, the children became aware of the fictional characters being described by accessories and by speech as well as by events. In order to focus on the events the teachers arranged a shadow play with the chosen characters, where the accessories were only vaguely visible and where the speech and the events were stressed in order to characterise the figures.

The creative work connected with the reading was thus not used only for amusement and for the development of children's creativity as such, but it was also used as a means to make children express, in creative work and in discussion, their conceptions about the focus of the work, in this case fictional character. When the children had been given a task, there was never an issue whether the solution to the task was right or wrong, but the point was rather to be made aware of the several possible solutions to the task and also the possibility to discuss the different solutions. Therefore, the group was used as a means to develop children's conceptions of the task and the focus of it.

What is development of conceptions of character?

Firstly we had to ask, what the children's conceptions of fictional character were, as the theme was initiated. As we saw in the example above, the children were able to express their conceptions when making paintings of the characters. The teacher was then able to direct the work and plan the theme in order to develop the children's conceptions. She decided that she wanted the children to describe and reflect about characters in more psychological terms; from an outer – more emblematic – focus on character to an inner, more psychological description of character. As we can see from Docherty's characterisation of the development of the novel, the teacher's aims follow that of the history of character, without her being aware of it.

It is always more difficult to focus on the inner qualities of a character when working with characters that have an established form, like the Moomins, whose portraits are clearly outlined, through illustrations, picture books and films. In other themes, teachers read narratives which were not illustrated, or where the illustrations were introduced to the children, once the theme was completed. Through the arrangement of the shadowplay, however, the outer characteristics were reduced to a minimum and the inner were brought into focus. Another means of shifting the attention from the outer to the inner was through focussing on feeling and thereby letting the inner state of mind reflect the outer expression instead of vice versa. It was found, which was not surprising, that the children had a conception of outer appearance reflecting inner qualities; that is, Beauty is good while the Beast is evil. They had a tendency to let this conception based on a fictional world of experience influence their own world of friendship and the only girl at day-care who did not have long curly hair suffered severely from this.

One task was to depict gloom using pencil. How do you look gloomy, how have professional artists depicted gloom, and how do children as artists describe the feeling? Subsequently, the teacher arranged an exhibition of all the drawings in grey and white and the children were free to comment on the different ways to depict gloom. This was also one way of getting away from the children's conception that pictures should always be "nice" and reduce the competition between the children as to who had made the nicest picture.

Another difficulty is to make children aware of a character's inner change. Many narratives for children are based on outer change reflecting inner change. The prince becomes a beast who eventully changes back into a prince. When the children, from the whole project, were interviewed about the tale of Beauty and the Beast, they were not always aware of the prince and the beast as the "same" being. Therefore character is often conceptualised as static, even if the process of "getting to know" the "real" character is dynamic. The beast was really a prince all the time.

How then does the teacher know that the work with the theme has been successful? The teacher's own development and increasing knowledge about children's conceptions is one measure of success. If the teacher has not learnt anything about her children, the theme has been a failure, in developmental terms.

If the children have had several opportunities to express themselves and to listen to others, they will have learnt that there are more ways to solve a task and more ways to describe a fictional character than that of the film they have seen or the book they have read. One teacher observed for instance that the first

drawings of the Moomin characters were more like Tove Jansson's original, while the final drawings depicted the characters as human and not as trolls. This observation suggests that the children looked on the characters as friends and relatives and saw their inner qualities rather than their outer, which was one of the goals of the theme. In fact, Tove Jansson's own drawings of the trolls show the opposite direction of development (Westin 1988).

When the children were made aware of their own development in their conceptions of the fictional characters visible in their drawings, they were also able to reflect on their own learning process, which was another goal of the theme.

As researchers, we have other means of evaluating the theme work. All the children were interviewed before as well as after the theme work about stories that were not focussed in the work at all. The children who had worked with the theme of character all showed an increasing tendency to reason about fictional characters as psychologically coherent, when it was relevant.[3] Children from the other preschools, working with other themes, did not show the same tendency, when being interviewed about the same story. Some children even tried to understand some of the evil characters, which most children, and adults as well, just accept as allegorical figures.

Conclusions

The theme of this conference is "Other worlds, other lives". In the theme work described in this paper, teachers have tried to stress the differences and

similarities between the fictional world of the Moomin Valley and children's own world of friends and family. Both worlds belong to children's world of experience and they have been able to compare them and focus on the existence or lack of correspondence between inner and outer qualities in both worlds.

In the world of Moomin, the starting point was the outer qualities where both differences and similarities were found. The girls found a footring and a curly fringe on Snork Maiden, and a striped apron and a black handbag belonging to Moominmamma as points of similarity. The boys found the activities of Snufkin and the Hemul as corresponding to their own preferences. All children found similarities in family relations, friendship and home environment. What they found different were above all the emblematic characters depicting evil, to whom they found no correspondence in their own real world of experience. They could also find similarities in the plans, hopes, aspirations and feelings expressed in the books about the Moomins. If differences were focussed on as regards to outer appearance, then similarities were stressed as regards thoughts and feelings. Thus, a study of fictional characters became a study of life, and of the children's own world.

The primary characteristics of this type of theme work is firstly, to take as point of departure the children's own world of experience as the children express it and not as the teachers take it for granted. The researchers and one of the teachers each had one interview with all the children about different stories and the results of these two interview studies were discussed with the teachers before the theme started. Secondly, awareness of children's conceptions of the content and awareness of what conceptions teachers want children to develop is another prerequisite, since the goal of the theme work is to increase the child's world of experience and to develop children's conceptions. It is also necessary to seize the

moment as it presents itself. In one of the groups the children had made their own paintings to illustrate a short story before the teacher presented an artist's view of the story, and when she finally did, this provoked a lively discussion of choice of colours and techniques which would reflect the shifting mood in the story. While the children had used similar colours, the artist let the choice of colours illustrate the mood, something the children were able to see and discuss. Thirdly, the theme should be evaluated with reference to the development of children as well as teacher in the mutual process of learning. Since the outcome of learning is documented through the concrete work; in paint, pencil and clay; children and teachers can compare not only a development of skills but also a change of conceptions as a result of learning.

This paper presents one example of how children's literature can be used in changing children's conception of the world around them. It is also an empirical study of children's literature, since it provides us with insight into how children think about the Moomin world of characters. It seems that children around the world take to the characters of Moomin, since the books have been translated into several languages. We would now like to invite researchers and teachers interested in children's literature to study the African child's concept of narrative. What differences and similarities will African children find in the Moomin world of characters?

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1 Compulsory schooling in Sweden, starts in August, the year a child is seven years old.

2 The canon of preschool literature in Sweden and its genre categories established in practice has previously been presented in Asplund Carlsson (1994).

3 Compared with the results in Marak (1994) our five and six year olds were on the same level of reasoning as Marak's eight year olds from the same type of home environment.

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Il Fratellino Bianco:

race relations in Salgary's adventure novels

ann lawson lucas

Emilio Salgari was the foremost writer of adventure novels for the young in Italy; at his apogee in the 1890s, he was writing in the era of extensive European colonialist expansion and, one might say, of imperialist orthodoxy. Indeed, in his time Italy, feeling politically disadvantaged, sought to acquire territory in Africa, events which – to his credit – Salgari never converted into fiction. Yet it is the *sine qua non* of Salgari's oeuvre that its subject is elsewhere, it is other, it is an act of exploration through which he reveals to his readers that which is unfamiliar, unknown, even thus far unimaginable to them.

As a young man from the Venetian mainland, he had experienced the call of the sea and understood the romance of foreign parts; he had felt thwarted in his longing to travel and know for himself the strangeness of the world. In his first decade as a writer five of the seven novels he published described the Orient: Cochinchina, China, Borneo, Burma and India.[1] The stories he devised for his exotic backgrounds sprang from the contemporary or recent state of political and social affairs in his chosen countries. His first chances to publish came from a travel magazine and from a daily newspaper; his first three, serialised, novels appeared in the Veronese *Nuova Arena* over a period of two years.[2] After that, another newspaper, *L'Arena*, also in Verona, gave him a salaried post as a reporter. So his formative years as a writer were spent working in close association with the business of conveying world news to the public. This may

have intensified his inspiration, as well as providing the topic for his third novel, *La Favorita del Mahdi*, which presented a political drama of 1883 to the public in a fictionalised version in 1884.[3] Nevertheless, the editor of the *Nuova Arena* recalled in a memoir how the young Salgari had arrived in his office with several narrative pieces ready; these – *Tay-See* and *La Tigre della Malesia* – had plots rooted in the recent political situations of Cochinchina and Borneo respectively.[4] It seems that, from the start, it was Salgari's own inclination, which was subsequently simply reinforced by his experience of journalism, to choose to write about a contemporary political theme which happened to be wedded to an exotic landscape.

In this first decade all the novels except one include a colonial or quasi-colonial presence, which is given varying degrees of prominence from novel to novel.[5] In most cases, but not all, this implies the existence of conflict between the indigenous population and the colonial power. In *Tay-See* the colonial conflict is in the background rather than the foreground. It provides a context of enmity and danger, but the subject of the novel is a love affair. The lovers' path to union is full of obstacles, partly of a moral kind since it is an adulterous affair; the inappropriate nature of the affair is redoubled by the context of colonial strife, for this is a forbidden love for political reasons too: Tay-See is indigenous Cochinchinese and her lover, Josè, is a Spanish army officer. The sympathies of the reader are clearly led in human terms: the lovers are young and attractive and brave, whereas Tay-See's husband is old, authoritarian and finally cruel; besides, it was an arranged marriage, so all is excused. Better still, the young wife's friends help the lovers, from humanitarian motives; that is to say, these Cochinchinese assist a foreign soldier from the colonial forces which are bent upon subjugating their own people. Politically the novel is a little more complex; broadly speaking the French and Spanish invaders are seen, *en masse*, as reprehensible, with the exception, though, of one individual, Josè. We are invited

to sympathise with the beleaguered Cochinchinese yet the old husband is unattractive; this is partly because he is a General, and as such is seen as an official representative of the military machine, part of the political apparatus of authority which disrupts private lives. Often in Salgari personal and political affiliations are experienced with differing degrees of intensity, and where there is a conflict between the two it is always humanity that wins. His are not novels of personal desire being abandoned or suppressed in the interests of a cause. They are not novels of self-abnegation. Love and friendship are possible between individuals despite the impositions of a political power, which is seen as impersonal and official, and is normally represented in Salgari's stories by its functionaries, its administrators and armies (as distinct from its individual soldiers).

This does not imply that Salgari expresses no political views. To some extent in the first novel, and certainly in the second and many others, the colonial or imperial power is described as an oppressor. The publicity printed in *La Nuova Arena* to herald the new serial story referred to its location as "quei fantastici e ricchi paesi dove ora la Francia cerca di portare la civilta a colpi di cannone."[6] The final phrase is certainly critical and must have been written either by Salgari himself or by the editor with Salgari's knowledge. It appears to indicate not only the rights and wrongs of colonialism, but also an awareness of the hypocrisy which accompanied imperialist ambitions.

The second novel was *La Tigre della Malesia* which would become, in its definitive version, *Le Tigri di Mompracem*.[7] Here it is quite clear that personal qualities match political affiliations; the reader's sympathy is drawn to certain individuals for personal reasons and this determines, or at least emphasises, the political judgements the reader is induced to make. Lord Guillonk is a rich, landed aristocrat and administrator of the British presence in Borneo; he is a

symbol of the imperial authority which has dispossessed indigenous rulers and interests. Therefore he is unpleasant, just as the alien power he represents is bad; together they provide the unequivocal villainy of the piece. Sandokan is a dispossessed and outlawed aristocrat of the indigenous people, who has taken refuge on an islet and who fights a righteous guerrilla war against the British. To finance this, and indeed for survival, he and his followers have been obliged to take to piracy, a way of life endemic in the East Indian islands. He has been politically, socially and economically wronged, he is dynamic and impressive, he and his men represent the good cause, the fight for right.

Our sympathies are engaged unequivocally, yet that does not mean there are no complications, for the plot springs from a conflict of loyalties which would not exist without the colonial conflict. Marianna, the niece of Lord Guillonk, is British, and part of the white, European, power elite; she is also pretty. When she and Sandokan fall in love, she changes sides politically, in order to marry him and live in the wilderness; her natural goodness had set her apart in the British context, but is clearly demonstrated in her choice of the rebel cause. So in this story, and in so many to follow, the characters who are personally and morally good are also politically good, and vice versa; moreover, the politically bad are in power, the politically good are subjugated. From Salgari's second novel (published when he was 21) onwards, it is clear in many different situations, political and otherwise, that his sympathies always lay with the "underdog", the person or people who had been wronged, abused, vanquished.

In Italy it has long been popularly supposed, and unthinkingly reiterated (with particular relish in the Fascist period), that Salgari was anti-British. Trifling personal reasons (an English girl's fierce governess who supposedly protected her charge from him in the streets of Verona) used to be retailed for his detesting the

English so much that he determined to embody his hatred in his novels. This is often advanced as the central, indeed only, political position presented in the East Indian "Ciclo dei Pirati" (or Pirate Series). This interpretation is wholly incorrect. It was the oppressions and injustices of colonialism that Salgari deplored, and in this instance the colonialists happened to be British. Besides, he had good, workmanlike, novelist's reasons for painting the British authorities black. As a novelist rather than a propagandist, Salgari is careful not to allow his opposed camps of right and wrong to be too simplistically composed, on the one hand of the rich, white Europeans, and on the other of the poor, brown "natives". Marianna disturbs that pattern, and, more importantly, so does another character who is part of the Sandokan camp for reasons more measured, less passionate than those of the girl in love. The Portuguese, Yanez, is a poor, white European, who lives with and fights alongside the so-called "Tigers" out of choice as Sandokan's "fratellino bianco" (or white brother). It is in this often repeated phrase that Salgari makes overt reference to the racial implications of the story.

The Pirate Series did not come into being as such for another eight years after the publication of *La Tigre della Malesia*, when, in 1891 to 1892, Salgari published the sequel to the first Sandokan novel; the definitive title of the sequel would be *I Pirati della Malesia*.[8] Meanwhile, in 1887, there appeared the first version of a quite unrelated novel, set in the Sundarbans of the Ganges delta, which would ultimately become *I Misteri della jungla nera*.[9] Not till 1893, a decade after the first appearance of Sandokan, were the Indian and the Bornean stories brought together and intertwined to form one sequence. Thus the Pirate Series had two progenitors, existing separately at first but whose union founded a dynasty.

In the first Indian novel the British Imperial presence in the subcontinent is acknowledged, indeed a British army officer is an important character. Yet the

mood is quite different from that of the first Borneo novel. There is a state of conflict and danger between two groups of people, but those groups are not the colonised Indians and the colonising British; they are the ordinary inhabitants of the area on the one hand, and on the other the members of the Indian sect of Thugee, dedicated to the goddess of destruction, Kali, and given to ritual murder by strangulation. Most of the victims are other Indians, but the sect holds a white girl as prisoner and priestess. The Indian who falls in love with her from afar and the English officer who is her father form a close friendship and mutual determination to free her. As with Sandokan and Yanez, here is a warm partnership between a European and an Asian, in which, moreover, the Asian is the leading figure. On this occasion the enemy is again collective with one figurehead symbolising the whole, but this enemy is in no way political, or white, or imposed from outside; it is indigenous. The leader of the sect is the mysterious Indian, Suyodhana, who will survive in the subsequent novels of the series as the epitome of evil, challenged in future by Sandokan. The villainy of this character far exceeds that of Lord James Guillonk, who is disagreeable rather than evil and is mainly in the wrong because of his political and colonial role. Here, then the prime antagonism is between a good Indian and a bad Indian. There is no hint of anti-British sentiment in a novel with an English heroine and her good father, the friend of Indians, among the leading characters. Many later novels also give the lie to the notion that Salgari was anti-British. Indeed, the Sandokan series proper provides the only example of the British, taken as a group, being regarded as deplorable.

Salgari would still be writing about Sandokan at the end of his life and, though the two separate elements (of Indian origin and Bornean origin) would merge at an early stage, the geography of the cycle would continue to contain both Borneo and India. Though Sandokan would in future often visit India, the character of

the adventures in the two areas would always have a distinctly different flavour. The central issue in the Borneo adventures always remained the colonial conflict, the more so because Marianna died very young and Sandokan remained celibate thereafter. In the Indian context, while there is always an awareness of the British in India, and historical events such as the Indian Mutiny of 1857 are mentioned, nevertheless European colonialism is not the subject of these books. Superficially the subject is a lifelong power struggle between Sandokan and Suyodhana, which symbolises the struggle between good and evil. There is, however, a curious paradox in some of the later stories.

It is worth remembering in this context that after the first three titles in the sequence, ending with *I Pirati della Malesia* (1896) in which the first two stories were bonded together, Salgari then abandoned the sequence for eight years, finally bringing out two new sequels in 1904. Then in 1907 came *Alla conquista di un impero.*[10] The heroes have grown older, but the middle-aged Yanez is engaged to marry Surama who has a claim to the throne of Assam; this is held by a drunken and corrupt usurper (again a character who is both politically wrong and personally disagreeable). With the help of Sandokan, the usurper is dethroned and Surama and Yanez installed in their "empire". One interpretation might be that brown imperialism, even when it entails killing people, is honourable; white imperialism is not. However Salgari would have justified his protagonists' actions by pointing out that Surama had a rightful claim, whereas the British in Borneo did not; so, in India as in Borneo, it seems that Sandokan was committed simply to righting wrongs.

One way or another, the climate of colonialism informs the whole of the "Ciclo dei Pirati", but this temporarily came to an end in 1891 when he produced his first novel specifically published for a young readership (*La Scimitarra di*

Budda). This heralded a period of treasure hunts, explorations, sea stories, all without any reference to colonial or other political contexts. It was not until 1898 that Salgari returned to colonialism, but now in new settings. It constitutes the general ambience for a story of big-game hunting and rescue by Europeans resident in *La Costa d'Avorio*;[11] it is once again the central – and topical – subject in *Le Stragi delle Filippine* which deals with a Filippino insurrection against the Spanish colonial rulers; [12] in *Il Corsaro Nero*, first published as a serial in 1898 to 1899, the colonialism described is for the first time located in the New World and for the first time situated in an earlier historical period (the 17th century).[13] All three of these novels use the circumstances provided by the colonial situation to supply a story or parts of it.

Two of the novels are in no way polemical, whereas *Le Stragi delle Filippine*, like his earlier work, is. Here the nub of the plot is the same as in *La Tigre della Malesia*: a conflict of loyalties and emotions arises from a love affair which bridges a deep political division. The story was based upon the real insurrection which had recently occurred in the Philippines on the part of the indigenous peoples against the Spanish colonial rule. The mixed race hero, Romero, supported by the Chinese, Hang-Tu, is in the forefront of the insurrection, but he loves the daughter of a Spanish army officer while he, in turn, is loved by a devoted Chinese girl. The attempt to throw off the Spanish yoke fails and, with Hang-Tu shot and Romero banished, the sympathy the reader has been encouraged all along to bestow upon the insurgents is intensified by pity for the courageous oppressed and by resentment against the politically powerful. Once more Salgari directs that sympathy towards native freedom fighters and against colonial might. The date of publication was 1898; the insurrection had taken place in 1896 to 1897; Spain was a near, Mediterranean neighbour of Italy. Salgari was not yet ill or troubled, and it seems inconceivable that he was not

conscious of the message he was elaborating for his tens of thousands of young readers. He was taking up a political posture and yet again, in a topical context, he was condemning colonialism.

Apparently as if to redress the balance, the following year *La Capitana del Yucatan* treated the Spanish-American War of 1898, taking the Spanish side along with the dashing Spanish heroine, who smuggles guns through the American blockade to the Spaniards defending Cuba.[14] The explanation is, of course, that the political roles are reversed in this novel; the USA is the aggressor and wields colonial ambitions and might. The sentiments on nationality are exactly similar to those expressed in the Sandokan books; Salgari is no more anti-Spanish (as might have been claimed on the basis of *Le Stragi delle Filippine*) than he is anti-British; he is anti-colonial, and if it is a case of colonisers threatened by a greater, external power then he sympathises with the first and weaker group. For Salgari, might is not right.

For some years, the world of colonialism provided the broad background of many of Salgari's novels, even if only in the sense that distant, colourful countries in other continents were sufficiently populated with Europeans to provide leading characters for stories of treasure hunts or explorations. For several years around the turn of the century, most of Salgari's protagonists were, in fact, European albeit against an exotic backdrop. Then came the return to the Asian hero, Sandokan, and the colonial context of India in *Le Due tigri*, the novel in which the good and righteous Sandokan kills the evil arch-enemy, Suyodhana.[15] This is a moral tale, not a political one, but in the same year Salgari pursued the political struggles of Borneo, through the agency of Sandokan, in *Il Re del Mare*.[16] So far only the "Ciclo dei Corsari" had represented the colonial world of past centuries, though without raising questions about it. Now Salgari published *Capitan Tempesta*

(1905);[17] in writing about the embattled Venetians in 1571 staving off the terror promised by the Turkish horde (counter-claimants to Cyprus), he came as close as he ever would to the theme of Italian colonialism. However, as with *La Capitana del Yucatan*, the political tables have been turned; Venice is the long-standing occupant of Cyprus and is about to be vanquished by an invading power more mighty and more brutal.

For about three years, until 1908, the theme of modern colonialism was only carried forward by the later examples of the Pirate Series; the period when Empire was constantly in the background of his stories seemed to have receded. Then in 1908 and 1909 Salgari made two new departures, both opening new series and both taking a new example of colonial conflict as their central subject. *Sulle frontiere del Far-West*, which was to have two sequels, concerned not only the wars between inimical Red Indian tribes but also the perpetual battle between indigenous and immigrant Americans.[18] *I Corsari delle Bermude* and its sequel used another aspect of North American history, the American War of Independence, a war to be free of European domination.[19] In these two stories the expected pattern is followed, but the Red Indian trilogy provides a surprise at the very end of Salgari's life, a surprise which was perhaps brought about in part by his own state of despair, and in part by the European terror and propaganda that accompanied the contemporary scourging of the Indian nations, with, for example, the annihilation of the Sioux at the Battle of Wounded Knee.

According to the ideas he had advanced all his life, the Red Indians, displaced, hounded, mercilessly killed by the white colonialists, should logically have been the hard-pressed heroes, attracting the readers' sympathy for their bravery and their lost cause. They are indeed the protagonists, but not the heroes, except in the abnormal sense of supremacy and chilling expertise in all the sanguinary

skills; they are passionless killers and grim seekers after revenge. Our potential sympathy goes unplaced, for the white characters have minor and colourless rôles by comparison. The mood of these tales is almost unmitigatedly sombre; there is precious little warmth or love to modify the universal hatred. These are novels which argue no case and evoke no sympathy. They are probably not colonial or political novels at all, even in the restricted sense appropriate to Salgari's work. In the depression of his late years, Salgari had lost sight of his old beliefs and optimism, and now wrote, not of the success of the weak and valorous, but of the bloodlust and will to self-destruction of wronged human beings. Beyond Salgari's condemnation of colonialism as a political system, there are other conclusions to be drawn from the thread of political and colonial subject matter which runs through so much of his work. Many of his novels present the reader with situations which raise questions specifically about race relations, or rather answer them. These questions are posed naturally by the interpersonal relationships developed in the colonial contexts already mentioned: the brown Bornean's closest friend and ally is his "fratellino bianco" (or white brother); Sandokan marries an English girl, Yanez marries an Indian girl.

There are many other examples in the colonial books proper, and yet more interracial relationships appear in novels where the colonial context is nonexistent or is not so prominent and where Salgari makes, as it were, an unprovoked choice of such relationships for his characters. Indeed, in the period from 1892 to 1897 inclusive, when he was eschewing political situations in favour of simple travel and exploration – which, originally, he evidently viewed as more suitable for the young – we find some striking cases, especially in three novels published in the year 1896. In his first novel about the slave trade, *I Drammi della shiavitú*, a dramatic example of black-white relations is at the core of the story.[20] The Brazilian captain of a slave ship falls in love with a mixed-race girl among the

slaves; more than that, he makes a free man of another slave, a West African king. The treachery that provokes the drama comes from another white man, a European, who kills the captain in order to obtain the girl for himself. Apart from the decent captain, it is the black Africans who are the noble figures, who avenge the captain's death and who "live happily ever after".

Sexual relations between races are implicitly introduced towards the end of *I Robinson italiani* by way of providing a happy ending.[21] Three Philippino girls are conveniently shipwrecked on the island where three Italian men have been surviving as Robinson Crusoes for some time; when, at last, the British Navy arrives, it finds a thriving and multiplying colony. It is a story in a much lighter – even light-hearted – vein than *I Drammi della schiavitú*, but with the same message. Another variant of the theme appears in *Il Re della prateria*, where a young Spaniard becomes chief, or king, of a Red Indian tribe as successor to his own white brother.[22] This version is different from the others of the period in one important respect; in the others, Salgari assumes racial equality, whereas the Apaches, of their own volition (not from colonial imposition), and against all expectation, choose to have a white leader whom they respect and even revere. The theme of the white king or queen – for which there was a pre-existing tradition – is repeated many times in widely differing racial contexts, from Brazil to Pacific atols, and is probably the only context in which Salgari makes assumptions concerning white superiority.[23]

In 1898, when Salgari began to reintroduce colonial themes into some of his work, he also produced his second novel concerning West Africa, *La Costa d'Avorio*. It is a novel which first recognises the existence of tensions between white settlers and black indigenous people, and so establishes a reality as opposed to fantasy. A Sicilian settler's farm is burnt and his young – white – brother is

kidnapped by an African from the barbarous kingdom of Dahomey. The racial equation is established when the search party is assisted by a wounded female – or "Amazon" – warrior from Dahomey, who later marries one of the Europeans. This is one of Salgari's many novels which superficially seem to present a fairy tale invention, but where his data is surprisingly close to reality. For it seems that in fact on Africa's West coast there was much miscegenation and Dahomey in fact had brutal kings and a regiment of warrior maidens.[24]

White and black, and white and oriental are not the only racial permutations to be treated by Salgari in plots where the resolution includes sexual harmony. Several stories employ associations between Gentiles and Jews, and between Europeans and Arabs; *I Predoni del Sahara* (1902) is an example of the former, and *Sull'Atlante* (1908) of the latter.[25] In the first, a Corsican on a journey from Morocco to Timbuctoo befriends a Jewish brother and sister; his search for the lost Flatters expedition is unsuccessful, but the story concludes with his marriage to Esther; the second novel is also located in North Africa, where a Hungarian is assisted in his escape from the French Foreign Legion by an Arab girl. Just as Salgari's novels clearly propose a noncolonial world, that is the removal of white domination and exploitation, so too do they posit interracial harmony as the ideal, the happy ending, *par excellence*.

In the late 1920s and 1930s, under the rule of Fascism, a nationalist dictatorship with imperialist ambitions, which was also to be associated with the racism of Nazi Germany, it became fashionable to claim that Salgari, who had died in 1911, had been a "prefascista" (a pre-Fascist) whose work prefigured the Fascist ideology.[26] It was a superficial reading of his novels, which assumed that if they treated subjects located in distant and exotic lands, where the characters included Europeans resident or travelling among the indigenous people, who might be

supposed to be more "primitive" or less "civilised" than themselves, then the message could not be other than imperialist. Nothing could have been further from the truth. As we have seen, Salgari clearly condemned colonialism and created harmonious and equal human relations where colonialist reality would have imposed inequality and conflict; Salgari almost always sympathised with the oppressed and drew unattractive portraits of the European oppressors. His attitudes seem all the more surprising when one considers that in his own time the newly unified nation of Italy developed its first colonialist ambitions, so Salgari was out of sympathy with the official policies of the government of his day. The only modest connection with the mood of these politics could be the general expression of a fascination with far-off lands, rather than preoccupation with the local, the national, which had dominated Italian culture throughout the 19th century. But then this exoticism itself had a purely cultural explanation in the age-old tradition of the aesthetic vogue for orientalism, a European, rather than an Italian, phenomenon, but one which was promoted by Italian grand opera (as in Verdi's *Aida* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*).

There was, however, perhaps a partial motivation for Salgari's writing which was of political origin, albeit certainly an unconscious one. Its source is related precisely to that near-exclusive concern with Italian subjects which had prevailed in literature since the early 1800s, and still did in the Verismo of the 1890s. This had been generated by the determination on the part of the literate, professional classes that the "patchwork" of separate and disparate little states, ranging from Lombardy under Austrian rule in the North to Sicily under an alien Bourbon rule in the South should come together, free of foreign domination, as a single, unified nation of Italy, a political condition not experienced since Ancient Roman times. The emphasis on Italy and nationhood was promoted politically by the patriotic Risorgimento movement and culturally by the Romantic movement's

championing of the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. The long fight for Italian freedom and unity was characterised by powerful passions and personal acts of generous bravery. Unification was completed in 1871, so Salgari was too young to experience any of the long revolution except its afterglow and the accompanying difficulties and disappointments. In a sense, then, his novels are a reliving of the Risorgimento ideals, emotions and deeds in new and exciting settings. Sandokan is the Italian patriot and guerrilla fighter, Garibaldi, with a brown skin and foreign clothes. But this is the politics of nostalgia, not of ambition.

Notes

1 *Tay-See*, 1883; *La Tigre della Malesia*, 1883–4; *Gli strangolatri del Gange*, 1887; *La Scimitarra di Budda*, 1891; *La Vergine della Pagoda d'Oriente*, 1891–2.

2 He published a short serial, *I Selvaggi della Papuasia*, in the travel magazine, *La Valigia*, Milan, in 1883; the daily paper, *La Nuova Arena*, Verona, printed his serialised novels, *Tay-See, La Tigre della Malesia* and *La Favorita del Mahdi* between 1883 and 1884.

3 *La Favorita del Mahdi*, Guigoni, Milan 1884, concerns the uprising of the Mahdi in the Sudan in 1883.

4 R. Giannelli, 'Ricordi di un vecchio giornalista. Dove Emilio Salgari comincio a farsi conoscere dal pubblico', in *Il Raduno*, Rome, 21 January 1928.

5 The odd one out is *Duemila leghe sotto l'America*, Guigoni, Milan 1888, a fantasy underground exploration a la Verne.

6 "... those amazing and rich countries where France is now introducing civilisation by means of cannon-shot"; from a front-page advertisement in *La Nuova Arena*, Verona 1884, printed each day from 12th to 14th September inclusive.

7 The definitive version, *Le Tigri di Mompracem*, would not appear until 1900, published by Donath, Genoa.

8 *La Vergine della Pagoda d'Oriente*, was published as a serial in *La Gazzetta di Treviso*, Treviso 1891–2; the definitive version, *I Pirati della Malesia*, appeared in 1896, published by Donath, Genoa.

9 *Gli strangolatori del Gange* of 1887 became, definitvely, *I Misteri della jungla nera*, in the book version of 1895 published by Donath, Genoa.

10 *Alla conquista di un impero*, Donath, Genoa 1907.

11 *La Costa d'Avorio*, Donath, Genoa 1898.

12 *Le Stragi delle Filippine*, Donath, Genoa 1898.

13 *Il Corsaro Nero*, Donath, Genoa 1898–9.

14 *La Capitana del Yucatan*, Donath, Genoa 1899.

15 *Le Due tigri*, Donath, Genoa 1904.

16 *Il Re del Mare*, published as a serial in *Per Terra e per Mare*, Genoa 1904–5, and in book form by Donath, Genoa 1906.

17 *Capitan Tempesta*, Donath, Genoa 1905.

18 *Sulle frontiere del Far-West*, Bemporad, Florence 1908. The sequels were *La Scotennatrice*, Bemporad, Florence 1909, and *Le Selve Ardenti*, Bemporad, Florence 1910.

19 *I Corsari delle Bermude*, Bemporad, Florence 1909; its sequel was *La Crociera della Tuonante*, Bemporad, Florence 1910.

20 *I Drammi della schiavitú*, Voghera, Rome 1896.

21 *I Robinson italiani*, Donath, Genoa 1896.

22 *Il Re della Prateria*, Bemporad, Florence 1896.

23 *L'uomo di fuoco*, Donath, Genoa 1904, was based on a historical circumstance and is set in Brazil. *Il Tesoro della Montagna Azzurra*, Bemporad, Florence 1907, is set in the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

24 Bruce Chatwin gives details in *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, (1980) Pan, London 1982, pp 96–7.

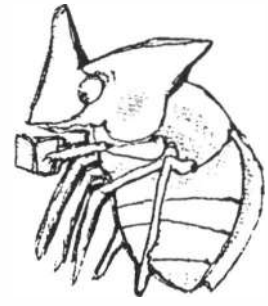
25 *I Predoni del Sahara*, Donath, Genoa 1902; *Sull'Atlante*, Bemporad, Florence 1908.

26 These ideas were first advanced by Luigi Motta in his preface, entitled "Emilio Salgari. (Il Romanzo d'avventure: il suo carattere e la sua influenza)", in Salgari's *Il Tesoro del Presidente del Paraguay*, Casa editrice "L'Italica", Milan 1923. They were enthusiastically promoted over a six-month period in the weekly journal *Il Raduno*, Rome, from December 1927 to July 1928.

Nigerian children's literature

and the changing social scenes

philomena osazee fayose



Introduction

The patterns of children's literature have always been conditioned by national aspirations with cultural, political, economical and social factors being the major determinants. This is because literature is socially inclined. Whatever behavioural traits adults consider desirable in children are reflected in the literature produced for them. This is particularly evident in countries with a long tradition of children's book publishing[1]. (Children of course have little or no say in the literature produced for them. It is the adults who write the stories, publish them or recommend them for reading).

Though Nigerian children's literature is still quite young being only 34 years old, the stories reflect the changing patterns in the social, economic, cultural and political fabric of the Nigerian society. Early fiction for Nigerian children were anthologies of folk stories and stories drawing heavily on oral tradition. This is to be expected because when a nation turns from an oral to a written tradition the oral forms provide easy source materials for the new writers[2].

Nigerian children's literature 1960–1978

Two main periods can be discerned in Nigerian children's literature. The period from independence in October 1960 to 1977. The first period was dominated by anthologies of folk stories collected and transcribed into English or the major Nigerian languages. Between 1963 and 1972, all the major publishing companies in Nigeria published series of folktales. The most popular being the Oxford African readers. Between 1966 and 1970, clever authors like Chinua Achebe, Kola Onadipe, John Iroaganachi, amongst others, took individual folk stories and transformed them into more episodic narratives thus producing new and refreshing stories.

Traditional beliefs and practices

Alongside the early folk stories were a number of novellas and novels drawing their themes from traditional beliefs and practices. These works are useful for their sociological and educational viewpoints. In fact, in 1965, five years after independence, Achebe, one of the leading exponents of African literature expressed his views about what is expected of the newly emerging crop of African writers. He states:

> My aims and the deepest aspirations of my society meet ... I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them ... Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure art. But who cares? Art is important but so too is education of the kind I have in mind[3].

Thus the early writers for children such as Kola Onadipe, Neville Ukoli, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe and Onuora Nzekwu, to mention a few, saw themselves as teachers who sought to teach their readers about the Nigerian past as well as help them to come to terms with the uneasy changes brought about by colonialism and contact with the Western world. In particular, these authors were out to refute or re-affirm certain widely held views on traditional beliefs and practices. In some books among which are Onadipe's *Koku Baboni* (1965) and Ukoli's *The Twins of the rain forest* (1969), the authors refute the belief in the evil nature of twin children. In the past, and even today, multiple births such as that of twins or triplets were considered taboo in many Nigerian societies. Such children and sometimes their parents were killed or banished from the community for fear they bring harm to it. In *Koku Baboni*, Adia, a wealthy but barren woman is directed in a dream to a river bank where she finds an abandoned baby who turns out to be a twin. Adia keeps the baby whom she names Koku Baboni. The name means he refuses to die (Koku), Gift of God (Baboni). The boy is brought up to be a fine young man, the pride of his mother and the village. On Adia's death bed, the facts of Koku's life are made known to him. The boy returns to his village of origin and makes himself known to his people who indeed remember the circumstance of his being thrown into the river. The novella ends thus:

> But many parents wept because their own twin children had been killed. They now know that twin children are not evil. Perhaps their own children had been brave, strong and handsome like Koku. From that day twin children were welcome into the village[4].

Besides refuting the belief in the evil nature of twin children, Onadipe touched on two very important issues in early Nigerian societies – barreness and maternal love. In many Nigerian societies a barren woman is often regarded with suspicion and pity. The ultimate desire of every Nigerian woman is to have children. A marriage is considered unsuccessful unless there are lots of children and preferably

male ones. Today the desire for male children has been played down in most children's stories. Barren women are no longer portrayed in an unfavourable light. But the question of maternal love is emphasised throughout the literature. Lack of maternal love, as we shall see in post-1978 stories for children results in delinquent children.

The belief in witchcraft is again rejected in two novellas by Onadipe *Sugar girl* (1963) and *Sunny boy* (1978). In some Nigerian societies, old women and sometimes men who live alone or encounter disasters, frequently are regarded as witches and wizards. People will have nothing to do with them. Ayawa of *Sugar girl* has been driven away from Apampa village because the people consider her a witch. She explains to Ralia "they say that I am a witch and that I had killed my husband and children. They drove me out of the village"[5]. But Ayawa was kind to Ralia when she was lost in the bush. Witches are not known to show kindness to human beings. Ayawa is recalled to Apampa town and all is well with her again.

Mama Saro of Shanka Town in *Sunny boy* has lost her husband before the story starts. Nobody in Shanka Town knows about her past. Abai's mother warns:

> "They say she is a witch," Abai's mother said.
> "Who is a witch? That old woman? Mother that is not a kind thing to say. Is she a witch because she is old and wrinkled? Will you become a witch when you are old?" Abai asked one after another (p 17).

Abai's mother must have been thoroughly embarassed by the questions put to her by the boy. There was no further discussion of witchcraft between mother and son. In fact in the course of the story Abai benefited immensely from the generousity of Mama Saro. Onadipe thus shows that being old and wrinkled does not make any one a witch.

Superstition, Caudwell suggests, is adapted to an exploited class. Nigerian writers for children use the belief in superstitions in some of their novellas to show how a class of people initiate or spread superstitions in others to exploit other classes of people. In *Juju rock* (1966), the belief in the supernatural powers of certain categories of men is established. The inhabitants of Dankom and the surroundings live in absolute fear of the "Keepers of the Rock" who are said to possess magical powers and are able to turn into all sorts of animals and objects in order to harm their enemies. The fear is created in order to exploit the local people by the men who were looking for the lost gold mine in the area. After the bloody battle on Juju Rock, the "Keepers of the Rock" are defeated and exposed. The Kamalu men in *The Rescue of Charlie Kalu* (1971), are another set of secret society men exploiting the fears and beliefs of the local inhabitants of the Rivers State. Dorothy Wimbush in most of her novels written between 1965 and 1971 uses the belief in spirits and other supernatural beings to further the plots.

Colonialism

Nigeria's contact with Europe and the break up of traditional societies has also provided themes for Nigerian children's fiction. This contact is often revealed as a conflict especially in school stories. The European missionaries tried to discredit all that the child held most dear at home. There was conflict, for example, between the Roman Catholic Mass and Traditional Worship in *Blade among the boys* by Onuora Nzekwu.

But generally the stories show the comic scenes between Nigerian teachers who try to imitate their European proprietors.

There are funny descriptions of teachers' physical deportment and mannerisms in two books by Anezi Okoro. *The Village school*, and *New broom at Amanzu.*

Many natives did not believe in Western education because it breeds thieves, idlers and ne'er-do-wells as in *Akin goes to school* by Christie Ade-Ajayi and Michael Crowder. Eze's relatives in *Eze goes to school* were unwilling to help him continue his schooling after his father's death because schooling is not good.

> Were schooling a good thing, I would not mind helping. But it takes people away from their proper living[6].

Thomas Chigbo crams into his *Odenigbo* all the features of colonialism and its effects on Nigeria: the break up of traditional societies because of disregard for tradition by those who have imbibed European ways; new means of gaining a livelihood working for Europeans as opposed to the traditional occupations of hunting, farming, palmwine tapping, local crafts; the introduction of sophisticated household gadgets and weapons; the relationships between colonial administrators and powerful local chiefs. In all, writers employing the theme of colonialism make it clear that a total disregard of the traditional will lead to disaster.

Nigerian children's fiction since 1978

The Macmillan Winners Series whose first title *Ehanna and friends* appeared in 1978 may be said to be the watershed of children's book publishing in Nigeria. In 1976 Macmillan Nigerian Publishers started a yearly children's story competition to discover talents in this new but rapidly growing area of book publishing. The competition ran from 1976 to 1986. The winning stories now

appear as the Macmillan Winners Series. Nineteen seventy eight was also the year of 16th Congress of the International Board on Books for Children and Young People (IBBY). The theme of that Congress was "Modern Realistic Stories for Children and Young People". More realistic stories have been published for children in Nigeria since 1978. Realistic stories are those which deal with the social, economic, political and cultural issues in society and how these affect children in order to help them come to terms with these issues. Realistic stories are true to life, many deal with children's immediate problems and the details are often grim or blood curdling. Many of the post-1978 stories for children reflect the changing scenes of life in the country.

(a) *Children as present in their stories*

The early books for Nigerian children presented them in a beautiful, ideal world of their own. This world was dominated by play and food. The children are contented and happy. When there are problems, adult teachers or parents are around to help the children solve these. Parents get on very well with their children and there are good interpersonal relationships between siblings.

Since 1978 it would appear as if family relationships have broken down. In *Sparing the rod* by Bayo Adebiyi, and *Motherless baby*, to mention two novels, parents no longer have control over their children. They in fact quarrel openly in front of them. Some children are shown to run away from home either because they feel their parents are too harsh or they want to be independent as in *Call me Michael* (1980) and *Together again* (1983). Cooperation between parents in the proper upbringing of their children has been a major theme in Nigerian children's literature since 1978.

(b) *Child exploitation and abuse*

Child exploitation and abuse have been recurrent themes in Nigerian children's literature since 1980. *A Lucky chance, The Drums of joy* and *Footsteps in the dark* look at the dreadful abuse of children by adults. In the first novel Chisa leaves the village and goes to the town to live with his wealthy and educated uncle who has promised him a better start in life. He is told that

> Uncle Kulu will take good care of you. He will buy you new clothes. You will go to a big school[7].

But instead, Chisa finds himself a second class citizen in his uncle's household. He is treated worse than a servant and exploited in every way possible. It is by sheer luck that the boy is able to go to secondary school.

The problem of money to pay school fees so that children can carry on their education was common in stories written before 1978. Where the situation is desperate, as in *Eze goes to school*, adults like Teacher Okafor or Wilberforce came to the rescue. In some post-1978 stories where the same problem arises, adults to whom children go for help exploit them in every way possible. In *Call me Michael* by Kola Onadipe "Area Father" and his criminal gang use innocent, needy boys for their neferious jobs of smuggling, burglary and pick-pocketing[8].

Two stories by Teresa Meniru *The Drums of joy* and *Footsteps in the dark* look at child abuse, armed robbery, kidnapping and men of the underworld. Nigerians have become insensitive to the needs of children and the aged alike. Through these stories, Meniru unveils many of the evils in the Nigerian society.

Two novels *Motherless baby* and *Iheoma comes to stay* look at premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies. In the former book, Ngozi, a school girl finds that she is pregnant. She runs away from home to a big city where she is unknown. When the baby is born she abandons him. The rest of the story reveals Ngozi's mental torture as a result of that evil act. Ekwensi takes the opportunity of the story to criticise the night life in the urban areas of Nigeria with its glib-tongued musicians and uncontrollable young girls looking for premature enjoyment.

(c) *Feminism and Nigerian children's stories*

Since 1982 more female characters that play major roles in the stories have appeared increasingly in Nigerian children's fiction. Before 1978, most of the female characters in Nigerian children's fiction were passive. In *Eze goes to school*, we only hear of Chiwe Agu's academic brilliance in two paragraphs. Eze's sister and mother are in the background. Nnenne in *The Drums of joy* is a memorable character. She holds her own against Mr Fish in the ferry boat, against the robber at Kafanchan railway station and in fact, it is her own ingenuity that helps her to escape from her captors at the beginning of the story. Unoma of *Unoma at college* breaks the traditional view of the African woman when she rejects a brilliant offer of marriage in preference to continuing her education. Nigerian women are beginning to wake up to the realities of life. They want equal opportunities with their male counterparts and have proved that they are as capable as men. Though many women are still very much in the background, more are coming into the limelight. The men can no longer hold them in servitude. Education and economic buoyance are sure steps to liberation.

Conclusions

Nigerian children's literature has tried to express the changing needs of society. Many of the writers see themselves as social critics. Their main purpose in writing is to make their society a better one. Emenyonu (1974), for example, praises Cyprian Ekwensi in particular for his exposure of social ills. He writes:

> the work of the novelist is to hold up a mirror to nature and describe the reflections truthfully regardless of the over-sensitiveness or otherwise of his public.

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Why pooh-pooh Pooh?

Isn't he universal?

peter havard-williams

Introduction

A church in Gaberone each year organises a Christmas party for handicapped children from a poor area of the city. This year two of the photographs from the party showed first, one of the children tearing off a corner of a paper to reveal a bear's ear, and secondly, the girl hugging her toy tightly. Of course, a single case does not make a universal, but the example does indicate that bears can be inter-cultural!

Winnie-the-Pooh, however, has had a bad press over the years. Children's librarians prefer books more recently published. Pooh is too comfortable, he does not face the realities of life, nor does he adjust to a modern outlook. In the age of disenchantment, violence and sex, Pooh is enchanting, peaceable, viable to sell in an increasing variety of forms and in increasing numbers, in spite of the "cognoscenti" of the library world – a sale of over 500 000 a year of which 30 percent go to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and Pooh has been translated into 31 languages, from Afrikaans through Chinese, Dutch, Hebrew, Macedonian, to Thai, Esperanto and Latin (Thwaite 1992:190). Then there are Pooh china designs, Pooh calenders and even Pooh clubs – one for students of the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand (Thwaite 1992:188), for Pooh appeals to young people and even the

aged, as well as to children. The Pooh industry had already begun in the 1930s but has risen to new heights in the past 10 to 15 years.

The creation of a personality to appeal to children in the age range of below 10 years is important. The complaint of the ages is that teenagers are hard to handle. Before being a parent, one has the notion that children are animate but uninteresting before they are 15 or 16. But obviously Milne's experience was different. Even though Christopher Robin's nanny came between him and his son, he was aware of the reality and the interest of a young child as a person. From my experience, I found that children develop early. Children at one or two or three are real people. My eldest daughter could sing in tune at the age of three years, and we exchanged experiences of the day, every day together at bed-time. Friendship has to grow in these early years in order to blossom further as children grow older, and this is a fundamental message of the Pooh books. If parents are preoccupied, rushing hither and thither, ignoring their childen when they are young, how do they expect friendship and confidence to develop during the teenage period? This view is reinforced by an article recently published by Janet Walker (1994), "Parenting in the 1990s: great expectations and hard times", an article of considerable importance. In every case it is the quality of interpersonal relationships that matters most.

This is what the Pooh books are about.

Pooh – a personality

Pooh is, after all, a personality of, and for, all ages and for every age. The books have something special to offer. The creation of Pooh seems to have been

based on perceptions of Christopher Robin and his mother. The text was, as it were, merely edited by Milne and was in fact dedicated to Mrs Milne, though of course the stories were Milne's.

The Pooh books rest on certain fundamental elements which remain important whatever the time and the place. These elements are the creation of a personality, the portrayal of intimate family relations, the recognition of a child's universe, the events which typify it, and a profound sense of humour – sustained by an excellent simple English style (simplicity of this kind is the mark of genius).

The evolution of Pooh's personality is supported by the drawings of EH Shepard. Take, for instance, the very first drawing in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. There is a child's bear, going down the stairs, head first, held by Christopher Robin. He is obviously a toy. Even his name is in doubt. Yet he is presented in his own right and he has a mind.

> Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs (Milne 1950:1).

Although he is a toy, he wonders if there is another way of doing it:

> If only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it. And then he feels that perhaps there isn't (Thwaite 1992:190).

That statement of alternatives is found throughout the book, and is a very useful piece of intuitive child pyschology. Much better to say "If you do A, X will happen, if you do Y, B will happen", rather than "Don't do Y". The name "Winnie-the-Pooh" comes from Christopher Robin but this is unstated so it

might have come from Pooh himself. The name is just, even though he is a boy and Winnie is a name for girls. "Pooh" seems to have been taken on board because it was the name of a Swan the family had met. This is in fact the short name for Winnie-the-Pooh, not Winnie.

Sometimes Winnie-the-Pooh likes a game, sometimes a story – preferably about himself – the same as any child. The name problem is further complicated in the first story by the fact that he lives "under the name of Sanders". This is quite a subtle pun: to live "under the name of" implies that Pooh has an alternative name which gives him a separate existence in the forest, with all the other animals, but it also (through Shepard's drawing) shows him literally sitting under the name on a sign over the door:

> It means he had the name over the door in gold letters, and lived under it (Milne 1950:3).

This was at first beyond Pooh's comprehension. The drawing incidentally re-appears once more in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and once in *The House at Pooh Corner* (1963) but Sanders is all but forgotten.

Winnie-the-Pooh is the result of a dialogue between father and son, and this collusion between the two in creating the name itself begins the creation of Pooh's personality and also sets the tone of the story.

When Winnie-the-Pooh, in the first story, tries to fly, suspended from a balloon in the hope of visiting a bees' nest, helped by Christopher Robin, he is still a toy. When he visits Rabbit, in the next story, he gets stuck in Rabbit's burrow and is read to by Christopher Robin:

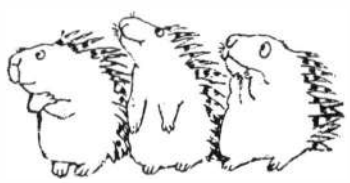
> ... a Sustaining Book, such as would help and comfort a Wedged Bear in Great Tightness ... at the North end of Pooh (Milne 1950:28).

At the end of the week, Christopher Robin pulls him out with Rabbit "and all Rabbits' friends and relatives – Pop"!

> So, with a nod of thanks to his friends, he went on with his walk through the forest, humming proudly to himself. But, Christopher Robin looked after him lovingly, and said to himself, "Silly old Bear!" (Milne 1950:31).

The chapter begins to create a personality for Pooh. He walks proudly (it is important to support self-esteem) while Christopher Robin says "Silly old Bear!" (equally important not to take children too seriously but to show affection at the same time.) We see in fact an evolution of Christopher Robin as a parent-substitute and Pooh as a Christopher Robin substitute. Moreover, a social system is in the process of being created. Rabbit is well-organised – better organised than Pooh – and he has more common sense ("The fact is you're stuck, he states"). He goes to fetch Christopher Robin, he uses Pooh's paws as a clothes line, and when the friends and relations help to pull Pooh out, Rabbit is the organiser.

Piglet



And then Piglet is presented. Though he is small, he compensates for this by living in a very grand house in the middle of a beech-tree which was in the middle of the forest. As Benjamin Hoff (1993:4) points out in *The Te of Piglet*, Piglet craves security and wants to be somebody.

> Unlike Pooh, who simply is and does, Piglet agonises (Milne 1950:1).

Piglet starts out as "piglet" but swifty becomes "Piglet" with a capital "P", a name. He also wants to be somebody – hence "Trespassers W", from a broken board near his house, which indicated the name of his grandfather, Trespassers Williams.

> And his grandfather had had two names in case he lost one – Trespassers after an uncle, and Williams after Trespassers (Milne 1950:32).

There is in Milne a propensity to balance qualities. Piglet is small, but he lives in a big house and has ancestors with which to establish his identity. As we find in later stories, the diminutive Piglet is the material from which heroes are made. He is the only character in the books to change, to grow, to become a finer personality than he was in the beginning (Hoff 1993:49).

Pooh is, Piglet becomes – a fundamental distinction almost since the beginning of philosophy.

Piglet finds Pooh walking round and round in a circle, hunting – Piglet suggests it's a woozle. And Pooh who sees several tracks, asks Piglet to accompany him. The solution is found only when Christopher Robin arrives – when he, Pooh, realises that it is he and Piglet who have been making the tracks and not the Woozles or Hostile Animals. "I have been Foolish and Deluded", said he, "and I am a Bear of No Brain at all" (Milne 1950:41). He is nothing if not honest about himself, but he is comforted by Christopher Robin:

> "You're the Best Bear in All the World, however", said Christopher Robin soothingly.
> ... "Anyhow", he said, "it is nearly Luncheon Time".
> So he went home for it (Milne 1950:41).

Pooh is still something of a toy, but he is increasingly growing into a personality. We should bear in mind the following:

> Bears are like cats – they arrive disguised as nonentities. Only time will reveal just who they are. A bear grows more alive with age (Teddy Bear ... 1992).

Eeyore's tail

Pooh discovers that Eeyore, the old Grey Donkey, has lost his tail. Eeyore has not been aware of it.

> "That Accounts for a Good Deal," said Eeyore gloomily. "It Explains Everything. No Wonder."

The upper-case letters, as ever in the Pooh books, indicate the importance of what is said. Eeyore is the image of the sad, unhappy child (or the unhappy mood of a child) while Pooh is the incarnation of the ideal, such as AA Milne and his wife no doubt wanted Christopher Robin to be. The ideal child is always ready to help, to cope with a situation, even-tempered and with a sunny nature. But he is also a bit obstinate (he has a strong will) and he can occasionally be slightly foolish (but not too much so) and not bad.

So Pooh goes off to consult Owl –

> "and if anyone knows anything about anything, said Bear to himself, "it's Owl who knows something about something," he said, "or my name's not Winnie-the-Pooh," he said. "Which it is," he added. "So there you are".

Owl lived at the Chestnuts, an old-world residence of great charm. And greater charm than anyone else's because it had a knocker and a bell-pull. Spelling, however, was not Owl's strong point. He was able to read, write and spell his own name "Wol", so that notices had heen done by Christopher Robin:

> PLEZ CNOKE IF AN RNSR IS NOT REQID (Milne 1950:60).

However, Pooh turned his attention to both notices.

> Winnie-the-Pooh read the two notices very carefully first left to right, and afterwards, in case he had missed some of it, from right to left (Milne 1950:60).

Pooh finally discovers after a long complicated speech by Owl, that the bell-pull is Eeyore's tail.

> "Owl," said Pooh solemnly, "you made a mistake, somebody did want it." ...
> Eeyore, my dear friend Eeyore.
> "He was – he was fond of it?"
> "Fond of it?"
> "Attached to it," said Winnie-the-Pooh sadly (Milne 1950:50).

> Christopher Robin nailed the tail back on, and Eeyone frisked about in the forest. He was so happy.

> Winnie-the-Pooh came over all funny, and had to hurry home for a little snack of something to sustain him (Milne 1950:52–3).

This is just one absurd incident among many which, in their naivete, is based on an incorrect interpretation, a misunderstanding where the successful ending depends on the simplicity of language and the underlying humour.

Heffalumps

One of a child's nightmares is encountering a large animal. In *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the imagining of such an encounter leads to boasting:

> Christopher Robin finished the mouthful he was eating and said carelessly: "I saw a Heffalump today, Piglet" (Milne 1950:54).

This is not only a boastful statement, it is also cruel, since Christopher Robin would know Piglet was small and nervous. But it was "just jumping along". Pooh had seen one, he said, wondering what a Heffalump was like.

The whole conversation includes statements about Heffalumps which Christopher Robin, Pooh and Piglet have never seen except as a fantasy. Pooh decides to catch a Heffalump, and the chapter's theme has been fixed. As usual, events are experienced by each of the personages in terms of their own personal interests. Heffalumps could be captured if a pot of honey was put in the trap, so after a lot of discussion, Pooh goes to get the honey ("Hunny") in the jar.

Quite incongruously, Piglet digs the Very Deep pit. When Pooh brought and threw the honey pot down to Piglet, he says:

> "Yes, but it isn't quite a full jar," ... and Piglet said, "No, it isn't! Is that all you've got left?" and Pooh said, "Yes". ... So Piglet put the jar at the bottom of the pit and climbed out, and they went off home together (Milne 1950:60).

The whole incident is based on fantasy. Piglet, for instance, thinks that string is needed to lead Heffalumpa when they have been caught, while Pooh thinks they

respond to whistling. But Pooh, after counting Heffalumps to get to sleep, dreams of Heffalumps and goes back to the pit in the middle of the night to finish off the honey. Piglet, when he goes, finds Pooh who having finished the honey, has his head stuck in the honey pot. Piglet is terrified of the "Heffalump" and runs to Christopher Robin. When they approach the pit again, they hear Pooh knocking the jar against a tree-root. Christopher Robin laughs and laughs when he realises what is happening. But Piglet does not walk quietly away as Pooh did – he is so ashamed of himself that he runs straight off home and goes to bed with a headache.

And Christopher Robin and Pooh go back to breakfast. For Eeyore's birthday, Pooh gives him an empty honey pot, from which he has eaten all the honey on the way – it would be a pot to put things in! He wants to have "Happy Birthday" on it, so he goes to see Owl.

Eeyore's birthday

> "Many happy returns of Eeyore's birthday," said Pooh.
> "Oh, is that what it is?"
> "What are *you* giving him, Pooh?"
> "I'm giving a Useful Pot to keep things in, and I wanted to ask you –"
> "Is this it?" said Owl, taking it out of Pooh's paw.
> "Yes, and I wanted to ask you –"
> "Somebody has been keeping honey in it," said Owl.
> "You can keep *anything* in it," said Pooh earnestly.
> "It's very useful like that. And I wanted to ask you –"
> "You ought to write '*A happy Birthday*' on it"
> (Milne 1950:78–9).

Is this not so typical of two children, each preoccupied with his own world, and desiring to communicate while bypassing each other?

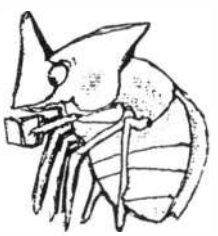
> "It's a nice pot," said Owl, looking at it all round. "Couldn't I give it too? From both of us?"
> "No," said Pooh. "That would not be a good plan. Write on it" (Milne 1950:79).

Owl licks the end of his pencil, and wonders how to spell "birthday" ..... and this is what he writes:

> HIPY PAPY BTHUTHDTH THUTHDA BTHUTHDY (Milne 1950:87)

Pooh looks on admiringly. Piglet gives him only a burst balloon, but, in keeping with his character, Eeyore accepts the gifts with pleasure.

> Eeyore wasn't listening. He was taking the balloon out, and putting it back again, as happy as could be ...
> "And didn't *I* give him anything?" asked Christopher Robin sadly.
> "Of course you did," I said (Milne comes back into the narrative to help Christopher Robin). "You gave him – don't you remember – a little – a little –" (waiting cleverly for Christopher Robin's response).
> "I gave him a box of paints to paint things with."
> "That was it" (Milne 1950:87).



Kanga and Roo

Kanga and little Roo come on the scene later than the other animals and new arrivals are not welcome in a group of children. Accordingly they decide to take

Roo as a hostage and replace him with Piglet. But the adventure does not turn out quite as planned. Piglet jumps into Kanga's pouch, suffers a cold bath, his colour is lighter after this ordeal and Christopher Robin joins the game with Kanga:

> "Perhaps it's some relation of Pooh's," said Christopher Robin. "What about a nephew or an uncle or something?" ...
>
> "I shall call it Pootel," said Christopher Robin. "Harry Pootel for short." (Milne 1950:105).

Harry Pootel jumps out of Kanga's arms, runs for his life through the open door, and when he is a 100 yards away rolls the rest of the way home, so as to get his own nice comfortable colour back. After that Kanga and Roo stay in the Forest and they are all happy again.

The roles of Christopher Robin and Pooh are interesting. Christopher Robin, as has already been noted, becomes the parent substitute. He is on the side of Kanga against the others, he plays the role of the back-stop, who is there to resolve situations time and again. Pooh is the ideal child – or the sort of child Milne thought of as ideal, yet all the animals are aspects, moods of any one child. Kanga brings in the maternal element. We must remember Christopher Robin was an only child – and only children often create an imaginary society for themselves. (My eldest daughter used to visit her friend, Howdodowdy, who lived first in India, then in Australia. She often went with a small suitcase packed with fruit and a sweater to the summerhouse at the top of the garden).

The flood

The sight of a spectacular event can create a lasting impression on a child. Piglet's house was completely surrounded by water, after "It rained and it rained and it rained". If only he was not all alone.

> "It's a little Anxious," he said to himself, "to be a Very Small Animal Entirely Surrounded by Water" (Milne 1950:128).

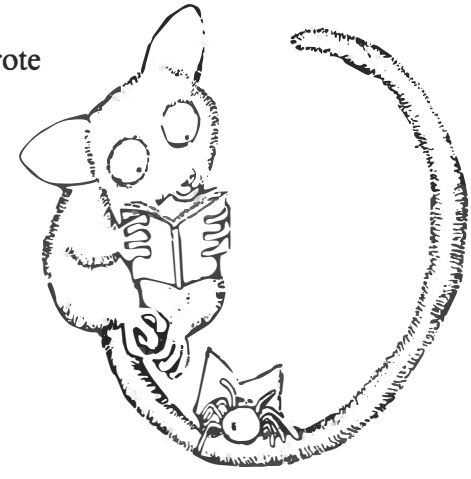
All the others could escape ...

> ... Eeyore could escape by – by Making a Loud Noise Until Rescued, and here am I, surrounded by water and I can't do *anything* (Milne 1950:128).

Piglet may be a "Very Small Animal", but he has his moments.

> Then suddenly he remembered a story which Christopher Robin had told him about a man on a desert island who had written something in a bottle and thrown it into the sea ...

He searched for a pencil and paper and a bottle and wrote



> HELP!
> PIGLET (ME)

on one side of the paper, on the other side –

> IT'S ME PIGLET, HELP HELP (Milne 1950:130).

He throws the bottle, with the paper in it, as far as he can throw, and is aware he has done all he can to save himself. He is obviously, in Kipling's words "an animal of infinite resource and sagacity", who can spell (without making a fuss about it) and can use his knowledge in action.

When the rain began, Pooh was asleep. Pooh, who had had a tiring day, and had eaten well, suddenly had a dream. He was at the East Pole, where it was very cold. Woozles came to nibble the fur off his legs to make nests for their young – until they were so cold, he woke up and found that water was all around him. He must escape. He gets the pots of honey which he finishes in four days. He finds Piglet's bottle and recognises the "P's" on the paper inside and thinks that it's a "missage" (Milne 1950:132–4).

He uses a large honey jar as a boat – and gives it the name "The floating Bear". For a while Pooh and "The Floating Bear" – were uncertain as to which of them was meant to be.

He paddles off to see Christopher Robin, who lived at the very top of the Forest, where his house was beyond the reach of the flood, and where he marked the rising level of the water, each day,

> On the morning on the fifth day he saw the water all round him, and knew that for the first time in his life he was on a real island. Which was very exciting! (136).

Owl flies over to say "How do you do?"

> "The atmosphere conditions have been very unfavourable lately," said Owl.
> "The what?"

"It has been raining," explained Owl.
"Yes," said Christoper Robin. "It has."
"The flood-level has reached an unprecedented height."
"The who?"
"There's a lot of water about," explained Owl.

Owl is obviously a child who will become a professor of meteorology!

"Have you seen Pooh?" asks Christopher Robin. Owl flies off to find him.

Pooh turns up.

"Here I am," said a growly voice behind him. Pooh has come by boat, as we know.

> "On my boat," said Pooh proudly, "I had a Very Important Missage sent me in a bottle, and owing to having got some water in my eyes, I couldn't read it, so I brought it to you. On my boat" (Milne 1950:137–9).

A splendid excuse for not reading it and so typical of a child's "alternative reasoning" to avoid admitting the truth.

When it comes to rescuing Piglet, Pooh has the brilliant idea of using Christopher Robin's umbrella.

"And then this Bear, Pooh Bear, Winnie-the-Pooh, F.O.P. (Friend of Piglet's), R.C. (Rabbit's, companion), P.D. (Pole Discoverer), E.C. & T.F. (Eeyore's

Comforter and Tail-finder)" thinks of the umbrella. This is so characteristic of certain children, wanting to create an impression and praise their companions. Piglet is rescued in the umbrella boat (The Brain of Pooh) (Milne 1950:140).

And as that is really the end of the story, and I am very tired after that last sentence, I think I shall stop there (Milne 1950:143).

Milne, the author, reappears to bring this series of adventures to an end. He is present in the first chapter, when he is asked by Christopher Robin to tell a Winnie-the-Pooh story. By the double magic of I am a storyteller, he brings Winnie-the-Pooh to life and introduces Christopher to the universe of friends/toys.

> The first person he (Winnie-the Pooh) thought of was Christopher Robin.
>
> "Wasn't it me?" said Christopher Robin in a voice full of emotion, hardly daring to believe his ears.

The author then retires from the stories and intervenes only once before closing the story as he began, shortly before bath-time, when Pooh again becomes a toy bear (revealed by Shepard's drawing).

House at Pooh Corner

Thus, in this first book, toys take on personalities. This is developed further in *The House at Pooh Corner*. When Tigger appears, he is not considered as a toy,

but as a "bouncy" child, fussy about his food. He does not like honey (fortunately for Pooh) nor acorns (Piglet) nor thistles (Eeyore) but he loves Malt Extract (Rooh's Fortifying Medicine). But Piglet, who finds Tigger excessively bouncy finds that "he is already fortified enough".

> Even small (short for "very Small Beetle") is personified and when he is lost all the animals "organise a search". Small is found on Pooh's back when he and Piglet get out of the gravel-pit into which they had fallen.
>
> So when Christopher Robin has helped them out of the gravel-pit, they all went off together hand-in-hand.

The animals all sign a "resolution" which is presented by Eeyore, for they know that Christopher Robin is going to leave them. Eeyore has written a poem:

> The Poem which I am now about to read to you was written by Eeyore, or Myself, in a Quiet Moment. If somebody will take Roo's bull's-eye away from him, and wake up Owl, we shall be able to enjoy it. I call it – POEM.
>
> This was it.
>
> Christopher Robin is going
> At least I think he is
> Where?
> Nobody knows
> But he is going –
> I mean he goes
> *(To rhyme with "knows")*
> Do we care?
> *(to rhyme with "where")*
> We do
> Very much ... (Milne 1963:164).

Pooh and Christopher Robin stay behind.

They walk on, thinking of This and That, and by-and-by they came to an enchanted place on the very top of the Forest called Galleons Lap ...

The evolution of the personalities is ended, for Christopher Robin thinks about his future, while Pooh remains his favourite companion. Pooh says

"What I like best in the whole world is Me and Piglet going to see You, and You saying 'What about a little something?' and Me saying 'Well, I shouldn't mind a little something, should you, Piglet?' and it being a hummy sort of day outside, and birds singing".

In the second volume the storyteller disappeared and the child and his friends have their own life and it is Christopher Robin himself who puts an end to the interplay of imagination and of childhood.

"Pooh, when I'm – *you* know – when I am *not* doing Nothing, will you come up here sometimes?"
"Just Me?"
"Yes Pooh."
"Will you be here too?"
"Yes, Pooh, I will be *really*. I promise I will be, Pooh."
... "Pooh, *promise* you won't forget about me, ever. Not even when I'm a hundred".
Pooh thought for a little.
"How old shall *I* be then?"
"Ninety-nine"
Pooh nodded.
"I promise," he said (Milne 1963:171).

The author is content in these last lines to look from a distance at the world he has created, but from which he is excluded.

Here then are the books. They give children the security of a family environment, with different friends who each have their particular characteristics – feel small like Piglet, be sad like Eeyore or verbose like Owl.

But these traits are also the different facets of the personality of Christopher Robin (and of any child). Through the dialogues, the child-reader (or listener) becomes conscious of his moods and the moods of others.

Milne (his wife and many other parents) have thought that toys, if they are loved, become people or at least personalities and create an environment which, especially for a child, encourages the development of imagination and gives a sense of security which are both so essential for children.

The Hums

The pleasure of the text also derives from the humour of the verses with which it is studded – the famous hums of Pooh – mixing verses "of no importance" with a prose full of surprises.

> Isn't it funny
> How a bear likes honey?
> Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!
> I wonder why he does (Milne 1950:6).

And when Pooh climbs into the tree looking for a bees' nest, which will have honey he thinks of another song.

> It's a very funny thought that, if Bears were Bees,
> They'd build their nests at the *bottom* of trees.
> And that being so (if the Bees were Bears),
> We shouldn't have to climb up all these Stairs (Milne 1963:1).

These verses have their own logic, even if they prove enlightening in a rather unrealistic kind of way on bears and bees and the logic created from the humorous verse.

In the first chapter of *The House at Pooh Corner*, Pooh is looking for Piglet's house and to his surprise, he saw the door was open, and the more he looked inside the more Piglet wasn't there.

> "He's out", said Pooh sadly, "That's what it is. He's not in. I shall have to go for a fast Thinking Walk by myself. Bother!" (Milne 1963:6).

But first he thought that he would knock very loudly just to make quite sure ... and while he waited for Piglet not to answer, he jumped up and down to keep warm, and a hum came suddenly into his head, which seemed to him a Good Hum, such as is hummed Hopefully to Others.

Humour also is found in the repetition of effects. Pooh loves honey, as we know, and in *The House at Pooh Corner* there is constant reference to honey (perhaps symbolising food in general – an important factor in a child's life.)

> Sing Ho! for the life of a Bear!
> Sing Ho! for the life of a Bear! ...
> Sing Ho! for a Bear!
> Sing Ho! for a Pooh.
> And I'll have a little something in an hour or two!
>
> He was so pleased with the song that he sang it all the way to the top of the Forest, "and if I go on singing it much longer," he thought, "it will be time for the little something, and then the last line won't be true." So he turned it into a hum instead.

This formula is well-known in many English families. Of course one cannot be too precise and one just needs a "little something," specially towards eleven o'clock in the morning.

> "Nearly eleven o'clock," said Pooh happily.
> "You're just in time for a little smakerel of something," and he put his head into the cupboard (Milne 1963:3).

The clock was still saying five minutes to 11 when Pooh and Piglet set out on their way half an hour later.

Charm of nature

The charm of the story and its appeal for children as well as adults depends on the novel use of language, and its subtle understatement. The confusion, the marvellous discovery of its own logic, with words in a simple language reflecting an insight into the child mind. And, many children like eating.

In fact, Pooh and Piglet were in Pooh's house when outside,

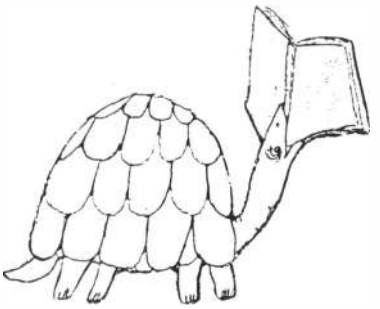
> ... the wind had dropped, and the snow, tired of rushing round in circles trying to catch itself up, now fluttered gently down until it found a place on which to rest, and sometimes the place was Pooh's nose and sometimes it wasn't, and in a little while Piglet was wearing a white muffler round his neck and feeling more snowy behind the ears than he had ever felt before (Milne 1963:3–4).

The personification of the snow, the tenderness and humour of the text, the simplicity of the construction and the unusual, subjective use of snow translated

into the recognition of a situation by an adult, yet with the impressions and the unique sensation of a child.

The more it snows
(Tiddely pom),
The more it goes
(Tiddely pom),
The more it goes
(Tiddely pom),
On snowing.

And nobody knows
(Tiddely pom),
How cold my toes
(Tiddely pom),
Are growing.



This is the kind of alternative logic which is so liked by children.

The subtle humour which underlies the description and the personification of nature, the creation of an ambience in which the characters – to a large degree more or less grown-up, can laugh at their inadequacies and face them. All that is a valuable contribution to the literature of childhood.

It is thus the memory of a happy childhood – and who does not want to feel the possibility of that – the humour of a Bear of Little Brain, the easy and simple style and the evocation of nature which enables Winnie-the-Pooh books to be seen on the shelves of children, young adults – and even the aged. In a new South Africa, it is to be hoped Pooh and his friends become known to a much wider audience, emphasising the role of friendship and love, whatever the problems beyond that of a parent and child, and among the family as a whole.

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Rudyard Kipling and a "new" literature of abandonment and exile:

the writer as outcast from paradise

tanya barben

This paper is written from a dual perspective. I am the Rare Books Librarian at the University of Cape Town and curator of its Libraries' extensive Kipling Collection. I have, consequently, renewed and extended my acquaintance with some of Rudyard Kipling's work and with books about him. I am also a child of politics, the daughter of political activists who left South Africa without their children and returned after 25 years of exile in 1990. I am also a parent who has found parenthood a challenge as well as a joy. These are the main focuses of this paper, although there are other patinas, overlays, that add some insight to the formation of the title to this paper, and of the paper itself. That said, however, this is a reader's response to Kipling and a literature of abandonment and exile.

Although no apologist for a writer who has been described as "often mean-spirited" (Howe 1987:36) with considerable literary skills unsupported by intellectual and emotional depth, I was often deeply moved by much of what he wrote. But I was as often repelled as moved by what I read. Kipling's work is

very often shot through with the evils of cruelty, violence, hatred and lustful revenge, "too often, alas, with a certain authorial relish" (Wilson 1987:48) writes one critic. Much of it makes uncomfortable reading. I wondered why this was so, why it was necessary for him to write of such things, and found some explanation in the moving accounts of his unhappy childhood experiences which appear in the biographical and critical works which we have in our collection. The more I read about him the more I learnt that in his life there was much tragedy.

Rudyard Kipling was an abandoned child. This is certainly what he perceived himself to be. He also suffered the experience of exile – many exiles, in fact. These psychological wounds affected him greatly although they did not dampen his creativity, for he was one of those writers who was able to overcompensate for their unhappiness by excelling later in life in ways that would bring them admiration and praise. But (and there always seems to be a but) I wondered why he was not, like other classic writers of literature – children's literature – who also had unhappy childhood experiences – able to move beyond his pain and use his wonderful creativity as an healing balm.

Let me put Kipling, a writer primarily for adults (largely short stories and verse) who also wrote some classics of children's literature, into some sort of perspective. He was born in 1865 and died in 1936, so he has his feet planted squarely in both the 19th and the 20th centuries – but perhaps not very comfortably in either. He is best known to children today as the writer of *The Jungle books* (*The Jungle book* and *The Second jungle book* which this year and last celebrated the centenary of their publication) and the *Just so stories* through the medium of television and film.

These stories, although much mangled, are loved as much now as they were in an earlier age. Youthful readers of *The Jungle books* seem to spit out what is indigestible and revel in the author's brilliant mastery of words, while the *Just so stories* still create a wonderful sense of conspiratorial warmth between the storyteller and the listener against the rest of the world. The story of Mowgli which appears in *The Jungle books* is a masterpiece of imagination, in it he created an entire mythology for boys and girls. Yet it contains elements of surprising cruelty and "lustful revenge". And some of the *Just so stories* "often betray a good deal of snobbery towards animals and racism toward other people" (Sale 1982:85), and also unnecessary cruelty. Why, for example, is it necessary for the Elephant's Child to be beaten repeatedly on account of his "'satiable curtiosity" – surely a commendable characteristic in children – and why must he so joyously avenge this punishment with his newly acquired trunk?

Kipling's output as a poet and writer of short stories was prodigious. He shares with Shakespeare the status of an English writer whose works are constantly in print (it is said that they are the only poets to have captured the English imagination – whatever that might mean). This apparent popularity is intriguing, because, unlike Shakespeare, Kipling is not an establishment writer, his works are not studied at schools and universities today. And yet there is a revival of interest in his life and work.

Very little, in fact, is known about his inner life because many of his personal and family papers were destroyed by his widow and his surviving daughter. So a new breed of critics, psycho-biographers, is attempting to solve the Kipling conundrum by reexamining his writing.

For Kipling's readers are repeatedly struck by the discrepancies and contradictions in his work, his writing is ambiguous, one often has difficulty trying to establish what exactly it is that he is trying to communicate to his reader. His talents as a descriptive writer are considerable – his powers of description are remarkable and his literary skills (although very uneven) when good are considered to rank with those of almost the best – but there is always a sense that these very talents are used to mask the real meaning of his writing, to brush away anything that might shed light on the true personality of his characters and that might explain the inner personality of their creator. There often seem to be a sense of many things left unsaid.

In the last two lines of the last poem to appear in the *Definitive edition of Kipling's verse* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), entitled *The Appeal*, he writes the following:

> Seek not to question other than
> The books I leave behind

And it is from the books he left behind, particularly his autobiography, *Something of myself*, published posthumously, which conceals as much as it reveals and the short story "Baa, Baa Black Sheep", an auto-biographical account of his childhood disguised as fiction (in *Wee Willie Winkie*, first published Allahabad, A H Wheeler, 1988) that we learn about his crippling childhood experiences. The reminiscences of his younger sister, the talented Trix, are also a valuable source of information.

He was born in Bombay, the son of John Lockwood and Alice Macdonald Kipling. He was a precocious child, displaying his enormous creativity very early on in life. His parents were loving and intelligent, but were rather pre-occupied

with their own lives (not unlike the parents of Mary Lennox in *The Secret garden*). Perhaps the Kiplings shared with all other parents in their inner life a universal characteristic of ambivalence: what takes precedence, the job of caring for the child or meeting one's own needs? This has been described (Hoyme 1988:32) as the "abandoning impulse" which stands for "the multitude of forms and intensities which the hostility, resentment, fatigue, indifference, and selfishness of parents may take". Alice Kipling was, furthermore, a fiercely independent woman.

The young Rudyard grew up in a bungalow surrounded by a large garden and the ministrations of a team of loving Indian servants. He learnt to speak Hindustani and had to be reminded to speak English to his parents and their visitors.

This Edenic existence was interrupted briefly when his mother travelled to England with him to await the birth of her daughter. A rumbustious and uninhibited child – the antithesis of English children – he created havoc in the homes of his relatives and negative reactions to her child on the part of some members of her family might have explained Alice Kipling's later behaviour. Parent and children returned to India and Paradise was regained. In fact Paradise (he looked back upon those early years in India as absolute bliss) was enhanced by the presence of his adoring and adored sister. All this ended rather abruptly when Kipling was five and a half, his sister two and a half years younger, for their parents took them to England. He was told, not by them but by his *ayah*, that he was going to leave India and go across the sea in a big ship" (Kipling 189:261). Six months later, again with no explanation and no real goodbyes, Alice and Lockwood Kipling left their children in the care of unloving, unsuitable and often brutal strangers – as paying boarders.

Trix described the experience thus:

> [We] were left by our parents, who were going back to India, to face a cold world alone. And it was a *very* cold world, without one familiar face. And we were left with strangers who were very unkind to us ... As it is we felt deserted – everything had gone at once, Mama, Papa, our home in a garden full of sunshine and birds. Dear Ayah who was never cross ... . All gone at one swoop – and why? "Aunty" – as we called the woman we were left with – because she was no relation – used to tell us we had been left because we were so tiresome and she had taken us out of pity.

She added:

> No kind and loving parents would leave their children for years without giving them any preparation or explanation (Fleming 1947:3).

It was the practice for Anglo-Indian children, older than Ruddy and Trix, to be transported to England to get away from the unhealthy climate (and the apparently even unhealthier influence of the indulgent Indian servants).

This was the explanation given later to the children by the much kinder husband of "Aunty". The children knew better. Trix wrote that they "had been to Nassick, the Hill Station of Bombay. So what could be the real reason? We couldn't think – and it worried us terribly" (Fleming 1947:3). What seems very odd is that they were not left with relatives who were willing to look after them, despite their exuberance. And why no proper goodbyes?

The evangelical Mrs Holloway was particularly cruel to the boy and the years he spent in her cheerless, gardenless home in Southsea – "The House of Desolation" he called it – were a torment to him. He says that he howled until his nose was red, his eyes sore and his head ached (Kipling 1895b:269) He was punished

repeatedly for "showing off, even when his eyesight deteriorated so badly that he became nearblind. His mother came hotfoot from India (her first visit to England for more than five years) at the request of the attending doctor, and the boy remembered that on the first night that they were together, when she went up to kiss him goodnight, he flung up an arm to ward off the cuff he had been trained to expect (Kipling 1895b:296; see also Kipling 1937:17).

Critics and psycho-biographers have pored over Kipling's account of his life in Lorne Lodge. Some have tried to minimise the unhappiness of the experience. Kipling, after all, spent one happy month each year at The Grange, home of his beloved Aunt, Georgie Burne-Jones, who was "never, *never* angry". The children were visited at Southsea sometimes by their aunts and they never complained. (In *Something of myself* Kipling explained their silence thus: ("Often and often afterwards the beloved Aunt would ask me why I had never told any one how I was being treated. Children tell little more than animals, for what comes to them they accept as eternally established. Also, badly treated children have a clear notion of what they are likely to get if they betray the secrets of the prison-house before they are clear of it" [Kipling 1937:15].)

One wonders how these two children survived – Trix says that they created a play that ran on and on for months in which they played all the parts and had wonderful adventures – not unlike the Brontë children who, practically deserted by their indifferent father, created the Gondal and Angria cycle. Rudyard retreated into the world of books.

Surely things could not have been so bad, and if they were so how could Kipling have written about them? Some biographers have tried to minimise the unhappiness

of the experience saying that Kipling's descriptions of his life in Southsea are an imaginative exaggeration of what was, admittedly, a difficult time for the children (exacerbated by the fact that the child Kipling was very difficult to handle) while Trix's reminiscences were merely myth-making. Others are less sceptical and see these experiences as a spur to his natural talent and his remarkable creativity.

The fact is that the children's memories of this time were stark and horrific – they were victims of an attempted "soul murder" ("the killing of the instinct for love", the "killing of the love-life in a human soul") (Shengold 1981:204) according to one psycho-biographer. Rudyard was saved by the love given to him by his *ayah* and those other servants – and his months at the Grange, a "paradise" he called it. And, like many victims of psychological battering, he used his creativity to conceal, if not heal entirely, his wounds. But he was not left entirely unscathed: these years in Southsea, it is thought, left him confused about his own sexuality, affected his attitude to women and turned him away from organised religion. Trix was not so lucky. For much of her adult life she was severely mentally ill, a bright candle snuffed out, deprived of the ability to love.

Alice took her children away from Lorne Lodge. After a holiday with them in Epping Forest and, briefly, in London, she again displayed what can only be described as a shocking lack of judgement. She returned Trix to the care of Mrs Holloway.

Her son she placed in a "second-rate" public school in Devon, established to prepare boys for the armed services. He had just turned 12. He was small for his age, friendly and cheerful, the only boy in the school to wear glasses (he commented that spectacles were uncommon in those days, having to wear them

had been the one thing that diminished the happiness of their stay in Epping Forest [Kipling 1937:17]). It was his experiences at the United Services College at Westward Ho! that are described in *Stalky and Co* (London, Macmillan, 1899), in which the schoolboys' irreverent pranks are aimed at the schoolmasters and become practice sessions for their actions later in the front line of battle.

But Kipling was never to be military material. Three months short of 17 he returned to India and the parents he barely knew to be assistant editor on the *Civil and military gazette* in Lahore (his father was now principal of the art school there). Thus began the "seven years hard", as he described his time on that newspaper and on the Allahabad *Pioneer* which he joined in late 1887. It took him some time to settle down, to get to know those unknown parents. To his surprise "the Mother proved more delightful than all my imaginings or memories. My Father was not only a mine of knowledge and help, but humorous, tolerant and an expert fellow-craftsman" (Kipling 1937:40). This must have confused him the more, for how could these "delightful" people have deserted him so cruelly when he was so young? When Trix arrived in Lahore in early 1884 the "Family Square" consisting of four people who were close, loving and open with each other was completed. Not even clashes with his strong-willed and acerbic mother marred their happiness.

During these years he spent in India Kipling won fame as a writer of short stories and verses. He returned to England in 1889 to receive the adulations of the literary world. There followed much travelling – America, Canada, Australasia, South Africa – and some intense periods of depression associated with hard work. He returned to India once again, in December 1891, to say goodbye to Lahore, and to have a last look round at the only real home he had known. He found the time to visit his old *ayah* in Bombay and left India, the

country of his blissfully happy childhood, before rushing back to London to marry a sister of his recently deceased dearest friend and sole literary collaborator, Wolcott Balestier.

The marriage of Rudyard Kipling to Caroline Balestier, an American, was a puzzle for family and friends. Henry James wrote:

> She was poor Wolcott Balestier's sister and is a hard devoted little person of whom I don't in the least understand his marrying. It's a union of which I don't forecast the future ... (as quoted by Carrington 1955:193).

Whatever the reasons for the marriage, it was, on the surface a happy one, certainly in the early years before her depression and their many tragedies marred their lives. Carrington (1955:193–194), the "official" biographer, suggests that it was bound up with his devotion to Wolcott and that he was carrying out Wolcott's death-bed request, others for example, Mason (1975:98,303); Cross (1992:142); Seymour-Smith (1989:200–201); *contra* Wilson (1977:277–278) feel that it had something to do with Kipling's guilt about his love for Wolcott, or that the sister was a substitute for her dead brother. Carrie with a fierce possessiveness (for a portrait of Carrie Kipling see "Epilogue: memoir by Mrs George Bambridge (formerly Elsie Kipling)", in Carrington (1955:516) protected her husband from the world, built a laager around him and scrutinised any visitors who came to call. In all the homes in which they lived her work space was always situated outside his study door. She was an efficient, no-nonsense manager who kept the household running smoothly so that her husband's literary genius could not be disturbed.

The couple travelled extensively – this was the pattern of their early years together – on an extended honeymoon and finally found themselves in Carrie's

home territory in Brattleboro, Vermont, living in a rented house, Bliss Cottage. And it was bliss. Kipling was very happy and very productive. It was here that his beloved Josephine was born and that some of the stories that make up the two *Jungle books* were first written. Work on their home, to be named after the book he had written with Wolcott, commenced.

The happiness and productivity of their life in Vermont was interrupted only by more travels. In 1886 their second daughter, Elsie was born. This idyll was shattered by a ridiculous quarrel with Carrie's brother, the mad, bad Beatty Balestier, and the Kiplings fled America to return to England. Exiled from Vermont and Bombay, the two places in which he most wanted to live, the two places that were most closed to him, he found the rented house in which they lived cold and grey, the weather miserable (cold English weather was often a symbol in his writing of his longing for India). Finally a home was bought in Sussex and here their youngest child, John was born. Here, too, he began to write down the stories he had told Josephine in Vermont – these were later to be published together with others written in Cape Town, which the Kiplings visited for the first time as a family in 1898, in the *Just so stories*.

The following January, instead of visiting South Africa, the family travelled to New York to attend to, among other things, business affairs. Kipling and Josephine (just six), who had had a cold for a while, came down with double pneumonia. Father and daughter were critically ill, but Josephine's condition was further complicated by something akin to dysentery. But Kipling was the world's best-known writer and Josephine was moved away to the home of a friend, out of reach of the press. Kipling, to everyone's delight and surprise, recovered. He was told some time later that Josephine had died. From this he never recovered. He always had the sense that all energies were concentrated on his recovery, if he

had not been so famous perhaps she would have survived. Henry James referred to her as that "dear little surrendered, sacrificed soul" (Carrington 1955:291).

To Kipling, Josephine's death was another exile and abandonment. She was his "Best Beloved" of the *Just so stories*, the little Taffimai Metallumai or Taffy (the pet name he had given her) of "How the first letter was written", "How the alphabet was made" and "The Tabu tale", three stories in which the relationship between a father and daughter are beautifully described. She was "the daughter that was all to him".

The Kiplings returned to England to take up the threads of their lives and in January of the following year travelled to Cape Town to live in the Woolsack, the house built for them by Rhodes. Annual visits to the Cape continued until 1908, and there Kipling tried to recapture the Eden of his early years in India and the years in Vermont. But to no avail, the South African War had spoiled that and there was little feeling for the country and its people in his writings. The incomparable *Kim*, a tale of spy adventure and spiritual quest, was completed and published in 1901. It is considered the only one of his books which is not filled with violence and hatred. It was planned with his father, lovingly portrayed in the novel as the Curator of the Lahore Museum. Kim, was another one of Kipling's characters who was an abandoned child, both his parents were utterly unsuitable and left him orphaned. He was fortunate that he had a foster parent, more loving, more present than his own. This was the Tibetan lama, travelling through India along the Grand Trunk Road in search of a certain River into which had fallen an arrow shot by Buddha himself. Kim joins him in this search, while pursuing his career as a spy for the British Secret Service. In this book Kipling is able to pour out his love for India, the scents, sounds and smells of the Paradise he knew before he was six and had seen a

little of again when he was a young man. But Kim, too, is confused, a child caught between two cultures which generated utterly conflicting loyalties.

Some peace came when the Kiplings moved to a new home in Sussex. Bateman's was to be his home until his death and it was here that the guardian angel that gave him inspiration from outside, his Daemon, helped him to create *Puck of Pook's Hill* and *Rewards and fairies*, those two books that had to "be read by children, before people realized that they were meant for grown-ups" (Kipling 1937:190), and in which Elsie and John feature as Dan and Una.

The Kipling family, always rather exclusive, became more and more reclusive. He in his writing and his wife in her running of the household, her jealousy and nervous tension fenced him in "not only with the delights and warm magic of life and remembered innocence but also with his dread of the 'shadow of ancient regrets'. It was probably one way of keeping in the past while avoiding too close a scrutiny of the future" (Scheerer 1987:84). Life continued to be unkind to him. His politics and beliefs were unpopular, out of step with the rest of society. Tragedy was to strike again. War was declared and his young son, John, no scholar who closely resembled his uncle Beatty, attempted to obtain a commission in the army just before his 17th birthday. He was rejected on the grounds of his poor sight and his age. Kipling pulled some strings and the boy, striving to be the soldier his father wanted him to be, was given a commission in the Irish Guards. He went to France when he turned 18 and lasted but a month on the Front. He was one of the 20 000 British soldiers lost in the Battle of Loos. His body was never found in his parents' lifetimes, it was probably blown to bits. Two years later they received confirmation of his death.

The Kiplings were utterly broken. They retreated behind the laager once more and mourned alone. He had been devoted to their children and had wanted them to grow up happier than he had. Now two of them were dead. As before, he sought comfort in work, preparing a history of John's regiment, the two-volume *The Irish Guards in the Great War* which was published in 1923. In it John Kipling's name appears a few times in brief, largely repetitive entries. Kipling spent the rest of his life in pain, fearful that the duodenal ulcer that had long troubled him was, in fact, cancer.

I feel that it has been necessary for me to describe in some detail Kipling's life of tragedy and precarious existence, for all these factors influenced his writing and explain why it is that much of what he wrote is suffused with sadness – despite its great vitality. He seems to be saying that however exciting and Edenic the world might appear to be at the beginning it is bound to disappoint. As his life disappointed. But in addition to the sadness, the poignancy, there is also the anger, the unnecessary cruelty, the lust for revenge that occurs in his writing (apart, again, from *Kim*) and (as shown above) pervades the stories of Mowgli in *The Jungle books*.

Perhaps at this point I should examine *The Jungle books*. The theme of abandonment and exile appears over and over again in these stories. Mowgli is surely a classic case of an abandoned child. His parents leave him in the jungle when they are confronted by Shere Khan, the tiger. "Its parents have run off" (Kipling 1894:7), Shere Khan reports. Surely most parents would sacrifice their own lives in order to save that of their child? Mowgli was fortunate, for he found in the jungle (and again in the village) foster parents more loving, more present than his own. Mother Wolf says that she loves her Little Frog more than she ever loved her cubs. Descriptions of Mowgli's life in the jungle are idyllic

and Baloo, the bear and Bagheera, the black panther, are wonderfully loving and tolerant mentors.

But after Eden comes the Fall and Mowgli is cast out of the wolf pack and the jungle, although it is difficult for him to cut loose his ties. He is neither of the jungle or the village, but live in the village with the Man-Pack he must. His final departure from the jungle and his farewell to his friends is heart-breakingly told in "The Spring running". Here we have the end of childhood described.

The powerful images of hatred and lustful revenge that occur throughout *The Jungle books* are clearly visible in a story entitled "Letting in the jungle". In it Mowgli persuades the animals against their better judgment to destroy entirely the homes and produce of the villagers who have attacked the woman Messua, who believed Mowgli to be her son. Mowgli frees Messua and her husband, now he seeks revenge. "Messua had been kind to him, and, as far as he knew anything about love, he loved Messua as completely as he hated the rest of mankind" (Kipling 1895a:73). Mowgli's endearing characteristics, his ingenuity and, courage, are somewhat tarnished by this hatred and desire for revenge – he is driven by more than a need to survive. The reader understands him all the better for knowing something of his creator, but the account of his life cannot really be accepted as just a delightful set of children's stories.

There is no doubt that the traumatic events of Kipling's childhood made him the adult he became and affected the choices he made. His life choices – his home, friends, the causes he espoused, his contempt for intellectuals, his values – had a stranglehold on his writing and his personality. Particularly significant was his choice of mate. His wife was a controlling, possessive woman who barricaded

him from friend and foe alike. There seems to have been no moderating influence in his life – except that he was most comfortable in the company of children whom he loved unreservedly and understood completely. Perhaps the greatest choice he made was that he was unable to shake off the burden of his past and create stories in which these same burdens could be transformed into triumphs of the spirit.

The above covers the Kipling aspect of this paper. What is this new "literature" that is mentioned in the title and what is the connection between it and Kipling – a writer whose views are abhorrent to many of us today? I saw a linkage when I read in Hilda Bernstein's remarkable *The Rift* the interviews with the children of political exiles. I remembered how moved I was when I saw (and later read the script of) Shawn Slovo's *A World apart*. I identified in some ways with the children whose lives are described in the book and on film. I could see a connection between their – our – experiences and those of Kipling, although of course the experiences were utterly different. All these children suffered the pain of abandonment and exile, although in some cases the abandonment was not a physical one.

Children need to know and feel that their existence is important to their parents, that they are the centre of their parents' universe, it is from this knowledge and these feelings that they acquire a self-esteem. To know that they are "loved" does not seem to be good enough. Bernstein quotes the following, taken from interviews with the children of political exiles:

> "There were times when I felt I was competing with 30 million blacks for my parents' attention", and "I knew he was on the side of good... but I didn't really understand why he was putting his politics before us" (Bernstein 1994:434), and "They should have thought about us as children. You make a decision about what you're going to do; you have children, and you are aware that you're bringing other people into the world, so therefore you have to think of them first" (Bernstein 1994:469).

In *A World apart*, Molly, the daughter-character says to Diana, the Ruth First/mother-character, "*Your* friends, Your friends, your work, that's what's most important. That's all you care about" (Slovo 1988:108).

I know of one parent who said that she thought it enough that her children had a roof over their heads, clothes on their backs, food on the table and parents who came home at night. Compared to what other children in South Africa were getting, that might seem to be enough, and the complaints of these children churlish, but children, in fact, should have, need, are entitled to more. They need, above all, to be aware of how much their parents value their existence.

Apart from the sense of abandonment and the anger that many of the children feel about their parents' choice of political commitment above family, there is also a sense of loss and a more personal exile, the loss of South Africa, of being an African and growing up in an African environment, and the exile from childhood and the extended family, as well as a sense of hopelessness, of not being able to fit in anywhere, of not being really accepted in an alien environment. The psychological wounds suffered by these children affected the choices they made in later life, in respect of relationships, education, lifestyle, family responsibilities. Some spoke of being damaged because of their childhood. Of course, once the families were in exile, the parents were lost to their children again, either because they were able to continue their political activities without fear of harassment by the South African security system or because that same system tracked them down and they died for their cause. The stories of the many children who were left behind in South Africa while their parents pursued their political objectives, who were abandoned physically as well as emotionally, remain to be told.

What all these children share in common is an ambivalence and a confusion. They are proud of their parents' involvement in the struggle for freedom in South Africa and that their actions were driven by morality and a profound sense of justice. Their parents were, after all, heroes fighting the evil empire of Apartheid. But in addition to this pride is the resentment that they, their needs, the daily round of their lives, became insignificant when ranged against the other priorities of their parents' lives, against the needs of all those "other" children. Were not the political parents, by putting the needs of their children on the back burner so they could pursue their own, simply following the seemingly irresistible "abandoning impulse" that Hoyme has identified and I described earlier? And if this were so could we not forgive them? At least their actions were not guided by selfishness, but rather by self-sacrifice (albeit, according to their offspring, a self-sacrifice that was misdirected). These parents cannot, after all, be equated with the parents (mother, in particular – mothers often seem to have a bad press – see Apseloff 1992a:106) of Hansel and Gretel, those classic abandoned children of Western literature.

The effect of exile from the country of one's happy childhood, before that childhood is completed, can also be profound. Such an experience is poignantly described in Eva Hoffman's account of her exile from Poland at the age of 13 (*Lost in translation: a life in a new language.* London, Minerva, 1991). She writes of the loss of Paradise and the sense of alienation she felt and the difficulties she endured when settling in a new country with an alien culture and a foreign language. Assimilation into the new society was difficult – and not always desired, as the links with home were thereby weakened and familiarity with the mother-tongue was lost. Some of South Africa's involuntary exiles describe this feeling exactly.

What have the experiences of the children of South African political exiles got to do with children's literature? Well, I would like to think that a "new literature"

about the experiences of these children of politics will emerge from the horrors of Apartheid. It must, in fact, be written not only, but also, because these are stories that need to be told. (I know of only one South African children's book that deals with exile and a longing for Africa. This is Patricia Pinnock's *Thobile's dream* (1992). In this book the chief character is a third generation South African – not a political exile – living in London who dreams of the animals of Africa. The animals step out of his dreams and he and his grandmother, who came to England as a young woman, determine to satisfy their longing for Africa.) Shattering experiences occurring in our own century have been described in children's books. In some of them the sufferings of the chief protagonists are used creatively to bring forth images of the good in human nature and to celebrate qualities of ingenuity and courage.

I believe that these children have something in common with Kipling. Although their backgrounds are utterly different from that of the controversial and enigmatic "poet of Empire", they share with him unhappy childhood experiences. I believe, too, that, just as Kipling's childhood experiences were a spur to his creativity, in the lives of South Africa's involuntary exiles there is much meat for a children's literature. These stories must be told so that they become part of a healing process. I trust that the writers of these yet-to-be stories will not follow the example set by Kipling and allow the triumph of the human spirit to be overshadowed by past hurts. It might take some years for personal experiences to emerge as part of a popular children's literature, as if they have to be chewed and digested before they can be rendered suitable for children. They must present the truth without traumatising the reader and it will be impossible to write of these children's experiences without also describing the horrors of Apartheid. Although comparisons of this kind are odious, it is for this reason that a true children's literature has taken so long to emerge from the Holocaust, as most of these books appeared in print only in the 1970s and beyond (Kimmel 1990).

Our writers of the future can learn from the children's literature of the Holocaust. In many of these books the protagonists have to endure horrifying and inhuman experiences. They face a loss of innocence when confronted with the behaviour of their fellow man and with what they must do in order to ensure their own survival. Survival is their only goal, so that they might bear witness to the horrors of war and man's inhumanity to man (Apseloff 1992b:78), and so that what has happened will never happen again. Particularly noteworthy is Uri Orlev's *The Island on Bird Street* (London, Hutchinson, 1984). The author, himself a victim of the Holocaust, who lived through the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, writes about Alex, a lone Jewish boy, living in the ruins of the ghetto of an unnamed city. He is awaiting the return of his father who has left him for months to fend for himself. Alex survives like Robinson Crusoe, taking what he can from the environment around him. He witnesses or participates in many horrors and has to cope with situations utterly beyond his control. He is, however, filled with hope that his father will return for him: he is a child who has triumphed over adversity, despite the loss of his childhood and his innocence. He has been created by an author who has dug into the sewer and dredged up the good, and who tells a story with insight and humour.

How our stories will be told is a matter of choice. I do hope that they will be told with such humour and insight. I hope, too, that we will choose to dump the baggage of our past and rejoice without rancour at what has been achieved in our country thanks, *inter alia*, to our parents' commitment to the Struggle. We owe it to them and to ourselves that the truth of the past be told to South Africa's children, so that this past will never be repeated. Our choice must be that in the telling of our stories we will reject the example set by Rudyard Kipling. Our stories should not be suffused with hatred, confusion and a desire for revenge. They should be ones in which the human spirit triumphs over many

adversities and there is a striving to make things better. In a metaphor that is appropriate for our land and this province, we can excavate the earth and find a lode of gold. In this way our protagonists – who could be ourselves – will triumph in life.

Note

This paper could not have been written without the insights of many people who broadened my knowledge and understanding – to them I give thanks.

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Discovering one's African identity:

two Kenyan voices speak

jenny janisch

Come and listen to the voices of Deborah Masters and Joseph Kituku, two young people living in pre-independence Kenya. Listen, as through their narration they chart their course through the emotional upheavals of adolescence and in the process reveal something of their identities.

Here is Deborah responding to a "lesson" in history given by Benjamin, who grew up with Deborah's father and who is now a lawyer in Nairobi:

> And the land, the soul. He said the soul. We've taken their soul. We must give it all back. We must go away. But we can't go to England. Where do we belong then? Where do we belong? (165).

Us and them. White coloniser and black colonised. The dilemma of later-generation colonists. Where does Deborah, a farmer's daughter born and bred in Kenya and closely in touch with the land, belong? Her whole concept of her self is rooted spatially in the farm Taratibu. As Linda Warley (1993:28) writes: "the particularly ambivalent position of the settler in what has always been occupied, not empty space, forces the issue of belonging." Deborah certainly does not regard herself as a colonist, particularly in the way Memmi (1990) speaks about colonists whom he describes as people who do not identify with the country they

live in and regard the mother country as "home". She eventually realises that she truly belongs in her African environment.

Now listen to Joseph Kituku after the funeral service for Kyanzo, who is the Master in the title of Mulwa's novel:

> As we left, I puzzled over what the Reverend had said, and why it was that we always waited till it was too late before we had compassion and love for one another, why we hated, betrayed, killed and subjected one another to misery if the end result of all the evils of this body was this grave? Why didn't we see even a year ahead of us? (201).

Being a black Kenyan he would seem to be talking about the way the colonised are treated by the coloniser, but this is not entirely so. He is pondering a more general truth about humanity and his use of the pronoun "we" is not exclusive but inclusive. His African identity, however, has certainly been affected by his colonial position as his name clearly shows.

Both Kituku and Deborah are adolescents at that crucially pivotal stage of transition from childhood to adulthood, discovering their identities and establishing their personal moral codes. Both go to school away from home and both experience major emotional upheavals which materially affect their orientation in moral space.

Deborah is in her final year of primary school. She and her younger brother are boarders because they live on a farm in the Highlands area of Kenya. This is 1952, the time of the Mau Mau uprising when the white farming community is in a particularly vulnerable position and so she tells us: "Every time I go back to school nowadays I keep thinking what if.. what if.. Oh please, God, don't let

anything happen. Please God!''(2) But the inevitable does happen: her father is killed, her mother badly burned and the farmhouse destroyed through the agency of Kamau, a man who had worked for the family for many years. He was approached by the ''fighters of the forest'' and given an ultimatum – ''unless he took the oath to kill the white man, he Kamau would see his children killed before him'' (154).

Deborah is profoundly affected by these traumatic events. But she courageously seeks to understand a very different point of view in order to come to terms with the loss of her father, especially in the light of her Christian belief in a kind and caring God, and her position as a white coloniser. Eventually she and her family return to the farm to start again. As Deborah walks up to visit the wife of Kamau she says:

> ... the further I walk up the hill through the grass paddocks the happier I feel. Just the smell of the molasses grass and the dust and the dung and the fir trees of the timber plantation and the white helichrysums with bitter herb smells. I realize how I've been longing and longing for it ... Now I'm home. I'm really home (176).

The young Kituku spends his Standard Six school year at the Dickensian establishment called Kyambe Primary School because his father believes that there ''he will receive the best education possible and the best Protestant upbringing possible'' (3). As the school is far from his family home he is put under the care of his father's friend, Kyanzo, who has a home near the school which is looked after by his servant, Hamad. During this formative year Joseph (to use his ''Christian'' name) is exposed to the harsh discipline of the school and Kyanzo, the loving care of Hamad and to the adult world of corruption and powerful emotions. Through Hamad he learns about the position of the colonised in Kenya and the value of the individual, and through the school he learns about

the value of education and book-learning. Caught up unwittingly in the triangular relationship which develops between Hamad, Kyanzo and Eileen (Kyanzo's wife), Joseph is forced through Kyanzo's jealous machinations to betray Hamad to the authorities and this leads to Hamad's arrest. Hamad had killed the exploitative white farmer he once worked for in an emotional reaction to the callous flogging to death of a young girl. Afterwards he sought sanctuary with Kyanzo who, in turn, exploits him as a virtual slave. Shortly after manipulating Hamad's removal, Kyanzo dies in what appears to be an accident and it is his funeral which leads Joseph to moral musings about human nature and identity.

Identity implies a concept of self as an inner, spiritual being. The answer to the question: Who am I? is not simply a name and a genealogy, although the names of both protagonists are particularly telling. Kituku has an English Christian name attached to his African name. This indicates a dichotomy in his concept of self which his narration confirms. Deborah's surname is Masters – a clear reference to her family's position in Kenya.

The answer to the question of identity must include the way a person is oriented in moral space, "a space," says Taylor "in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary" (1989:28). Moreover, identity is not static; lives are constantly in a process of becoming or evolving. This means that identity involves not only who we are but where we are going. Our lives and selves are grasped in a narrative and our identities expressed through language.

The identities of Kituku and Deborah emerge through their positions as first person narrators. A narrator's manner of expression (the surface structure) as

much as the content (the deep structure) allows the reader to construct an image of the narrator of that particular work. The narrator's choice of surface structures from the many possible alternatives for expressing the deep structure enables the reader to derive the tone, rhythm and thought patterns of the narrator. This distinctive linguistic presentation of an individual mental self may be termed "mind-style". The I-figure or narrator is constructed via a consistent set of options in which the presented world is cut to one pattern which creates an impression of a particular mind-style.

Joseph Kituku, the narrator of *Master and servant*, begins his narration in the present tense:

> A hot afternoon. Not a cloud not even a wisp of it crosses the sky. I am standing under the eaves of our mud house, looking at a pillar of dust spiralling on the plains from earth to sky and wondering if Moses would have used *this* for guidance in the desert when I hear murmurs on the path down the hill. Two men are coming up this hill towards our home. One of them is familiar, so familiar that I wince. Everytime he comes up that hill (which has been very often) and finds me at home without a book or scraps of paper, indicative of a young scholar, in my hands, I get a thorough beating on my buttocks (1).

The boy reveals how his thinking has been conditioned by the Old Testament and his father's harsh discipline. Education is a painful, but absolutely essential enterprise. As Western-style education in a so-called Christian environment of the "spare the rod and spoil the child" variety is what his father sees as advantageous, this is what Kituku must get.

Having drawn the reader into the immediacy of his childhood, Joseph moves back and narrates the story mostly in the past tense. Thus, his childhood self is seen from his adult perspective. This distancing allows Joseph to generalise and

draw conclusions which would not have been available to him as a child. It also allows him to use vocabulary and concepts in a language he was not very familiar with as a young boy, but most importantly it allows him to use a child's naivety, literal understanding and limited viewpoint to humorous effect. Humour of the Dickensian type is a marked characteristic of his style.

For example, after Hamad has given him a thorough scrubbing in preparation for his first day at his new school he says sardonically:

> Thus, washed clean, I emerged from the pond, not without some hope that a voice would waft down upon us from the forest up above and proclaim that the Lord was very pleased with me (16).

Then the headmaster initiates him into the school rules:

> ... we delved into the narrow and intricate pathways of school rules, religious rules, hygienic rules and, in short, I was so harassed by the rules of Kyambe School that I didn't make any movement without being conscious that there was some rule against it. And by the end of the day ... I felt as if I was carrying a huge placard with the inscription THOROUGHLY RULED on my back (26).

He attends the morning parade and observes:

> At the centre of the courtyard was a flagpole and beside it and holding the flag, stood a most unusually disciplined schoolboy whose only difference with the flagpost was that he had two legs to his credit and the post had none (27).

After raising the flag "the specimen of discipline":

> ... walked backwards, faced the flag with satisfaction, [and] stamped both his legs like an impatient he-goat at the sight of an insoluble mystery (28).

The child Kituku is suitably impressed by the Coketown style of Kyambe Primary but the adult Joseph is able to satirise it.

Through his school education he learns to become as he says "a very monument of facts and theories" but because his schooling is not truly educational he is unable to understand or explain to Eileen and Hamad its value. When Eileen, Hamad and Joseph were out working the lands Eileen:

> ... once taunted me and asked me if I thought I was a good scholar? I said I believed I would be. Then she asked me, "Scholar-that-is-to-be. Tell me; when will they ever teach you how to work upon the land – how to use the panga and the hoe?" I replied that I would learn that art by and by, although I knew little of it and hoped that there was a lot of that intelligence high up in the academic tree. Then she said, "It's a false hope, scholar. Those white people are all scholars like you. Yet they know very little about basic things" (118).

Upon another occasion she asked:

> ... whether I didn't think theirs a better occupation than all the books on earth. I was not ashamed then, but now that I have grown much and read much and have become a very monument of facts and theories, I *am* ashamed to say that I agreed with her and forgive myself because I was only a child who could be easily swayed by the smallest argument (134).

This, in spite the way he portrays Hamad as the ideal farmer who produces harmony both in the land and in those who work with him. Hamad is his role model and loving teacher, yet Joseph opts for the questionable values of the education being offered to black children at that time. Interestingly, though, when Joseph goes to organise his transfer to a school closer to home he finds that Hamad's influence has affected his Arithmetic mark. The boy got the processes right but all the answers wrong because "I felt I was ... solving the wrong problem" (202).

Earlier in the year, Joseph was teaching Hamad to read and do sums until Hamad questioned the arithmetical process by which individual items are reduced to mere numbers, relating the concept to "this colonial government" and its treatment of the black people it rules as "a *mass*, a number of objects that count for nothing" (92). At the time Joseph does not understand his argument and even later he says, "I did not understand it or his hatred of what he called an 'idea'. And I must say that up till now I have not been able to follow his argument" (94).

Puzzled as the boy is about the two kinds of education he experiences, he has no doubt about his moral dilemma because of the role he is forced to play in Hamad's arrest and removal from their lives. There is no way that he can avoid betraying Hamad and he knows this when he says:

> The white man stopped and grabbed me – suddenly. Then, from the inside of his breast pocket he whipped out an old newspaper cutting ... Still holding me, he flapped the paper in the wind to unfold it. "Look at this picture," he snapped. And in the dying light of that Saturday evening, Hamad's face stared at me. It could have been the face of a dead man but for the eyes that pierced and reproached me for what I was about to do.

But Hamad does not. Instead he says:

> "Little teacher, do not blame yourself. Even without you, Kyanzo and this white man would have found me ... They *must* win. And that's why I must go. But wherever I am, I will remember you. I shall remember my little teacher" (188).

Then he leaves Joseph Kituku a mission:

> "Continue to teach always. And always strive and learn to teach the way to bridge the gulf between men" (188).

By the end of the novel, the reader is not at all sure that the adult Joseph Kituku has been able to do this. He seems to have opted for the morally dubious benefits of White education, although the *author*, David Mulwa, wants the reader to be influenced by Hamad's views. In fact, Joseph ends his narration, indicating that he has not yet found where he really belongs:

> ... many of us still spend our lives in our houses and out of them – Looking for home (206).

The reader of *Flowers of the thorn* is also immediately drawn into Deborah's worldview and, because the narration is mostly in the present tense, is able to follow her closely as she struggles to understand those inevitable realities of life – change and death. As a corollary she seeks to gain a clearer understanding of the socio-political situation which led to her father's death.

Deborah's language is characterised by its poetic intensity, its frequent use of images and symbols, and its accurate, precise descriptions. She is intensely aware of her surroundings and records sounds, sights and smells vividly and personally. Going back by train to her final year at primary school she reveals some of these characteristics:

> I try and read again but suddenly the train goes roaring into a patch of forest. Dark, bitter earth smelling. I hate forest now. They say that's where they're all hiding. All around. Just waiting ... . Oh Lord, I hate forest (1).

A little later, however, the train goes through a cutting and:

> Clouds break apart in the west and sun pierces through, with rays like bright windmills. Blinding! White! Heavenly ... And slowly across the clouds comes a long flock of egrets; white, flicker-white, grey underwing, floating, flickering across the sun, across heaven (3).

Deborah's growing-up experiences are closely linked with spiritual growth and so are often couched in religious terms.

Her upbringing, like Joseph's, has been Christian – but of the New Testament sort: her view of God is of a caring father who loves his children and watches over them constantly. So when her father is killed her faith is severely shaken. On the day of the funeral, hiding away from everyone in the barn, she sees a dead swallow which confronts her with further heartache and disillusionment:

> Though it's dead it's very beautiful ... Is it so beautiful to be dead then ... I want to hold it, slide my hand underneath – aaagh! Drop it! Worms! Maggots! ... You liar, God! I hate you, you liar! (142).

Having verbally rejected God she is tormented by a feeling of guilt which is only resolved after she deliberately listens in to her mother's report on the deaths at *Taratibu*. She is so upset by the bald details that she runs instinctively to Leopard's Rock, which she earlier described as a "holy place". She attempts the difficult cliff ascent alone for the first time, without her father's support. As she climbs, a storm, symbolic of the trauma she is experiencing, builds up over the forest; lightning and thunder force her to reach the cliff top quickly to find shelter. While taking refuge in a cave next to a rock pool, she picks up a stone and thoughtlessly throws it at three dassies which have come to drink there. She injures the smallest and has to deliver the *coup de grace*. With hands sticky with his blood, she faces the truth that in all of us there is an ugly, cruel element. She feels that God can never forgive her for her wickedness. At this moment of ugly self-discovery – "I think I'm quite a different person from what I thought I was. I feel sick inside" (171) – she is aware that she is not alone. Then "these words come very clearly into my head, not my ears: I loved you before you were born. I have never left you. Go back and be at peace" (171). For a long time she stands watching the sunset, before taking the forest path downhill.

It is significant that she finds in the forest the "tree with long red thorns on it covered in white blossom that smells like honey" (171). Forest, for Deborah, has been associated with Mau Mau and fear and lurking death; now it provides a symbol of the central concern of the novel. It speaks of growth and the paradox that pain and beauty co-exist on one branch, that nothing and no-one is all good or all bad, that one must understand and accept this truth, in terms of oneself as much as of others.

Complementary to the images and symbols are Deborah's dreams which punctuate the narration, recording her subconscious linking of the elements of the tragedy. Firstly they foreshadow the death of her father, but later allow her to come to terms with her need to forgive Kamau who was the agent of his death. Her last recorded dream occurs 10 days before Christmas when the visiting priest tells Deborah that to forgive Kamau is "probably the hardest thing you'll ever have to do" (148). In her dream she tries to protect her father from Kamau.

> No! You shan't have him! No! I'll kill you! I am strong, very strong, and like a beast I rush at him [Kamau] and his hand comes out like a claw but I twist it off and snap it away and I take his head and smash it open on the rocks and darkness pours out ... there is crying. Crying, only crying ... and the blackness of Kamau's poring like blood over the stones. Crying. Kamau's crying, crying (149).

On awakening, she notices the old Indian tea-tin which reminds her of how Kamau once comforted her by filling the tin with fudge and coconut biscuits to ease the pain of going back to school. "If Kamau did that, did he hate us? Why was he crying in my dream? Why did I hear him crying?" (150). She seeks out Benjamin to find out the truth: "I want to know why Kamau could be so kind and yet he killed my father" (151). In response Benjamin says:

> "Deborah, if you really want to listen to the truth it will not be easy. Many of your people have hidden the truth. When you hear it, the truth might be bitter. We in Gikuyu say that the more bitter a medicine is, the better it is." He looks at me hard for a while, saying nothing. Then he says, "When you are crying you only hear the sound of your own crying. Now you have come to talk. Now you must sit up and listen to the crying of others" (151).

And she does, enabling her to make another step forward in her development towards adulthood.

All these linguistic clues lead to an assessment of Deborah as a sensitive, intelligent 13-year-old with a strong aesthetic sense. From the opening page she displays a sense of responsibility as regards her role as a school prefect and as an older sister, and gradually she learns about her situation as a white person in a colonial situation.

Through following the intensely personal youthful learning experiences of these two young people discovering themselves and their place in a colonial society, we, the readers of their narrations, are given an insight into "other worlds, other lives" and are richer for the experience.

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Writing about "others" from the inside

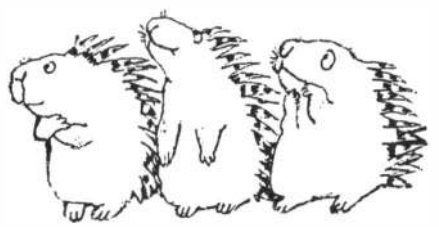
rhonda bunbury

During 1995 to 1996 there is a research project at Deakin University in process and this paper serves the purpose of a preliminary position paper for this project.

The project entitled "Youth confronts racism through literature" received funding this year from the Department of the Prime Minister and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. It will explore the reception of "multicultural literature" with the central focus being the reception of multicultural youth literature by youth. Specifically, orientation around themes of racism was sought by the government of the day as part of its declared "Year of Tolerance". The researchers will therefore be going to centres where racism – of an overt nature – is known to be a problem. Young people will be asked to read selected works, to respond in small group discussions to the literature and the multicultural/racist themes explored through the literature. An outward manifestation of young readers subjective positions will also be recorded through written responses. Here the focus is likely to shift from the published author's position to that of the young people themselves as they write about their experiences of racism from within the multicultural context in which they live and go to school.

Many of the young people being considered for this exercise (from the industrial and provincial city of Geelong as well as within the inner suburbs of the capital

city of Melbourne) will be neither keen readers nor writers. Visits from several published writers are seen as necessary incentive for the young people to become involved. Extracts of the writers' multicultural works will be presented to youthful participants with the aid of "book gigs" which take the form of dramatic interpretations presented by youth. These presentations serve to introduce the writers who then interact with their youthful audience answering questions and encouraging a personal written response. This process in itself is another form of reception to be recorded by the researchers.



The Concept of "other"

The concept of "other" in literary studies is important for the "Youth Confronts Racism through Literature" even though it is an evolving one, and one which a number of scholars have endeavoured to theorise. For the purpose of this paper, the "other" in youth literature draws on the work of those who are endeavouring to establish a theoretical foundation for multicultural literature. The reason for beginning here is that most nations seem to have an element of multiculturalism in their shifting populations and this means that cultural as well as social and political events are obliged to shift their ideological base in order to accommodate "the other" who now see themselves as part of mainstream cultures. These contexts were evident in the paper presented at the 11th biennial congress of the International Research Society For Children's Literature which was held in September 1993 at Geelong under the title, "Crossing the Boundaries: Multiculturalism in Children's Literature" (papers to be published by Greenwood Press in 1996). The concept of "other" was given a different emphasis in the following year at a conference held in Malaysia, 8–10 November, 1994. The topic was "A view of our ethnocentric perspectives in literature", where the emphasis was the indigenous

people in many lands who are producing literary works and who see themselves, not as "other" but as the authentic and even "first" voice in the land – any land. From this perspective, indigenous people and their narratives become the central point of focus and the dominant or majority cultures become the "Other". These two different starting points help demonstrate the shifting nature of the concept of "other" even before we begin an exploration of the literature before us.

The "Other" in youth literature

There are at least three competing grounds for considering the "other" in Australian literature.

1. The mainstream literature or "ethnic majority" literature where the focus is Anglo-Australian in its origins, aspirations, memory, nostalgia – where everything else is "other".
2. The indigenous voice which has been barely heard in literature, unless it is the "other" noted by the ethnic majority, acknowledged as partial and given central focus only with reluctance. Fortunately this is changing, particularly since the inception of Mugabala Books.
3. The ethnic minority literatures which are accustomed to being sidelined as "other", speaking with the voices of migrants newly arrived, nostalgic for the comfort and acceptance of the place of origin yet also beginning to speak through third generation writers of their own experiences "inside" the new country in a place where the dominant ethnic majority become "Other".

It is this third position which is the focus of this paper. The context is a third generation Italian Australian where the writer speaks directly through a first

person narrative in Melina Marchetta's (1992) *Looking for Alibrandi*. The narrator has lost the nostalgia of the customary position (it is irrelevant to her). She does not call on the memories, the desire or the intimacy assumed in the old country, rather, she exposes this nostalgia seeing it as past – though as relevant to her "Nonna" (Grandmother) and maybe her mother – but for herself it is confining and limiting. This nostalgia she sees in her elders, she acknowledges as her Italian inheritance but it is an inheritance she tolerates rather than embraces – at least initially.

Written in the first person, the "other" in this book is not her Italian self (a member of an ethnic minority) but the mainstream ethnic majority, Anglo-Australian, "Other". For herself, in her daily life, she fully acknowledges the Italian self, seeing it being reflected in both personal and interpersonal ways, although she does wish to be accepted by the majority "Other". So the shift is between the inner self and self as "other" (outside the mainstream) with the mainstream becoming "Other". This may seem a confusing distinction so it is useful to draw on Bakhtin's (1984) idea of the "dualistic subject" (self/other). Another possible theoretical position is that outlined by Kristeva (1989) who refers to "the subject in process" that is, where the deconstructed self in many versions becomes the focus. The separation out of aspects of self/subjectivity helps the reading and reconstruction of the narrative; and in particular, it helps unravel the position of Josephine, the narrator. We are also hopeful that it will provide the theoretical background to the empirical research which is to proceed during 1995 to 1996 for the "Youth confronts racism through literature" project.

The "Self" of Josephine

The self of Josephine is clearly Italian in so many ways: the close bond between members of the extended family; Italian outgoing, emotionally expressive ways;

the community's watchful, reporting eyes; older generational controls on the young. Yet Josephine acknowledges the veracity of her Italian self as perceived by Others; that is, notably the longer term Anglo-Australian others. Examples of the cues recognised by these "Others" include: arranged marriages; false, utopian views of virginity; supremacy of husband's will; the proliferation of pizzas and facial hair (amongst women); a grandmother in mourning black for forty years; big Italian barbeques (not sausages on the "barbie" but left over pizza, schnitzel and egg plant!). Does she accept all this? In a way yes, in a way no. For a time, Josie sees a self as wanting to fight and reject all this, become emancipated, and hence (as she sees it) Australian in the process.

> "Me? I'd like to be a rebel Italian. I'd like to shock everyone and tell them to stick to their rules and regulations. If anyone ever died, I'd wear bright colours to the funeral and laugh the loudest" (Marchetta 1992:152).

Yet in her innermost self, she sees that she will always be "other".

> "We live in the same country, but we're different. What's taboo for Italians isn't taboo for Australians" (Marchetta 1992:152).

Whatever her aspirations, she sees she will never be as Australian as the majority.

> "There is this spot inside me that will always be Italian" (Marchetta 1992:152).

So being Italian, she accepts. What she resents most and what she perceives keeps her the outsider is her illegitimacy. This strikes at the core – both personally and at her Italian sense of community. This is the innermost self which she perceives will always keep her as "other" – even within the Italian community. It is this shifting point of view of the narrative which makes for a

most productive reading of *Looking for Alibrandi*. First person narratives are generally considered to be problematic and they are often seen to be simple outpourings of the author. But once we forget the point of view of the author and trace the point of view of the narrator, responding to the shifting positions, we begin to see the complexity of the "other's" position.

Multiculturalism as problematic

Multicultural life is more often than not perceived as a "problem", a mode of existence where there's a deficit, where the "other" is expected to be part of the mainstream. At least this has been the position historically and Fasil Risvi (1989) reminds us that from a political as well as social point of view, the aim has always been assimilation.

> The policy of assimilation was clearly and unambiguously designed to preserve the hegemony of the Anglo-Australian ruling class. Yet it was sold to the immigrants in a language that suggested meritocracy, egalitarianism and equality of opportunity. According to the rhetoric used, immigrant groups were encouraged to assimilate into an homogenous culture so that they too could have an opportunity to take an equal and informed part of the maintenance of Australian society (Risvi 1989:8).

Assimilation is Josie's initial aim and only gradually does she shift to her acceptance of her difference. Initially in the novel Josie aches to be accepted, to be part of the "in crowd" (152). She sees that her circle of friends, by and large, is drawn together because they are all "other", all on the outside: Anne because of her hypersensitivity, Sera because she is so overtly brazen and promiscuous, and Lee because she is a middle-class scholarship fellow. These are the underdogs, these are her friends, they need each other.

"I suppose we've done well for a group which the elite of St Martin's says shouldn't be at the school." (Marchetta 1992:22).

But the reader does not accept this view, gradually we see her underlying appreciation of who she is – "a wog" – and proud of it. Her aspirations for the trappings of wealth: money, prestige, the new Volvo, and perfect white skin (21) are what the reader comes to see as superficial and not the "real" Josie.

Positioning

What is it that persuades a reader to focalise with Josie the "wog" instead of the wealthy youth from establishment families, such as John Barton, whose family expects him to become prime minister; or Poison Ivy who is destined to be his companion at parties, social events and probably in future life? A reader need only attend to the descriptive language used to present these people, for example, the "pretentious try hards" who are "always laughing in a fake way" (81). This language is a revelation to the reader and positions Josie unconsciously outside their circle though willfully within. She wants to be part of them, to be accepted by them but has not the level of hypocrisy required.

It is Josie's positioning of herself which provides the thrust for the story and is the clue to the reader's response. It is here that the work of Stewart Hall (1989) supplies the appropriate theory. He explores the notion of "positionality" and through this means gives shape to the subjective self. He sees that one's position socially, culturally, historically helps define one ethnically. It is not biology, not geography, it is one's "position" in a society which gives meaning to one's ethnic centre of being.

> The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated and all knowledge is contextual (Hall 1989:29).

Josie's self positioning is not static within the novel and neither does it need to be. Hall (1989) reminds us that absence of a permanent position does not imply the absence of meaning, but rather, because positioning is always temporary, meanings are always provisional (Hall 1989). Her perceived difference as a member of an ethnic minority is at first expounded with regret but later accepted with pride. Several key factors contribute to this.

1. She begins to accept who she is and as she sees the apparently ideal world of John Barton – of whom everything was expected and for whom everything was possible, crash into suicide along with his Nihilist view of his position in the world.

   > "I am somewhere else, now, outside" (Marchetta 1992:238).

   This, from the most "insider" of the lot!
2. As she meets and comes to know her father.
3. And most of all, as she realises that illegitimacy was not her burden, and not even her mother's but her grandmother's.

Thus we see what Hall (1989) means by the concept of identity "as process rather than fact". As narrator, Josie achieves this by positioning herself both inside and outside "the system of representation" or in Alibrandi's terms, both inside and outside the (ethnic minority) Italianate community; as well as outside, *then* inside the ethnic majority (Anglo-Australian) culture. Using Hall's (1989) emphasis on history, this becomes the important feature of family history conveyed by the narrator which deserves our attention.

The Third generation

The historical perspective is sensitively conveyed via the voices of three generations in the novel: Josie, her mother and grandmother. Each one tells her own story since coming to/being born in Australia. It is significant that Josie is third generation Italian in Australia. No longer is the role of "victim" here – a common feature of ethnic minority adult literature where writers tell of their harrowing experiences of migration. Gunew draws attention to this feature of ethnic minority writing:

> In so far this feature of ethnic minority voices at all in Australian writing, we are accustomed to hearing them as victims, doubly enhanced by the first person mode (Gunew 1994:94).

Such a heart-rending position is present in *Looking for Alibrandi* but not in Josie herself. She hears of this second hand (along with the reader) from her grandmother's personal narrative (her "Nonna" bore a child by another man – an Australian – outside of marriage, while she was married to an Italian man in Australia). At the telling of this experience it is Josie who is "outside" the context and she strives to understand the loneliness, the despair, the impact of isolation, the loss of community. Yet Josie's ethnicity is no guarantee of comprehension. Initially she sees her grandmother, her "Nonna" as hypocrite, as one falsely seeking sympathy, when the victim's role was more deservingly her mother's – or so she thought.

> She dominated our lives hypercritically and made herself look the victim when in actual fact it was Mumma who was the victim (Marchetta 1992:220).

The shifting point of view is important for the novel (and for an informed reader response). The compelling catalyst of the book is not Josie's story and the discovery

of her father at all, nor is it the story of her first love, the uncertainties, the pressures and the jealousies, but rather, it is her Nonna's harrowing confession. Her Nonna's love for the Australian lover, the subsequent conception of Josie's mother, the tacit acceptance of her husband's total domination (basically because of his importance and her perceived "cheating" in the marriage bed), were all exchanged for a position within marriage for a daughter conceived in lonely despair – through unaccustomed gentle and considerate love-making out of marriage. (Remember, these were Italian Catholic values and this was the 1950s in Australia when divorce was both rare and cause of a woman's shame, and an illegitimate child brought her and her family only disgrace and pain).

While Marchetta's (1992) novel still swings on the more conventional migrant story where the immigrant is decidedly "other" its conviction depends on the third generational position of Josie. She does eventually hear and respond sympathetically and lovingly to her Nonna's confession and accepts her version of history. So too does the reader. It is this process which brings the reader "inside" Nonna's first generation migrant story – at least to the extent that Josie (with whom we focalise most) takes her story within so that Nonna – and other immigrants like her – are a little less "other". It is the third generation of ethnic minority writers who see beyond the migrant "other"/outcast and who in the process, force a national acceptance of difference and hence foster a gradual shift in national consciousness.

> Prevailing stereotypes of national culture are being interrogated by second generation writers perched strategically and knowingly between cultures (Gunew 1994:10–11).

Class consciousness

Intricately linked with the migrant position is that of class says Gunew (1994:9) and this is endorsed in *Looking for Alibrandi*. Josie desires to be

upwardly mobile and she is resentful of the very "yuppies" she would love to join.

It is only Jacob Coote (her boyfriend, who is self-proclaimed working-class) who recognises the class inferiority which she feels and lives, is fed by herself alone. He sees that it is this inner sense which keeps her as an ethnic illegitimate other.

> "Your problems are out there, I believe that. But they're small. They only grow out of proportion when they climb inside your head. They grow because of insignificant people like Carly and Poison Ivy and Sera who feed on them because they know how you feel" (Marchetta 1992:146).

She achieves her emancipation, as she calls it but it is less than convincing, as given her newfound father who doubles in the role of successful lawyer, the reader sees that she can simply walk away from her former self where she was identified as "other":

- by her position as (daughter of an) immigrant;
- by her lower middle-class status confirmed by the scholarship position;
- by her illegitimacy;
- by her position as granddaughter/daughter of a "victim".

Again, it is Joseph Coote, the one "without pretension" (145) who sees that she can walk away from all this and join the mainstream as an Italian barrister (and daughter of a successful and established barrister).

> "The rich marry the rich Josie and the poor marry the poor. The dags marry the dags and the wogs marry the wogs. The western suburbs marry the western and the north shore marry the north shore. Sometimes they cross breed though and marry into the eastern suburbs" (Marchetta 1992:144).

Jacob is mainstream Anglo-Australian, not immigrant other, yet because of his class, he recognises that in a sense, it is he who will always be "other". Even if a form of emancipation is possible for him, he will be the mechanic (not the barrister) hence his class origins will keep him as "other" unless he is with his own kind – and this does not mean Josie. One may well speculate; with whom will young readers focalise most: Josie's emancipation or Jacob's realisation?

Conclusion

From within the first person narrative position of Josie, her view from inside the migrant other is ultimately very positive – if not entirely convincing. And it is because the book is both written and narrated by a third generation Italian-Australian writer that cultural difference is represented without being appropriated (Gunew 1994:29). Furthermore, through this novel cultural difference is emphasised and celebrated, not just the more passive position of cultural diversity (Bakhtin 1984:40). In the process the dominant Anglo-Australian, position is opened, questioned and set back on its heels – just a little.

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Name and title register

Name register

Title register