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Contact address
Institute of English and American Studies
University of Gdańsk
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
Phone: (+48) 58 523 30 49, (+48) 58 523 30 50
Email: beyond.philology@ug.edu.pl

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The worlds of *Celia* by Elena Fortún

MARÍA JESÚS FRAGA

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Abstract

Elena Fortún (1886-1952) is an important Spanish children's writer, the author of a famous series of novels about Celia, who first appeared at the end of 1920s in stories published in a children's supplement of a popular magazine. Told in the first person by a seven-year-old girl, these simple and humorous stories present an ordinary childhood in an affluent Madrid family using familiar elements of setting and time frames simultaneous with the reader's activities. In the 1930s the stories became successful novels of education. Though the episodes of Celia's life trace important social changes in the middle-class life of the 1930s (family relations, emergence of feminism, economic decline, the civil war and its aftermath), a distinct quality of Fortún's text is also the child's Quixotic inability to separate the real world from the world of her prodigious imagination, which allows her to construct interpretations subtly critical of the adult world.

Key words

Elena Fortún, Celia, childhood, fantastic world, Spain, 1930s

Światy Celii w powieściach Eleny Fortún

Abstrakt

Elena Fortún (1886-1952) jest znaną hiszpańską autorką opowieści o Celii, które najpierw publikowane były w specjalnym dziecięcym dodatku do poczytnego magazynu pod koniec lat 20. XX wieku, a w latach 30. stały się serią nadzwyczaj popularnych powieści o edukacji. Proste i zabawne opowiadania posługują się pierwszoosobową narracją siedmioletniej dziewczynki ukazując zwyczajne dzieciństwo w zamożnej madryckiej rodzinie i używając znanych odbiorcy elementów tła przestrzennego oraz chronologii nawiązującej do rytmu życia odbiorcy. Epizody z codziennego życia Celii ukazują ważne zmiany społeczne zachodzące w Hiszpanii lat trzydziestych (relacje rodzinne, pojawienie się feminizmu, pogarszanie się sytuacji ekonomicznej, wojna domowa i jej konsekwencje), ale znaczącą cechą opowiadań jest dziecięca nieumiejętność oddzielenia rzeczywistości i świata wyobraźni, co łączy Celię z postacią Don Kichota i pozwala jej tworzyć humorystyczne interpretacje świata dorosłych, które są w istocie krytyczne.

Słowa kluczowe

Elena Fortún, Celia, dzieciństwo, świat fantastyczny, Hiszpania, lata trzydzieste

1. Introduction

In the interwar period Spanish society began its modernization although without managing to distance itself from its difficult turn-of-the-century legacy. At the beginning of the century, the literacy index of the young population was still very low and literature for children was developing in accordance with a traditional scheme based on the re-creation of popular environments and the importance of exemplary children firmly led by the hand of a narrator. Thanks to the initiative of some publishing houses (Calleja and later Juventud) which translat-

ed great works of European children's literature, already at the start of the twentieth century young Spanish readers learned to enjoy novels and stories created especially for them, and freed from the moralistic ballast of the nineteenth-century tales.

The pioneering efforts of the publishing houses led to strengthening the importance of the children's press – magazines, newspapers and supplementary materials for children – which in the 1920s became a powerful force for the promotion of vanguard movements in Spanish literature and visual arts. These circumstances created opportunities for new authors to publish frequently. The presence of such authors as Bartolozzi, Magda Donato, Antoniorrobles, or Elena Fortún in children's publishing, was a decisive factor in the process of modernizing Spanish literature for children and raising it to the European level.

Elena Fortún, whose real name was Encarnación Aragoneses (1886-1952), was a professional writer without solid academic education, but keen on culture and, in her adult years, immersed in the literary world owing to thick social networks established by female intellectuals of that time and to her husband's dedicated fondness of theatre. Her works, published since 1920s by general publishers, reveal her interest in progress and her dedication to modern ideas: feminism, abolitionism, spirituality, education and hygiene, and fashion. The author was one of the first members of the Lyceum Club, a space created for women, founded in Madrid in 1926 in the image of clubs already existing in other European capitals. That was where she made friends with María Lejárraga, a writer and journalist, the wife of a playwright and a man of the theatre Martinez Sierra. She also attended the Residence for Young Ladies (*la Residencia de Señoritas*[1]), where she participated in

[1] The Residence for Young Ladies (*la Residencia de Señoritas*), created in 1915 by Maria de Maeztu, was the first official centre aimed at university education for women. The inspiration came from the famous Residence for

the Course of Library Science, first as a student, until she obtained the degree of a librarian, and later as a teacher of "Story narration". Elena Fortún went to Paris to learn about the functioning of the children's library *L'Heure joyeuse* where once a week children took part in a "story time", and soon she started organizing sessions of what is now referred to as "storytelling" for students of the public school in Ortigosa del Monte during their long summer holidays, and, during her exile, in libraries belonging to the Municipal Library of Buenos Aires.

Through María Lejárraga who was familiar with her narratives and sense of humor, in 1928 Elena Fortún established contact with Torcuato Luca de Tena, then the director of *ABC* paper and the illustrated magazine *Blanco y Negro* ("Black and White"). The author was invited to collaborate in a supplement for children, *Gente Menuda*, at the time when the magazine was an object of deep formal renovation which turned it into the "favorite publication of Spanish families". This reorganization also included the supplement which, with the competent participation of Elena Fortún, tuned into the most complete and best-selling children's periodical publication in Spain in the first third of the twentieth century. According to Mercedes Chivelet (2009: 69), in 1906 the print run of *Blanco y Negro* – and therefore of the supplement – amounted to nearly sixty thousand copies, and in 1928 and 1929 it exceeded a hundred thousand copies.

Although the first texts by Elena Fortún were published in *Gente Menuda* in June 1928, it was the following year when she started to publish a series which would later gain numerous fans among the children readers of the supplement as well as adults. Its protagonist is Celia Gálvez, a girl of seven – "the age of heart" – born in Madrid, like her creator, and from a well-off family. In each episode Celia tells an anecdote in the first person, frequently addressing the reader in order to en-

Students (*Residencia de Estudiantes*), created by the Free Institution of Teaching and the main centre of modernization in Spain.

courage them to read subsequent episodes. This technique also reflects the protagonist's desire to introduce the reader into the text as an interlocutor of the narrative voice and, as a result, as another protagonist of the stories. The presence, growth and psychological evolution of the protagonist in the real time, as well as the adjustment of the scenery of her adventures in accordance with the actual seasons of the year and holidays, made the series very successful. The readers were preparing for their summer holidays or for Christmas at the same time as their fictional friends – the children of the Gálvez family. In this way, week after week the relationship between the characters and the readers was becoming stronger and stronger. Undoubtedly, the experience of growing up at the same time as the protagonist of a story makes the reader want to maintain contact with the character who progresses with them.

In 1932 Elena Fortún introduced another protagonist of the series, a boy called Cuchifritin, very similar to his big sister but at an age – six years old – which allowed him to express himself in a way that appealed to young children readers, who the writer felt more competent to address. Moreover, the choice of a male protagonist resulted in an increase of the number of readers – which possibly was the motive of the change. Many boys who were not interested in Celia's adventures, enjoyed reading about her brother. The series continued to be published until July 1936 when it was tragically interrupted by the *coup d'état* which initiated the Spanish civil war. However, Elena Fortún continued her journalistic activities and finally published a social report combined with a child story in the magazine *Crónica*.[2]

[2] Apart from numerous children's stores, Elena Fortún published in *Crónica* a series of articles focused on social topics: the right to education, social injustices of pre-war Spain and the consequences of the civil war, especially hunger and homelessness. The author published her last work in this magazine on December 11, 1938.

Meanwhile, towards the end of 1933 the publisher Manuel Aguilar started to issue the adventures of Celia in a book format, until it amounted to five volumes. The book format changed the story series into a novel. According to María del Prado Escobar Bonilla (1996-97: 60) the episodes of the story are closely linked to one another thanks to family relations between the characters and strong consistency in supratextual ties. In order to strengthen the textual unity the author highlights thematic connections between chapters of each book with an introduction and, sometimes, an epilogue.

Success came immediately: readers of the supplement were waiting for the book format as less ephemeral than a press publication. The publisher Manuel Aguilar made sure that the release of the first copies of the books about Celia – *Celia lo que dice* and *Celia en el colegio* [*What Celia says* and *Celia at school*] – coincided in time with the Book Fair celebrated in Madrid in the spring in 1934, where the author herself sold almost four hundred copies of the second volume.[3] Having realized how successful the series was, Aguilar insisted on the third volume – *Celia novelista* [*Celia the novelist*] – to be ready as soon as possible. In the Fair of 1935 the last volumes of the adventures of Celia as a child were sold – *Celia en el mundo* and *Celia y sus amigos* [*Celia in the world* and *Celia and her friends*].

Before describing the worlds of Celia it is essential to highlight that the principal features of the novels by Elena Fortún are simplicity of narration, presence of humor and dominance of dialogue over description. Conversations between the protagonist and her numerous interlocutors are the most important tool of characterizing the fictional figures and of evaluating their psychological evolution throughout the books. Thanks to the author's attention to detail and her accuracy in

[3] The Book Fair in Madrid started in 1933; it was a part of a private initiative, but it participated in the process of promoting books and reading, launched by the first republican governments.

reflecting various speech registers depending on the speakers' social background and age, conversations are the main source of humor in her novels.

The novels about the Gálvez family are the main part of Elena Fortún's artistic work.[4] These dynamic and imaginative stories, fruits of the passionate, generous and perceptive personality of the author, dedicated to the psychological creation of Celia, make it a real novel of education and a thorough chronicle of one of the most violent times in the history of Spain: including the end of the interwar period, the arrival of the Second Republic, the civil war and the author's exile.

The author herself, while presenting the protagonist of her books, elaborates on the dual character of her "everyday nature":

> Celia is a girl like any other, one of these girls we see on a bus going to school. She lives in Serrano Street and she has a dad and a mom who scold her and pamper her, and who are fair and unfair with her, depending on their mood. Her story is simple from the outside and marvelous inside. It is an ordinary life where every day you can put on magic garments and, through fantasy and imagination, live in a world of adventures and miracles. (Fortún 1935: 153)[5]

[4] An autobiographic novel written by Elena Fortún during her exile in Argentina has been recently published for the first time as *Oculto sendero* [*Hidden track*] (Seville, Renacimiento, 2016).

[5] "Celia es una niña como otra cualquiera, de las que vemos pasar en un autobús que las lleva a casa desde el colegio. Vive en la calle de Serrano, y tiene un papá y una mamá que la riñen y la miman, y son justos o injustos con ella, según el estado de sus nervios. Su historia es sencilla por fuera y prodigiosa por dentro. Es una vida vulgar, que todos los días se viste con el ropaje de maravilla, fantaseando, imaginando y viviendo en un mundo de aventura y de milagro" (Fortún 1935: 153).

2. The fantastic world of Celia

It soon turns out that the anecdotes that inspire many chapters in these novels come precisely from the absence of border between Celia's simple real world of her domestic space, and the world of her prodigious imagination. In her head, the girl constantly leaves her domestic space behind and immerses herself in fiction, distancing herself from the reality which often seems hostile to her. It also gives her an opportunity to fulfill her desire to communicate and live other, more interesting lives. Imagination helps her overcome difficult situations, such as the loss of her position in the family due to her brother's birth, and loneliness caused by her parents' frequent travels. In her fantastic lives, Celia mixes reality with fantasy and confuses the identities of people and objects, as well as the nature of events. Situational absurdity provoked by such confusion is the major source of humour in the first novels, though the humour is rather melancholy, as the protagonist is not always able to disentangle the problems she herself creates. As if she were a new Don Quixote, her passion for reading fairytales and adventure books is the main origin of Celia's fantasies, which she confirms in a conversation with her father's friend who observes:

> – Blimey, what imagination! Do you learn about the fairies and the old man on the moon at school?
> – No way! At school they know nothing. It's only some wonderful books that I have which explain everything. (Fortún 1980a: 68)[6]

The incorporation into her imaginary world of the elements of Andersen's famous story, *The enchanted princes*, inspires one of the most significant episodes of *Celia en el colegio*: "Celia

[6] "– ¡Caramba, qué imaginación! ¿Y es en el colegio donde aprendes eso de las hadas y del viejo de la luna? – ¡Quia! En el colegio no saben nada. Es en unos libros preciosos que yo tengo, donde explican todo" (Fortún 1980a: 68).

and Princess Leonor" (1980b: 96-100).[7] The school gardener Celia her that in the adjacent house seen from the garden lives "a Russian or Chinese girl..., I don't know. Yesterday I saw there a man and his brother who has a wooden arm" (1980b: 97).[8] When she finds out that the girl's name is Leonor, Celia suspects that she is a story protagonist and, when she finally sees her, she has no doubt about it: "It was her, my God, it was her! She's grown up a lot; but many years have passed since then..." (1980b: 97-98).[9] However, her classmates are skeptical:

> Having eaten, Milagros came to ask me:
> – Is it true that you have seen Princess Leonor?
> – Yes. Do you want to see her?
> – But is it her? How do you know that?
> – Look. Her name is Leonor, she's a princess, her brother doesn't have an arm, and she's wearing a ribbon on her forehead...
> – Then it's her... (Fortún 1980b: 98)[10]

Celia approaches the alleged princess shyly:

> It's just if you would like some nettles to finish the tunic for your brother... Here there are lots. [...] Yes, nettles... We know it all... We've read it in *The enchanted princes*... (Fortún 1980b: 99)[11]

[7] In other versions of the tale the princess's name is Elisa and the title of the story is "The wild swans". Celia learns that the princess must weave eleven shirts – from thread that she has to obtain from nettles – for her eleven brothers turned into swans. But she does not have enough material to weave a sleeve for her youngest brother's shirt so when he regains his human form, one of his arms remains a swan's wing.

[8] "Una señorita rusa o china..., no sé. Ayer ha venido un señor, que es su hermano y tiene un brazo de madera" (Fortún 1980b: 97).

[9] "¡Era ella, Dios mío, era ella misma! Había crecido mucho; pero es que han pasado muchos años desde entonces..." (Fortún 1980b: 97-98).

[10] "Después de comer vino Milagros a preguntarme: – ¿Es verdad que has visto a la princesa Leonor? – Sí. ¿La quieres ver tú? – ¿Pero es ella? ¿Cómo lo sabes? – Fíjate. Se llama Leonor, es una princesa, su hermano no tiene brazo, y ella se pone una cinta en la frente... – Entonces, sí es..." (Fortún 1980b: 98).

And, when her friends claim that the stories are not true, she replies outraged: "You believe so… Everything has been written in the books because it happened" (Fortún 1980b: 98).[12] With this claim Celia expresses her certainty that writing is able to make things real, even if they are completely invented. Without this certainty – again Quixote's legacy – the intensity with which the girl assumes the conditions of her fictional models would not be convincing.

With her childish logic Celia constantly tries to decipher the world that adults have adjusted to their needs and, above all, the rules of language, interpreting it with the help of schemes provided in the stories she reads. When her parents decide to send her to a boarding school, she quickly accepts her new situation, and it is she who comforts her father, preoccupied with the absurd educational practices of the religious schools of that time, with a very insightful argument: "But this school is like a story book!" (Fortún 1980b: 18).[13] Consequently, the school rules, incomprehensible to Celia at the beginning, become easy to interpret in her fictional frame.

However, Elena Fortún does not limit the child's imagination to the suggestions of these stories: while Celia is in the boarding school run by nuns, religion – with its rites, sacred history, and lives of the saints – shares the function of the stories. Influenced by the fervent atmosphere prevailing in the school, the girl identifies an old beggar – "wearing torn clothes, with a white beard" – as Saint Peter and decides he must have some shelter on a rainy night. She asks her friends, the altar boys, for help but they initially refuse her request:

[11] "Era por si querías ortigas para acabar la túnica de tu hermano… Aquí hay muchas. […] Sí, ortigas… Nosotras lo sabemos todo… Lo hemos leído en *Los príncipes encantados*…" (Fortún 1980b: 99).

[12] "– Eso creerás tú… Todo lo que está escrito en los libros es porque ha pasado…" (Fortún 1980b: 98).

[13] "¡Si este colegio es como un libro de cuentos!" (Fortún 1980b: 18).

– Listen. Do you know Saint Peter?
– Here we go!
– Yes, it's this old man who begs for alms at the door…
– Ah! The drunk guy with the beard… What about him?
– You should let him sleep in the church.
– No way!
– If you let him sleep inside tonight when it's raining, tomorrow I'll give you a box of cards.
– It's not much…
– And a fountain pen… […]

That night I slept peacefully. I heard it was raining and I thought that Saint Peter was sleeping right by the heater in the big chapel…

Soon I woke up scared. I heard the garden bell and someone was running down the stairs. Mother San Jose ran right by my bed and I heard her say: 'My Jesus, have mercy on us!' […]

– There's a fire in the church! (Fortún 1980b: 188-189)[14]

A cigarette that the old man lights at night sets fire to the church walls. This time the unfortunate consequences of Celia's mistake affect people as well as the property, and make the nuns lose their patience and punish Celia in one of their absurd ways.[15]

Legends and stories told by minor characters of the saga, like for example Ms Benita, "a woman who looked after mom

[14] "– Escuchad. ¿Conocéis a San Pedro? – ¡Anda ésta! – Sí; es ese viejo que pide limosna en la puerta… – ¡Ah! El tío borracho de las barbas… ¿Qué le quieres? – Debíais dejarle dormir en la iglesia. – ¡Ni más ni menos! […] –Si le dejáis dormir dentro esta noche, que va a llover, mañana os regalo una caja de estampas. – Es poco… – Y una pluma estilográfica… […] Aquella noche dormí más tranquila. Oía llover, y pensaba que San Pedro estaría durmiendo junto a la estufa de la capilla grande… De pronto me desperté asustada. Tocaba la campana del jardín, y corrían por la escalera. La madre San José pasó corriendo junto a mi cama y le oí decir: – ¡Jesús mío, ten misericordia de nosotras! […] – ¡Hay fuego en la iglesia!" (Fortún 1980b: 188-189).

[15] Compare *Celia en el colegio* (1980a: 188-89). After the episode, the mother superior decides to dismiss Mother Isolina from the monastery, who was the most understanding about the child's behavior.

when she was little" (Fortún 1980a: 110),[16] spark her imagination, too. Ms Benita's detailed descriptions of spirits and their celestial origins provoke confusion in Celia, who believes that she recognizes one of them in a German boy, "very blonde and very white, however not transparent as Ms Benita says, in flesh-colored trousers and a pointed hat..." (Fortún 1980a: 139).[17]

Dreams, fever and unconsciousness spark Celia's imagination in a similar way. At this point we should contextualize these resources with vanguard literature of that time, where the oneiric and the absurd are reclaimed, and where two recognized avant-guardists, Antoniorrobles and Manuel Abril, publish their works in *Gente Menuda* at the same time as Elena Fortún.

Today it is accepted that the processes of imitation and identification with the models in stories are essential for a child's growth, who in her innate playful space feels constant longing to be someone else and does not stop trying to fulfill it. The models that Celia follows are not different to the ones offered to other children, but her imaginative hyperactivity and the intensity with which she lives her fantasies are distinct. The little reader is fascinated by the audacity and determination with which Celia takes on the role of her models, in spite of the indifference or rejection that her frequent violation of the rules created by adults provokes.

Putting herself by Celia's side, as if she herself did not belong to the world of adults, the author right from the beginning takes the side of child, of her rights and her integrity as a person. The world of adults, as Elena Fortún describes it in the prologue to *Celia en el mundo* [*Celia in the world*] is "unreasonable in calling things with wrong names, speaking with fixed

[16] "[...] una señora vieja, que también cuidó a mamá cuando era pequeña" (Fortún 1980a: 110).

[17] "[...] muy rubio y muy blanco, aunque no transparente como dice doña Benita, con pantalones encarnados y un gorro en punta..." (Fortún 1980a: 139).

phrases, rejecting children's stories and accepting the ones invented by adults at their whim…" (Fortún 1980c: 7).[18]

In her desire to be someone else, in her determination to fulfill that desire, in her suffering without any protest, we can see Quixotic traces of the protagonist of these novels. Just as Cervantes resorts to the alleged craziness of Quixote to severely criticize the society and politics of his time while avoiding possible repercussions, so Elena Fortún uses Celia's seemingly innocent adventures to present, episode after episode, ridiculous clichés typical of the bourgeois society of that time. Carmen Martín Gaite describes it as follows:

> Elena Fortún's effectiveness, as well as her survival as a writer, consist in the liveliness and realism of dialogues which, put in a child's mouth, facilitate social criticism hidden behind ingenuity and irony. I believe that in this case a child is an excuse [...]. (Martín Gaite 2002: 100)[19]

The fragment describing repressive and irrational educational methods of religious institutions and their devastating logic, juxtaposed with the innocence of a child, is certainly significant. However, while Cervantes defended himself by putting the description of inquisitorial methods in the mouth of an alleged madman, Fortún received severe criticism and did not avoid censorship of the Francoist regime which banned all her work in 1945. In result the volume *Celia en el colegio* from that year was not published until 1968, and some of her other novels only appeared in 1992.

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[18] "[...] tan poco razonable, que llama a las cosas con nombres equivocados, habla con frases hechas, rechaza los cuentos de los niños y admite los que las personas mayores han inventado a capricho..." (Fortún 1980c: 7).

[19] "La eficacia de Elena Fortún, así como su pervivencia, consisten en la viveza y realismo de unos diálogos que, al ser puestos en boca de niños, facilitan una crítica social encubierta tras la ingenuidad y la ironía. Me atrevo a decir que en este caso un niño es un parapeto [...]" (Martín Gaite 2002: 100).

The author finds another source of humor in the breakdown of the symbolism of language, which moves the child to the world entirely different from the reality of adults. The incorporation of absurd and surreal situations into Celia's domestic life leads to semantic transgressions and is greatly appreciated by readers. The child's interpretations of polysemic terms cause numerous funny confusions. For instance, Celia confuses the meaning of *monte*[20] which she hears used by Basílides (her Uncle Rodrigo's cook) while talking about Monte de Piedad[21] where she goes frequently on Sundays. Celia is tired of city life – "[…] I'm fed up with seeing just houses and houses, and the streets made of rock, and the trees growing out from holes in pavements…" (Fortún 1980c: 65)[22] – and insists on Basílides taking her one day with her:

– Are there flowers there, Basílides?
– No, not exactly there. But there are some around the corner.
– And what about rabbits?
– What are you talking about? There are rabbits at the poulterers' but the man doesn't like them.
– I'm talking about the mountain…, living rabbits…
– Maybe there are some cats, and probably some rats!…
What a strange mountain! (1980c: 66)[23]

Surprised by the sight of a big room full of counters – where people obtain their loans – and seated on a bench waiting for their turn, Celia assumes that they are in a train station from

[20] Here: *mountain* or *pawn shop* (translators' note).

[21] The Montes de Piedad (or Montepios) were a kind of a charity fund (created on the initiative of Franciscan friars in Italy to fight with usury) where the ones in need could exchange their belongings for money.

[22] "[…] yo estoy harta de no ver más que casas y casas, y calles de piedras, y los árboles saliendo por los agujeros en las aceras […]" (Fortún 1980c: 65).

[23] "– ¿Habrá flores en el monte, Basílides? – Allí mismamente no. Pero los hay a la vuelta de la esquina. – Y conejitos, ¿hay? – ¿Qué dices?… Hay conejos en las pollerías, pero al señor no le gustan. – Yo digo en el monte…, conejos vivos… – ¡Si acaso habrá gatos, y puede que algún ratón que otro!… ¡Vaya un monte más raro debía ser!" (Fortún 1980c: 66).

where they will be taken to the *mountain*. She comes back home frustrated: "And you call that a mountain in Madrid? Don't laugh!... You are all fools, you don't even know what a mountain is..." (Fortún 1980c: 70).[24]

Fortún also takes to the limit literal interpretations of fixed phrases and lexical metaphors. For example, Celia gets angry with her Uncle Rodrigo's friend with whom they travel together on a train:

> The man wearing a beret is coming with us... I'm angry with him! He says that we've caught the train on the fly... That's not true! We found it at the station and it wasn't flying... (Fortún 1980c: 185)[25]

3. The world of the liberal middle class in Madrid in the 1930s

It is not a coincidence that Elena Fortún chose sceneries deeply rooted in the Spanish ground as a background of her protagonist's adventures. The author herself expresses the necessity that the protagonist "wanders around Spanish pine woods, drinks cool water from earthenware pitchers, lives in a small white house in Castilla, so that the reality and the story become one in her soul" (Fortún 1935: 149-153)[26] although she would prefer to put Celia in an urban environment, in accordance with her own middle-class roots. It is worth mentioning what María Martínez Sierra said about it in her notes presumably devoted to the adventures of Celia:

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[24] "¿Y a eso le llamáis monte en Madrid? ¡No te rías!... Aquí sí que sois tontos, que no sabéis lo que es un monte..." (Fortún 1980c: 70).

[25] "El señor de la boina se vino con nosotros... ¡Le tengo una rabia! Dice que hemos cogido el tren al vuelo... ¡No es verdad! Lo encontramos en la estación, y no estaba volando..." (Fortún 1980c: 185).

[26] "[...] camine por pinares de España, beba aguas frescas de un botijo de barro y viva en una casita encalada de Castilla para que realidad y cuento se hagan una sola poesía en su alma" (Fortún 1935: 149-153).

> Spanish children, congratulations. For the first time the protagonist of your favourite story that reaches your soul is born and raised in Spain. Little Red Riding Hood picked strawberries and met the wolf in a German forest, where also Sleeping Beauty lived. Puss in Boots knocked on the door of a French castle, and a castle in France was also the Ogre's abode [...] (Martínez Sierra 2002: 88)[27]

Although the first stories about Celia contain very few historical references, they are full of geographical, social and cultural ones. The principal setting of her first adventures is Madrid of the liberal middle class of the 1930s, a developing city which – thanks to the constant influx of rural population, coupled with reduction of mortality – reached one million inhabitants at that time. To improve their comfort and to meet the requirements of the government, urban changes led to the creation of new districts and roads for modern transport. This evolution resulted in increasing cultural activity as well as the linking the high culture with the popular one and the traditional with the modern.

Celia comes from a well-off family, her parents are erudite and elegant; the liberal profession of her father allows them to live in a house in Serrano street, located in an elegant part of Salamanca, own a car, a chalet in the mountains in Madrid, and a set of servants, among which there is an English governess who looks after the child and teaches her the language. The family lives a typical modern life: they go to the theatre and cinema, and engage in numerous social activities, like going for walks, paying visits, having tea etc. They travel to Switzerland and France and go to popular beaches, like the one in San Sebastian or the Sardinero beach.

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[27] "Niños españoles, estáis de enhorabuena. Por primera vez, la protagonista del cuento que llega a vuestro espíritu nace y vive en España... Caperucita recogía sus fresas y encontraba a su lobo en un bosque alemán y en un bosque alemán se dormía la Bella Durmiente. El Gato con Botas llamaba a la puerta de un castillo francés y en un castillo francés vivía el Ogro [...]" (Martín Gaite 2002: 88).

In the affective distance which the family customs of the time imposed on the relations between parents and children, Celia will find – while being looked after by servants or in the boarding school – a great support and understanding from her father, a free spirit, affectionate and understanding, but allowing his wife take care of the intellectual and emotional development of their daughter. On the other hand, the mother, who perfectly represents the model of a modern Madrid woman in a high social position, and who the child adores, behaves in a very distant and inconsiderate way, despite the sadness it causes in Celia.

Although the mother is neither an emancipated woman nor a perfect mother and housewife, thanks to her servants she maintains some of her liberty, which she devotes to leisure and social life. She herself enumerates the tasks – "talk to the cook, write two or three letters and […] have tea with my friends from Lyceum" (Fortún 1980a: 28)[28] – which prevent her from giving her daughter as much attention as she would like her to. In the fragments about the mother we can also see her tendency toward negative judgment of the child.

The complex relationship between Celia and her mother – studied in detail by Capdevila-Arguelles[29] – proves the "uncertain position of maternity in modern woman's life, being the key point of a debate of the emerging Iberian feminism" (2009: 122).[30] Elena Fortún, who shared reluctance towards housework with Celia's mother, does not seem to be capable of solving, through the characterization of this protagonist, the mod-

[28] "[…] tomar la cuenta a la cocinera, escribir dos o tres cartas y […] tomar el té con mis amigas del Lyceum" (Fortún 1980a: 28).

[29] Nuria Capdevilla-Arguelles analyses the role of Celia's mother in the Introduction to *Celia madrecita* (Seville, Renacimiento, 2015), and the topic of motherhood in the times of the first feminism in the Introduction to *Oculto sendero* (Seville, Renacimiento, 2016).

[30] "[…] la incierta posición que la maternidad tenía en la vida de la nueva mujer moderna, constituyendo un punto clave de debate en el incipiente feminismo ibérico" (Capdevila-Arguelles 2009: 122).

ern dilemma of combining maternity with the development of social identity.

However, far from limiting Celia's universe to her relations with the upper social classes, the author likes to contrast the customs of this society with those of the lower classes. The facades of beautiful houses on Serrano Street hide a series of modest homes, lofts, and tiny apartments accessed through back stairs, where poorer people live, as, for example, the indefectible doorman. In fact, the first book of the series, *Celia lo que dice*, opens with one of the most widely commented scenes because of its significance from the social point of view. On the night of the 6th of January Celia, already in bed, has a dream in which she is talking to the black king who has entered her room through the balcony.[31] Unfortunately, the previous year she forgot to leave a present for Solita, the doorman's daughter, which Baltasar comments on as follows: "I only leave toys on rich children's balconies; but I do it so that the rich forward them to the poor. If I had to go to all the houses, I would not finish in one night" (Fortún 1980a: 12).[32] When Celia wakes up and sees toys on her balcony, encouraged by this egalitarian message,[33] she does not hesitate to share them with Solita, to her parents' displeasure:

> What did you give to Solita?
> A goat…
> My God! A really expensive toy!… […]
> Look dad, I'll explain.
> Could you be quiet? Girls don't lie and they don't believe their dreams are true…
> Soon there appeared Juana, gesticulating wildly.

[31] One of the Three Kings who in the Spanish Christmas tradition leave toys for kids [Spanish children traditionally receive presents on the 6th of January instead of Christmas (translators' note)].

[32] "Solo dejo juguetes en los balcones de los niños ricos; pero es para que ellos los repartan con los niños pobres. Si tuviera que ir a casa de todos los niños, no acabaría en toda la noche" (Fortún 1980a: 12).

[33] According to Beatriz Caamano Alegre (2007: 5) this and other episodes suggest communistic idea of equality between the rich and the poor.

> Sir, Pedro the doorman is here with some toys. He says…
> Alright, alright – dad interrupted her – tell him that they're for his daughter. (Fortún 1980a: 13)[34]

Understanding certain cultural practices, like travels, cinema, or commemorative parties, helps distinguish one social class from another. When Carnival parties begin, Celia's parents decide that their daughter will attend an elegant costume ball for children, impeccably dressed up as *Incroyable*. Celia quietly envies Solita's plans who, wearing a flowery dress, a gift from her godmother, is planning to go to "Uncle Juan's tavern, […] to eat some delicious meat" (Fortún 1980a: 25).[35] She had already been there the previous year and she had had so much fun that she lost her shoe, to her godmother's great disappointment. Everything starts to make sense to Celia when she hears the servant's comment: "They'd better send her [Solita] to school, she's the Cinderella of the house" (Fortún 1980a: 27).[36] The fairy godmother, the party dress, the lost shoe… Celia understands that her friend is the protagonist of one of her favorite stories, which only strengthens her desire to get closer to her.

The relationship with Solita is also an excuse – followed by many others – invented by the author to give Celia an opportunity to see Madrid from a different perspective and to contrast the customs of the upper middle class with the ones typical of the lower social classes. Celia always prefers to spend time with the boys who play in the streets, to the ones who go with their *misses* to Retiro, the most emblematic park in Ma-

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[34] "– ¿Qué es lo que le has dado a Solita? –Una cabra… – ¡Válgame Dios! ¡Un juguete carísimo!… […] – Verás papá; yo te contaré. – ¿Te quieres callar? Las niñas no mienten ni creen que es verdad lo que sueñan… De pronto apareció Juana haciendo aspavientos. – Señor, aquí está Pedro, el portero, con unos juguetes que dice que… – Bueno, bueno – interrumpió papá –; dígale usted que son para su hija, que se los dé…" (Fortún 1980a: 13).

[35] "[…] ventorro del tío Juan, a merendar unas chuletas muy ricas" (Fortún 1980a: 25).

[36] "Más le valiera que la manden al colegio [a Solita], que es la Cenicienta de la casa" (Fortún 1980a: 27).

drid. This is also the case when she is admitted to a religious boarding school, where the altar boys – "Lamparon" and "Pronobis", coming from the town where the school is situated – will be her best friends with whom she will share a good part of her adventures in *Celia en el colegio*.

However, the high economic status of the privileged social classes started to weaken towards the end of the 1920s. The adverse international economic situation had a strong negative effect on the fragile Spanish economy and deepened its structural imbalance. In the first book, *Celia lo que dice*, the father already regrets his extravagance: trips abroad, visits in fashion houses, summer holidays, which all weaken the economic situation of the family. Celia, full of the already mentioned Quixotic spirit, decides to find a job as a servant, but her skills – "…putting babies to sleep, watching chickens so that they don't run away, feeding pigeons, pulling out weeds" (Fortún 1980a: 145)[37]– are no use to the farmers living in the small town where Celia's family are spending a part of their summer. This economic instability will be the reason why her parents' more and more frequent and distant travels will be getting longer and longer. Celia soon abandons her home, which eventually disappears as a consequence of the increasing nomadism of her parents. Her stays in subsequent schools and friends' houses do not last long either. The episodic disconnections from her close family give Celia opportunities to act freely and to immerse herself in fantasies. Her itinerant situation constantly obliges her to leave behind people, things and situations, while little notice is taken of the abandonment that she suffers.

Not all the members of the Gálvez family are in a difficult economic situation: Uncle Rodrigo, Celia's father's retired military brother and a bachelor, enjoys a privileged life from bene-

[37] "[…] acunar a los niños, cuidar de que las gallinas no salten al huerto, dar de comer a las palomas, arrancar la hierba de los paseos […]" (Fortún 1980a: 145).

fits, participating in all cultural novelties offered by modern Madrid. He comes back to Madrid from Morocco and brings along Maimón, a young Moroccan servant – who will be Celia's good friend. Having found out about the loneliness of his niece and her unfinished education, Rodrigo decides to educate her in his own way, which means nothing else than familiarizing her with the social practices of adults living their modern and cosmopolitan lives.

It will be in *Celia en el mundo* [*Celia in the world*] where Celia, after a short walk around the boarding school premises, will learn from her uncle about the peculiarities of social routines in Madrid: walks, social gatherings, the twelve o'clock mass, the visits, terraces in Retiro Park where they serve snacks, casinos, and tea salons with jazz bands… Due to lack of experience in raising children, Uncle Rodrigo's concern about Celia's well-being has some unpleasant consequences for the girl: cold showers, cod liver oil…, but also leads to her summer holidays in Jean-les-Pins, a place on the French Riviera with its beaches popular among elegant people. There Celia will meet Paulette, a fascinating friend, the only person who understands her easily and who will recurrently be by her side until her adulthood. Celia and her uncle's stay in a Parisian palace, which closes this volume, also marks a sudden end of Celia's cosmopolitan education as she is admitted into a Spanish school with a long tradition, where she has adventures described in *Celia y sus amigos* (1942) [*Celia and her friends*]. At all times, Celia lays bare the striking social and cultural differences of that time. Her account of the adult reality from a child's point of view provokes a series of funny situations, where ingenuity hides important criticism.

4. Paradise lost

After four years of letting other family members play the main role in the story, the author lets teenage Celia take the floor

again in *Celia, madrecita* [*Celia, oh dear*] published in Madrid towards the end of 1939. In this novel, Elena Fortún describes the beginning of the disintegration of Celia's worlds after her mother passes away, as the girl herself foresees at the beginning of the novel, when her grandfather makes her look after her little sisters: "I cried about my fourteen years which had been happy until my mother's death; my three years of high school which I considered lost, and the birds in my head, flapping their wings in agony" (Fortún 2015: 41).[38]

Set during the Spanish civil war, the novel meets the requirements of the editor who asked the author to write a chronicle describing the impact of the strife on the generation brought up in the comfort of the interwar period. There are strong contrasts between this book and the previous five novels: Celia must abandon the comfortable urban environment and the student life without any major preoccupations, to immerse herself in the provincialism of the tiny Spanish town of Segovia, and take on rigorous responsibilities of a housewife with numerous obligations, worsened by a difficult economic situation.

Finally, adults treat the teenager as a grown-up woman, forcing her to abandon the last traces of her magical world. They see Celia as mature now, and there are other – younger – characters who will take on the role of imaginative children eager to live fantasy lives and lacking the ability to tell the reality from fiction:

> Girl, we needed you so much to help us put this gang in order! They live in the fictional world of stories that they invent. Sometimes we unknowingly take part in a story... The other day poor

[38] "Lloré sobre mis catorce años que habían sido felices hasta la muerte de mi madre; mis tres cursos de bachillerato, que consideraba perdidos, y los pájaros de mi cabeza que aleteaban moribundos" (Fortún 2015: 41). In this confession we can again find similarities between Celia and Don Quixote, who, before he dies, realizes that the knights errant do not exist, at least not in his times. For a detailed analysis of Celia as a quixotic character, see Fraga (2012).

> Tomas, who went out to smoke his pipe in the garden, ended up being thrown a pitcher of water in his face to disenchant him… Everything is enchanted here, according to the girls, and you never know if you are a fairy godmother or a princess…, or Balaam's donkey… (Fortún 2015: 199)[39]

The story, where one can sense the tension of Spain moving towards the war, ends on the 18th of July 1936,[40] but the author will meet Aguilar's requirements and complete another volume while in exile: *Celia en la revolución* [*Celia in the revolution*], however, will not be published until 1987, and then reissued in 2016.

Celia en la revolución presents the miseries of the war with great strength and truth but marks a definite end of the protagonist's innocence: she is trapped by revolutionary events and yet remains clueless about political ideals. Her adventures reflect everyday life in the three most significant centers of republican resistance: Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona. The progressive loss of Celia's familial bonds due to the war has a liberating effect on the author's voice, who now finds no obstacles to merge her protagonist's voice with her own. This openly autobiographic end confirms the identification of the author with her protagonist throughout the series, up to the point when numerous critics identify Celia as an authentic alter ego of Elena Fortún.

The author left Spain shortly before the end of the war and lived for nine years in exile in Argentina where she kept up her creative activity: she continued both as a journalist and a writer producing new stories about Celia and her brothers.

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[39] "– Hija, ¡qué falta hacías aquí para poner orden en esta pandilla! […] Viven en un mundo prodigioso de cuentos que ellas se inventan. A veces, nosotros tomamos parte en el cuento sin saberlo… El otro día, el pobre Tomás, que salía a fumar su pipa al jardín, se encontró con que le tiraban a la cara un jarro de agua para desencantarle… Aquí todo está encantado, según las niñas, y nunca sabes si eres un hada o una princesa…, o la burra de Balaam…" (Fortún 2015: 199).

[40] The Spanish Civil War started on the 17th July 1936 (translators' note).

Soon after returning to Spain, she died in Madrid (on the 8th of May 1952) after a long illness suffered in solitude alleviated by reading and correspondence from her friends.

Translated by Beata Knabe and Jadwiga Węgrodzka

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María Jesús Fraga
Complutense University of Madrid
Avda. de Séneca, 2
Ciudad Universitaria
28040 Madrid
Spain
mjfraga23@gmail.com

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Images of the child and childhood in Elizabeth Jennings' poetic world

JEAN WARD

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Abstract

The many poems Elizabeth Jennings (1926-2001) wrote for children and about childhood, and her appreciation of the young as an audience are evidence that the child's perspective is an important aspect of her poetic sensibility. Contrary to what most critics seem to think, however, this is not a theme that can be removed from the framework of reference of Jennings' Roman Catholic faith. This discussion examines several poems in which a child's experience of the world, including the experience of the sacraments, is recollected with deep feeling and incorporated, with respect and compassion, into the experience of the adult. Some of this is evidently autobiographical, but the confessional aspect never prevents the poet from seeing personal experience in a wider context; nor does it hinder her in relating such experience to the mystery of the God who became Man as a little *child*. Though the vision of childhood that emerges in Jennings' poetry is far from being unequivocally paradisal, the attention paid to it seems to reflect the poet's conviction that only by reflecting on childhood experience in the light of the Incarnation can we learn as adults how to "become the *kind* of child God wants us to be", as she wrote in her unpublished *Pensées*.

Key words

child's sensibility, child's experience of religion, unpublished *Pensées*, sacraments, adult's incorporation of childhood experience, complex simplicity, Incarnation

Obrazy dziecka i dzieciństwa w świecie poetyckim Elizabeth jennings

Abstrakt

Perspektywa dziecka jest ważnym aspektem poetyckiej wrażliwości Elizabeth Jennings (1926-2001), która napisała wiele wierszy dla dzieci i o dzieciństwie, a także ceniła dziecięcych odbiorców. Wbrew opinii większości krytyków, tematyki dziecięcej nie można oddzielić od religijnego kontekstu katolicyzmu poetki. Artykuł analizuje kilka wierszy, w których dziecięce doświadczenie świata, łącznie z doświadczeniem sakramentów, wywołuje głębokie emocje i zostaje włączone – z szacunkiem i współczuciem – w doświadczenia dorosłego. Niektóre z wierszy mają niewątpliwie charakter autobiograficzny, ale ich konfesyjność nie przesłania poetce szerszego kontekstu osobistego doświadczenia, ani nie utrudnia łączenia go z tajemnicą Boga, który stał się człowiekiem w małym *dziecku*. Jennings nie tworzy jednoznacznie rajskiej wizji dzieciństwa, ale wydaje się sugerować, że jedynie refleksja nad dzieciństwem w świetle Wcielenia pozwala dorosłemu zrozumieć, jak „stać się takim dzieckiem, jakim chce nas widzieć Bóg", co zapisała w swoich niepublikowanych *Pensées*.

Słowa kluczowe

dziecięca wrażliwość, dziecięce doświadczenie religii, niepublikowane *Pensées*, sakramenty, integracja doświadczeń dziecięcych przez dorosłego, skomplikowana prostota, Wcielenie

> It is strange how for years one can think one is adult in every way yet still be not a child (that would be good) but an utter beginner, an ignoramus in matters of religion. Paradoxically we can only become the *kind* of child God wants us to be by exercising every adult strength and faculty to "know, love and serve God". This is what Eliot means by "Ardour, and selflessness, and self-surrender". Innocence is an unselfconscious given in childhood. When we are grown-up it is a gift we are only offered if we are willing to accept it. And accepting it means the renunciation of *every* kind of possessiveness. (*Pensées* 91)

The many poems Elizabeth Jennings (1926-2001) wrote for children (as exemplified in the collection *A Spell of Words: Selected Poems for Children*, which gathers together poems from all stages of her preceding poetic career) and about childhood, and her appreciation of the young as an audience (Orr 94), are evidence that the child's perspective is an important aspect of her sensibility as a poet. This, of course, has not passed unnoticed. However, the attention paid by critics to images of childhood in the poet's work sometimes suggests that it is a theme that can be isolated from her religious outlook (e.g. Sage 1999: 349). I have argued elsewhere that no aspect of Jennings' oeuvre can be properly understood outside the framework of reference of the faith which she declared to be, alongside her poetry, the most important thing in her life (qtd. in Wheeler 1985: 104; see Ward 2009: 150). The passage from her unpublished *Pensées* quoted above may indicate that this is particularly true of the theme of childhood in her work.

Jennings' *Pensées* – the title, of course, alluding to Pascal – is a series of numbered, sometimes highly intimate though generalised reflections which reveal a variety of aspects of the poet's thinking and inner experience. Besides the remarks quoted above on the relationship between childhood and adulthood, we find thoughts on many subjects which might not seem to be much related to this question, for example on

her personal sense of the trial of loneliness or the value of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. We also find references to the writers she disliked (the Catholic writers Waugh and Greene among them) and to the artists and art that inspired her. I wish to suggest that in fact many of these apparently disparate matters are connected at a deeper level with the poet's vision of the child and childhood. To illustrate this, let us consider *Pensée* 92, which immediately follows the statements quoted above, where Jennings seems to move to an entirely different subject, writing of the "terror [...] at the heart of all great art". She gives as examples not only "*The Waste Land*, *Paradise Lost* (despite its peaceful close), [...], Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida* [sic], *Lear*", but also, emphatically, "*all* of Hopkins". *All*, Jennings writes; but nowhere in the "great art" of this nineteenth-century Jesuit poet do we find the sense of "terror" so clearly expressed as in the so-called "terrible sonnets" of the last period of his life. The language of these poems is at moments more shrieks and cries than words: in the "pangs" of wrenching pain, grief, desolation and despair, the tormented speaker tells of the mind's terrifying "mountains; cliffs of fall / Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed", rebuking the insensibility of those who have not experienced such things: "Hold them cheap / May who ne'er hung there" (100).

There is no doubt of the importance that Jennings attached to Hopkins and his poetry. She included a chapter on him in her study of Western mystical poetry *Every Changing Shape*; she wrote a critical biography of him which remains unpublished, as the editor of Jennings' *Collected Poems*, Emma Mason informs (2012: 964); she named him specifically in the titles of two poems ("Hopkins in Wales", 2012: 238; "Homage to Gerard Manley Hopkins: After Receiving Communion in Hospital", 2012: 801); and she used quotations or near-quotations from the sonnet I have mentioned as titles for at least two others ("The Mind has Wounds", 2012: 843, and "'No worse, there is none'", 2012: 834, two poems from 1957-1966

which remained unpublished until the newest collection, edited by Emma Mason), as well as of the volume *The Mind has Mountains* (1966). This is one of her most painful collections, born out of her experience of mental breakdown and hospitalization (it is an ugly, inhumane word, but one that seems appropriate in the context) in a psychiatric institution.

But what has Jennings' admiration for Hopkins' poetry to do with her vision of childhood? Precisely this: for anyone who might be expecting that vision to be unequivocally paradisal, it is instructive to note that one of the places in her oeuvre in which she most obviously alludes to Hopkins, indeed to the very sonnet I have referred to above, is a probably autobiographical poem about the experience of a *child*, or at least of someone on the cusp of childhood and adolescence. The young person whose experience of confirmation is described in "Whitsun Sacrament" is bewildered, terrified and lonely; the poem explores a depth of desolation equal to what is expressed in any of Hopkins' terrible sonnets, and it is not for nothing that we find here an echo of "No worst, there is none". Hopkins' speaker, "pitched past pitch of grief", cries out in his abandonment: "Comforter, where, where is your comforting?" "Comforter", of course, is one of the names of the Holy Spirit, whose gifts are conferred in the sacrament of confirmation which is the subject of Jennings' poem: Whitsun, Pentecost, being the appropriate moment for its celebration. The line "Spirit, Spirit, where / Are you to be caught now and where be heard", though it repeats not "where", but "Spirit", is sufficiently reminiscent of Hopkins' despairing question as to call it very clearly to mind. "Whitsun Sacrament" emphasises the negative and the absent or soon to be absent: "childhood just about to leave"; "not sure we believe"; questions whose answers do not satisfy; the Spirit, the dove, peace that are sought for and not found; and finally, in the face of our "most need", only "Christ at his silentest" – a phrase that might be regarded as a paraphrase of the experience described in Hopkins' sonnet.

"Whitsun Sacrament" is not the only poem in Jennings' oeuvre in which childhood comes together with an experience of utter desolation. In an even more clearly autobiographical poem, also, significantly, describing the experience of a sacrament, in this case that of penance, or as it now more often known, reconciliation, Jennings looks back on "A Childhood Horror", a "hurt" that lasted "five harsh years" and cast its long shadow "over decades" beyond that (2012: 651-652). Published only in 1992, in *Times and Seasons*, when the poet was well into her sixties, it tells of a confession made when she "was still a child although fifteen" – this detail about her age, and of "listen[ing] to the words within that still / Confessional" suggesting the stark authenticity of a bitter memory. Merely for the "fault" of "large uncertainty / Of my faith's tenets", at a time when she had not even come "Close to grave sin", and even though he gave her absolution, the priest forbade her to receive communion the next day. With the judgment of hindsight, the poet can say, "The priest was twisted, sick", but at the time the consequence was to terrify her, turning her faith to nothing but "fears" and "grief": for the loss of the innocence that in childhood is, as she says in the *Pensée* quoted above, "an unselfconscious given", that "part / That should be left untouched in childhood till / There have been many blows upon the heart".

One rather obvious reading of this poem would find in it principally a protest against the ruination of a happy childhood by the institutional aspects of the Roman Catholic Church. The speaker is well aware that the conduct of the priest was reprehensible in the extreme, placing a "dark shade […] between / Me and the altar"; hindering a child (whose vulnerability is emphasized by the adjective "frail") from coming to Christ, rather than "suffering the little children to come unto [Him]"; exploiting the sense that children have that "they cannot change such things". The poem even begins by sounding something like another kind of "confession", made in adult life

to a therapist, perhaps, by someone who in childhood suffered some kind of abuse at the hands of a priest. It has an element of self-reproach that is common in such circumstances: "I have pretended long, in loyalty. / […] / I *let it* wound my good fragility" [emphasis added]. There is no doubt of the enormity of the priest's failure of trust. On the other hand, however, the phrases I have quoted might also be seen as the beginning of a healing sacramental confession in which a long buried hurt is brought to light and deprived of its continuing power to wound.[1]

Despite the categorical reference to the "part / That should be left untouched in childhood", the following phrase, "till / There have been many blows upon the heart", has a hint of ambiguity which blurs the apparently clear border between childhood and after childhood. Without the word "many", the phrase would place "blows upon the heart" unequivocally in the time after childhood is past; with it, the phrase admits the possibility that *some* blows at least might be inflicted before its end. The consequence of this ambiguity is, if only slightly, to diminish the significance of the priest's conduct, allowing the speaker in a sense to regain control of her experience. By reflecting deeply and honestly on its pain, by acknowledging its long-term consequences (even now, when "Love sings / […] in my spirit", "black moods" may still come), the speaker is finally led to the frankness of a prayer in which she can admit, "God, you meant terror once", and go on from this to interpret the "childhood horror" anew. "Maybe", by showing her by personal experience what "unjust suffering" means, it has led her "close to your mysteries". Earlier, "Gone was liberty"; finally, the liberating grace of the confession empowers her to make a *decision* which sets her free from the incomprehension and passiv-

[1] Another way in which the poem might be viewed is as a kind of post Vatican II corrective to a childhood experience of the sacrament which might have laid undue emphasis on penance at the expense of reconciliation. Jennings was brought up as a "cradle Catholic" in the preconciliar Church.

ity that made her *let* the "childhood hurt" cut so deep into her frailty:

> Deciding this
> I sometimes now am filled with boundless love
> And gratitude from which I've power to build
> Music, the poem and all they are witness of.

That concluding "of" is a daring feat of poetic aplomb. It is like the poet's joyous cry of freedom and assurance: out of the confession of a rending experience of desolation no less "grave" than in Hopkins for being that of a child, the poet has "built" a piece of consummate music, with only two rhyming sounds for each six-line stanza – and deliberately chosen the most insignificant of words, a preposition, to sign off! For when "of" is rhymed with "love", the poem's very form expresses the lifting up of seemingly unimportant and unnoticeable experience – childhood experience, as so often in Jennings – into "boundless" significance.

"A Childhood Horror" refers to the experience of two sacraments: to one by the pain of the way it is administered, to the other by the pain of its being denied. Unlike confirmation, which is the subject of "Whitsun Sacrament", a person may receive these sacraments countless times in the course of a lifetime. Here is what Jennings says, elsewhere in the *Pensées*, distilling the wisdom that incorporates childhood experience but has carried it into adult life and learned to make use of it: "We may *perhaps* be able to remain in a state of grace without frequent communion and confession. What is quite certain is that we cannot stay in a state of *peace* without these sacraments. For they have the power to fuse our wills and our emotions and our intellects. If we do not often receive the graces which these sacraments impart we tend to rely too much on the intellect, to pile up lists of resolutions while our hearts and feelings are elsewhere. The will too tends to grow cold without

the fire of the Blessed Eucharist, the purging flames of penance" (104).

In writing of the pain of "unjust suffering" experienced by a child and its potential to bring a person "close to [God's] mysteries", Jennings is working a line of thought that is familiar in her poetry. "Hurt" (2012: 289-90) recounts the story of an apparently trivial incident at a party, in which the hostess refuses to accept a gift, "small enough / But pretty and picked out with care" for her by her guest, because it comes from Russia. As often in Jennings' work, the incorporation of direct speech ("I do not want it") into the poem, and the deftly sketched details give the incident described the air of authenticity; but at the same time, this deeply hurtful though unspectacular event in the life of the person recounting it becomes an image of all the intentional and unintentional injuries that human beings are capable of inflicting on one another in everyday life.

"They do not mean to hurt, I think", is how Jennings begins the poem; and those words might also sum up her attitude to the priest in "A Childhood Horror". There is never any rancour in her accounts of pain suffered at the hands of others; but this does not diminish her sense of the seriousness of the wrong done. In "Hurt", it is for "lack of charity", the cardinal sin in Jennings' book, for "this kind of thing [that] is worse than Lust // And other Deadly Sins" (that enjambment over the stanza break somehow downplays the whole concept of the Deadly Sins in relation to the real sin) that "Christ sweated blood". Importantly, the particular pain that the poem draws attention to within the "greater pain" of the Saviour's suffering on the Cross, is the one that *"a hurt child shows"* [emphasis added]. Thus, in this attempt to imagine the Crucifixion, the theological truth of the identification of Christ with human beings is revealed in a comparison of His pain with that of a child.

In the various traditions of Catholic meditation, the unknown, everyday suffering of the ordinary and little regarded is taken up into the suffering of Christ, borne for and with human beings on the Cross. Jennings was deeply familiar with these traditions, and in her poetry their influence can often be felt in her sensitivity to the frailty and helplessness of children. This is why, in "A Childhood Horror", the child's "unjust suffering" becomes a means of drawing near to God's "mysteries": the mystery of the Cross. "Hurt" is written in *terza rima*, a form that raises the dignity of the seemingly undramatic subject. In its final line, standing like the final lines of Dante's cantos outside the tercet framework, yet linked with the whole sequence of thought by the sentence construction and rhyme, we may find a structural confirmation of the deep seriousness with which the poem regards all suffering, beginning, perhaps even ending, with the hurts of childhood, which remain where "the heart / Stores up all things that have been done // "And though forgiven, don't depart".

Is it perhaps in this way, by "stor[ing] up all things that have been done", not in order to grieve continually over them but to bring them to the Cross, that the adult whom the child becomes may learn (or re-learn) to be "the *kind* of child God wants us to be"? But this cannot be done without recalling or rediscovering the abandoned provinces of the world of childhood, which in Jennings' poetry is so much more capacious and mysterious than adults seem to realise. In "Children and Death", the poem's "they" are evidently adults, of whom the "we" declare: "Nor do they know our games have room enough / For death and sickness" (2012: 106). "They", the poem suggests, do not understand that the secret world of childhood is at home with those experiences that adults would shield it from, preferring the "dear familiar darkness" to the "light" placed by the child's bed to keep that darkness at bay. In the poem "A Bird in the House", recorded on *The Poetry Archive* in Jennings' own reading, this ability of the child to accommodate

death, in a way that the poet calls "callous but wise", is dramatized in a tale of a dead pet canary ritually placed "in a cardboard egg": "That day we buried our bird / With a sense of fitness, not knowing death would be hard / Later, dark, without form or purpose" (2012: 500).

In an early poetic sequence entitled "The Clown", Jennings reflects on the experience of watching a circus performance, and makes the clown a figure that "strangely […] remind[s] / Of Christ on the cross", a figure with something of profound significance to say "concerning pain". At the same time, the poem implies that it needs the "utmost concentration" of a *child's* watching, "the way / A child will watch until the view enchants / And he is lost in it", to hear what the clown has to say (2012: 103). The poem seems obliquely to recall the warning of Jesus: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3); but it does so by focusing on a quality of the child that homilists explicating this text may not usually have in mind: the ability to be enchanted out of the surrounding world and lose oneself in an eternal moment. It is this ability that offers access to things generally hidden from the eye of the adult; we may be reminded of another Gospel text that points to the wisdom available to the child: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11: 25). "Time halts" for the child as he "stares at the stars", though he "does not know / Their names"; he is taken out of himself, "possessed / By dispossession" in a way that only the experience of falling in love can restore to him in adult life ("A Child in the Night", 2012: 380).

In the original *Pensées*, Pascal laments the human inability to live in the present, which might be regarded as the particular curse of adulthood:

> We do not rest satisfied with the present. We anticipate the future as too slow in coming, as if in order to hasten its course; or we re-

> call the past, to stop its too rapid flight [...]. Let each one examine his thoughts, and he will find them all occupied with the past and the future. We scarcely ever think of the present; and if we think of it, it is only to take light from it to arrange the future. The present is never our end. [...] So we never live, but we hope to live; and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so. (*Pensées* 172)

In "The Bright Field", R. S. Thomas presents essentially the same thought in poetic terms, with one of his dizzying enjambments across a stanza break: "Life is not hurrying // on to a receding future, nor hankering after / an imagined past". Rather, it is "the turning / aside like Moses to the miracle / of the lit bush" (1993: 302). It is the present – unlike the past or the future – which can become an image of eternity, of a world released from the constraints of time, a world in which it is possible to wonder. As suggested in my comments above on "The Clown", in the life of the child there is not the sense that so weighs on the mind of the adult, of what Eliot in "Burnt Norton" calls the world's "metalled ways / Of time past and time future" (1969: 174). So in the same Quartet, the poet sums up the yearning to be unshackled from those "metalled ways", to be able to "turn aside" and walk out of history's relentless linear progress, in the image of "the hidden laughter / Of children in the foliage" (Eliot 1969: 176). We find a very similar image in a poem from Jennings' penultimate collection, *Praises* (1998), whose title, "Concerning History", seems to point not in the direction of eternity at all, but towards the time-bound sublunary world that adults know. Remarkably, "history" is imagined here, with a fanfare of integrating sound effects (alliteration, assonance, consonance and internal rhyme), as "the child / In a green wood in a gold flower in a white hour" (2012: 786). So, alongside many accounts of ordinary childhood experiences, we find in Jennings an idea of childhood as a gateway to what is outside the ordinary temporal world, giving on to a "view" that may "enchant" us and

release us from ourselves into a world of wonder in which, to invoke Eliot again, "all is always now" (1969: 175).

In "Concerning History", however, the injunction that follows the image of the child in the greenwood, "Don't let grey come banging the door," with its rude and brutal stress on "banging," suggests how fragile, how threatened, is this vision of the eternal. In Jennings' humble and compassionate listening to the world, including the world of childhood, there is never anything smug or naïve. Her sensitivity to the child's vulnerability is perhaps particularly noticeable in her treatment of the theme of Christmas, which incorporates both the apparently trivial trappings of the Feast and the wonder of its profoundly mysterious theological meaning. But whatever the approach, there is always a sense of the child's susceptibility to hurt. One poem calls to mind the disappointment of an ordinary child, dubbed "a sulky little boy" by the adults around him, at the sad failure of the celebration to live up to the excitement of expectation: "I've planned what I'll give everyone and what they'll give to me, / And then on Christmas morning all / The presents seem to be // Useless and tarnished" ("Christmas", 2012: 233). This poem, however, might possibly hint that the disappointment is the fault of the adults; perhaps it is they who have failed to focus on the season's true mystery and in so doing have spoilt it for the child. "Christmas too / No longer seems to mean // The hush, the star, the baby, people being kind again" might express in a child's language a sense of why "things all go wrong" when Christmas finally arrives.
"Christmas" is spoken from a child's point of view. In many other poems, Jennings dwells from an adult perspective on the mystery by which "God took time and entered history" ("A Christmas Sequence", 2012: 637). The poet emphasises "all that littleness, […] all that tiny flesh" of the child whose "manger is the universe's cradle" ("Christmas Suite in Five Movements", 2012: 450-452), who "made a world where even children fit / For he was innocent" ("A Christmas Sequence",

2012: 638). The conflation of the nativity with the crucifixion continually reminds us of the smallness, powerlessness and vulnerability of the Christ-child, who in these respects is no different from any other child: "Cradle Catholic" addresses to Christ the words: "To make life simplified / You were a little child who died", (2012: 131). "Christmas Poem 1974" begins with an astonishing backward sweep: "Once more you climb down from the cross / Back through the thirty years and lie / Within a young girl's large embrace / And warmed by wonder" (2012: 390). On the other hand, "Christmas Suite in Five Movements" concludes by looking forward from the tiny child in the manger to the "daily bread" of the Lord's Prayer and the Eucharistic Host: "God, you have made a victory for the lost. / Give us this daily Bread, this little Host" (2012: 452). In this final phrase, the "little Host" is both the child who welcomes us at the crib, "where the poor of heart receive all gifts / The universe can offer" ("Hymn at the Crib", "A Christmas Sequence", 2012: 659), and the sacrificially given Eucharistic body of Christ.

These are poems in which theological depth combines with an apparent simplicity of expression. Simplicity, indeed, is a recurrent motif in Jennings' work and a recurrent word in her vocabulary; it is a quality that she values highly and commonly connects with childhood. However, she presents it as, incomprehensibly, both familiar and profoundly "strange" – a word with which it is frequently paired. In "Our Lady's Lullaby", Mary exclaims: "O power subdued to flesh of mine, / How tangible is our exchange. / From me the milk, then you in wine. / Simplicity, O you are strange" (2012: 385). Simplicity, the name Mary gives here to her child, is inexplicably, unutterably complex at the same time. In "Interior Music. The poetry of the plainspoken", Clive James makes "complex simplicity", brought about by the poem's "interior music", his criterion of poetic quality. He does not mention Jennings in this context; but he well might do. In her poetry, simple language,

usually uncomplex sentences and a direct, conversational tone, frequently with features of colloquial speech, such as contractions, combine with intricately though unobtrusively crafted poetic forms which exploit an endless variety of rhythmic effects and sound qualities (as for example in the *terza rima* of "Hurt"). Reflections on ordinary everyday experience lead the reader into the heart of the Gospel teachings and the meaning of Christ's Passion. And at the heart of this complex simplicity is the mystery of the Incarnation – of God who became Man as a little *child*, who alone can teach us how to "become the *kind* of child God wants us to be", accepting the restored gift of innocence and its necessary concomitant: "the renunciation of *every* kind of possessiveness".

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Jean Ward
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
angjmw@ug.edu.pl

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Neither useful nor useless: The child in Kate Chopin's fiction

MONIKA DACA

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyze the figure of a child in the fiction of Kate Chopin, an American proto-feminist writer, on the example of her novel *The Awakening* and three short stories: "Beyond the Bayou", "Désirée's Baby" and "Ripe Figs". Characters are analyzed here in terms of James Phelan's mimetic, thematic and synthetic components as well as character's dimensions and functions. It is argued that children in Chopin's fiction contribute to the development of the narrative by transforming the dimensions of adult characters into their functions. Chopin portrays two types of children common in the literature of the period: the economically useful child (a little laborer) and the economically useless but emotionally priceless child (a mascot). A third type of child emerges especially in Chopin's short stories: the child that is extremely useful in psychological and moral terms. This figure adds moral depth to the narratives, prompts the adult characters to evolve and serves as a source of in-text instabilities or as a medium of transferring the narrative tensions. The child's psychological and moral value on the level of the plot translates into their narrative significance on the level of story construction.

Key words

child, usefulness, uselessness, Kate Chopin, dimension, function

Ani przydatne, ani nieprzydatne – dziecko w twórczości Kate Chopin

Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia znaczenie postaci dziecka w twórczości amerykańskiej pisarki proto-feministycznej Kate Chopin na przykładzie powieści *Przebudzenie* (*The Awakening*) oraz trzech opowiadań: *Beyond the Bayou*, *Désirée's Baby* i *Ripe Figs*. Podstawą analizy postaci jest podejście Jamesa Phelana, opisujące mimetyczne, tematyczne i syntetyczne elementy postaci literackich i wprowadzające pojęcia ich aspektów oraz funkcji. Dzieci w twórczości Chopin przyczyniają się do rozwoju narracji poprzez przekształcanie aspektów postaci dorosłych w ich funkcje. Chopin konstruuje dwa typy postaci dziecięcych powszechne w literaturze jej epoki: dziecko przydatne ekonomicznie (małego robotnika) oraz dziecko nieprzydatne gospodarczo, ale bezcenne pod względem emocjonalnym (maskotkę). Ponadto szczególnie w opowiadaniach pisarki pojawia się trzeci rodzaj dziecka: bohater o wielkim znaczeniu psychologicznym i moralnym. Ta postać nadaje opowieści moralną głębię, motywuje rozwój i przemianę postaci dorosłych, a także stanowi źródło wewnątrztekstowych niestabilności lub pełni funkcję środka przekazu napięć narracyjnych. Psychologiczna i moralna wartość postaci dziecięcych na poziomie fabularnym przekłada się na ich znaczenie na poziomie konstrukcji opowiadań.

Słowa kluczowe

dziecko, przydatność, nieprzydatność, Kate Chopin, aspekt postaci, funkcja postaci

Kate Chopin, born in 1850 in St. Louis, Missouri, was an American proto-feminist writer best known for her works exploring the subject of discovering female identity and rebelling against the cultural norms governing the thoroughly male-dominated South. The aim of the present article is to discuss the motif of a child in Chopin's fiction. It will be argued that Chopin introduces young characters into her works in a number of functions, all of which are crucial for the development of a given story.

It might be appropriate to start the analysis with some preliminary comments on Chopin's attitude to children and literature. The author wrote over 100 short stories, about a third of which were labelled as "children's stories". It is vital to observe, though, that this categorization is based mainly on the fact that the stories in question were published in children's or family magazines, such as *Harper's Young People* or *Youth's Companion*. Nevertheless, Chopin never ventured to write a classical fairy tale story: she held strong belief that children and teenagers should not be protected from the 'dangers' of serious, adult literature, hence she tried to construct her children's stories in a very mature, elegant style, similar to the one that she employed to write stories too perverse to be published at the time. Chopin considered children conscious readers, keen observers and reflective beings. It is not surprising, therefore, that in her fiction the figure of the child is typically portrayed with reverence and certain gravitas: "[t]hroughout her writings, young people feature as subjects in their own right, as metaphor and as the focus for far-reaching reflections on psychological, cultural or historical possibilities" (Knights 2008: 45). Indeed, Chopin constructed young characters in her stories and novels not as embellishments or markers of verisimilitude, but as vital elements of the narrative influencing its progression.

In analyzing the figure of the child in Chopin's fiction, James Phelan's theory on literary characters proves especially

useful, as the realist works of the writer resist methods of interpretations relying on perceiving literary characters as purely artificial constructs, utterly separated from real human beings. As Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga and Jadwiga Węgrodzka rightly observe: "In contrast to scholars who refuse to grant characters any similarity to real persons, Phelan attempts to accommodate the well-known tendency of the readers to treat character as such" (Terentowicz-Fotyga, Węgrodzka 2015: 17). In *Reading People, Reading Plots. Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative* (1989), Phelan distinguishes three components of the character: mimetic, thematic and synthetic. It is the mimetic element that refers to the aforementioned plausibility of a given character and it is the prerequisite of an efficient mimetic illusion. Non-professional readers, represented by narrative audience (term borrowed by Phelan from Peter Rabinowitz), tend to perceive characters as real people, whose appearance, behavior and background cannot differ radically from their own, if they are to be plausible; this kind of perception is possible solely in the cases of characters with well-developed mimetic elements. The thematic component adds a symbolic depth to a character, showing her as a representative of an idea, belief, group or class larger than the character herself. Finally, the synthetic element points to the fact that each literary character is in fact a constructed figure belonging to the fictional world. The artificiality of characters tends to be unnoticed by those who enjoy the mimetic illusion, but while the synthetic may be more or less foregrounded, it is always present (Phelan 1989: 3).

Furthermore, Phelan proposes a distinction between functions and dimensions of characters:

> A dimension is any attribute a character may be said to possess when that character is considered in isolation from the work in which he or she appears. A function is a particular application of that attribute made by the text through its developing structure. (Phelan 1989: 9)

Therefore, the progression of a given narrative contributes to transforming dimensions into functions, though not all dimensions undergo this kind of conversion. Interestingly, dimensions and functions apply to all three components, but in the case of the synthetic, every dimension is necessarily also a synthetic function (Phelan 1989: 14). Finally, Phelan introduces one more significant distinction: between tensions and instabilities. Tensions are certain divergences created by discourse of a given work, discrepancies "of value, belief, opinion, knowledge, expectation – between authors and/or narrators, on the one hand, and the authorial audience on the other" (Phelan 1989: 15). These tensions are not to be mistaken with instabilities, phenomena of similar nature to tensions, but occurring within the story. Instabilities happen between the characters, they are caused by fictional situations and may be complicated or resolved in the course of the action. Phelan's theory will serve as a theoretical framework for the subsequent discussion of the child in Kate Chopin's fiction.

The title of this article may appear misleading, or at least confusing, but there is a method to it. In 1994, sociologist Viviana Zelizer published a book entitled *Pricing a Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, in which she argued that between the 1870s and the 1930s there was a shift in the social and cultural significance of children. The change involved moving from perceiving a child as economically useful to seeing it as economically useless, yet emotionally priceless. Zelizer proves that American children had always worked and it was not until the end of the 19th century that child labor began to be commonly seen as morally wrong. Reformers struggled to eliminate the image of a useful child: the one that helps parents not only with housework, but also earns money in factories and on farms. Thus emerged the modern child, economically useless but of great emotional value. This useless child no longer works, and its main function is to bring joy to the family and whole community. The shift from useful to use-

less child, as one can imagine, deals with extremes, and therefore its implications were often extreme as well. The useless child was frequently presented as having ornamental rather than practical function: the child was supposed to be beautiful and adorable, to play instruments or recite poems, to stay quiet in the presence of adults and to be as thoughtless as possible. This new approach resulted, among other things, in the excessive protection of children against "adult" problems, such as those described in the aforementioned ambitious literature, allegedly inappropriate for young readers. Kate Chopin clearly opposed this idea. She recognized the problem of both useful and useless child, and addressed it, among other works, in her second novel, *The Awakening*.

In *Kate Chopin and the subject of childhood* (2008), Pamela Knights highlights the importance of the fact that Chopin presented two strikingly different girls in *The Awakening*: an African American girl employed by one of the characters and an upper-class girl whose sole task is dancing at an elegant party. The former child is, in fact, mentioned only in passing in the description of her employer's activity:

> Madame Lebrun was busily engaged at the sewing-machine. A little black girl sat on the floor, and with her hands worked the treadle of the machine. The Creole woman does not take any chances which may be avoided of imperilling her health. (Chopin 2015: 414)

This brief introduction of the child figure indicates that the girl is not perceived by Madame Lebrun – or any other adult present in the room – as a complete, valuable being with her own identity, but rather as a purely functional tool. The ironic sentence on the nature of wealthy Creole women strengthens this idea, signalling that imperilling a black servant's health would be perfectly acceptable. The girl does not possess any mimetic function of her own in the novel: her role is perhaps to enhance the plausibility of Madame Lebrun as an upper-class

lady. Nevertheless, the thematic dimension, later turned into function, is clearly visible, as the child represents the oppressed young laborers. Just a few pages further in the narrative, another girl is presented, and her description is somewhat more developed:

> A little girl performed a skirt dance in the center of the floor. The mother played her accompaniments and at the same time watched her daughter with greedy admiration and nervous apprehension. She need have had no apprehension. The child was mistress of the situation. She had been properly dressed for the occasion in black tulle and black silk tights. (Chopin 2015: 417)

Interestingly, also this child is presented predominantly in relation to adults: the girl is supposed to be a charming object of everyone's awe, which is prompted by her mother's "greedy admiration" and concern with whether the performance is successful or not. Hence the mimetic dimensions, although more developed than in the case of the servant, are transformed into thematic functions and once again focused primarily on how the child performs its designed role in the society. Due to her status as a member of white upper class, the dancer's function happens to be solely decorative.

Obviously, by juxtaposing the thematic functions of both girls, Chopin comments powerfully on the class and race inequality.[1] Simultaneously, though, she presents the two radically different types of the American child, later characterized by Zelizer: a little laborer and a mascot. However, I would argue that in general Chopin recognizes and frequently describes yet another type of a child: a child neither economically useful, nor reduced to purely entertaining and ornamental role. This third type in Chopin's fiction can be viewed as extremely useful, but in psychological and moral rather than economic terms.

[1] On racial inequalities and slavery in "The Awakening" see Ewell (1999).

In Chopin's "Beyond the Bayou", a short story about overcoming mental boundaries, the protagonist, La Folle, is a middle-aged black woman who lives in a cabin near a plantation and never crosses the bayou separating her from the outer world.[2] Traumatized in childhood, La Folle cannot cope with the fear and has little contact with the outside, but is frequently visited by Chéri, a 10-year-old son of the plantation owner. She genuinely loves the child and the boy adores and respects her. One day, Chéri accidentally shoots himself in the leg and La Folle immediately takes him to the verge of the bayou and shouts for help. Not hearing any response, she decides to carry the youth to the doctor, crossing the ultimate boundary and, by the same token, overcoming her limitations. The child, therefore, is an instrument of deep transition here, as it enables La Folle to defeat a phobia cultivated for approximately forty years. However, this aiding function of the boy is not limited to fighting a minor space-related fear – a mere inconvenience. Indeed, having crossed the bayou, La Folle explores a whole new world, which provides her with the new identity: no longer treated as a madwoman, she becomes a conscious, accepted member of the community. Furthermore, she decides to visit convalescing Chéri at his home, making a powerful statement by knocking on the door of the plantation owners. La Folle, a slave, performs an act which may be viewed as highly symbolic: she crosses the boundary between herself and the white upper class. The act of crossing the bayou, made possible by the affection towards the boy, becomes a sort of a revelation: "A look of wonder and deep content crept into her face as she watched for the first time the sun rise upon the new, the beautiful world beyond the bayou" (Chopin 2015: 67). This kind of revelation may lead La Folle to a great disappointment, which is prompted to the authorial audience by a literary allusion to Shakespeare's Miranda's fascination with the "brave new world". The white world may not be as wonder-

[2] See Dara (1996).

ful for the old black slave as she expects it to be. However, even if the description of her wonder on the newly discovered world is ironic, there is no doubt that the new perspective, whether blissful or not, would not have been gained if it was not for the child. Once she overcomes her fear of the outer world, everything seems possible.

"Beyond the Bayou" exemplifies a technique applied frequently in Chopin's stories: the effect of the emotional and psychological usefulness of the child is obtained by the young character's contribution to the development of adult characters and of the narrative itself. As the relationship between the child and the adult character usually requires certain action on the part of the latter, the child (or its needs, to be more specific) propels the progression of the narrative, which – in turn – enables the conversion of adults' dimensions into their functions. The conversion is not particularly smooth in Chopin's works, it usually involves major changes in characters' fictional situation. It can be argued that La Folle's main distinguishing mimetic dimension is her fear. However, it is signaled that she also has other hidden attributes, bravery and self-consciousness, which, due to her love of Chéri, are transformed into a mimetic function. The function, moreover, has not only a mimetic nature, but is also of deep thematic significance, as it encompasses the development of a new, more aware approach of the slave towards her white masters.

The motif of children helping adults in gaining a certain kind of freedom and identity is frequently deployed in Chopin's fiction, but not always in such heartfelt and at least apparently positive narratives as "Beyond the Bayou". In "Désirée's Baby", an infant serves as a cause of tragedy. Young and beautiful Désirée, whose origin is unknown, marries a wealthy and respected man, Armand, and gives birth to a child, whose skin is a little too dark. Furious Armand deduces that his wife must have a drop of black blood, and, incapable of handling such a disgrace, expels both the mother and the child. Although

Désirée is supposed to go back to her mother's house, she disappears in the forest, never to be seen again. It finally turns out that it is Armand who is partially black, but the calamity cannot be undone. The innocent baby leads, in a crooked way, to the discovery by the male protagonist of an unwanted – and, in his opinion, degrading – racial identity, which is by no means a positive experience.[3]

Moreover, the story features one more vital young character. Désirée notices the otherness of her baby only when she observes a one-fourth black boy fanning the infant. The similarity of their skin color strikes her and leaves her speechless. The quadroon boy, this little obedient slave, becomes a silent proof, a medium revealing the harsh truth. Although clearly innocent and unaware of conveying a calamitous message, the two boys constitute an axis of the family tragedy. Furthermore, the skin color of both boys is much more than just their mimetic attribute: it is a thematic dimension, transformed by the progression into the thematic function. The boys constitute telling elements in the discussion of the problem of race, becoming bearers of the racial history and victims of the oppressive southern society of the white upper class.

On the level of the narrative structure, another vital mechanism comprising the child's contribution to the progression is employed. The major narrative instability in the text is the one between Désirée and Armand and it is caused by the discovery that the baby is black. The resulting action constitutes the most significant move of the story's progression. Désirée's mimetic and thematic dimensions (such as her unknown origin and position in the society) are transformed into functions – even though the functions rely on the false assumption that Désirée has a drop of black blood. The satisfactory resolution of the instability is not granted by the author: Armand learns

[3] On the subject of race in Kate Chopin's fiction see Goodwyn (1994) and Taylor (1989). The notion of the drop of black blood in "Désirée's Baby", as well as in other works of American fiction, is explored by Palumbo-DeSimone (2002).

the truth and so do the readers, but Désirée is already gone at the time and in all probability she dies unconscious of the groundlessness of her husband's accusations. In this sense, the story achieves closure, but not completeness. As proposed by Phelan, closure "refers to the way in which a narrative signals its end, whereas completeness refers to the degree of resolution accompanying the closure" (Phelan 1989: 17-18). Ultimately, then, the infant in "Désirée's Baby" causes the unresolvable instability which is central to the whole progression. Similarly to Chéri in "Beyond the Bayou", the baby serves as a motivation for converting certain adult characters' dimensions into functions.

As mentioned above, Chopin constructs young characters not as mere additions to adults, but as active and often quite reflective agents. "Ripe Figs" is an excellent one-page long story, published in 1893 in Vogue. It describes a process of waiting: Babette, a girl, is promised by her godmother that she will be able to visit her cousins "when the figs were ripe" (Chopin 2015: 241). The girl waits impatiently (or so it seems at the beginning), but reasonably: she examines the trees carefully every day, checking the leaves and the fruit, as well as musing on the weather. When the figs are finally ripe, she takes great effort to present her godmother with the proof that the terms of the contract have been fulfilled. The child is therefore not discouraged by the abstractness or ridiculousness of the deal, but approaches it in a mature and, out of necessity, patient way, and eventually has enough courage and reason to assert her rights. It is worth noting, moreover, that presenting and executing the deal, the godmother treats the child in a bizarre way: on the one hand, she uses the extraordinary method of counting time and expects the child to follow it, and on the other, she is surprised when the girl announces that the time has come. The aunt relies on idiosyncratic, poetic, if not immature, discourse, whereas Babette respects the terms of the

agreement, which makes her an active and thoughtful character.

Indeed, the analysis of particular components of the characters of Babette and the godmother, Maman-Nainaine, reveals an interesting paradox. Babette, despite clearly being the actant and main protagonist of the story, is not described in terms of physical appearance or habits. The weird godmother, on the other hand, vaguely resembling a typical fairy-tale figure and thereby displaying a synthetic dimension, is presented from various perspectives. Readers learn, for example, that she had a "muslin cap standing like an aureole about her white, placid face" (Chopin 2015: 241), but also that she frequently used strange references to nature as a method of counting time. In fact, the ripening of figs was not the only instance of this tendency, as the godmother mentions also meeting her relative "when the chrysanthemums are in bloom" (Chopin 2015: 241). This mysterious mimetic dimension of the character, strengthening only her synthetic dimension, is moreover a source of a major tension presented in the text. Indeed, the godmother's discursive singularity constitutes something that the readers do not understand. The lack of shared knowledge between the narrator and the audience is subsequently affirmed and its importance is amplified, because the information on the terms of the agreement is followed by an interesting assertion: "Not that the ripening of figs had the least thing to do with it, but that is the way Maman-Nainaine was" (Chopin 2015: 241). At the same time, the tension cannot be perceived as an in-text instability, because Babette is well aware of Maman-Nainaine's habit, which she confirms by following the aunt's instructions imperturbably, without questioning their reasonableness. Hence even though the girl's action does not result in resolving the tension (because eventually the readers do not receive a satisfactory explanation of the aunt's behavior), her character undoubtedly constitutes a kind of platform on which the tension is mediated, and therefore

she contributes to the story's uncertainty and mysteriousness. Undoubtedly, the importance of the figure of the child in the story is based on a different mechanism than those presented in "Beyond the Bayou" or "Désirée's Baby". The child does not propel the narrative progression by means of the transformation of certain adults' dimensions into functions, but rather by acting as the medium of transferring the narrative tension.

The nonobvious nature of the characters' presentation in "Ripe Figs" is signaled at one more point. The narrator mentions that "Maman-Nainaine was as patient as the statue of la Madone, and Babette as restless as a humming-bird" (Chopin 2015: 241). If the sentence appears to be accurate at a certain point of the narrative (i.e. at the beginning of the description of the waiting process), the course of the events eventually proves that quite the opposite is true: real patience characterizes the girl. This obvious contradiction is perhaps the most noticeable manifestation of the synthetic components and functions of both characters; a procedure especially telling, as such mechanisms are extremely rare in the prose of Chopin, deeply rooted in realist traditions.[4]

After publishing *The Awakening* and such stories as "A Pair of Silk Stockings", Kate Chopin met with fierce criticism as far as her portrayals of mothers and children were concerned. She was attacked for introducing characters of mothers who loved their children "sometimes" or only to a certain extent. The outrage of Chopin's contemporaries towards her description of motherly love resulted in an unjust but widespread belief that the author treated the figure of child – and, by implication, children as such – with disregard. However, such voices of criticism clearly neglect all the instances of representing children as active, intelligent and vital for the development of Chopin's stories. Some of the children in her fiction were indeed more passive than the others, and many were not in fact described in great detail – as Pamela Knights observes, "in the area of

[4] On realism in Chopin's fiction see, e.g., Skaggs (1988).

childhood, as in others, Chopin's texts are never univocal but (…) work with a rich, and often contradictory, range of materials, taking up concerns of widespread contemporary interest" (Knights 2008: 46). In numerous cases, the children's mimetic components do not rely greatly on personal attributes, but rather on their relationships with adult characters. What contributes most to their plausibility is the affection they receive, and their obvious dependence on their caretakers. Even though Chopin not always addressed such issues directly, she constructed her children characters upon a conviction that the extra-textual knowledge of the audience will suffice to fill the descriptive gaps or those created by intended understatements. The brief descriptions apply especially to those young characters whose thematic functions are foregrounded (such as the two girls in *The Awakening*). As argued above, however, even such scarcely described characters may have a crucial function in Chopin's fiction.

All in all, the child in Chopin's fiction is neither economically useful nor decorative – it is always incorporated into a given story for a very significant reason, as it is often the figure of a child that contributes to clarifying the mechanisms regulating the adult world, as well as to adding certain moral and psychological depth to the story. Additionally, the usefulness of children in Chopin's fiction is not restricted to their psychological and moral pricelessness on the level of the plot, but it also translates into their narrative significance on the level of story construction, as they contribute greatly to the progression of the narrative.

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Monika Daca
Filologiczne Studia Doktoranckie
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
monika.zanko@gmail.com

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Children's theatricals and other games in E. Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle* and David Almond's *Kit's Wilderness*

JADWIGA WĘGRODZKA

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Abstract

The motif of children-characters making a theatrical performance, found in many children's texts, is considered on the basis of E. Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) and David Almond's *Kit's Wilderness* (1999) where it is made parallel with children's other playful activities. Though an improvised performance in Nesbit's humorous novel contrasts with a controlled and structured activity in Almond's more sombre text, the two books share a metafictional interest in the power of imagination and its relation to hidden aspects of reality. Play-as-performance is also parallel to other games which introduce elements of the fantastic, of metaleptic transgression, and of ritual initiation. Both novels link childhood, imagination and creativity in a way reminiscent of Romantic ideas.

Key words

E. Nesbit, David Almond, *The Enchanted Castle*, *Kit's Wilderness*, play, game, performance

Zabawy teatralne w powieściach *The Enchanted Castle* E. Nesbit i *Kit's Wilderness* Davida Almonda

Abstrakt

Obecny w wielu tekstach motyw teatralnego przedstawienia organizowanego przez dzieci omawiany jest na przykładzie powieści E. Nesbit *Zaczarowany zamek* (1907) oraz *Powrót z bezkresu* (1999) Davida Almonda. Oba teksty ustanawiają ekwiwalencję między przedstawieniem, mającym wiele cech zabawy, a innymi czynnościami dzieci. Choć wiele różni humorystyczną powieść Nesbit od znacznie poważniejszego tekstu Almonda, łączą je motywy metafikcyjne oraz zainteresowanie mocą wyobraźni zwłaszcza w relacji do ukrytych wymiarów rzeczywistości. Inne zabawowe czynności dziecięcych postaci wprowadzają elementy fantastyczne, metalepsję, a także sugerują rytuał inicjacji. Obie powieści wykorzystują motywy dzieciństwa, wyobraźni i twórczości w sposób bliski paradygmatowi romantycznemu.

Słowa kluczowe

E. Nesbit, David Almond, *Zaczarowany zamek*, *Powrót z bezkresu*, zabawa, gra, przedstawienie

1. Introduction

Play remains most firmly associated with children even though evolutionary perspectives make it obvious that play is natural for many animals[1] while sociological studies provide various examples of play in adult behaviour. There are many different approaches to play in human cultures and in the specific context of childhood, many ways of classifying it, as well as numerous and historically changeable attitudes to this phenome-

[1] Compare Chapters 3 and 4 devoted to animal play in *Children's Play: Understanding Children's Worlds* by Peter K. Smith (2010: 41-60).

non.[2] It is interesting to note that the Puritan tradition made play suspicious in Britain from the seventeenth to early nineteenth century. For example, Isaac Watts's poems for children *Divine and Moral Songs* (1715) refer to "wanton play" (in Song 18) and contrast it with positive examples of childhood piety which the poems seek to inculcate (Węgrodzka 2016: 467-8). At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the writer and educator Maria Edgeworth approved of play only if it followed the child's faithful discharge of all duties: for example, in her moral tale "Lazy Lawrence" a virtuous boy enjoys a ball game with his friends only after 10 to 12 hours of work in the garden (Edgeworth 1897: 34). The Victorian period vindicated and even sentimentalised children; play was recognised as a legitimate, desirable and endearing aspect of childhood. Sports activities (especially for boys) were seen as valuable in personal and social development of children while imaginative games of make-believe became an emblem of childhood and – with a bow towards Romanticism – aligned childhood with creativity. The cultural importance of play in relation to children is confirmed by the fact that such famous children's books as R.L. Stevenson's *The Treasure Island* (1883), J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904) or E. Nesbit's *The Magic City* (1910) derive from elaborate make-believe games played by adults with children while other texts more or less directly celebrate children's imagination as a creative power: for instance, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Mrs. Molesworth's *The Cuckoo Clock* (1877) or Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess* (1905).

I want to examine the motif of children's play in a more specialised sense of theatrical performance on the basis of E. Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) and David Almond's *Kit's Wilderness* (1999). While the two books are divided by many

[2] For cultural significance of play compare the classic book *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* by Johan Huizinga; for an overview of definitions and attitudes to play see Smith (2010: 21-40).

obvious differences, they also share a metafictional interest in the power of imagination and link childhood, imagination and creativity in way reminiscent of Romantic ideas. I also intend to prove that play-as-performance and children's other games in the analysed novels serve to introduce elements of the fantastic, of metaleptic transgression, and of ritual initiation.

2. Children's theatricals

While in Polish there are two different words to distinguish between a child's play (*zabawa*) and a theatrical play (*sztuka*), in English one can use the word *play* for both. This double sense of the word "play" serves as a starting point of the present article which considers the motif of children putting on theatrical plays in two novels divided by nearly a century: E. Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle* from 1907 and David Almond's *Kit's Wilderness* from 1999. In analysing children-characters' activities I will use elements of structural and semiotic analysis of aspects of the story world and the level of discourse, and refer to Roger Caillois's classification of various types of play. A comparative analysis of the novels will present similarities and differences in the authors' treatment of play, imagination and creativity.

Johan Huizinga's comprehensive definition of play in *Homo ludens* includes performances as a type of play covered by his research:

> [...] play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is "different" from "ordinary life". Thus defined, the concept seemed capable of embracing everything we call "play" in animals, children and grown-ups: games of strength and skill, inventing games, guessing games, games of chance, exhibitions and performances of all kinds. (Huizinga 1949: 28)

Other researchers highlight imaginative aspects of play. For instance, Wincenty Okoń in *Zabawa i rzeczywistość* defines play as an activity motivated by pleasure and based on imagination creating a new reality (1987: 44). He considers playing as a way of relating to consensual reality and of experiencing it not only in a pleasurable mode but also in terms of harmony between the human being and his or her world.

Children's games and theatrical performances share many features: they require special time and space as well as the presence of certain rules (script); they aim at providing enjoyment or fun. Moreover, both impose on the participant a secondary (fictional) personality (Cieślikowski 1985: 215) and involve an allotment of roles. Also both impose on the ordinary space some imaginary or extraordinary "superstructure" (1985: 215) and both definitely have creational character since the illusion of a different world has to be constantly supported. A child's play and a theatrical play can be repeated – though without producing identical realisations. In spite of similarities, Jerzy Cieślikowski claims that in a child's play a total merging of the primary personality with its secondary – playful – role does not entail theatricality since the play is not aimed at any outside viewer:

> The act of a perfect fusion with the imaginary, while no attention is spared for the preparation of scenery or for the presence of the outside (or inside) observer – may only concern an individual game involving one single player. Already with two players – even if linked in the most perfect agreement – there appears a need for some external considerations, which may involve at least some measure of control of oneself and the playing companion, or else may concern new suggestions. (Cieślikowski 1985: 218, trans. J. W.)

According to Cieślikowski, every game involving more than one player, may be called theatrical. The scholar stresses that such a game must have a script defining the required roles, the type

of imaginary imposition, and even rudiments of dialogic exchanges (Cieślikowski 1985: 218).

Out of a great number of narratives describing children's theatrical performances this paper examines two books which illustrate very different uses of the motif of a play put up by children. In their different ways both books link the idea of performance with the children's less theatrical, playful activities in a relation of equivalence. The two selected books share a special – theatre-like – setting, assumption of roles inside an imaginary world within the ordinary reality, the presence of a script with various degrees of control, and the motif of an audience in the sense of observer-characters outside the secondary world of the play.

E. Nesbit (1858-1924) was a widely-read author of children's fiction at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among her most popular novels are *Five Children and It* (1902), a magical adventure story, and *The Railway Children* (1905), a family story. The two novels represent two types of fiction – fantastic and mimetic – which Nesbit practised throughout her career. *The Enchanted Castle* (1907) belongs to the former type. The book's main theatrical event involves four children preparing and performing a play of Beauty and the Beast. They perform it for their teacher during holidays which they spend in the school due to illness in the family. The "theatre" is organised in the school dining room carefully prepared for the performance, complete with a stage and scenery, and seats for the audience:

> It was a real stage […] – the dining tables pushed close together and covered with pink-and-white counterpanes. It was a little unsteady to walk on, but very imposing to look at. […] Rows of chairs had been placed across the other end of the room – all the chairs in the house, it seemed […]. (Nesbit 1968: 107-108)

The children-actors wear ingenious costumes: "Jimmy, enlarged by pillows under Gerald's best overcoat […], a Turkish

turban on his head [...] opened the first act [...]", while "Gerald rustled in, elegant in Mademoiselle's pink dressing-gown [...]" (Nesbit 1968: 109). The narrator's descriptions of the children's preparations consistently emphasise their imaginative ingenuity which allows them to change pieces of furniture, fabrics and ordinary domestic objects into props and scenery.

In contrast to the carefully prepared theatrical setting and costumes, the children's utterances are largely improvised since they "had spent the afternoon in arranging their costumes and so had left no time for rehearsing what they had to say" (Nesbit 1968: 110). The plot of the traditional fairy tale serves as a script of the performance but they feel entirely free to improvise within its limits. The performance of the play gives much pleasure to the actors and to the audience: "[...] it delighted them and it charmed their audience" (Nesbit 1968: 110). While the narrator's descriptions – on the one hand – evidently emphasise the children's ingenuity in preparing and executing their improvised but spirited theatricals, on the other hand the narrator's gentle irony introduces frequent touches of humour:

> The [Beauty's] sisters were almost *too* natural in their disagreeableness, and Beauty's annoyance when they splashed her princess's dress with real soap and water was considered a miracle of good acting (Nesbit 1968: 111; emphasis original)

However, the most heavily emphasised element of the theatrical set-up is the audience: the teacher for whom the children organise the play and the maid they also invite, seem too few for the ambitious troupe. So the children make seven puppets to occupy some of the numerous chairs collected in the theatre room:

> Their bodies were bolsters and rolled-up blankets, their spines were hockey sticks and umbrellas. [...] their hands were gloves stuffed out with handkerchiefs; and their faces were the paper

> masks painted in the afternoon by the untutored brush of Gerald. (Nesbit 1968: 107-108)

Particular stress is put on the motif of the audience when the puppets suddenly come alive and start clapping their stuffed-glove hands. This terrifies the teacher and the maid who run away from the room as well as the actors so that the performance stops before the play is finished. In spite of their fear the actors are also terrified but courageously take it upon themselves to lead the animated puppets away from the school. Such an ending of the theatrical episode introduces an emphatic element of horror to the humorously described performance of the children. The animation of the inanimate introduces a transgressive motif typical of horror, though it needs to be stressed that horror motifs were not conventional in children's fiction at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nesbit's playing with horror motifs in a humorous children's story may be seen as a forerunner of the type of fiction prevalent now.

In the plot of Nesbit's novel the sudden animation of the puppets is explained as a result of a wish granted by a magic ring. Irritated by the meagre applause of just two members of the audience, one of the children utters a careless wish: "I wish those creatures we made were alive. We should get something like applause then" (Nesbit 1968: 111). The ring is one of the props in the performance: Gerald who performs the role of the Beast gives Beauty the ring and says:

> This is a magic ring that will give you anything you wish. When you desire to return [...] put on the ring and utter your wish. Instantly you will be at my side. (Nesbit 1968: 111)

The actor-characters assume that the power of the ring, defined during the performance, applies – fictionally and playfully – only to the secondary world of the play. But the power of the ring unexpectedly applies to the world outside of the play

and transforms a part of the reality beyond the stage (the audience). Such an operation of magic in the story world of the novel may be seen in terms of a metaleptic transgression: an element apparently belonging to one level of the story world penetrates into another level.

The theatrical episode in Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle* metafictionally highlights the power of imagination to shape not only the secondary reality of the play but also to influence the ordinary reality. The creation of the secondary, theatrical reality of the play involves the use of ordinary imaginative powers connected with participation in any kind of fiction. The transformation of the puppets into living beings, however, is presented as the work of magic. As a transformative power, magic can be seen as a metaphorical equivalent of imagination. While the children find much enjoyment in exercising their imagination while preparing the play and its additional audience, the horror of the puppets coming to life may be seen as a warning against letting imagination play too freely – a repeated motif in Nesbit's fiction (Briggs 1987: 265; Węgrodzka 2007: 183).

The second author in whose novel a performance of a play by children serves as an important motif is David Almond (born in 1951), a British author of acclaimed children's novels often linked with magic realism in children's fiction. In his novel *Kit's Wilderness* (1999) children (teens) perform a Christmas play based on *Snow Queen* at their school. The children-actors, the school setting, and the script based on a fairy story make the episode similar to the Beauty and the Beast performance in Nesbit's novel. However, in Almond's text the play is a much more serious and "professional" affair: it is supervised by one of the teachers, tightly controlled by the script, takes a long time to prepare and rehearse, and is performed for the whole local community. The performance involves elaborate lighting, music and scenery: "[…] dim lights inside, rows of chairs facing the brilliantly-lit ice world on the stage"; "[m]usic

played: squeaky violins and whistles, sometimes a distant wailing voice […]" (Almond 2008: 161). There are specially prepared programmes and thematic decorations on the school walls:

> […] first years dressed in silver foil and silver slippers passed out programmes. […] The lobby had great paintings and photographs of glaciers and ice floes. There were paintings of polar bears and penguins. […] Maps showed how the Ice Age once held the northern world in its grip. (Almond 2008: 161)

Young actors perform in elaborate and beautiful costumes. The play is written by a teacher on the basis of Hans Christian Andersen's tale and the new script is evidently a strong controlling tool since there is no improvisation in the play: everything is carefully rehearsed and performed perfectly. Even though the performance in *Kit's Wilderness* is a much more serious undertaking than the children's play in *The Enchanted Castle*, and involves much sustained effort, it is still hugely enjoyable for all of its participants, which links it with the idea of play as a game. The enjoyment is particularly highlighted in the character of Allie who plays Gerda.

It is the beauty and perfection of the performance, i.e. the aesthetic aspect, which is particularly stressed in Almond's novel. Multiple elements of the play synergically work to create an artistic whole. However, this sense of achievement and importance as connected with the play is weakened on the discourse level by the fact that only a part of the performance is attentively watched and described by the protagonist-narrator. Even though the play is gripping and beautiful, the protagonist Kit has more pressing concerns: "The play began again, but I was lost in my own thoughts, my own fears" (Almond 2008: 166).

Though the two theatrical events in Nesbit's and Almond's novels are quite different, they are linked not only by the fact that both are interrupted (the former on the story level, the

latter on the level of discourse) but also both are based on well-known fairy tales. Such a generic choice serves to emphasise the secondary worlds of the plays as fictional and distant from the ordinary reality of the characters. However, the two performances activate different spheres of semantic reference. In Nesbit's book, the play world is linked with the children's imagination whose creative aspect is enhanced owing to the parallel with magic. Moreover, the enjoyment of the performance and the horror of the magical transformation appear to suggest two opposite but related aspects of the exercise of imagination which may be creative and joyous or destructive and frightening (Briggs 1987: 265-266). On the other hand, in Almond's novel, the beautiful performance uniting many diverse aesthetic experiences (of pictures, scenery, costumes, music, stage movement, and words) is not really connected with the children-characters' imagination. Though present in the audience, Kit is overwhelmed by his problems and stops paying attention to (and describing) the play. The other protagonist, Kit's friend John, does not attend the play and is only mentioned by other characters. Out of the three main characters in *Kit's Wilderness* only the girl Allie is totally involved in the play and becomes sure she will be an actress – not just in the sense of a future job but in the sense of an artistic calling. The presentation of Allie as a future artist accords with the stress on the aesthetic aspects in the description of the performance. Moreover, the play's thematic focus on evil finds many echoes in the book (for example, in the characters of John and his father) and is functional also in relation to Allie who – owing to the role she plays – discovers a propensity for evil in herself. This area of functionality points to reflection on the functions of art which can enhance a person's understanding of themselves.

3. Play parallels

Both novels considered here establish parallels between the children's theatrical performance and other episodes. In Nesbit's *The Enchanted Castle* one of the four protagonists, Mabel, whose aunt is a housekeeper in the eponymous mansion, dresses up in a beautiful old dress and pretends to be Sleeping Beauty. She arranges herself on a bench in the castle gardens and is incidentally found there by three siblings who become caught up in the strangeness of the situation and half believe they are in a fairy tale. One of the boys "wakens" Mabel with a kiss, and for quite a long time she goes on pretending she really is a princess and her castle is just coming to life after a hundred years of sleep. The Sleeping Beauty episode evinces some features of a theatrical performance: Mabel performs a role according to the script provided by a well-known fairy tale, she uses a costume and certain props, and treats the castle and its grounds as the stage. On the other hand, the girl may also be seen as just playing a make-believe game because she is bored and lonely. Initially she pretends to be a princess only for herself since she does not have any playmates. She continues pretending when the three siblings appear and draws them into the make-believe world as half-believing participants and as an audience of her playacting. The episode highlights the closeness of a theatrical play and a child's game. Both the Beauty and the Beast performance and the Sleeping Beauty episode are based on well-known fairy tales. They are also linked by the fact that exactly the same cast of four children participate in both. However, the latter case seems more complex and ambiguous than the former one. A make-believe game – just like a theatrical performance – assumes the willing access of participants who understand the provisional and fictitious nature of the play reality. Yet Mabel insistently asserts the factual nature of her royal identity and tries to convince the other children that they have stepped into a real fairy tale.

Moreover, the rules assumed to be governing the play/game/performance are unexpectedly broken in both cases: in the theatrical performance by the sudden animation of the puppets in the audience and in the Sleeping Beauty make-believe game – by Mabel suddenly becoming invisible. In both cases the breakage is defined as the operation of magic. Mabel, still trying to convince the other children that she is a real princess in a fairy tale promises to become invisible. She expresses a wish but actually she only intends to hide in a cupboard. When she emerges, she takes the children's behaviour to be a spiteful copy of her own: they act as if she were still invisible, which she treats as hateful teasing until they make her look in a mirror. The Sleeping Beauty game is abandoned and the four children unite to deal with the distressing problem of invisibility. As observed by Julia Briggs,

> *The Enchanted Castle* […] elaborately counterpoint[s] make-believe and reality. The book begins with the most complex switchback of magic and games that she [Nesbit] had yet invented: one minute the children are playing 'let's pretend', the next their pretence has come true and they are caught up in a sequence of transformations that symbolically enact the dangers as well as pleasures of the imagination. (Briggs 1987: 265)

Also the spatial aspect of the Sleeping Beauty game/performance is significant in defining important aspects of play. Firstly, as already indicated, Mabel treats the castle and its grounds as an element of her make-believe game. Though this spatial extensiveness contrasts with the well-limited theatre room of the Beauty and the Beast performance, both spaces appear to function in suggesting the transformative power of a child's imagination. Secondly, the game starts in a labyrinth through which the three siblings are guided by a thread leading them to the centre where Mabel lies as Sleeping Beauty. Obviously such a configuration of the spatial setting introduces mythical associations – though they would be decipherable

on the higher level of reception not immediately available to children. Labyrinths have a great symbolic potential connected with their mythic origins and may be semantically associated with confusion, lack of knowledge and understanding on the one hand, and also with initiation, penetration to the heart of mysteries, or to the sacred centre and absolute truth of reality on the other hand (Cirlot 2007: 220). The former set of senses may apply to the children's inability to determine whether Mabel's story is true or just a game. Metaphorically, their confusion – as well as Mabel's when she unexpectedly becomes invisible – may through generalisation be related to human inability to fully understand the nature of reality. In the novel the children are continuously perplexed with the unaccountable operations of magic in the world of ordinary experience. The motif of magic in Nesbit's novel may be interpreted as expressing hidden, mysterious and even transcendental aspects of human reality, and not only the power of the child's imagination in pretending games.

Also in *Kit's Wilderness* the theatrical performance of the Snow Queen is made equivalent to other narrative sequences. For instance, the winter setting of the Snow Queen play, emphasised by the decorations concerning the Ice Age, glaciers and polar animals, introduces a strong parallel to Kit's own story about an Ice Age boy Lac who, like the two children in "The Snow Queen", gets separated from his family, is lost and likely to die. Kit writes the story for his friend John, who is suspended at school and runs away from his abusive home. The fictional Ice Age boy Lac is in Kit's mind increasingly identified with John. The fate of Lac – whether he dies of exhaustion or manages to find his family again – seems to determine the fate of John, but Kit, who is inventing and writing the story, does not know how it will end. He finally reads it to John in an underground cave in an old mine where the boy is hiding. The happy ending of Lac's desperate journey and his reconciliation with his family in Kit's story lays down a script of ac-

ceptance and love which is followed by John when he finally emerges from the cave.

Lac from the story is a caveman, which creates a link with John who chooses an old mine to hide from everybody. The sequence of equivalences connecting the Snow Queen play, Kit's story about Lac, and the subplot concerning John suggests a parallel of the wintry settings of the two former stories with the cave setting of the latter plot. The coldness of the winter setting is associated with evil in the Snow Queen play in the sense of egoism and lack of human compassion. In the story of Lac, the winter of the Ice Age is evidently suggestive of death which threatens the boy separated from his family. In the case of John, the cave setting of a dark, cold, underground space brings up the meanings of loneliness and emotional deprivation, as well as death in the sense of the suicidal desperation of the abused boy. Moreover, the darkness of the cave seems to correspond with John's twisted fascination with evil and death.

The plotline of John introduces another aspect into the network of narrative equivalences. The theatrical play, the Ice Age story, and John's escape from his troubled home are also parallel to "the game of death" played by John with a group of friends. Invented by John, who is unhappy and disturbed, the game reflects his focus on death and suicidal tendencies. It is played in an underground place similar to the grave and to a prehistoric dwelling. Thus, spatially the setting of the game of death is linked with John's hiding place in the old mine and with the prehistoric chronotope of Kit's story whose characters live in caves.

The similarity between the game of death and the Snow Queen play concerns the element of playacting and pretending. Moreover, like the theatrical play the game is also controlled by a pre-existing script (of questions and answers) as well as a predetermined sequence of activities. For instance, when Kit's turn comes to "die" in the game, he reports: "I knelt as

I had seen others kneel" (Almond 2008: 49). Then comes an exchange between John and Kit:

> 'Do you abandon life?'
> 'I abandon life.'
> 'Do you truly wish to die?'
> 'I truly wish to die' (Almond 2008: 49)

This repetitive script, however, suggests an emphatic ritualistic quality: because it assumes an entry of a participant into the sphere of death, the game can be seen as a rite of passage, an initiation. Moreover, while the theatrical performance is described as having a strong fun element (especially for Allie), the game of death does not seem to have any. Instead it has a strong element of *alea* (chance aspect) connected with the choice of the "victim" through spinning a knife. The game consists in choosing a person out of a circle of a few teens, who agrees to "die" (in the play sense) and is left alone in the cave until he or she emerges again. Most kids only pretend (playact) to die and invent stories of what they have seen while "dead". In this way, they realise the script as they understand it. But Kit does not pretend: he goes into a deep trance where he experiences frightening nothingness. This experience makes him able to see ghosts or shades of children who died in mining accidents in the past, as John, who can also see them, explains. For both Kit and John the game is a real, though imaginary, encounter with death, which enhances vision and understanding.

Further, the game of death has a parallel in dancing around a cemetery monument to children-victims of mining accidents from the past. Such dancing, recollected by Kit's grandfather and father, but no longer engaged in by Kit and his friends, has an evident *ilinx* aspect which, through its connection to trance-like states, confirms the ritualistic aspect of children's games. The dancing game involves both laughter and fear: dancing is exhilarating, but the children are also scared of be-

ing in the cemetery. The purpose of both dancing and the game of death is the same: to induce a trance-like state which makes it possible to see ghosts of children from the past. Interestingly, a ritualistic element also appears in Nesbit's novel (though not in connection with a children's game) when the children and adult characters witness a gathering of divine creatures from all human cultures and are engulfed in a trance-like experience of illumination.

All the playful activities I have discussed in connection with David Almond's novel – the theatrical performance, the inset story written by Kit, the game of death, the dancing game – share features of play as distinguished, for instance, by Roger Caillois: they are free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, and governed by rules (2001: 9-10). The latter quality is connected with what I have called scripts, which in all the above activities have different degrees of controlling power. Kit does not treat writing stories as a play or game and yet his activity also shares many features with playing: it is motivated by pleasure and results in the creation of a new, secondary reality through imagination, a quality Caillois calls make-believe (2001: 10; compare also Okoń 1987: 44). The latter quality is emphatically present in the theatrical performance and in the game of death. However, in contrast to the Snow Queen performance, which is tightly controlled by the script, Kit does not seem to have full control over his story. He does not know how the plot of Lac will develop, just as he is uncertain about the fate of his friend John. This feature strongly emphasises the element of uncertainty – which is one of the qualities of play (Caillois 2001: 9) and an element of the creative process.

More conspicuously than Nesbit's novel, *Kit's Wilderness* displays metaleptic transgressions. While Kit is engaged in writing his Ice Age story, a character from his fiction appears in his room and seems to be pleading for the survival of Lac. Eventually the figure from the story's secondary world is also seen by John when Kit is reading to him in the old mine. This

metaleptic mixture of narrative levels underlines the power of imagination and/or storytelling. Alternatively, Kit's creative gift may be linked with his visionary power (his ability to see ghosts of long-dead children) and thus suggest that his story recaptures some events from distant prehistoric past. Both of these explanations highlight the independent – and, in some sense, real – existence of the make-believe, secondary reality created by playful imagination. Another aspect of reality of make-believe worlds is also visible in their therapeutic or transforming power: the theatrical performance makes one of the players, Allie, aware of her own potential for evil, Kit's experience of "death" makes him able to understand his friend John, while Kit's story becomes a metaphoric script of hope and survival for John. The therapeutic aspect links all the various examples of playing in the novel and emphasises their creative or transformative power. By drawing an equivalence between playing (the game of death, dancing in the cemetery) and such artistic activities as performing a theatrical play or writing a story, the novel empahasises the creative aspects of playing on the one hand and playful qualities of artistic engagement on the other.

To conclude: the two considered novels are linked by introducing a motif of children's theatrical performance and making it equivalent to other more or less playful activities. Moreover, both introduce uncertainty about the rules of the world model and suggest the presence of magic (Nesbit), and of the supernatural, metaphysical or the numinous. Strangely enough, both books preserve some echoes of the connection between performance, play/game and ritual in their connection to hidden aspects of reality. Both Nesbit and Almond seem to celebrate the child's imagination and sensitivity, while Almond additionally links it to artistic creativity by making all three of his main characters budding artists. The connection between childhood, imagination and creative and/or visionary power is very Romantic in nature, and testifies to the persistence of the

Romantic paradigm in the contemporary culture. What is more, both books present imagination as able to enhance mundane reality (through magic transformations in Nesbit's novel and artistic creations in Almond's), but also capable of producing actual or potential horrors (the living puppets, ghosts, fascination with death) which may be destructive and evil. This dark side of imagination seems to be a price to pay for being sensitive and open to hidden aspects of reality.

The two novels may also be seen as illustrative of certain cultural changes as well as continuities in the understanding and literary presentation of childhood. The Edwardian children in Nesbit's story are fully aware of playing and sometimes even voice this consciousness: playing is an important aspect of their lives. In Almond's novel, such awareness of the playfulness is most strongly present in relation to children from the past in the dancing game of the protagonist's father and grandfather. Contemporary children (or rather teens) are very serious about all their activities even when they apply the name of "game" to them (as in the "game of death"). However, by making a theatrical performance equivalent to children's other activities, both novels highlight the make-believe and creative aspect of such actions. Significantly, in both texts children's games involve connections with ritual and initiation into hidden facets of reality. The motifs of play-game-performance, linked in tight networks of equivalences, testify to the semantic richness of the play motif in the considered novels. It should be also emphasised that while both texts focus on young characters and their playful activities, the motif of play – in its several senses – far exceeds the confines of actions limited to the period of childhood by referring to art, ritual and spiritual initiation.

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Jadwiga Węgrodzka
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
angjw@ug.edu.pl

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Pet or food: Animals and alimentary taboos in contemporary children's literature

JUSTYNA SAWICKA

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Abstract

In books for pre-school and early school-age children (4-9 years of age) published in Poland between 2008 and 2014 it is possible to observe a new alimentary taboo. Though statistics show that we consume more meat than ever, we seem to be hiding this fact from the children. The animal is disconnected from the meat, which becomes just a thing we eat so that there is no need to consider animal suffering or to apply moral judgement to this aspect. The analysed books, written by Scandinavian, Spanish and American and Polish authors, do not belong to the mainstream of children's literature, but, by obscuring the connection between the animal and the food we consume, they seem to testify to the problem with this aspect of our world that the adults – authors, educators and parents.

Key words

alimentary taboo, children's literature, pre-school children, animal story, Scandinavian children's literature

Uroczy przyjaciel czy składnik diety: Tabu pokarmowe we współczesnych książkach dla dzieci

Abstrakt

Książki dla dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym (4-9 lat) wydane w Polsce w latach 2008-2014 są świadectwem istnienia nowego tabu pokarmowego. Chociaż statystyki wskazują, że obecnie jemy więcej mięsa niż kiedykolwiek wcześniej, coraz częściej ukrywamy przed dziećmi fakt zjadania zwierząt. Odzwierzęcamy mięso i czynimy je przedmiotem, wtedy bowiem nie musimy zastanawiać się nad cierpieniem zwierząt i nad moralnym osądem tego faktu. Analizowane książki, pisane przez autorów skandynawskich, hiszpańskich, amerykańskich i polskich, nie należą do głównego nurtu literatury dziecięcej i nie są wydawane w wysokich nakładach. Zacierany w nich związek między jedzeniem a zwierzęciem świadczy jednak, że dorośli autorzy, wychowawcy i rodzice mają problem z tym aspektem naszego świata.

Słowa kluczowe

tabu pokarmowe, literatura dla dzieci, dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym, bajka zwierzęca, skandynawska literatura dla dzieci

Animals are often featured in children's literature. Writers and illustrators use animal characters to explain the world to their young recipients. Anthropomorphic animal characters embody types of human behaviour, demonstrate emotions, teach about good and evil, and introduce children to complex issues such as: love, death, hatred, fear, violence, human rights, illness, otherness, addiction and old age. In children's literature animals are like humans: sometimes kind and sometimes nasty, good and bad, wise and silly. On the other hand, they may also be portrayed realistically, as pets of the human characters, or

working animals serving human masters in various capacities, thus becoming elements of the human environment.

Animal characters serve to facilitate children's entry into the world of values.[1] They introduce children into the adult reality delicately, demonstrating various methods of dealing with increasingly serious problems arising as the children grow. Apart from this animal figures also demonstrate how to deal with failures in learning new skills, such as, for example, riding a bicycle (as in Eriksson's *Malla cyklar* from 2003[2]). Most animals in children's literature are nice and friendly, and are treated as family members (for instance, in Appelgren and Savolainen's *Vesta-Linnéa och gosnosen* from 2005[3]), especially when they live in the human world (like in Alexander Steffensmeier's *Lieselotte Lauert* from 2006[4]) rather than in the wild. They offer help in unexpected situations, for example, when new children are born into the family or when a child does not have any siblings as in Lindenbaum's *Gittan och älgbrorsorna*.[5] The Moose Brothers from Lindenbaum's story manage to convince the heroine that having siblings may also have drawbacks. Fictional animals allow children to see situations from different standpoints, thus broadening their horizons. Mama Moo, a cow, encourages children to pursue their dreams, both small and grand ones. A cow that wishes to be where the birds are, learns to climb trees (in Jujja Wieslander and Sven Nordqvist's *Mamma Mu klättrar i träd* from 2005[6]). Nothing is impossible – she seems to be saying. This is what

[1] Compare Irena Koźmińska and Elżbieta Olszewska, *Z dzieckiem w świat wartości*.

[2] The Polish translation by Agnieszka Stróżyk was published in 2009 under the title *Mela na rowerze* [*Mela on the bike*].

[3] Translated by Elżbieta Frątczak-Nowotny as *Wilhelmina i aksamitny nosek* (2008) [*Josefine and the Velvet Nose*].

[4] The Polish translation by Emilia Kledzik was published in 2012 under the title *Krowa Matylda na czatach* [*The cow Mathilda on a farm*].

[5] Translated by Katarzyna Skalska as *Nusia i bracia łosie* (2008) [*Bridget and the Moose Brothers*].

[6] The Polish translation by Michał Wronek-Piotrowski *as Mama Mu na drzewie i inne historie* (2013) [*Mama Moo on the tree and other stories*].

animals in children's literature are for. Mama Moo is friends with Mr Crow, thus allowing the book to become a commentary on difficult friendships. The nice elephant Pomelo,[7] in turn, prepares children for their first encounters with fear. He worries that rain will flush away all colours and that one day everything will turn upside down. He is afraid that he might swallow a fruit pip and have a cherry tree growing in his belly. After all, who has never been worried by the possibility of a tree growing in our stomach? Accidentally swallowed pips live their own life in children's imagination. Pomelo is afraid of various things just like the youngest readers. Moreover, they are often scared of ultimate things, and here again animal characters become helpful. Mr Muffin in Ulf Nilsson and Anna-Clara Tidholm's *Adjö, herr Muffin*[8] (2002) – a guinea pig – is very old. He has to pass away but before this happens we follow his beautiful memories which prove he has had a wonderful life. The reader learns that death does not hurt. What comes after death, remains a mystery – known only to Mr Muffin.

Animals are also used to portray the life of an ordinary kindergartener. Wesoły Ryjek[9] ["Merry Snouty"] from a Polish book by Wojciech Widłak and Agnieszka Żelewska has a family, a beloved toy turtle, sometimes encounters problems but usually he is a happy piglet. Gradually, he discovers that everyone is unique and learns about the workings of time. He lives the life of an ordinary child in an affluent family: he has a room full with toys, he goes on trips which gradually extend his sense of space. His first person narrative helps activate the mechanism of identification in children.

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[7] The Polish translation by Katarzyna Skalska was published in 2012 under the title *Pomelo ma się dobrze pod swoim dmuchawcem* [*Pomelo is well under his dandelion*].

[8] The Polish translation by Hanna Dymel-Trzebiatowska was published in 2008 under the *title Żegnaj Panie Muffinie!* [*Goodbye, Mr Muffin*].

[9] Wojciech Widłak, Agnieszka Żelewska, *Wesoły Ryjek*, Poznań, Wydawnictwo Media Rodzina, 2010.

The problem I intend to highlight here in connection with children's animal stories concerns the fact that animals are also the staple of human diet. This matter is usually absent from contemporary children's literature. Interestingly, this mystification turns out to be a relatively new trend. It seems that eating animals became a taboo in the beginning of the twenty-first century. However, it is possible to find some examples of books for children revealing the secret connection between meat and animals. I intend to discuss these books in the following pages in order to present the problems their authors' highlight through their narrative choices. My selection of texts – including both fictional and non-fictional ones – is certainly subjective and by no means exhaustive since my major aim is to signal the existence of this phenomenon rather than to present its comprehensive analysis, which would exceed the limits of a short article. I am going to focus on books dealing with the subject of eating meat that are available on the Polish publishing market.

Our avoidance of discussing the problem of animals as a source of food seems to result from various premises. Adults wish to uphold children's belief in a safe and generally kind world and to protect children from becoming aware of cruelty. Moreover, adults may want to avoid the discomfort of having to deal with a difficult subject. Hence we have developed a metalanguage that allows us to evade the discussion. This language is present in contemporary children's literature. In their vast majority, people are carnivorous, but books for children generally omit this fact. Often they go as far as to conceal the existence of the food chain entirely. We eat beef, pork, and poultry, while we read about Mama Moo (a cow) or little Snouty and Florka (pigs). Consequently, children tend to discover quite late that animals are also what they eat.

All cultures destine some animals for consumption and protect others. The fact that cows, pigs, turkeys, and ducks are

regularly eaten in Poland, while horses, dogs and guinea pigs are not, is reflected in children's literature.

> In the world of domesticated animals, there is a radical division between animals perceived as food or workforce on the one hand, and pets on the other. De Mello emphasises that what puts the animals in their particular condition is not an integral part of themselves, but rather a result of applying human categories and practices. Pets, contrary to "livestock", are not regarded as a source of food: they are under an alimentary taboo so that pragmatic approach is replaced by an emotional one. As noted by James Serpell, "from the economic point of view most pets are completely useless". For many people, eating their animal companion would be an act of cannibalism. In contrast to animals raised for slaughter, providing eggs or milk, pets are individualised which is emphasised by giving them names. In a way, naming them can be seen as an initiation ritual bringing pets into the human community. Our memories about an animal, the way we treat it, and even communicate with it are all possible on condition that the animal has a name that plucks it out of an anonymous mass and makes it something more than just a representative of its species. (Żółkoś 2013: 80-81; trans. M. Wojdyło)

The importance of names that transform animals into something more than food can be found, for instance, in Janosch's (alias Horst Eckert) *Oh, wie schön ist Panama* (1978).[10] The book tells the story of Bear and Tiger's (written with capital letters) journey to Panama. The characters are friends and live in a valley by the river. They have their own boat and are doing really well: Bear catches fish (small letter!) while Tiger picks mushrooms. One day they find a wooden box floating in the river. It smells of bananas and the markings on the box reveal that it originates from Panama. The friends begin to dream

[10] The Polish translation by Emilia Bielicka was published in 2009 under the title *Ach, jak cudowna jest Panama. Opowieść o tym, jak Miś z Tygryskiem wędrowali do Panamy* [*The trip to Panama: The story of how little Tiger and little Bear travel to Panama*].

about visiting Panama and then set out on a journey. On their way, they meet other animals: Mouse, Fox, Cow, Hare, Hedgehog, and Crow. The story mentions an old Fox roasting a goose for his birthday dinner. The goose is considered as food, and therefore its name is treated as a common noun spelled with a lowercase letter, in contrast to the previously listed animals. The scene is accompanied by an expressive illustration: Fox is holding the goose in his lap, and next to them a pot, a knife and a fork are visible. The image, even though it does not show any blood, stirs the child's imagination, and is uncomfortable for the adult readers, as the children-listeners tend to asks lots of questions about the captured goose. Children seem not to be able to grasp why the goose is treated differently than the other animals. The group of edible animals in Janosch's story includes fish or geese which are designated by ordinary common nouns and are not individualised. Common nouns are also used for the individualized animals in *The Trip to Panama* but the appearance of capital letters changes these nouns into equivalents of proper names.

In *Benny's Had Enough!* by Barbro Lindgren and Olof Landström (1998)[11] the main character, a small piglet, is individualised by being given a human name: Benny. In the plot of the story he is not confronted with common animals. Instead, running away from home with his toy Little Piggy, he finds a sausage stand. Is it black humour? Or is it only a transposition of human reality into an animal story that invites rather macabre associations by linking a piglet in an obvious relationship with the sausages? The illustrations are charming and nullify the tension present in the scene. I have never met[12]

[11] The Polish translation by Katarzyna Skalska was published in 2014 under the title *Ależ, Bolusiu!* [*Benny's Had Enough!*].

[12] My observations are based on experience gained while conducting reading workshops for pre-school and early school children at schools, nursery schools and in the bookshop Bookafka as well as during children's book festivals (such as Literacki Sopot, Festiwal LiterObrazki in Bydgoszcz) between 2013 and 2017 on behalf of publishing houses I worked for at that time. The workshops were conducted on the basis of scripts prepared for

a child that would be surprised by the fact that there were sausage stands in a town inhabited by pigs. Nursery school children, the intended readers of the book series about Benny,[13] do not associate sausages with the charming little pig. Nevertheless, the connection must be entirely clear to the adult readers.

However, an entirely different reception experience applies to young readers who read the story of Benny with vegetarian or vegan adults: such children treat the scene with sausages as a joke and respond with laughter – just like the adults do. Together children and adults form the community created by laughter where, according to Grzegorz Leszczyński:

> [...] there is no hierarchy of knowledge, age, social position; the rules of carnival impose democratisation. Nobody – whether an adult or a child – is automatically wiser or right, because in the distorting mirror of satire all positions are undermined and mocked. Participating in a community of laughter produces a particular kind of pleasure and satisfaction connected with social or collective, rather than individual, reception. (Leszczyński 2015: 107)

Even adult readers may not always react with surprise to a piglet contemplating sausages because the association of the animal with the food we consume is weak or entirely absent. Billboards with images of meat are an element of our everyday reality. Actually, what is advertised are pieces of killed animals, but somehow we fail to notice this. We have been successfully desensitised through centuries of de-animalisation of the meet we eat, for instance by removing slaughterhouses and butcheries farther and farther away from the consumers.

particular book titles and involved reading to children and observing their reactions.

[13] In Poland, three books about Benny have been published so far (*Ależ, Bolusiu!, Ładnie, Bolusiu!, Chrum, chrum, Bolusiu!*).

Éric Baratay points out that the process began in the nineteenth century:

> With the arrival of a new era of prosperity since the 1840s, whole carcasses of animals and recognisable body parts, from heads to limbs, were displayed in the butchers' windows a sign of victory over famine. Then they were hidden away in refrigerators at the back of the stores. Since the 1960s and 1970s, certain parts (organs) started to be entirely discarded, while other parts were openly presented but became more and more difficult to link with the actual animal: neat, geometric pieces obliterated any association with living beings so as not to arouse any discomfort in consumers. Recently, in response to the growing uneasiness associated with blood, more and more restaurants have introduced in their menus a selection of meat and fish that – their dictionary definitions aside – seem not to involve gore. (Baratay 2014: 300)

Apart from subtly introducing the question of the link between animals and meat, children's stories may also consider fish. These animals remain on the margins of the animal kingdom, while their meat is often listed under vegetarian dishes. A gigantic fish is the mute heroine of a slightly surrealistic book *Fisken* written by Erlend Loe and illustrated by Kim Hiørthoy (1994)[14] Kurt, a forklift operator, has an extraordinary family comprised of his wife Anne-Lise, who is an architect; the eleven-year-old Thin Helena; ten-year-old Bubble Kurt and little Bud. The story begins with Kurt unexpectedly finding a big dead fish. The whole family is delighted by the discovery: they will have plenty of food in the months to come so they start planning a distant journey. The fish and luggage are loaded onto a forklift and off they go. They visit America. When they have to cross the ocean, Kurt loads all their belongings on the dead fish and uses it to transport the family to the other side. The illustrations invariably show the dead fish smiling, though

[14] The book was translated by Helena Garczyńska and published in Poland as *Kurt i ryba* [*Kurt and the fish*] in 2012.

more and more of its skeleton becomes visible as it is gradually consumed. As the journey continues, the fish gradually disappears. The peculiar family share their dinner with characters they meet on their way, for instance in India, where the fish feeds their 400 new friends. They go to Brasil, Antarctica, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Africa, Spain and France. The fish is getting smaller and smaller, until what is left of it is a smiling skeleton. As they reach Germany, the only thing left of the fish are fishbones that are packed onto a ferry. The following day all the travelers are back in Norway, at the family's house. Kurt puts up the fish's skeleton in his backyard, like a monument. They have had enough of the fish and promise each other they will not eat fish for another year. A risky topic for a book? Maybe, from the animal studies perspective. The book clearly links the animal – a fish – with eating of its meat. Vegetarians and vegans object to the smiling skeleton of a fish since they consider using animals for food or as a source of materials for clothes or medical substances as equivalent to a new holocaust.

Animals as food also appear in non-fiction books, such as cookbooks intended for children, but usually as beef, pork, and poultry. One of the very few exceptions is *Eat for Goals!* (2012)[15] created in cooperation with UEFA and the World Heart Federation for Euro 2012. The book contains football stars' favourite recipes. Fernando Torres's choice is chicken stir-fry with rice and vegetables. There are photographs of a live chicken and a chicken breast featured next to instructions telling the readers to cut the chicken breast into cubes. When Lukas Podolski shares his recipe for pepper, ham and turkey farfalle, the animal origins of poultry and ham are revealed as well – we can see that they come from living animals (turkey and pig) presented in the photos next to the pictures of

[15] The book was published in Poland in 2012 under the title *Jem zdrowo i strzelam gole*. There is no information in the book about the Polish translator. The English version is edited by Russel Stevens.

meat. The recipes are presented together with pictures of football players, comments on the dishes' calorie content and on the best times of day to prepare them. Robert Lewandowski's favourite dish is beef steak served with potatoes – illustrated with a picture of a cow's head. What is particularly interesting in connection with this book, is the indignation of parents (not children!). I have repeatedly[16] seen parents browse through the book and react with outrage. They maintained that children should not be shown such explicit association of meals with living animals. Such parents find the illustrations too straightforward as they reveal the real origins of meat. I have heard similar opinions expressed about *Fisken*. Obviously, such negative opinions are not voiced by vegetarians and vegans.

Adults are less disturbed by lexicon-like publications, such as *Farm Anatomy: The Curious Parts & Pieces of Country Life* by Julia Rothman (2011).[17] Even though the book is a mine of information on animals farmed for their meat and fleece, it is not considered controversial as the previously discussed titles. The reason might be that we expect this kind of information from an encyclopaedia. Animals are not personified here, which facilitates showing them as food. While analysing poultry, Rothman explains which breeds are raised for meat and which for egg production. For instance, the book provides a description of Orpington, a chicken described as meaty, with a mild temper. Chicken breeds raised for meat are often showed next to breeds that are not treated as food even though they are quite similar to each other. Rabbits are described in a similar way. While Mini Rex has a calm character and is re-

[16] I refer to personal experiences as an owner of a bookshop and participant of bookfairs representing various publishing houses. On many occasions I have talked to parents of pre-school and early school children who made it clear they did not wish their children to know that particular kind of meat comes from a particular animal; they preferred the books to use such terms as beef, pork and poultry without suggesting the link to the cow, pig or chicken – as it happens in *Eat for Goals!*

[17] The Polish translation of the book by Barbara Burger was published in 2014 under the title *Anatomia farmy: Ciekawostki z życia na wsi*.

garded as a friendly pet, New Zealand breed has the most exquisite meat. In Julia Rothman's illustrations showing both breeds, the rabbits look almost the same.

The encyclopedia also includes practical information on how to cut up a chicken, with illustrations. Children get detailed directions how to pull away wings from the body or how to separate the thighs by cutting the skin and snapping the joins. Diminutives often used in Polish children's literature to describe body parts give way to neutral expressions that are no longer emotionally charged. The descriptions are technical. It is interesting to note that in relation to our pets we do not usually talk about hip joints, knee joints or drumsticks. This is why cutting and bone-breaking can be easily performed when we are no longer dealing with an animal, but a thing or a dish.

The book also discusses the most delicious parts of beef, pork, and mutton. Similarly to Marc Augé's non-places,[18] cows, pigs and sheep may be called non-animals. They are meals, dietary ingredients. On our plates, animals lack subjectivity. The way Julia Rothman describes the world of animals in an encyclopaedic and informative mode, resembles books written before the present era of alimentary taboo, when children had more contact with nature and farming. Out of necessity, they were often present when animals were hunted and butchered, and eating animals was natural to them. Parts of animals were not yet neatly packaged products of unknown origin, filling store shelves. Such a world was described by Astrid Lindgren not a long time ago. In her 1966 *Emil med paltsmeten*,[19] we read about blood noodles, a regional dish which, being unknown in the Polish cuisine, must be ex-

[18] Marc Augé, *Nie-miejsca: Wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności,* Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, series Pogranicza, Warszawa 2010.

[19] The Polish translation *Emil i ciasto na kluski* by Anna Węgleńska first appeared in 2005; the edition quoted here is from 2008.

plained in the book's Polish translation (Lindgren 2008: 10).[20] The explanation refers to a Polish dish called *czernina*, that is, blood soup, though it has to be added that it is no longer popular and the child-addressee may not know it. Not only are all the ingredients of blood noodles, well-liked by Emil and his family, explicitly named but the same humorous episode mentions the activity of washing pig intestines and involves Emil upsetting the bowl of dough over his father who is bloodied all over. Blood soup, blood noodles, and pigs' intestines are not scary to children. Nor do they outrage parents reading to children. This may be the result of the humor emphasized in the episode and of the fact that the book depicts a world already gone: a rural world from before the time of mobile phones, computers, fast cars, and planes. Thus, parents can explain to their kids that this is just the way people used to eat back then, and drop the subject. It would be much more difficult to do while reading Paulina Wierzba's *Co jedzą ludzie?* [*What People Eat?*], considered a highly controversial work.

What People Eat? is a short *savoir vivre* for globetrotters. In the author's Introduction we read that the book contains information about bizarre dishes that may arouse indignation, fear and disbelief, chosen by the author to show the children some of the cultural determinants behind eating various animals (Wierzba 2010: 6). She tries not to judge. The book contains information about Michel Lotito, the man who ate everything, as well as descriptions of many dishes from African, American, Australian, Asian and European cuisines, molecular dishes, and even cannibalism. Thus the Africans eat grubs, ants, and tarantulas; the Americans – alligator cheesecake; the

[20] Compare Dymel-Trzebiatowska's discussion of this translation problem in her *Translatoryka literatury dziecięcej: Analiza przekładu utworów Astrid Lindgren na język polski* (2013) where she emphasises the lack of consistency in the Polish translation of the dish called Paltsmet (as well as other dishes in Polish editions of Lindgren's books). In a traditional Småland recipe, Paltsmet is a mixture of water, pig's blood, salt, flour and lard, from which small rolls are formed and boiled in hot water (Dymel-Trzebiatowska 2013: 195), and is not equivalent to the soup denoted by the Polish word *czernina*.

Inuit favour squirrels, while the Hindus drink tea made of living fish. The inhabitants of Peru eat guinea pigs served on sticks, the Australians – dumplings stuffed with kangaroo tail, and the Asians choose camel buttocks (also eaten raw). Finally, there are also the Chinese who eat cats, dogs, and living monkeys' brains. This is how Wierzba describes a Philippine dish:

> Buro is an extraordinary dish, widely popular in the Philippines. The way it is prepared is quite interesting as well. To begin with, it is necessary to stop feeding a dog for a few days. Next, we give the animal a vegetable mix briefly stewed in brine, and allow it to enjoy a full tummy for a while. During this time the dog digests the food a little bit. After a while, a buro specialist hits the dog in the ribs with a single fine blow dealt with the hand's edge, which makes the dog vomit. Vegetables regurgitated by the dog are collected into a pot, seasoned, simmered... and a delicious meal is ready! Of course, the dog gets another meal which it enjoys in peace. (Wierzba 2010: 40)

In making buro the dog survives but in most cases animals appear in the role of ingredients. The author informs her readers that the Filipinos also eat living, jumping shrimps, while the Indonesians drink cobra's blood and coffee extracted from civets' excrements. The Japanese delight in a lethally poisonous fish called fugu, while the Cambodians prepare a bat soup; the Koreans, in turn, drink wine made from mice, while the Thai eat aquarium soup. As Wierzba explains, the soup is

> [...] a cooked aquarium, with various vegetables and spices, such as green and hot peppers, floating inside instead of water plants. In the beginning, the fish in the aquarium are still alive. The aquarium soup is heated up very slowly: cold water where the fish feel very well is gradually brought to the boil. Before the fish are cooked, they try to hide in the chopped vegetables. (Wierzba 2010: 51)

This description sounds like a horror story.

Wierzba's book also informs that the Vietnamese drink snake liquor while the French eat frogs and live mussels. Also snails are part of the French cuisine; as the author explains, snails are "very nutritious and easily digested. Their flesh is lean, rich in calcium and magnesium, and contains a considerable amount of vitamin C. Snails are almost fat-free and contain plenty of protein, as well as mineral salts" (Wierzba 2010: 59). The inhabitants of Iceland eat rotting sharks, "an unusual dish called hakarl":

> Right after the animal is captured, it is buried in the ground for a long time ranging from two to six months! However, before the shark is covered up with soil, it has to be... peed on, so that ammonium present in the urine could react with the acid in the meat. It is said to be done in order to release all the toxic substances the meat might contain. Of course, the buried shark starts to decompose, but this is precisely the effect the Icelanders desire. After a few months the rotten shark is dug out and dried in the sun. Next, it is cut into tiny pieces and served. (Wierzba 2010: 60)

As we continue reading, we learn that the Icelanders also eat sheep heads, the Norwegians – *lutefisk*, a dish made of dried fish soaked in lye, and the Poles have their blood soup (*czernina*) and tripe soup (*flaki*) (which – incidentally – won the title of the world's most disgusting dish in a competition organised by the American *The Times*). In the majority of described dishes, animals are treated as an ordinary ingredient, often a primary one. The book is intended for children from 9 years of age. Still, few people decide to buy it[21] as it is too controversial for most parents.

The last type of books crucial for the discussion of animals treated as food is a small group of works engaged in promoting ecological perspectives, which begin to appear on the Polish publishing market. One example is *That's Why We Don't Eat*

[21] This was stated by the publisher in a private conversation.

Animals. A Book About Vegans, Vegetarians, and All Living Things (2009) by Ruby Roth, an ideologically committed text intended for vegetarians and vegans.[22] Roth observes that while some animals are born in loving families, the lives of others are spent in pain. This is true about thousands of animals kept for meat or dairy products. They also have their feelings and they suffer. Roth does not individualise animals by giving them proper names but she humanizes them by mentioning their feelings and families. The same humanizing terms are applied to the discussion of ducks and geese, that contrasts the wild birds which fly all over the world and the ones kept in cages on industrial farms and force-fed. Prevented from flying and feeding naturally, they become frightened and sick and lose their plumage. Though the author does not particularly focus on cruelty, her arguments on animals' feelings are hard to argue against. Still not many parents decide to buy Roth's book. One reason may be that it blurs the boundary between human and animal species and forces us to admit that we are animals, too, who eat smaller and weaker beings similar to ourselves. This is a problematic perspective for many parents since we continue to guard our minds against thinking that we are fundamentally the same as the beings we consume.

Descriptions in *That's Why We Don't Eat Meat* consistently emphasise the contrast between the life of free-ranging wild animals and those on farms, and always highlight parallels between animals and humans. Cows, for instance, are presented as displaying various emotions and personality features; they show off, play, get angry, make friends, or help others when they are free in a herd. But on industrial farms they are constrained by tight spaces and unable to chew on fresh grass. Instead they are fed on corn which makes them fat

[22] The Polish translation by Marta Mikita was published in 2013 under the title *Dlatego nie jemy zwierząt: Książka o weganach, wegetarianach i wszystkich żywych istotach.*

and causes stomach discomfort. Roth also stresses that cattle farming is detrimental to the environment as it wastes water and cases much pollution. She advocates replacing animal farming with plant food production as beneficial for the environment and more economical for feeding the human population. The author's intentions are clear: she encourages her readers to give up eating meat and appeals to their sensitivity to animal suffering, especially on farms.

In spite of still present tensions and conflicts (such as terrorism, wars in Ukraine and Syria), the present safety of the Western world seems greater than ever in history. This state of affairs is mirrored in children's literature. For example, the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales have been transformed in myriads of ways, as they were considered too brutal. We no longer have to induce fear of wild animals in children since they rarely face this kind of danger nowadays. This could be one of the reasons behind the tendency to present animals as charming friends and pets. Nowadays, books for children feature amiable lions, hyenas or wolves. Sometimes they do act nastily but this only serves to illustrate various types of human character.

However, in spite of many roles animals play in stories for children, we cannot escape the issue of animals being also a source of food. Moreover, people increasingly begin to feel the need to explain to their children what we eat and what suffering our food producing methods impose on our "lesser brothers". Numerous adults desperately cling to the vision of cute animals living happily on a farm. After all, we do not want to reveal to our children the ordeal animals go through before they end up on our plates. Obviously, we understand it is much too brutal. Pieces of meat displayed on billboards as products of graphic design, do not make children aware that what they see is actually parts of animals. Additionally, some parents simply refuse to acknowledge where meat originates from. That is the reason why they avoid children's books that reveal the deception. Some authors try to show the truth about

animals as food in the contemporary world, but such books are definitely marginal: apart from Astrid Lindgren's story from the previous century, none of the considered publications can be seen part of the children's literature mainstream.

The observations I have been conducting for the last few years prove that parents are confused when it comes to eating animals and explaining this phenomenon to children, which results in their avoidance of books discussing the subject. What about children? The moment when they learn that the food they eat includes animals very much alike the pets they keep at home occurs later and later in their development. Still this this issue needs to be faced. Maybe it would be beneficial to begin an honest discussion on the subject? Maybe it would be better to allow children access to books openly considering this issue? Maybe such books could advise parents how to deal with this paradox? Silence deepens our schizophrenic approach to animals and creates another division among people: those who do and those who do not eat animals. Studies show that in 2013 about 3.2 percent of Polish adults did not eat meat.[23] In comparison, in 2000, vegetarians and vegans made up only 1 percent of the society. The upward trend is indisputable, and this fact alone signals that, whether we like it or not, this issue will have to be dealt with in children's literature. The key is to find a proper formula for this kind of subject – without mystification, panic, pompousness, exaggeration, too overt displays of cruelty and moralising.

Two commentaries featured on the cover of the Polish edition of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals* (2009) are worth bringing up to conclude our discussion.[24] The blurb quotes a review from *Los Angeles Times*:

[23] According to the article "W Polsce jest już milion wegetarian" published by Focus.pl on 1.10.2013; the article relies on researches by Homo Homini commissioned by LightBox.

[24] The Polish translation by Dominika Dymińska was published in 2013 under the title *Zjadanie zwierząt*.

> Some of our finest journalists (Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser) and animal rights activists (Peter Singer, Temple Grandin) – not to mention Gandhi, Jesus, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, John Locke and Immanuel Kant (and so many others) – have hurled themselves against the question of eating meat and the moral issues inherent in killing animals for food. Foer, 32, in this, his first work of nonfiction, intrepidly joins their ranks […]. (Reynolds 2009)

Further, the blurb claims that the book will make us wonder if we are hypocrites every time we are faced with meat on the plate, which is Foer's great success. The author calls for including animals into the public debate.

In my opinion, the problem of animals as food should also be present in books for children, who should be granted a chance to confront it in their own way. When we remove this issue from public discourse, children lose the opportunity to make informed decisions, and often become desensitised. Later in life, they may turn into guardians of the rules they have absorbed. The argument frequently used in discussions concerning the exploitation of animals is that it has always been this way: we have always eaten animals. The opportunity to face this problem will allow children to fulfil their natural need of organising and ordering the world they face. However, the reluctance to confront children with the challenging issue of animals as food seems to be a part of a much broader tendency to prevent children from facing problems of old age, death, or sickness. This is visible in the already mentioned tendency to rewrite fairy tales, which are currently considered too brutal and jarring with the vision of the world we want to pass down to our children. Paradoxically, this does not stop us from watching the daily news filled with crime and gore – in front of the kids.

The topic of eating animals is certainly not new but animal studies have already brought about significant changes and developed new tools. Éric Baratay notes that animals observe

certain moral rules (Baratay 2014: 329) while for Frans de Waal "human morality is an emanation of social skills rooted in biology, whose beginnings that can be traced back to other mammals, especially the primates" as it is succinctly summarized in the afterword to the Polish edition of his *The Bonobo and the Atheist* (Posłowie 2014: 364). Thus, there is no sense in treating animals as the Other. It is time to leave the winners' camp behind, move to the other side and discover a new perspective (Baratay 2014: 40). Frans de Waal describes an experience which he calls transcendent:

> […] it is impossible to look an ape in the eyes and not to see oneself. There are other animals with frontally oriented eyes, but none that give you the shock of recognition of the ape's. Looking back at you is not so much an animal but a personality, as solid and willful as yourself. (de Waal 2014: 110)

Books for children will certainly tackle this subject more and more often. Yet the question that remains is whether they will find readers: books which are not read are merely paper filling warehouse storage space.

It seems a big mistake to remain silent about what happens in the interval between an animal's life on a farm and its appearance on our plate. This silence obscures animal suffering that we are afraid to confront. Even though the role of science is neither to explain the sense behind all this nor to tell us how to act (de Waal 2014: 21), books (also for children) not only provide information but also introduce values. Teaching values is, after all, one of the functions of literature, especially addressed to children.

> The crucial element of teaching values is supporting children in the process of building their own strong systems of values, as well as making them apply these values in their daily lives not because of pressure or fear of punishment but because of their personal convictions and needs. Our task is to teach children how to derive

happiness and pride from their own honesty and other moral values. (Koźmińska, Olszewska 2007: 79-80)

How do alimentary taboos appear? Just like any other forbidden topic. Taboos arise when some topics become uncomfortable to deal with, when there is a discrepancy between what we believe in and what we do, what we pass down to children. Parents generally wish to bring up their children well and probably who do not wish them to harm animals. But this is precisely what the adults do: they harm animals. Perhaps that is why it is easier to remain silent about animal suffering. We justify the silence by claiming that children are incapable of dealing with this problem, that it is too horrifying and would give them nightmares. To an extent, it is difficult not to agree with this view. However, the silence we keep results in the world created for children by adults being completely artificial: is an animal in the pen entirely different from the one on the plate? To put it bluntly, it is a hoax or utter dishonesty. Is it really impossible to address children in an honest way while keeping to all the rules of good taste, and taking into account their sensitivity? Perhaps Ruby Roth can be seen as a possible model.

By robbing the children of the possibility to acquaint themselves with various facets of eating animals, we enter the discourse of childhood considered a pre-human state. By closing our eyes and ears to children's questions, we actually prepare them for a world that no longer exists (compare Cackowska 2012: 66-67). Thus the question we face while discussing animals as food actually concerns the kind of discourse we are going to apply in the process of upbringing. It concerns the vision of the child and childhood.

Of course, it is easier to read about a bear who saves butterflies from danger in a pretty book filled with beautiful illustrations in pastel colours, which talks about friendship, coopera-

tion, and selfless help,[25] that is, the attitudes we would like our children to learn. Such books do not force us to face questions and taboos.

Translated by Maja Wojdyło

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[25] I refer here to Susanna Isern and Marjore Pourchet's book *Oso Cazamariposas* (2012) published in Poland in 2013 translation by Weronika Perez Borjas as *Niedźwiedź, łowca motyli*.

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Justyna Sawicka
Filologiczne Studia Doktoranckie
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
sawicka.justyna@gmail.com

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Henry James, Louisa May Alcott, and the child

BEATA WILLIAMSON

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Abstract

Among Henry James's early book reviews, there is only one dealing with literature for the young. James's opinion on Louisa May Alcott's *Eight Cousins* is negative, yet the review deals rather with the didactic outcome of the novel and not with its literary aspects. James's review is especially intriguing as it shows his attitude to matters which are definitely not the concern of his subsequent fiction – his approach to the upbringing of children.

Key words

Henry James, book reviews, Louisa May Alcott, children, children's literature

Henry James, Louisa May Alcott i dziecko

Abstrakt

Pośród recenzji literackich, które Henry James pisał w młodości, tylko jedna dotyczy literatury dziecięcej. James ostro krytykuje powieść Louisy May Alcott *Eight Cousins*, lecz jego negatywna opinia skiero-

wana jest raczej na dydaktyczne aspekty książki, a nie jej literacką wartość. Recenzja Jamesa jest tym bardziej intrygująca, że zajmuje się sprawą wychowania dzieci – czyli tematem, który w późniejszych dziełach tego autora się nie pojawi.

Słowa kluczowe

Henry James, recenzje literackie, Louisa May Alcott, dzieci, literatura dziecięca

Despite appearances, Henry James was not born middle-aged. Some evidence of this fact might emerge from biographical materials, perhaps even in a photograph or two, portraying a boy who later allegedly became the writer we now recognize – the writer whose best works appeared in his late middle age, works that could scare a student of literature more than Melville's *Moby Dick*. James's early writing is less formidable, and less respected at the same time. His first novel, *Watch and Ward* (1871), was deemed "an embarrassment to James's 'career,' best left forgotten, [...] a failed work of art" (Henke 1995: 257). And this criticism is more or less in keeping with what critics (including James himself) have been saying about the book ever since it appeared. In this Pygmalion story, we have a picture of both a child and a woman, and yet neither is particularly well developed or memorable.

Yet even before he began publishing his own fiction, James published reviews of works by others, and in these he began to construct what might be seen as an aesthetic – one that began to lay down ground rules as to how to deal, for example, with characters very unlike himself: women and children. Interestingly, these early published pieces are book reviews – predominantly very severe – written for *North American Review* and *Nation*. Two of these reviews, unsigned, appeared as early as January 1865, when James was 21 years old (Davidson 2005: 11). The young James, still free from his own literary produc-

tions, and much before the time when he will suffer from critical condemnation himself, criticizes other fiction writers freely and with gusto. Many of the reviews written in the 1860s deal with fiction written by women, the fashionable then sentimentalists. Thus, Anne Moncure (Crane) Seemuller's first novel is "almost [...] worthless" (James 1984: 588) and "mortally dull", yet her second one is better because "not more than half that long" (1984: 595). Harriet Elizabeth (Prescott) Spofford's writing "is characterized by that venturesome, unprincipled literary spirit, defiant alike of wisdom and taste" (1984: 603). Elizabeth Stoddard's one book is "a thoroughly bad novel," while another is better, but "almost brutally crude," "feebly conceived," and "violently written" (1984: 614-615). Adeline Dutton Whitney receives a praise of entertaining a "fanciful theory of life," yet James modifies his praise, a few sentences later, deeming the theory "neither new nor very profound" (1984: 635). Rebecca Harding Davis's "intention has always been good, but the execution [...] monstrous." Davis's – and other women writers' – "lachrymose sentimentalism" appears to anger young James the most (1984: 221). Such a sentimental novel was also Louisa May Alcott's first, *Moods*, towards which James is, perhaps, slightly more positive, barely allowing himself to comment that its "author has been somewhat maligned" (1984: 189).

Today, Alcott is remembered predominantly as an author for young audiences. In the 1860s James is not interested in children – his attention at twenty-something is directed towards graver matters, and if children appear in his own writings then, they are not treated kindly. Significantly he observes in 1865 (Dutton review), "There are, of course, few things so charming as the innocence of childhood, just as there are few things as interesting as the experience of manhood" (James 1984: 637), dismissing the subject of childhood with his favor-

ite damning expressions – "innocent" and "charming".[1] Understandably, for one familiar with sentimental writing of the times, James is peeved by "degradation of sentiment by making children responsible for it"; later, he famously exclaims: "Heaven defend us from the puerile!" (Whitney review; James 1984: 637). In *Hawthorne*, his subject's "childish years" and "infantine career" are treated in passing (1984: 330), while "infant mind" is referred to with disdain (1984: 346). Women will be granted their point of view in James's "middle phase" (Henke 1995: 279); likewise, James will look at a child more sympathetically only in his later years. Thus, James's review of Alcott's novel for children, *Eight Cousins* (1875) appears exceptional and intriguing. In the whole body of James's "American writers" reviews, there is only this one piece that deals with literature expressly meant for the young. James treated Alcott's tale for children with injustice, to be sure, but looking at the review with some care might give a clue to a larger strategy. James dismisses Alcott's work because he had an overall disdain for children's literature and for children in general – an empyrean stance which, while understandable at this stage in his career, hints at a vague but possible desire to detach himself from his own childhood, or at least from his inner child. Interestingly, this desire diminished over time.

Before moving on to the discussion of the *Eight Cousins* review, it might be useful to look at some examples of James's early and later juvenile characters. *What Maisie Knew* (1897), "The Turn of the Screw" (1898), and a few years earlier, "The Pupil" (1891) are the most familiar (and often – taught) texts in which children play central roles, carry complex personalities, and are treated with sympathy. However, there are less known, and at the same time more intriguing instances of James's child characters or of their role in his fiction. In *The Awkward*

[1] In his 1879 biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne, James applies these words to his famous predecessor and thus wins the epithets of "condescension" and "patronization", forever attached to his *Hawthorne*.

Age (1899), James expresses his old sentiments towards children, although in the following he gives an impression of being more funny than disapproving. Actually, the passage in which two gentlemen talk about a family of friends might be one of the funniest of James's rare instances of humor:

> "There are four children?" his friend went on.
> "The elder boy, whom you saw and who in his way is a wonder, the older girl, whom you must see, and two youngsters, male and female, whom you mustn't." [...]
> "You mean the youngsters are – unfortunate?"
> "No, they're only, like all the modern young, I think, mysteries, terrible little baffling mysteries." (James 1899)

James shies from such mysteries; there are other ones that interest him more. However, the humor of the above passage lies (mainly) not in the last sentence, but in the word "unfortunate" – after the dash. The reader imagines the gentle, elderly Mr. Longdon, inclining his head and lowering his voice, when the terrible suggestion that the family's youngest members are mentally or physically deformed, crosses his mind. But they are not deformed. They are just regular brats.

Children in James's early fiction appear seldom. A curious example is an 1869 story, "Gabrielle de Bergerac," which speaks of love between people from distant social classes – an aristocratic girl and her brother's tutor. The secondary narrator here is the brother, who seems a likable enough child-character, sympathetic to the plight of the lovers, and smart. However, even though he speaks of the times of his childhood, he is an old man now, and we cannot treat his voice as a perspective of a child. Much stranger is an 1867 story, "My Friend Bingham". It is not a good story, almost unnoticed by critics, and deemed "unconvincing" by one:

> Bingham is, so he thinks, a confirmed bachelor. While out hunting, he accidentally kills a little boy. He extends what comfort he can to the boy's widowed mother and eventually marries her.

> Though barely conceivable as an episode in a long narrative, this sequence of action is too brief to develop the qualities of character introduced as central in Bingham (McElderry 1949: 285).

McElderry speaks of the story as a whole, but it is the treatment of the child that is "unconvincing" – or worse – it chills and frightens at the same time. James is not interested in the child whom he makes a character – or rather a pretext – in this story; he passes lightly over the death of the boy, describes his mother's reaction as hysterical, almost an overreaction, and swiftly moves on to the problem of the adults, that is, a relation of the killer and the mother of the child (who eventually marry despite society's outrage). The boy's death is an incident of the plot, a mechanical device for the development of events. In "My Friend Bingham" we have first-person narration – the unnamed friend tells the story. Perhaps it is his perspective, then, that makes the tale disturbing – the man is not bothered by the tragedy, and the emotional reactions of the mother make him uncomfortable. James hides safely behind his narrator.

Yet three decades later, in *The Other House*, he returns to a similar theme; the death of a child reverberates in the later novel in a way that is disturbing and sinister. It is not an accidental killing: a little girl is destroyed by a mentally deranged, scheming woman. The crime goes unpunished, as the community (notably, the child's father) decides to shield the murderess; she pays merely with her banishment from the society. Jennifer L. Jenkins notices that "this solution in part speaks to the value of children in the community: [the murdered child] is merely a symbol" in the social games James deals with. As she observes further, "critics and most readers have found the ending of *The Other House* outrageous in its suspension of morality" (181). Additionally disturbing is the condescension with which James treats the one person who reacts strongly, who in fact shows her heightened emotions at the terrible news. In chapter XXXII of the novel, a young woman "wails", "sobs",

and "sways to and fro in her grief", while the father of the child, speaking "quietly", "gently", "coldly", and "lucidly" decides to protect the killer (James 1896). This resembles the scene from "My Friend Bingham" where the mother of the shot boy "moans" and "sobs" while the composed narrator tells the killer, "Keep your senses. It's not your fault" (1999: 133). The composure of the males set against the emotionality of the females – the emotionality which is understandable, yet perceived as inferior – strikes the reader. That in James's fiction "such domestic crimes are often treated as incidental and matter-of-fact" (Jenkins 166), serving simply as *incidents* of the plot, or as excuses for contrasting composure with emotionality is chilling indeed. In an attempt to explain James's imperturbability, Anna De Basio recalls his reaction to a description of an actual murder: "Interestingly and somewhat disturbingly, James dwells on the aesthetic allure of the 'perfect' case as reconstructed by Roughhead". In *The Other House*, it is the "narrative strategy" that matters, not the infanticide (De Basio 2011).

Of "juvenile literature" James speaks rarely, or with irony at best (1984: 331); "popular school books, story books, and other attempts to vulgarize human knowledge and adapt it to the infant mind" do not impress him (1984: 346). Thus, it is not surprising that Alcott's *Eight Cousins: or, the Aunt Hill* disgusted him. More surprising is young James's apparent concern with the work's didacticism. His review for *Nation* (1875) appears very concerned with the bad influence such prose might have on a young person's mind. Throughout the short article, James makes it clear that the novel is "a very ill-chosen sort of entertainment to set before children". Alcott's novel describes a year in life of an orphaned girl, Rose. Rose is thirteen years old when the novel starts. Her cousins, a merry group of boys, are of various ages; the oldest, and most important in the novel, are fifteen and seventeen. The novel is not about small children – the characters are adolescents, and this is the pre-

sumed audience for which Alcott writes.[2] Yet James insists that "infant readers" are the audience that grants her "vast" popularity (1984: 195). This is an example of James's well known condescension, implying in this case that he does not wish to see a difference between an infant and a teenager – for him, they are equally dull, as-yet-unformed specimens of humanity.

Yet neither the simplicity of the subject nor its lack of interest for the mature reader are those faults of the novel that James dwells upon. He appears more scandalized than bored. Alcott, in James's view, has simply a bad influence on the young generation. In this view James is not alone – other contemporary reviewers "blasted Alcott for denigrating the importance of adults in Rose's life" (Mills 1989: 74). This opinion might surprise the modern reader, as *Eight Cousins* is truly an innocent book – it shies from any risky topics such as erotic relations between the sexes; notably, there is not even a suggestion of any "puppy love" among the teenage characters.

Stranger is the fact that James clearly wishes to moralize – a critical activity from which *he* normally shies. The attitude which Alcott adopts while talking to her audience is one of the things that bother him: "Miss Alcott winks at the juvenile reader." He is right; indeed, "Miss Alcott seems to have a private understanding with the youngsters she depicts, at the expense of their pastors and masters" (1984: 196). Perhaps his concern will be easier to understand when we remember that Alcott was one of the first authors who truly wrote for children and teenagers, keeping in mind their specific needs for entertainment. Her *Little Women* (1868), a book playful and, if moralistic, then in a veiled way, meant for girls what *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) would mean for boys.[3] In any case,

[2] In reference to young adults or adolescents, Alcott in her novel uses the words "child" and "infants" only once, humorously.

[3] Shelden points out that "while Alcott has been excluded from the scholarly canon up to now in part because she was a writer of works for and

James's objections to the novel's moral influence reflect his "unprogressive" attitude: "the views expressed in [*Eight Cousins*] are hardly revolutionary, though they are set forth with a reformer's zeal; they seem typical for those of [its] time, indeed, for [its] century, at least as found in enlightened opinion of the day" (Mills 1989: 71). *Eight Cousins* actually depicts few pranks as daring as those of *Tom Sawyer*. Boy-characters make a lot of noise in the novel, but when they do something bad, they are duly condemned. Alcott's boys act Tom-Sawyer-like in church: "the dreadful things that were done during sermon-time will hardly be believed". For example,

> Charlie winked rapturously at her behind his mother's fan; [...] George fell over a stool and dropped three books in his excitement; Will drew sailors and Chinamen on his clean cuffs, and displayed them, [...] [and] Steve nearly upset the whole party by burning his nose with salts. (Alcott 1875)

The boys are later seriously chided for their irreverence. Alcott is even more serious when she talks of smoking tobacco – the boys are taught a lesson, and they stop.[4]

The reviewer apparently knows what is crucial for the proper rearing of the young: "What children want is the objective, as the philosophers say; it is good for them to feel that the people and things around them that appeal to their respect are beautiful and powerful specimens of what they seem to be"

about young people, this is a characteristic she shares with many canonical American authors, most notably Cooper and Twain" (2006: 212).

[4] For the reader's amusement I will quote a passage from *Eight Cousins*, where, upon Rose's entering the room, one boy gets rid of his smoke while the other objects:

> Archie threw his cigar into the fire.
> 'What's that for?' asked Charlie.
> 'Gentlemen don't smoke before ladies.'
> 'True; but I'm not going to waste my weed,' and Prince poked his into the empty inkstand that served them for an ash tray (Alcott 1875: 75).

(James 1984: 196). It is a view that many traditional educationalists shared, but it sounds strange from James, who has repeatedly made it understood that children do not interest him. But in the piece on *Eight Cousins* he expresses the opinions of someone who is interested, and has a definite view about children's needs, behavior, and upbringing. So does Alcott in her novel. She is didactic and educational, and the models of education she presents actually come from a very sound, if experimental, source: her father, Bronson Alcott (Mills 2006: 113). In his early texts, James mentions educational methods once, approvingly; the example is his 1869 story, "Gabrielle de Bergerac". Alas, these are the methods of Jean Jacques Rousseau, of a hundred years before:

> In those days [...] there was a vast stir in men's notions of education, and a hundred theories afloat about the perfect teacher and the perfect pupil. Coquelin was a firm devotee of Jean Jacques, and very possibly applied some of his precepts to my own little person. But of his own nature Coquelin was incapable of anything that was not wise and gentle, and he had no need to learn humanity in books [...]. We took long walks, and he told me the names of the flowers and the various styles of the stars. (James 1999: 438)

Couqelin's methods are unusual for his times; Bronson Alcott also "espoused wildly unorthodox theories of education for the time, urging children to think for themselves, insisting that originality produced strength" (Hamlin 1981: 85). He was a frequent and respected visitor in James's parents' home, but his ideas, as presented in his daughter's novel, apparently did not appeal to James. Perhaps, uninterested after all, the writer never became familiar with these new models.

James dislikes Alcott's treatment of adults in the book. Most of them, with the exception of Rose's Uncle Alec, are playfully criticized. Each of Alcott's "several grotesque aunts" (1984: 195) represents a certain failure in respect to children's up-

bringing: one is morbidly religious, another too "fashionable", while yet another believes blindly in the power of drugs. "Very likely", says James, "many children are overdosed; but this is a poor matter to tell children stories about". At one point in the novel, a learning-obsessed aunt is surprised by the young heroine's knowledge; reciting what she has learned, the girl enjoys her triumph. James calls Rose's response "a long, pert, snubbing speech" (1984: 196). Following this incident (that is, showing the mean aunt that Rose knows her lessons), Uncle Alec "dances a polka with her in jubilation. This episode has quite spoiled, for our fancy, both the uncle and the niece", announces James in disgust (1984: 197). Yet "adult authority", as Mills observes, plays the key role in the didacticism of *Eight Cousins*. Mills wonders that "contemporary reviewers, especially Henry James" objected to the minimal influence of adult characters in the novel (1989: 74). But James never says that elders do not play a vital role in *Eight Cousins*. What he finds objectionable is Alcott's irreverent picture of the grown-up world.

The grown-up hero of *Eight Cousins* is this "big burly uncle, an honest seaman, addicted to riding a tilt at the shams of life. He finds his little niece encompassed with a great many of these, and Miss Alcott's tale is chiefly devoted to relating how he plucked them successively away" (1984: 195). The above is true in more than one respect. By describing him ironically as "addicted to riding a tilt at the shams of life", James probably means to mock the uncle, but Alcott is similarly ironic in her novel, even if her irony is meant to amuse, not mock; moreover, the description does justice to this character. Indeed, Alec's role is to "pluck" the various errors made by nineteenth-century American parents. Yet the uncle, just like the aunts, is simplified for the young reader's taste, and has attributes that would endear him to this audience (for example, siding with Rose against her aunts). And even if we accept James's objection to the uncle's lack of loyalty towards the other adults, that

is, being happy when his niece delivers the "snubbing speech" to her aunt, the critic's heavy irony applied to Uncle Alec's innocent if silly acts seems out of place in a review of a novel for the young: "When [Alec] comes to see his niece he descends to her room by the water spout; why not by the rope ladder at once?" (1984: 196). Perhaps Alcott devised the water spout descent because rope ladders had already been used many times in adventure fiction, but still she realized that for a young reader any such endeavors would be fascinating – the use of water-spouts, rope ladders, torn sheets – since we all, I believe, as teenagers in any historical period, dreamt of similar experiences.

What James seems to disregard is that the novel is clearly meant not only for the young, but for their guardians as well. (The most positive "aunt character" in the novel is the one who advocates good literature for children, and who obviously reads such literature before recommending it to her sons.) *Eight Cousins* is a multi-purpose crusade: for dress reform, healthy nutrition, and exercise; against the use of drugs, "tonics", and tobacco; advocating democratic views and even the sisterhood of all women. While Alcott educates both the young and the old, James sees the novel as an example of a lesson in disrespectfulness towards the grownups: "Miss Alcott does not perhaps go so far as some of her fellow-chronicles of the nursery (in whom the tendency may be called nothing less than depraved), but she goes too far, in our opinion, for childish simplicity or parental equanimity". Again, he ignores the fact of how old the protagonists really are, and with relish repeats the "nursery" epithet; at another place, Uncle Alec "is like a hero of the 'Rochester' school astray in the nursery" (1984: 196). This is actually a shocking image; Mr. Rochester, rebel in polite society, of extreme sexual attraction, would be highly improper in books for children. Yet that this "nursery" is peopled by adolescents up to seventeen years of age, who,

together with their parents, may benefit from the didacticism of the novel, escapes the reviewer's notice.

At the end of the review, James expresses sentiments befitting an aged grandfather: "What have become of the 'Rollo' books of our infancy and the delightful "Franconia" tales? If they are out of print, we strongly urge that they be republished, as an antidote to this unhappy amalgam of the novel and the story book" (1984: 197). He then proceeds to list the attributes of such literature: it was simple, adults were "all wise and comfortable," and the young ones were respectful. There were no ambiguities ("the child-world was not a world of questions"), and things had "the glow of fairy land upon them" (1984: 197). In this vein, while writing *Hawthorne* a few years later, James praised his subject for such "charming literary services that have been rendered to children". Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* and *The Wonder Book* have a "fairy-tale quality" that fulfills "the ideal of happiness of many American children [...] to lie upon the carpet and lose themselves" in this reading (1984: 417-418). James was such a child himself, if only [...] "[he] may trust [his] own early impressions of [Hawthorne's children's tales]." Alas, he has "been careful not to read them over, for [he] should be very sorry to risk disturbing in any degree a recollection of them that has been at rest since the appreciative period of life to which they are addressed" (1984: 417). Two conclusions appear inescapable: first, for outwardly sentimental reasons the author of Hawthorne's literary biography did not bother to conduct research into all of the available material, in this case did not re-read some of the texts he commented on. Second, if Hawthorne's tales appealed to him as a child, but could have lost their charm if he read them as an adult, then Alcott's book, if meant for children, could be simply impossible to appreciate for the grown-up James. Thus, his authoritative statement starting with "What children want is…" (1984: 196) sounds empty, if not contradictory to what he says elsewhere.

Coming back to his *Eight Cousins* review, there is a strange absence of style criticism there (in most of his other book reviews, the assessment of form is dutifully presented, and in the review of Alcott's *Moods*, the imagery is actually praised). James mentions the style of *Eight Cousins* – mostly in a negative context – but his opinions refer, again, to what is proper for children, and are not meant to condemn Alcott's style per se. At the beginning he calls her "extremely clever". Alcott "deals with the social questions of the child-world, and, like Thackeray and Trollope, she is a satirist." But this "constant ring of the style," "the smart satirical tone" is, for James, "unfortunate", improper in children's literature (1984: 195). Moreover, there is a problem with Rose's way of speaking: "Her conversation is salted with feminine humor of the period" (1984: 196). Again, James misses the point that Rose is fourteen, and that she imitates her older female relatives – of which, both the speech of the females and Rose's imitation, Alcott actually disapproves. He finishes the review with a comment that might pertain to the style: "in *Eight Cousins* there is no glow and no fairies; it is all prose, and to our sense rather vulgar prose" (1984: 197). Perhaps, "vulgar prose" refers to something other than style here, as another "crusade" of Alcott's is her insistence on the purity of language. When one of the boys protests that his mother will not allow him to read a Horatio Alger-like novel, he says: "They're bully books, and I'd like to know where's the harm". His mother answers promptly: "You have just shown us one of the chief evils, and that is slang" (Alcott 1875: 77-78). Alcott's novel is not a gem of polished form, and could not have been meant to be. Mills stresses that "all of Rose's aunts are plainly 'types'", and Alcott's "dialogue [...] is often transparently put forward to lay out theories, flesh out character, advance action, and so on" (1989: 74). Yet the style of the book is consistent with the basic rules of prose for teenagers: clear, with a large dose of simple irony, few long descriptions, and plenty of dialogue. Admitting that Alcott was

"extremely clever", James indicated that she knew how to appeal to her audience. Yet the lack of any more serious analysis of form in his review appears to be a significant absence. For her style, Louisa May Alcott could have been praised – even with the reservation that it was simplified for children. James chose to praise her but little.

It is only after having read both *Eight Cousins* and James's review of it that a modern reader might feel the true injustice done to Alcott's work. James concentrates on the non-literary aspects of the novel: he criticizes its didactic outcome, and, connected with it, the types of characters which Alcott presents to her young readers. James is silent about the aspects of her book which might have appealed to a non-biased critic: the lively, realistic plot or the language, witty and proper for such literature. James's unfair treatment of Alcott might well mirror his own sense of having been unfairly treated as a child, diminished by the fame and notoriety of his father's guests, always in competition with an extremely clever older brother, and on top of all that, severely injured in some mysterious way when he was seventeen. Childhood, for James, both in the way others depict it and in the way he depicts it in his own fiction, is a delicate matter. Children suffer in ways that adults cannot understand. They take for wisdom things that maybe are not so wise. They are vulnerable and easily misled. Such a conception of childhood might be at the heart of James's objections to Alcott, and it might also inform some of his own later short stories. While James did not see children as merely small versions of adults, he did see them as being so complex and highly suggestible that any literature aimed at them – or literature about them – would need a very carefully attuned appreciation of its audience's (or subject's) sensitivities. Ultimately, the review appears to be less a critical assessment of Eight Cousins than an insight into what James thought children should be like. Even more importantly, the review hints at a nostalgia for his own childhood – when chil-

dren were good and happy, and the books for them had a magic glow. Many of us share the same memory.

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Beata Williamson
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
angbw@ug.edu.pl

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The world of childhood in Ray Bradbury's *The Illustrated Man*

KAROL CHOJNOWSKI

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Abstract

This article is devoted to an analysis of the motif of childhood in *The Illustrated Man*, a collection of short stories by Ray Bradbury. The particular focus is on the initial story, "The Veldt," and the last two stories, "Zero Hour" and "The Rocket." The article interprets imagination as a distinguishing feature of children's world, as opposed to the world of adults, characterised by logic and lack of imagination. This difference, the article claims, results in a clash of the two worlds. The article also analyses Bradbury's negative view of technology expressed in the stories, with its addictive and destructive potential, as well as technology's relationship to imagination. Another object of analysis is the ways Bradbury suggests to reconcile the worlds of children and adults and to avoid technology's pernicious effects. The article also aims to analyse the way in which the intertextual framework contributes to these themes and to interpret the meaning of the arrangement of the stories within the volume.

Key words

Bradbury, children, *The Illustrated Man*, imagination, technology

Świat dziecka w *Człowieku Ilustrowanym* Raya Bradbury'ego

Abstrakt

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie motywu dzieciństwa w zbiorze opowiadań *Człowiek Ilustrowany* Raya Bradbury'ego. Analiza w szczególności skupia się na opowiadaniu początkowym, *Sawanna*, oraz dwóch ostatnich – *Godzina zero* i *Rakieta*. Wyobraźnia zostaje zinterpretowana jako wyróżnik dziecięcego świata, w przeciwieństwie do świata dorosłych, naznaczonego logiką i brakiem wyobraźni. Z tej różnicy – brzmi jedna z tez artykułu – bierze się konflikt pomiędzy światem dzieci a dorosłych. W artykule omówiony jest też, wyrażony w opowiadaniach Bradbury'ego, negatywny stosunek do techniki, jej uzależniającego i niszczycielskiego potencjału oraz relacja techniki do wyobraźni. Przedmiotem analizy są też sposoby, jakie Bradbury sugeruje, aby przezwyciężyć konflikt świata dzieci i dorosłych oraz uniknąć zgubnych skutków techniki. Ponadto celem artykułu jest analiza intertekstualnych odniesień pod kątem ich wkładu w tematykę opowiadań oraz interpretacja sensu takiego, a nie innego układu utworów w zbiorze.

Słowa kluczowe

Bradbury, dzieci, *Człowiek Ilustrowany*, wyobraźnia, technika

1. Introduction

In Ray Bradbury's collection *The Illustrated Man* (1951) there are four stories which feature children as prominent characters: "The Veldt", "The Rocket Man", "Zero Hour" and "The Rocket". At least three of them seem to be deliberately arranged within the volume, with one of them appearing at the beginning of the collection ("The Veldt"), two ("Zero Hour" and "The Rocket") at the end, and one ("The Rocket Man") is placed near the middle of the text. Since the beginning and end of

a book – prologue and epilogue aside – are naturally its prominent parts, the placing of the "children" stories in these positions makes the theme of childhood conspicuous.[1] This article starts with brief summaries of the four stories and then focuses primarily on "The Veldt", "Zero Hour" and "The Rocket" with the intent of proving that they stress the importance of imagination as a defining feature of childhood. The article also analyzes the conflict between the world of children and the world of adults.

The first of the stories in *The Illustrated Man* to feature children, "The Veldt", tells the story of George and Lydia Hadley, a couple who purchase a state-of-the-art, thoroughly automated house which does all the housework. Moreover, the couple's children, Peter and Wendy, have a gigantic nursery with walls capable of producing extremely vivid and meticulously detailed virtual reality of any kind, complete with sounds and smells, triggered by mental commands. Within less than a year, the children become so addicted to the nursery that they become hysterical when the father switches the room off for some time as a punishment. All this the reader learns in retrospect; the story starts when the family has lived in the high-tech house for about a year and the relationship between the parents and the children has been deteriorating for two months since the children were first denied something they wanted and then punished by a ban on the nursery. Now the children's usual fairy-tale fantasies enacted on the nursery walls are replaced by images of an African veldt where ferocious lions wallow in a bloody feast under a scourging sun. When the alarmed parents watch the scene, they instinctively get scared of the life-like lions approaching them and run in panic. Also, Mr and

[1] Compare Robin Anne Reid: "Since Bradbury's regular collections of short stories have sold well and continue to do so, he must, as a writer, perceive a different purpose in revising and arranging stories to create a work such as *TIM [The Illustrated Man*]. [...] a close reading of the conclusions and themes of the various stories reveals a unified narrative connection" (2000: 37-38).

Mrs Hadley sometimes hear screams from the nursery and George finds his wallet and his wife's scarf, stained with blood, on the nursery floor. When the parents decide that both their children and themselves have been spoilt by the mechanical house and need to take a holiday from it, the children once again throw a tantrum; then they trick the parents into coming into the nursery and lock them inside, where, it is suggested, they are devoured by the lions, which have come alive.

The story does not describe the moment of the parents' death, and in the last scene, when a friend comes to help the Hadley family to leave for their holiday, the children – now innocently playing in the nursery – say their parents will come in a moment. However, what supports the children-as-killers interpretation is the fact that, in the last scene, the children in the nursery are smiling (1951: 18) – which they certainly would not be, had they released their parents from the room after locking them in, because they would have been punished. Additionally, this interpretation is supported by the foreshadowing – in the form of the screams and the eerie findings in the nursery. Robin Reid also implicitly assumes this interpretation, as she calls the children "killers" (2000: 46). Anthony Bernardo (2004), too, says that the "elder Hadleys" are killed.

In one of the two final stories, "Zero Hour", the main characters are a seven-year-old girl called Mink and her mother, Mrs. Morris. Mink, like all kids under nine in the neighbourhood, takes to playing a new game. The game is called "Invasion" and it involves constructing strange devices out of simple household tools and utensils, according to the instructions of an invisible or imaginary person called Drill. Mink, who actually treats the game quite seriously, solemnly tells her disbelieving mother that children are being used by aliens as a "fifth column" and that all adults are going to be killed. Mrs. Morris has a phone call from a friend who tells her that the game has suddenly become popular amongst children all over the country. Later that day, as the "Zero Hour" of the "Invasion" comes,

it turns out that the kids were not kidding: the invasion is real and the adults are going to be killed.

The protagonist of "The Rocket" is Fiorello Bodoni, a poor junkyard owner with a big family. One night, watching rockets zooming by, he dreams of space travel, as he has been doing for a long time. A friend of his, old Bramante, meets him and tells him that his dreams are useless because even if he can afford a space trip for one of his family – which is the best he can hope for – the rest of the family will hate that person or be "sick with" dreaming of space travel (1951: 173). But Bodoni does not give up and the following morning the Bodoni family pull straws to decide who is going to take the space trip. At this, they realise that Bramante was right: choosing one person is not a viable solution. They agree that the money Bodoni has been saving should be invested in new equipment for the junkyard. However, when somebody offers Bodoni a mock rocket to dispose of, he buys it instead of investing in the new equipment. After an unsuccessful attempt at starting it, Bodoni is close to destroying the rocket but then he has an idea. With the remaining money from his savings, he equips and reworks the mock rocket to invite his family on a space trip. His wife Maria thinks him mad and declines but the children accept his offer. The trip turns out to be a 3-D virtual tour, but the children never realise it. After their "return" Maria expresses her admiration for Bodoni.

"The Rocket Man" appears around the middle of Bradbury's collection. It tells about a rocket pilot who visits his wife, Lilly, and his fourteen-year-old son, Doug, at infrequent intervals. The mother, anxious about the numerous dangers awaiting him in space, says to her son that, should his father die in space, she would not be able to look at the planet where he died. During one of the pilot's stays at home, she demands that her son ask his father not to go to space anymore. But in fact Doug is fascinated by space travel and wants to become a rocket man himself. When Doug's father leaves on another

space mission, he promises that when he comes back this time, it will be for good. The day after his departure, the news comes that "[father's] ship had fallen into the sun" (1951: 72). This makes Lilly and Doug change to a nocturnal lifestyle "for a long time" (1951: 72). Though the fourteen-year-old protagonist could be considered a child, in actual fact the world of Doug is not a world of childhood. Firstly, Doug is an adolescent rather than a child[2] and secondly, his world is not the world of imagination and his dreams are not separated from the realm of adulthood: he dreams about becoming a space pilot as an adult. Moreover, his dreams do not immediately materialize, unlike Mink's from "Zero Hour" or Peter and Wendy's from "The Veldt". Finally, there is no clash between childhood and adulthood. If Doug is involved in any conflict, it is the conflict between father and mother, i.e. a conflict within the adult world. For all of these reasons "The Rocket Man" is not an object of analysis here.

2. Imagination as an essential feature of childhood

The world of childhood in *The Illustrated Man* seems to feature children's imagination as its defining characteristic. This claim is suggested by Lahna Diskin as quoted in Pere Gallardo-Torrano's review of Bradbury's collection in *Utopian* Studies (2001). What should be particularly noted is the strength of imagination and the fact that children treat it seriously. Sometimes, combined with the impressionable nature of children or with their strong emotions or desires, imagination is capable of endowing the unreal with real existence. The imagination of children is juxtaposed with the adult, rational, down-to-earth approach to life. In "The Veldt", imagination is combined with hatred excited by parental punishments and results in bringing lions to life. It is the adults' lack of imagination that pre-

[2] The distinction between children and adolescents is particularly important in "Zero Hour" as will be discussed further on.

vents them from realizing that the children's fantasies have materialized, and as a result they presumably die. Similarly, imagination and impressionability is what makes the alien invasion possible in "Zero Hour", while the adults are presented as too unimaginative and patronizing to realize the danger in time. It is also the impressionable nature of children that enables them to believe in the "space trip" organized by Fiorello Bodoni in "The Rocket", while the father, obviously, does not fall for the illusion that he has created.

While it seems quite likely that what brings the lions in "The Veldt" to life is the children's imagination aided by hatred for their parents,[3] there is also an interesting technological aspect suggested by the fact that the room itself, or the house, just like Hadley's children, may hate the father "for wanting to switch it off", i.e. for wanting to "kill" it (1951: 15. In his article on "The Veldt", Anthony J. Bernardo claims that it is the house that "makes the lions real" and that, at that point, "the Happylife Home becomes almost godlike. Peter, in fact, regards it as a god" (2004). This, however, is not entirely convincing, because the way Peter addresses the nursery or the house could be interpreted as a command as much as a prayer: "'Don't let them do it!' wailed Peter at the ceiling, as if he was talking to the house, the nursery. 'Don't let Father kill everything!'", and later, after shutting his parents in the nursery: "Don't let them switch off the nursery and the house" (1951: 17). (In this last instance, he could actually be talking to the lions). It is also interesting to note that from the beginning of the story, the nursery no longer obeys the parents' commands, and the children seem to have taken complete control over it.

[3] There is at least one other story by Ray Bradbury, "Pillar of Fire" from a 1966 collection *S Is for Space*, where the idea of a monster coming to life out of pure hatred is stated explicitly. It can be assumed that in "The Veldt" the same kind of motivation applies implicitly. However, in "Pillar of Fire" it is not specified whose hatred it is that brings the monster to life, other than his own.

This again supports the interpretation that the children, rather than the house, are the miracle-makers.

Moreover, the context formed by other stories in the collection should also be taken into account. The stories almost always present technology as threatening and harmful to people, but never show it as possessing supernatural powers. In fact, in "The Exiles", science and rationalism, connected with technology, are placed in radical opposition to the supernatural characters. It may be concluded that while technological equipment acquires certain supernatural features in "The Veldt", it is only because the children's feelings and imagination have made it do so. This becomes evident when we consider this transformation in the context of "The Exiles", where the existence of certain characters requires the belief in them on the part of others. Additionally, characters who owe their existence to other people's imagination appear in Bradbury's stories outside of *The Illustrated Man*, for example, in "On the Orient, North" (1988), "Pillar of Fire" (from *S Is for Space*; 1966) and – to some extent – "The Messiah" (1976). The lions, which acquire real, as opposed to merely virtual, existence in "The Veldt", seem to belong to the same category of characters.[4]

In "Zero Hour" it is again children's imaginations that seem to bring the aliens to life. In the children's belief, the aliens' very existence seems to depend on whether somebody believes in them or not: Mink says that adults "are dangerous [...] 'cause [they] don't believe in Martians" (1951: 167) and when her mother makes fun of her she tells her, "You're laughing!

[4] The fact that the lions owe their physical appearance in the characters' world not only to Peter and Wendy's faith but also to their strong emotions, simultaneously places the beasts into another, overlapping class of Bradbury characters, namely those who come into existence as a kind of emanation of other characters' strong feelings. This category includes such figures as the penitent from "Bless me, Father, for I Have Sinned" (1984), the ghost from "Banshee" (1984) and, especially, the two ghosts from "That Woman on the Lawn" (1996). (The stories "On the Orient, North," "The Messiah," "Bless me, Father, for I Have Sinned," "Banshee" and "That Woman on the Lawn" are collected in *Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales*).

You'll kill Drill and everybody" (1951: 166). Thus, when Mrs. Morris suggests to her daughter that aliens come from her head rather than from Mars, she may be closer to the truth than Mink realises. But it is exactly this suggestion that so irritates the girl. Perhaps the real point of difference between Mink and her mother is not so much whether Martians exist or not but how seriously you treat the products of your imagination.

In "Zero Hour", the power of children's imagination is aided by their impressionability. In fact, being impressionable is shown as definitive of childhood (as opposed to logic, which implicitly defines adulthood). We can see this in the conversation between Mink and her mother:

> 'Mom?'
> 'Yes?'
> 'What's lodge-ick?'
> 'Logic? Why, dear, logic is knowing what things are true and not true.'
> '[Drill] mentioned that,' said Mink. 'And what's im-pres-sionable?' It took her a minute to say it.
> 'Why, it means – 'Her mother looked at the floor, laughing gently. 'It means – to be a child, dear.' (1951: 167-168)

The world of adults, in opposition to the world of children, is governed by logic, and it is certainly marked by the lack of imagination. Because of this lack, George and Lydia from "The Veldt", as adults, are unable to fully realize what is happening in their children's nursery: that the walls enact their death in the jaws of lions. They hear screams that sound familiar, but they cannot recognize them as their own. Even when George finds his wallet with traces of saliva and blood, and his wife's blood-stained scarf, the parents are still unable to realize that the objects have materialized out of a 3D film. They sense danger but their rational and logical adult reasoning forces them to dismiss the possibility that anything can step out of the

screen. In "Zero Hour", Mrs. Morris rationalizes and represses all the eerie facts around her, thus ignoring the danger. Adults' rational, down-to-earth thinking prevents them from seeing at least some of the things that children see – and also from doing what the children are able to do: for example, Helen, Mrs. Morris's friend, cannot make the yo-yo disappear, even though Mrs. Morris can plainly see her daughter do so. Thus, the adults' rationality and logic not only limits their perception but also limits their abilities and makes them vulnerable to dangers that they are unable to see.

Out of the three stories – "The Veldt", "Zero Hour" and "The Rocket" – the latter is special in that children's imagination, while still playing a major role, is not shown as a sinister force. In "The Rocket", the children's imagination is still a defining feature of childhood and – aided, no doubt, by their impressionability – it enables them to believe the 3D projections to be a real space trip. It seems important, however, that in this story, the children's world of imagination is not placed in opposition to the world of adults: it is the children's father who conceives the idea of the "space trip", which definitely is an imaginative act. Moreover, the father's attempt proves that he treats his children's imaginative needs and desires quite seriously. The fact that both children and adults have imagination[5] may be part of the explanation why the children's imagination does not run amok: the children do not find an opposition to their imaginative world and do not have to fight for it, as in "Zero Hour". One can notice a certain similarity to "The Veldt" in the presence of the technological aspect: the 3D projection. But in "The Rocket" the children and the adults use the technology together and thus it cannot be used by one against the other. However, it can be noticed that, in spite of sharing in the same imaginative world, it is the father who remains in control and in fact creates the "space trip" for his

[5] Fiorello's wife initially shows scepticism but later expresses a wish to engage in the fantasy herself.

children. In contrast to the previously considered stories where the products of imagination assumed physical existence in the fictional world, in "The Rocket" the "trip" remains illusory and is only believed to be real by the children owing to their impressionability. It seems possible to conclude that while children's imagination has the power to change reality, when imagination is controlled by adults, it remains safely within the sphere of the unreal.

Reflecting on the relation between children and technology Bernardo argues about "The Veldt" that "[t]he nursery reproduces images of the children's thoughts, in effect becoming their imagination. This relieves the children of the necessity of developing their imagination by contact with the outside world" (2004). Bernardo seems to suggest that the children become passive due to their use of technology, which may appear plausible, especially when Peter says that he "[doesn't] want to do anything but look and listen and smell" (Bradbury 1951: 13). Nevertheless, the children's horrid ideas seem to be their own, rather than something fed to them by the nursery: technology does not replace imagination but aids it. Although it is possible to see the children as hooked on technology or addicted to their nursery, technology does not replace imagination. In "Zero Hour", children's imagination is equally lethal to adults as in "The Veldt", even though it has not been perverted by overuse of technology, while in "The Rocket" imagination is not dangerous at all *in spite of* being aided by technology.

3. Childhood and adulthood: the worlds in conflict

The Illustrated Man shows children and adults as living in two different worlds which can easily come into conflict, although this conflict is not inevitable. In "Zero Hour", the conflict between the children and the adults arises out of the very nature of childhood and adulthood: a conflict between (underrated)

fantasy and (overrated) logic. In "The Veldt", there are actually two conflicts: children against adults and humans against technology. The latter conflict may be seen as triggering the former. However, while the children in "The Veldt" think they are allied with technology, in fact they are its victims just as much as their parents. Of course, the differences between the children's and adults' worlds (imaginary versus rational) also play an important part in the children-adults conflict in "The Veldt", preventing the adults from realizing the danger. "The Rocket" offers a solution to both of these conflicts: the adults treat the children's fantasy seriously and help them to realize it by employing technology, but the technology is reduced to a minimum. While the adults accompany the children in the realization of their dream of space travel, it may be observed that the rocket remains immobile and the space travel is actually reduced to a 3D show. In "The Rocket" imagination is no longer a sinister and destructive force nor a power able to change reality. It seems significant that "The Rocket", a heart-warming story, is placed at the end of the collection, immediately after the sinister "Zero Hour", thus introducing a more optimistic and hopeful twist to the children-adults conflict.

Peter and Wendy, the names of the child characters in "The Veldt", are, of course, an allusion to the names of the protagonists in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (Reid 2000: 41, Bernardo 2004). If we compare the two Peter and Wendy pairs, it turns out that Bradbury's characters share a very important feature with the Barrie characters, namely their almost complete disregard for their parents' feelings in favour of having a good time – in Neverland or in the nursery, which constitutes a parallel to Neverland, as it is a fantasy-come-true. Children's callousness in *Peter Pan* is what enables them to fly to Neverland (Barrie 1984: 212-213) and also to forget about their parents for a while. However, in Barrie's novel it is because children are "gay and innocent and heartless" that they can go to Neverland (1984: 220), whereas in Bradbury's story it is the

other way around: the children become heartless *because* they go to their "Neverland" too much.[6] Also, in the case of Barrie's characters the disregard for parents is graded – Wendy is not totally callous, while Peter utterly hates all adults, his own mother included – whereas in Bradbury's story the children are fully united against the adults. Another parallel is suggested by the fact that in both stories children kill adults: as in *Peter Pan* the killing takes place in Neverland (1984: 178-190), so in "The Veldt" it takes place in the nursery, which is equivalent to Neverland. The intertextual reference to Barrie's famous story serves to reinforce the theme of children's potential hatred towards adults, but with a new twist: here the natural clash between the worlds of children and of adults has been aggravated by the children's addiction to technology.

In the story "Zero Hour", children are the enemies of adults, too. The conflict is all the more highlighted as there are no more military conflicts in the fictional world, which makes the children-adults conflict appear to be the only conflict in the world. Unlike in "The Veldt", however, the animosity between children and adults cannot be blamed on the children being spoilt with technology: there are many futuristic inventions in "Zero Hour" but they do not seem to have much influence on the children. If anything can be suggested as an explanation why children in this story should wish adults dead – apart from the fact that the latter force them to wash their ears and forbid them to go to bed late (1951: 167) – it is probably the fact that the adults do not treat the kids seriously enough. No matter what Mink tells her mother, Mrs Morris disregards it as

[6] Nevertheless, in Bradbury's stories children seem to have a natural predisposition towards cruelty: compare Mink and other children from "Zero Hour", who aren't spoiled by any nursery, but still want to kill their parents. The nursery in "The Veldt" is thus what triggers the potential for hatred which is already present in the characters.

irrelevant, even when Mink says it is "a matter of life and death" – as, in the end, it turns out to be indeed.[7]

It is interesting to note that in "Zero Hour" there is also a kind of third party in this conflict, apart from children and adults (and apart from aliens): children of ten and more, who are on the verge of adolescence. The process is marked by the loss of imagination and credulity. Mink scornfully says that such children, i.e. adolescents, are even "worse than parents", and so they are going to be killed first, while, as far as her parents are concerned, Mink "[wi]ll be sure [they] won't be hurt much" (1951: 168).[8]

As has been discussed above, the children-adults conflict in "The Veldt" is highlighted by means of an intertextual allusion to *Peter Pan*. By analogy, the story "The Rocket" uses a Biblical allusion to propose a resolution of the conflict. In "The Rocket", Fiorello Bodoni emerges as a godlike figure because he is a father who creates a kind of universe for his children and, like in the biblical account of creation, he does it within seven days, the seventh day being the day when "The Rocket" stops and the trip ends, which resembles the day when God "had rested from all his work" (Gen 2: 3). The allusion to *Genesis* is made fairly explicit when we read that "Bodoni looked and saw red Mars and it was good" (1951: 181), which is a paraphrase of the words "And God saw the light, that it was good" (Gen 1: 4) and similar phrases at subsequent stages of creation as described in the Bible. A little earlier in Bradbury's story, Fiorello prays "to himself": "let nothing happen to the illusion in the

[7] The idea that children should be treated seriously can also be found in Bradbury's short story "Screaming Woman" (first published in 1951 and then included in *S Is for Space*) where another girl protagonist meets with disbelief when she reports to her parents a matter of life and death – a woman buried alive – and her report also turns out to be true (in this case, however, the girl manages to convince adults and the woman is saved).

[8] It is also interesting to note that there are characters in the story who are somewhere on the borderline between children and adolescents: these are Joseph Connors (1951: 164) and Peggy Ann (1951: 169).

next six days. Let all of space come and go, and red Mars come up under our ship [...] and let there be no flaws in the color film. Let there be three dimensions [...]. Let time pass without crisis" (1951: 181). These words are reminiscent of God's words "Let there be light [...]. Let there be a firmament [...] and let it divide the waters from the waters" etc. (Gen 1: 3-26). Although the fact that Fiorello prays "to himself" may simply mean that he prays silently, it can also be a discreet suggestion of his godlike character – in this case as the one to whom prayers are to be addressed. Also, when Fiorello talks to Bramante, the latter says that he "will be just a bit nearer God, in space", which foreshadows the parallel between Fiorello and God. The Biblical parallel seems to put Fiorello's undertaking in a good light. What he makes for his children is a delusion, and a costly one, which may ruin the family, but the reference to divine creation makes it a noble act, as does the praise Fiorello receives from his wife at the end.

Apart from the intertextual framework, the difference between the two types of virtual reality – in "The Veldt" and in "The Rocket" – and their effects on people may have to do with the fact that in "The Veldt" it is the children themselves who create their virtual reality, while in "The Rocket" it is the father who produces the illusions for his children and accompanies them while they experience it. It is also very interesting to note that while Fiorello Bodoni shows his children illusory images without the children realising they are illusory, in contrast Peter and Wendy show their parents an illusion which, in turn, the parents do not know has become real.

4. Conclusion

The three stories – "The Veldt", "Zero Hour" and "The Rocket" – juxtapose the worlds of children and of adults and present them as two separate realms. All three stories emphasize the power of children's imagination, which sometimes can make

dreams real. This imagination can be dangerous if it is not paid enough attention. In "The Veldt" and in "Zero Hour", children are shown as a menace to adults and can actually kill their parents – not directly, but consciously and deliberately. In the words of Robin Reid, Bradbury presents children "as a separate race, hostile and antagonistic to their parents (2000: 51). Reid calls the two worlds "alienated" (2000: 48). "The Rocket" also juxtaposes the two worlds but, unlike in the other two stories, the conflict is avoided thanks to the attitude of the father who treats the imaginative dreams of the children seriously and because technology, which in "The Veldt" is a baleful power, here is under wise control.[9] The juxtaposition of the two stories – "Zero Hour" and "The Rocket" – at the end of the collection gives the three "children" stories, and the book as a whole, a heartening and reassuring twist by suggesting that the child-adult conflict is not inevitable.[10]

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[9] According to Reid, out of all the stories in the collection, even "The Rocket" can "hardly qualify as optimistic" as far as faith in technology is concerned (2000: 39).

[10] This, by the way, is in keeping with the message of the epilogue, which also ends on a hopeful note, thus suggesting that potential menaces in general can be avoided. "The narrator, by the end, believes that the stories predict the future, as shown by his decision to run away when he sees the image of his murder. Since he is able to escape to a nearby town, his survival reveals that the predicted future can be averted by the right action: the future revealed by the stories is not inevitable" (Reid 2000: 39).

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Karol Chojnowski
Filologiczne Studia Doktoranckie
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
karol.chojnowski@o2.pl

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A buried childhood in Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*

TATIANA JANKOWSKA

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Abstract

Charles Dickens's autobiographical novel *David Copperfield* devotes much space to the protagonist's childhood. By analyzing structural relationships of spatial elements in the artistic world of Dickens's novel the article focuses on the motif of childhood home in relation to such spatial images as churchyard, elm-trees, garden, rookery and Never-never land. Childhood in *David Copperfield* is associated with death only on the plot level through the motifs of David's early trauma of loss, but also owing to numerous metaphors constructed through language expressions as well as through imagery and motifs. Moreover, the motif of childhood home indicates the heavenly home (or nest) where we go – in the sense of homecoming – after death.

Key words

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, death, childhood, space, home

Pogrzebane dzieciństwo w *Dawidzie Copperfieldzie* Karola Dickensa

Abstrakt

Dawid Copperfield, autobiograficzna powieść Karola Dickensa poświęca wiele miejsca motywowi dzieciństwa protagonisty. Analiza strukturalnych relacji przestrzennych elementów w artystycznym świecie powieści koncentruje się na przestrzeni domu rodzinnego w relacji do przestrzennych obrazów cmentarza, wiązów, ogrodu, gawronich gniazd i Nibylandii. Motyw dzieciństwa łączy się w powieści ze śmiercią nie tylko na poziomie fabuły poprzez motywy dziecięcej traumy i osierocenia Dawida, ale także dzięki wielości metafor konstruowanych na poziomie języka oraz poprzez obrazowanie i ekwiwalencje motywów. Ponadto, dom rodzinny wskazuje w powieści na niebo, gdzie wszyscy powracamy – jak do domu – po śmierci.

Słowa kluczowe

Charles Dickens, *Dawid Copperfield*, śmierć, dzieciństwo, przestrzeń, dom

We are all children and I'm the youngest
Charles Dickens

1. Introduction

Charles Dickens's contemplation of childhood by adult consciousness can be considered as nostalgia for his own lost childhood.[1] If this is indeed the case, such nostalgia haunts him throughout his autobiographical novel *David Copperfield*,

[1] Compare: "Dickens's hard experiences in boyhood […] were clearly felt by him to have rung down the curtain on the innocence of his own childhood and also to have been critically determining of his adult character […] Pity for his own lost childhood undoubtedly made him especially receptive to the Wordsworthian conception of childhood" (R. Newsom's "Fictions of childhood" in Jordan 2001: 93).

first published as a book in 1850. Nostalgia is literally the pain of wanting to return home, not only to a private inner world of recollections, but also to the original home which will make the soul no longer a wanderer. Dickens's domestic ideology expressed in his narratives has his own theological dimension[2] according to which in the face of death we can find the Father and the Home for which everyone longs. In this article I intend to analyse structural relationships of spatial elements in the artistic world of Dickens's novel *David Copperfield*, focusing on the presented space of childhood home. I will consider the motif of childhood home in relation to such spatial images as churchyard, elm-trees, garden, rookery and Never-never land.

David Copperfield's parental home is created by the chain of paradigmatic elements linked by the semantics of "loss". The predominant motif of "loss" as the equivalent of "death" concerns specific family relationship of parent and child. *David Copperfield* is prevalently focused on the maternal aspect in terms of constant longing for the maternal nest and memory of the lost "happy home". Dickens clearly presents the protagonist's house in the metaphorical and metonymic relation with the deserted/empty nest. The parallel house – nest as well as its variants: man – house / birds – nests imply a sequence of correlated images: elm-trees – family tree, rooks' nests – family home, deserted rookery – deserted home. These images are influenced by semantics of non-being in terms of emptiness or absence of certain spatial elements. The most significant example of non-being is Dickens's depiction of disappearing

[2] Compare: "while Dickens's concept of God is not expressed or formulated in terms of a systematic theology, it is solidly Scriptural, at least according to the popular Scriptural understanding of his day. Clearly, Dickens's concept of God is Christian and typically Anglican in the popular sense [...], his concept of God taken by itself is determinative of little more than affirming his theism. Taken in the larger context, however, of both the nineteenth century and his writing [...] his concept of God tells us a great deal about his faith and his Christian convention [...]" (Colledge 2009: 57). And also "for Dickens, death seems to be simply the passage from his earthly life to the eternal happiness of heaven and reunion with loved ones and family" (2009: 59).

rooks that precedes the protagonist's birth and can be perceived as the indication of the destruction of the family home. The idea of non-being signifies the motif of the lost childhood home as the allegory of a "buried" childhood that is frequently introduced by the author with reference to biblical, mythological, and folkloristic traditions. The consideration of the key spatial images in the present article is divided into the following parts: Churchyard, Elm-trees, Lost garden, Deserted rookery and Never-never land.

2. Churchyard

David Copperfield's first recollection of his childhood is connected with two interrelated places: the house and the churchyard. These two spaces function as thresholds because of their connection to birth and death as two linked stages of existence. Looking back on his infancy, David says:

> I lay in my basket, and my mother lay in her bed; but [my father] Betsey Trotwood Copperfield was forever in the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence I had so lately travelled; and the light upon the window of our room shone out upon the earthly bourne of all such travellers, and the mound above the ashes and the dust that once was he, without whom I had never been. (Dickens 2011: 22)

In the above passage the syntagmatic relation of spatial images: basket, bed and mound creates a link between the house and the churchyard, and implies a temporal connection between birth and death. Additionally, Dickens alludes to the eternal existence of the soul by introducing dream imagery: "the land of dreams and shadows". It is significant that during his recollections "David has the ability to back far enough away from his own life to put it into perspective as a progress through time, with a definite beginning and ending marking out his own little stake in eternity" (Newcomb 1989: 85). In

a later passage, David Copperfield expresses it in the words, "the memory of most of us can go further back into such times than many of us suppose" (Dickens 2011: 23). According to Lynn Cain's explanations:

> David Copperfield's attempt to recapture childhood in the face of death is part of a long artistic tradition in Western culture of regarding the child as an emblem of mortality [...] As Dickens's contemporaries were well aware, the Bible exhorted a return to childhood to merit admittance to the kingdom of heaven. Consequently death and the afterlife signified a return to early childhood as the spirit was cleansed of mortal sin through salvation and returned to the purity of infancy. By extension, childhood was retrospectively experienced as an intimation of death and the afterlife. (2008: 113-114)

The protagonist's dream-like motion expressed in the phrase "I had so lately travelled" suggests the temporal aspect in terms of the opposition of "eternal life" and "mortality". On the spatial level the shining light indicates heaven and correlates with "the ashes and the dust" signifying the earth. This correlation creates an equivalence between the dream/death and awakening that may refer to the motif of entering the stream of life in the sense of rebirth. The interplay of the metonymic "window of our room" (that is, the house as a parental home) and the metaphorical image of "the mound" (that is, the grave) creates the earthly sphere, and suggests a return from the sphere of death because the child's creation and the demise merge in the person of its parent. The evoked religious connotations of birth/life/death/afterlife in the context of childhood are close to Romantic ideas. For William Wordsworth the child was "imagined as literally closer to the divine [...], peculiarly and even incongruously a figure of some authority (The Child is Father of the Man)" (Jordan 2001: 94).

In *David Copperfield*, the correlated images of "death" and "birth" as the threshold of ending and beginning are presented

explicitly in the plot event of "a posthumous birth" (the birth of the child after the father's death). David speaks about his strange feelings in connection with his childhood home in the initial description:

> I was born in Blunderstone, in Suffolk, or 'there by', as they say in Scotland. I was a posthumous child. My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six months, when mine opened on it. There is something strange to me, even now, in the reflection that he never saw me; and something stranger yet in the shadowy remembrance that I have of my first childish associations with his white grave-stone in the churchyard, and of the indefinable compassion I used to feel for it lying out alone there in the dark night, when our little parlour was warm and bright with fire and candle, and the doors of our house were – almost cruelly, it seemed to me sometimes – bolted and locked against it. (Dickens 2011: 11)

The idea of "death-in-birth" is depicted by the connection with human body parts – 'eyes', and simultaneously with the space of parental house. The third sentence of the quoted passage establishes a parallel which can be also perceived as an opposition: "closed father's eyes" / "open my eyes". On the spatial level this opposition can be seen in terms of "bolted and locked" doors for him / open for me. The door as the boundary between the house and churchyard is also the border between death and "birth-life" that is emphasized by the opposition of syntagmatic sequences of images: his white grave-stone – out – alone – dark night / our little parlour – warm and bright – fire and candle. These sequences can refer to the equivalence between the space of the house and the space of churchyard on the semantic level. According to Lotman,

> borders, in general, have a separating as well as connecting function – they do not only divide but also bring together what is different – and are therefore of extremely ambivalent nature. (Hansen 1994: 34)

In view of the connecting function of the boundary, the space of David's childhood is constituted not only by the house, but also by the churchyard, both determined by semantics of death.

Significantly, the semantics of death in David's childhood space seems to be emphasized by the onomastic aspect. The place name "Blunderstone" can be divided into two words with allegorical interrelation between: "blunder" and "stone". Considering etymological references, the word "Blunder [...] formed (as frequentative) from Icel. 'blunda', to doze, slumber; Swed. 'blunda', to shut the eyes; Dan. 'blunde' to nap" (Skeat 2005: 53). The etymological connection of the word 'blunder' with "the allegorical personification of the dream, [...] brother of Death (Greek thanatos)" (Biedermann 1992: 180-181) corresponds with Dickens's imagery. It is crucial that Dickens deliberately modifies the real name "Blundeston" by adding two letters to create: "blunder-stone" (death-grave) imagery.[3] In this connection 'Blunder-stone' echoes with 'murd(er)-stone' semantics in correlation to death. The interplay that relies on association of the cold stone and the frozen rigidity of death contained in the surname Murdstone of David's stepfather. As Ruth Danon writes:

> David's mother [...] cannot seem to recover from the death of David's father and even the name of the man she chooses to replace him implies that her passions are directed towards the grave. David associates Blunderstone with everything inimical to life. (Danon 1985: 55)

Dickens's distinctive use of language relies on creating similes and metaphors based on what he could have observed in his surroundings. Thus, the space of David's house and the

[3] According to *Dickens Encyclopedia*, "The name is a thin disguise for the village of Blundeston, which Dickens visited in 1848 [...] The name, seen on a signpost, attracted his attention, and he adapted it for the novel he was then contemplating" (Hayward 1968: 33).

churchyard is conditioned by the sensual imagery omnipresent in Dickens's works. According to Barbara Hardy,

> David believes that a good memory has its source in close keen observation, and the novel often draws attention to acts of seeing and the ability to infer inside from outside [...]. (Hardy 2008: 49)

As an example, the motif of reading / hearing appears repeatedly in David's early remembrances of childhood. It is clearly connected with the reading crocodile book by Peggotty, reading his father's novels by David, and reading the Bible by his mother. In David's recollections of childhood the modes of hearing and seeing correspond to the motif of reading / telling / looking through the window which is the spatial border between the house and churchyard. The correspondences are established in the following passage:

> There is something of a doleful air about that room to me, for Peggotty has told me – I don't know when, but apparently ages ago – about my father's funeral, and the company having their black cloaks put on. One Sunday night my mother reads to Peggotty and me in there, how Lazarus was raised up from the dead. And I am so frightened that they are afterwards obliged to take me out of bed, and show me the quiet churchyard out of the bedroom window, with the dead all lying in their graves at rest, below the solemn moon. (Dickens 2011: 24)

The story of Lazarus miracle is placed in the context of preaching the Gospel, but simultaneously the act of showing David the churchyard out of the window evokes mythological connotations. According to Cain's interpretation,

> The image uncannily recalls David's Oedipal fears of parental resurrection expressed through his response to the parable of Lazarus. (2008: 104)

The child's fear gives the Gospel story ambiguous connotations which seem close to Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque ambivalence as mingling of "high culture" with the profane by alternative voices within the carnivalized literary text. Sue Vice writes:

> Bakhtin describes the literary genre, originally medieval, of 'grotesque realism' as one opposed to all forms of high art and literature. […] it is worth noting that Bakhtin sees the carnivalesque view of death as a way combatting 'real' everyday and religious fears of death in Middle Ages, conjured up by natural, 'divine and human power'. (Vice 1997: 154-155)

3. Elm-trees

The space of the house-and-churchyard is defined by the dividing and uniting spatial function of trees in terms of up and down relations. The image of the trees is a constituent of the syntagmatic chain of landscape elements. David describes the churchyard where the shady trees as well as green grass and quiet tombstones are extraordinary and may be even seen as close to the miraculous thus suggesting a vision of heaven:

> There is nothing half so green that I know anywhere, as the grass of that churchyard; nothing half so shady as its trees; nothing half so quiet as its tombstones. (Dickens 2011: 24)

The function of trees as a link between the space of earth and the space of heaven in Dickens's artistic world accords with the image of trees in Biblical tradition:

> Used since early classical times to suggest genealogical relationships, the tree appears in Scripture to depict the destiny of an individual […]. Early Christian writers commented extensively on the doctrinal meaning and theological relationships of these biblical trees, and extrapolated from them a composite symbolic tree which embodied the major Christian doctrines and mysteries. (Jeffrey 1992: 779)

In symbolic terms, a connection between (elm) trees and the churchyard appears in English poetry. Thomas Gray speaks of the "rugged elms" of the country churchyard in *Elegy* 13 (Ferber 2007: 69). In Gray's poem it embodies a meditation on death, and remembrance after death. The elm-trees in Dickens's artistic space also reveal folkloristic connotations. The trees are described by David as half-human creatures that have access to mysteries and are able to predict fate. The narrator shows the garden landscape on the eve of David's birth in the following way:

> The evening wind made such a disturbance just now, among some tall old elm-trees at the bottom of the garden, that neither my mother nor Miss Betsey could forbear glancing that way. As the elms bent to one another, like giants who were whispering secrets, and after a few seconds of such repose, fell into a violent flurry, tossing their wild arms about, as if their late confidences were really too wicked for their peace of mind, some weatherbeaten ragged old rooks'-nests, burdening their higher branches, swung like wrecks upon a stormy sea. (Dickens 2011: 14)

In the above passage Dickens seems to bring together literary connotations of the tree in the Bible that often stands for a person (Ferber 2007: 219) with a mythological reference to "specific trees or an entire grove revered in many ancient civilizations as the abodes of supernatural beings" (Biedermann 1989: 350). On the dynamic level "the nests burdening the higher branches of the elm-trees", "swinging like wrecks upon a stormy sea" might be perceived as a configuration that foreshadows the destabilization of David's home as well as dangers and tragedies of his future life. His existence is metaphorically suspended between life and death.

4. Lost Garden

The garden trees that surround David's parental house as well as old rooks'-nests on them constitute an allusion to a family nest. The association of nest – tree – parenthood is common in English literature:

> If it taken literally, the trope should indicate the soft lining of the nest provided by the parent birds for the greater comfort and protection of their tender young nestlings, creating the sort of emotional response evinced by George Eliot's description of Silas Marner's parenting [...]. (Cain 2008: 20)

Moreover, in the description of David's childhood space the elm-trees seem juxtaposed with the garden fruit-trees. In the following passage "the ragged old rooks'-nests still dangling in the elm-trees" might be considered as the opposition to "the fruit clusters" in terms of emptiness and fullness:

> And now I see the outside of our house, with the latticed bedroom-windows standing open to let in the sweet-smelling air, and the ragged old rooks'-nests still dangling in the elm-trees at the bottom of the front garden. Now I am in the garden at the back, beyond the yard where the empty pigeon-house and dog-kennel are – a very preserve of butterflies, as I remember it, with a high fence, and a gate and padlock; where the fruit clusters on the trees, riper and richer than fruit has ever been since, in any other garden, and where my mother gathers some in a basket, while I stand by, bolting furtive gooseberries, and trying to look unmoved. A great wind rises, and the summer is gone in a moment. (Dickens 2011: 25)

The Edenic quality of being: "the sweet-smelling air", the imagery of trees bearing fruit pleasant to the sight and David's mother gathering some (like Eve) refer to the earthly, or childish, Eden. This way of describing childhood is common in the literary context:

> This pattern, with the interiorization of the lost Eden, governs the plots of many works of modern literature. Wordsworth's autobiographical epic *The Prelude* begins with an Edenic moment – *O there is blessing in this gentle breeze / That blows from the green fields* [...] – and soon describes his Edenic childhood in gardenly terms: *Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grow up / Fostered alike by beauty and my fear, / Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less / In that beloved vale to which erelong / I was transplanted*. (Ferber 2007: 85)

In his recollections of the garden David says: "a great wind rises and the summer is gone"; later he will explicitly describe the idyllic garden as a childish "paradise lost":

> Ah, what a strange feeling it was to be going home when it was not home, and to find that every object I looked at, reminded me of the happy old home, which was like a dream I could never dream again! [...] and soon I was at our house, where the bare old elm-trees wrung their many hands in the bleak wintry air, and shreds of the old rooks' nests drifted away upon the wind. (Dickens 2011: 124)

The contrast of the winter image in the quotation above with the summer image in the previously cited passage confirms the ambiguous position of David's family home as situated between life (metaphorically expressed by summer) and death (winter).

In the recollections of the lost childhood home Dickens introduces acoustical imagery of David's mother's singing:

> God knows how infantine the memory may have been, that was awakened within me by the sound of my mother's voice in the old parlour, when I set foot in the hall. (Dickens 2011: 124)

To exemplify Dickens's mode of transforming visual images into audible sounds, we can trace the relation between David's mother gathering fruit in the garden and her singing in the

house. It is essential that in the earlier quoted passage David is standing in the garden and describes the "latticed windows" of the house, which may suggest a cage. As Martin A. Danahay suggests, since women were expected both to sing and to look beautiful, they were frequently associated with songbirds in cages. Friedrich Nietzsche (in *Beyond Good and Evil,* Aphorism 237) extends the metaphor of women as birds to suggest that they have to be locked up in cages. The connection of women and caged birds was also established in Victorian poetry (Danahay 2007: 110). Thus David's recollection of his mother's singing may metaphorically suggest her imprisonment in the cage-like house by evoking the common metaphor of woman as a bird. Danahay also suggests a liminal position of the woman situated between home and garden.

Additionally, as Ivan Kreilkamp states:

> Dickens describes a decided similarity between human and animal [...]. The question of human likeness to the animal is, of course, a fundamental one in both ethical and biological thinking of animal-human relations. (Kreilkamp 2007: 85-87)

Looking back to his childhood from the distance of time, David says: "the influence of the Murdstones upon me was like the fascination of two snakes on a wretched young bird" (Dickens 2011: 67). Like David, his mother is also under the influence of the Murdstones. Clara's relationship with her husband suggests a spatially metaphorical transfer from the Edenic garden to the "latticed" space of the cage – the sign of imprisonment. In David's childhood world Dickens consistently indicates an analogy between birds and the members of David's family, including his mother. Remembering his childhood while wandering through the streets in Canterbury, David recalls his mother and the rooks that are associated with love and protectiveness in his pre-Murdstone childhood:

> […] under all the […] difficulties of my journey, I seemed to be sustained and led on by my fanciful picture of my mother […]. It always kept me company. I have associated it, ever since, with the sunny street of Canterbury […] and the stately, grey Cathedral, with the rooks sailing round the towers. (Dickens 2011: 208)

5. Deserted rookery

The ornithological imagery associated with David's family and parental home is also introduced by Dickens owing to the name of the house – "Rookery". The origin of the name is explained in the following exchange:

> 'In the name of Heaven', said Miss Betsey, suddenly, 'why Rookery?' […] 'Do you mean the house, ma'am?' asked my mother. […] 'The name was Mr. Copperfield's choice', returned my mother. 'When he bought the house, he liked to think that there were rooks about it'. (Dickens 2011: 14)

The name, originating in the father's liking for the birds introduces a positive aspect while the usual associations of rooks are rather negative since the black birds related to crows and ravens are symbolically connected with death (Ferber 2007: 167-168). Thus the ambivalent semantics of the birds introduced here relies on their connection with the father implying protection and care on the one hand and with death on the other.

What is more, Miss Betsey's exclamatory "In the name of Heaven" syntactically hints at a relation between Heaven and Rookery, which further entails an implied connection between the name of Mr. Copperfield and the name of God. As usual, Dickens associates the belief in God with the belief in a good father. In this context David's words: "without whom I had never been" may constitute a double allusion to his father and the Godfather (Dickens 2011: 22).

The negative aspect of the Rookery is undoubtedly emphasized by Dickens through the motif of emptiness in the image of the deserted nests. As David's mother explains:

> We thought – Mr. Copperfield thought – it was quite a large rookery; but nests were very old ones, and the birds have deserted them a long while. (Dickens 2011: 15)

The deserted birds' nests, an equivalent of a deserted family home, suggests the motif of homelessness. Its function is conditioned by the recurrence of spatial elements emphasizing the motif of emptiness of the house. To begin with David's earliest remembrance:

> On the ground-floor is Peggotty's kitchen, opening into a back yard; with a pigeon-house on a pole, in the centre, without any pigeons in it; a great dog-kennel in a corner, without any dog… (Dickens 2011: 24)

The chain of paradigmatic images: "deserted nests" – "a pigeon-house, without any pigeons in it" – "a great dog-kennel […] without any dog" might be treated as a kind of metaphorical code signifying a deserted home as a mark of death of the family members. The links between David's father's death, his mother's death, his baby-brother's death and "deserted rook's nests", an empty "pigeon-house" and "a dog-kennel" imply that the space of the protagonist's childhood is determined by emptiness and loss.

As Lynn Cain explains:

> Without doubt, David's *Künstlerroman* resounds to the echo of Dickens's own increasing sense of desolation, emptiness and loss which, ultimately, register the loss of the primal mother […]. Death and loss pervade the novel and many of those whom David loves – his mother Clara, his first love Em'ly, his youthful homoerotic attachment Steerforth, his child-bride Dora – all die either actually or symbolically during the novel […]. To speak of the 'death' or 'loss' of Clara is really to commit a solecism for, despite

> David's vivid memories of her, she is always an absence rather than a presence. Even before his birth, the empty nests at Blunderstone foreshadow the maternal vacancy which will be supplied by Peggotty and Betsey Trotwood. (Cain 2008: 14-15)

Interestingly, in Dickens's text the motif of nests is modified by the dynamic function of "swinging", "like wrecks upon a stormy sea" or "sailing" in the variant motif of "the rooks sailing round the towers". In the marine imagery of these metaphors the maternal aspect of the nest corresponds to Sigmund Freud's description of the "oceanic feeling" as a return to the feeling of infancy and longing for parental protection. The motif of the nest-as-bosom appears in the description of David's homecoming in the touching scene of meeting his mother: "she laid my head down on her bosom near the little creature that was nestling there, and put its hand on my lips" (2011: 125).

Dickens's frequent use of marine metaphors in his narratives suggests an extension of remote perspectives and in this sense indicates a possibility of belief in something beyond this life. As Robert Higbie observes:

> One way Dickens shifts the ideal beyond reality is by equating it with the sea. The sea lies beyond this world, as belief lies beyond reason and our sense of reality, and as death lies beyond life. (1998: 81)

Throughout the novel David accepts death as he accepts true belief. Dickens draws a parallel between death and truth according to the Biblical lesson that in death we are all one before God. The death of those whom David loves, to begin with the death of his father, makes him believe that the ideal exists beyond this life, and is to be found somewhere "higher" than this world. To reflect this idea on the spatial level, Dickens underlines the position of the rooks' nests on high branches and thus metaphorically suggests their connection with the area of heaven.

6. Never-never-land

Dickens creates the world of David's childhood by repetitively using the imagery of loss or expressions of loss as never being. An interesting connection with folklore is noted by Cain:

> Ancient folklore […] underscored the connection between the never-never-land of lost childhood, which the vogue for fairyland registered, and the afterlife. Fairyland was a theatrical, gas-lit vision of heaven inhabited by fancifully-clad angels, who like the classical putti were spirits of the dead. It was the place where children never grew up. (Cain 2008: 114)

The folkloristic motif of never-never land in Dickens's text can be semiotically defined as a dream-like state and the land of David's childhood. Mildred Newcomb emphasizes "the recurrent presence of dreams, dreaming, and dream-like states in Dickens's works" (1989: xvii). The motif of dream seems to imply that this imagined ideal of childhood land is vulnerable and can be destroyed just as a child's belief in the ideal can be shattered. In his narrative David self-consciously defines life as being "like a great fairy story" which he "was just about to begin to read" (2011: 297). The motif of recapturing the childhood world in connection with elements of fairyland appears in David's words:

> I sat looking at Peggotty for some time, in a reverie on this suppositious case: whether, if she were employed to lose me like the boy in fairy tale, I should be able to track my way home again by the buttons she would shed. (Dickens 2011: 38)

The boy's loss of home and his hope of finding the way back suggests a retreat from reality to imagination in the sense of trying to find the ideal home (from the time before the arrival of the Murdstones).

Affected by his childish love, David figures the nest-home of his imaginative marriage with Em'ly as a grave constructed by birds – a variant of Blunderstone's deserted rookery. Spatial polarization of these images is based on their relation to down and up directions. As David says:

> What happiness (I thought) if we were married, and were going away anywhere to live among the trees and in the fields, never growing older, never growing wiser, children ever, rambling hand in hand through sunshine and among flowery meadows, laying down our heads on moss at night, in a sweet sleep of purity and peace, and buried by the birds when we were dead! (Dickens 2011: 166)

In David's idyllic vision of happiness with Em'ly, heaven may be also seen in terms of a nest. Birds are expected to bury the children "when [they] are dead" and thus construct their grave as a kind of nest. Because birds – with their ability to fly up – can also be seen as connected with heaven, the implied eternal home may be construed as heavenly nest. Such an image links heaven to the idea of family home. This was reflected in popular devotional literature since the 1830s. The most characteristic Victorian idea of heaven defines it as a place where family reunions and the recognition of friends take place, and where lovers are united (Colledge 2012: 17). Writing to his children in *The Life of Our Lord*, Dickens remarks:

> what a good place Heaven is [...] where we hope to go, and all to meet each other after we are dead, and there be happy always together. (Dickens 1934: 11)

The image of moss in connection with sleep introduces the horizontal aspect and down direction which, together with the motif of night, suggest death in the earthy sense. The motif of birds – through their association with flight – introduces the vertical movement up and may imply rising up from the grave.

The desire of remaining "children ever" which culminates in the motif of death and burial paradoxically points to the idea of the death of childhood or rather burial of childhood. In relation to David the motif of buried childhood appears very clearly in his words relating to the mother's funeral. David admits that his childhood self is buried:

> The mother who lay in the grave, was the mother of my infancy; the little creature in her arms, was myself, as I had once been, hushed for ever on her bosom. (Dickens 2011: 151)

7. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the repeated return to childhood in Dickens's artistic world expresses constant longing for childhood but signifies not only a return to the past but to death. Death is regularly identified with nostalgic returns. Dickens sentimentalizes death scenes and creates the background for symbolic rebirth. After adoption of David by aunt Betsey, he is "reborn" as Trotwood Copperfield. Betsey Trotwood's reappearance in the plot marks a shift from the childhood trauma to a fairy-tale respite. The motif of rebirth after the death of childhood in Dickens's novel brings it close to myth. However, in *David Copperfield* Dickens as a Christian never fails to draw an absolutely clear distinction between what is human and what is divine.

To sum up, the association of childhood with death concerns not only David's early trauma of loss on the plot level, but also numerous metaphors constructed through language expressions as well as through imagery and motifs. Moreover, the key phrase "children ever" in the passage quoted above can be considered as Dickens's reference to the Biblical idea of our Father in Heaven. The author seems to indicate that childhood defines the heavenly home (or nest) where we go – in the sense of homecoming – after death.

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Tatiana Jankowska
Independent Scholar
taniaj@op.pl

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When the reader becomes a child: Narratological issues in *Daughters of the House* by Michèle Roberts

JOANNA MORAWSKA

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Abstract

Employing the theoretical framework derived from Gérard Genette's narratology, with a special focus on the category of a focalized narrator, the article investigates narratological strategies employed in Michèle Roberts's novel *Daughters of the House* in order to demonstrate how employing a particular form of narration influences the reader's perception and understanding of the novel. In *Daughters of the House,* the narrative is focalized by adolescent characters, which makes the reader assume a childlike perspective and identify with the children characters. Tracing the motif of childhood also on the level of structure and plot, the article aims to prove that for the proper understanding of the narrative, the reader has to become a child themselves.

Key words

child, focalization, focalized narrator, narratology, Gérard Genette, Michèle Roberts

Kiedy czytelnik staje się dzieckiem: Kwestie narratologiczne w powieści Michèle Roberts *Daughters of the House*

Abstrakt

Na podstawie teoretycznych ustaleń narratologii Gérarda Genette'a, zwłaszcza kategorii narratora-fokalizatora, artykuł bada strategie narratologiczne zastosowane w powieści Michèle Roberts *Daughters of the House*, aby ustalić, jak wprowadzenie danej formy narracji wpływa na postrzeganie i rozumienie powieści przez czytelnika. Narracja w powieści Roberts fokalizowana jest przez dorastające bohaterki, co sprawia, że czytelnik przyjmuje dziecięcy punkt widzenia i identyfikuje się z młodymi bohaterami. Badając motyw dzieciństwa także na poziomie struktury tekstu oraz fabuły, artykuł dowodzi, że dla prawidłowego odczytania powieści czytelnik sam musi stać się dzieckiem.

Słowa kluczowe

dziecko, fokalizacja, narrator-fokalizator, narratologia, Gérard Genette, Michèle Roberts

1. Introduction

Michèle Roberts (born in 1949) is considered to be one of the most significant contemporary British authors of her generation. Being an extremely prolific writer, she has written numerous texts in different – sometimes overlapping – genres, including thirteen novels, short stories, essays, poetry, plays and a memoir, as well as various texts in collaboration with other artists. She is often identified with women's writing, although she herself is against being pigeon-holed solely on the basis of her gender. As she states in an interview:

> I'm quite happy to say I'm a woman writer, though I don't believe in some kind of essentialist notion that by virtue of being a woman you automatically write differently to a man. I feel that denies writerly strategies, writerly sophistication and writerly choices, because there's a certain kind of good, old-fashioned, omniscient narrator that someone of either gender could write. (Newman 2004)

She has become the voice of the unvoiced and she herself admits to be "interested in trying to find and invent voices and stories of people who haven't been seen as important" (Newman 2004).

Roberts was born into a family of French and English origins which has undoubtedly influenced her writing. She frequently touches upon the issues of identity, as her dual British-French nationality has strongly affected her sense of belonging:

> That was the second impetus to my becoming a writer: living in a double culture, and feeling that I lived torn apart, or split, and didn't know where I belonged. (Newman 2004)

The sense of not belonging is reflected in the novel with which this article is concerned: one of the characters is locked in a struggle of fitting in to either of two societies while she is considered a stranger by both.

This article focuses on the theme of childhood as essential for *Daughters of the House*. The motif of childhood is present in Michèle Roberts's writing as she believes this period of life to be decisive for a person's future. She says:

> When you're young, you're very open to the world, you're vulnerable, you're soft-shelled. I think your childhood stamps you, wounds you, shapes you. (Newman 2004)

It is especially prominent in *Daughters of the House*, first published in 1992, which is widely acclaimed to be one of her most

brilliant novels. It touches upon the theme of childhood in a number of ways. Firstly and perhaps most explicitly on the plot level, which is concerned with a story of two women – Thérèse and Léonie Martin – who revisit their childhood in search of memories which became dissolved throughout the years. The reader is taken back in time to witness the two girls' search for identity as they strive to come to terms with unsettling experiences during their childhood and puberty. Those adolescent experiences leave a mark on the relationship between the two women and their relationships with other people. The two characters are strongly juxtaposed in the narrative concerning their childhood as they are driven into a constant struggle for dominance and adults' approval.[1] Thérèse is the saintly one. In their childhood plays, she would always assume the role of a holy nun or a tortured martyr who refused to reject their faith under threat. She is a little chaste French girl who would later become an enclosed contemplative in a convent. It was her mother's childhood dream to join her sister in a Carmelite convent – a dream which she had to give up because of something that had happened during the Second World War. The other girl, Léonie, is Thérèse's half-French and half-English cousin (though this relationship is called into question later in the novel). Léonie's Englishness stands for everything that is wrong with her: bad manners, dull cuisine, rather laid-back approach towards religion. She belongs neither in England, nor in France, as both nations despise her as a foreigner. Her identity is put into question on numerous occasions throughout the novel; however, in her adult life she finds a way to fit in, contrary to Thérèse who, as a nun, has become foreign to the outer world.[2]

The motif of childhood can be found not only on the level of the plot, but, more importantly, on the level of narration. In

[1] See Sarah Falcus, *Michèle Roberts: Myths, Mothers and Memories* (2007: 90-91) for a thorough description of the relationship between the girls.

[2] Thérèse's character is actually based on Thérèse of Lisieux, a nineteenth-century Carmelite. For more details see Falcus (2007: 89-90).

this essay, I will strive to demonstrate how employing a focalized narration affects the reader's understanding of the novel. Since the narrative is unveiled through perspective of children characters, the reader follows the plot from this particular vantage point. Moreover, I wish to argue that by introducing anachronistic narrative, Roberts demonstrates how understanding the text requires reverting to a child's perspective. The characters reminisce about their childhood in order to apprehend the meaning of the events that structured their adult selves. Thus, the reader, following the characters on their way to adulthood, needs to assume the perspective of a child to be able to grasp the meaning of the narrative. In my discussion, I will refer to narratological tools introduced by Gérard Genette in an attempt to disentangle and understand the semantic mechanisms of the novel.

2. Structure of the narrative

In the present article, the term "narrative" will be employed in one of the meanings distinguished by Genette. Acknowledging three different meanings he has established, I shall refer to the second one as particularly relevant from the narratological perspective. According to Genette, narrative can refer to "the succession of events, real or fictitious" (Genette 1980: 25). Thus, "analysis of narrative" would mean

> the study of totality of actions and situations taken in themselves, without regard to the medium, linguistic or other, through which knowledge of that totality comes to us. (Genette 1980: 25)

Following Genette's definition, I shall now take a closer look at the structure of the narrative in *Daughters of the House*.

Although in comparison to Roberts's previous writing, the considered novel seemingly displays a more realist structure, the apparent realism is fragmented and the narration itself unreliable. Employing such a structure results in providing

the reader only with possible versions of the events recounted (Falcus 2007: 88). More importantly, the perspective the narration assumes is that of its characters, i.e. Thérèse and Léonie. Thus, both Thérèse and Léonie serve as focalizers or "reflector figures" (Stanzel) and the reader follows the narrative through the filter of their thoughts and perceptions (Fludernik 2009: 36). Finding themselves in the vantage point of the characters, the reader's insight into the narrative does not exceed the knowledge the girls have at their disposal. Consequently, the reader becomes reduced to being a child themselves. In other words, a possible truth which adults choose to share with the children is then passed on to the reader, who, as a result, is reduced to the same position of an inferior.

The opening paragraphs of the narration include a description of a house employing vague, dream-like discourse. Events from the past are recounted in such a way that initially the reader is unable to determine whether they are memories or dreams. Thus, the first chapter refers to the events which happened before the 'main narrative' (this concept will be investigated in greater depth later in the article). However, taking into consideration the nature of this narrative segment – the dream-like discourse which does not indicate particular time or space – we shall assume, for the purpose of the present discussion, that the main narrative begins with Thérèse coming back to her home village. Her comeback to Blémont-la-Fontaine (a fictitious village setting of the childhood events) is veiled in secrecy as she does not wish anyone to know she is coming back. Only her cousin Léonie is waiting for her in anticipation as she has some vague idea of why Thérèse might be coming back now. Both women are in their forties and they have not seen each other for twenty years – Thérèse having been an enclosed contemplative with rather limited contact with the outer world, and Léonie – busy with married life in the house where they grew up together. The cousins' meeting is rather frigid and full of palpable tension. The reader may sense

that there has been some unresolved argument from the past, but at this stage she/he can merely wonder about its reasons. According to Falcus, it is the patriarchal system the characters are set in that antagonizes them and prevents them from retaining the close bond that had once connected them (Falcus 2007: 90-91). The narrative continues through several chapters before the reader finds out the reason of Thérèse's comeback in her own utterance:

> I'm writing my autobiography. I thought if I wrote down what happened when we were children it would help me to decide what it is I've got to do. But there's so much I've forgotten. You'll have to help me remember. (Roberts 1993: 23)

The narrative then goes back to the girls' childhood which constitutes a substantial part of the novel. It provides the reader with a broader perspective on the events which evidently had a tremendous impact on the characters' development. At the end of the book, the narrative leaps back to continue the main narrative, thus forming a kind of narratological frame.

Returning to Genette's considerations, we can say that the nature of a written literary narrative imposes the order in which particular narrative sequences are read by means of their linear arrangement, which Genette calls "the pseudo-temporal order" (1980: 34-35). Thus it is crucial to establish the temporal succession of the plot events and its connections to the pseudo-temporal order of the narrative. In order to analyse the temporal order of a narrative, one should

> compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story. (Genette 1980: 35)

If we look again at the structure of the novel with Genette's distinction in mind, we will see that the order of the narrative

does not correspond to the order of the story. The narrative begins with Thérèse's comeback which is later interrupted by the narrative of the girls' childhood, and then again, comes back to the "present" time. Thus, childhood occurs later in the narrative but if we follow the chronological order of the story, it obviously takes place earlier in the story. In other words, childhood comes *after* in the narrative but *before* in the story. Genette calls this type of discordance between the ordering of story and narrative *anachrony* (1980: 35-36). The *reach* of the anachrony, i.e. the temporal distance – the time leap between the first events in the narrative and the earliest events in the story – will cover more than twenty years: when the characters are first introduced to the reader, they are in their forties, whereas the analepsis (flashback) concerns the period of their childhood and early adolescence.

Though I have already made the assumption that Thérèse's return to her childhood home constitutes the main plot, in actual fact it is difficult to establish which narrative should be regarded as the main one in *Daughters of the House*. According to Genette,

> every anachrony constitutes, with respect to the narrative into which it is inserted [...] a narrative that is temporally second, subordinate to the first in a sort of narrative syntax. (Genette 1980: 48)

Considering the order of the narrative, it would be natural to assume that the narrative which begins with Thérèse's comeback should be regarded as the first and the narrative concerning the girls' childhood as the subordinate one. However, judging on the basis of the *extent* of the anachrony, i.e. a duration of the story it covers (Genette, 1980: 49), it may be argued that it is the anachrony that should be considered the main narrative as it constitutes a very substantial part of the novel. Furthermore, the anachrony performs a crucial role in the text, as it provides the reader with all the contextual

knowledge about the events which prove to determine the future fate of the two protagonists.

The childhood narrative anachrony seems to prove how crucial childhood is for a person's development and her/his future life. In *Daughters of the House* the narrative is ruptured to make room for the analepsis, and so is a person's current life when they reminisce about the past. Although the analepsis occurs in our minds whenever we indulge in memories, the shift is solely temporal just as it is in the novel. Both in the novel and in life, it is necessary to go back in time in order to make sense of the present. Therefore, it could be ventured that the novel might constitute a reflection on human memories.

The childhood narrative is not the only analepsis in *Daughters of the House.* On the contrary, the narrative which covers the years of the girls' early puberty is intertwined with a number of different kinds of analepses. For example, the story of Antoinette (Thérèse's mother) and her encounter with a Nazi soldier during the occupation of France, constitutes an analepsis external to the one concerning the girls' childhood. It is important that Antoinette's story remains out of the girls' reach throughout most of the narrative, though it provides the reader with explanations important for the understanding of the first narrative (Genette 1980: 49-50). This particular analepsis is evoked repeatedly in several places of the narrative, every time bringing the reader closer to the complete outline of the story, which is going to be elaborated on in the next section.

Another argument for the thesis that the novel deals with memory is the web the analepses create – reminiscing about a certain moment can automatically evoke a different memory.

3. Narration

The issue of childhood, which requires further investigation, is the one expressed on the level of narration. So far, we have

established that the structure of the novel is built on anachrony which consists of analepses. However, it is crucial to illustrate how these analepses are evoked in the text.

In the novel, we are presented with a third person narrator who alternately assumes Thérèse's and Léonie's perspectives, which makes them the focalizers of the narrative (as already mentioned). Although the narrator possesses the knowledge of the girls' inner thoughts and feelings, we cannot consider it an omniscient narrator, as it fails to provide the reader with information about events which happen to be crucial for the plot. The narrator appears limited to the level of the girls' awareness. Thus, the plot gradually develops as the reader follows Thérèse and Léonie on their way to adolescence.

As it is commonly practised by the adults, certain issues are scrupulously kept away from the children, as they are considered inappropriate or impossible to handle by a young innocent mind. The Martin family is no exception. At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns about some terrible experience that young Antoinette (Thérèse's mother) went through during the war. However, the incident is not talked about and thus is kept away from the children and, consequently, from the reader:

> What terrible experiences? Léonie always wanted to know. But Victorine would never say. Or she'd snap: don't be stupid, the war was terrible for everybody. Except the collaborators. And we all know who *they* are. (Roberts 1993: 27)

Thus, in order to gain any information about the past (and sometimes the present as well), the reader needs to rely on what adults choose to share with the girls. All the family secrets become eventually revealed to the children (and to the reader) through words uttered by the adults. A lot of what is supposed to be kept secret is revealed because of the adults' lack of caution and depreciation of children. In the end, the reader is presented with the whole story through letters which

had actually been addressed to Antoinette's sister, but which were delivered to Thérèse after her mother's death. Thus, again, the reader is somehow eavesdropping on the adults. The fact that the only reliable source of information (which is Antoinette herself) passed away, results in an attempt to tamper with the crucial information and eventually leaves the reader doubtful.

Apart from the focalized narration, another aspect worth mentioning is the issue of the narrator's unreliability which results in the decisive uncertainty as to the past events. Although the notion of unreliability seems to be exclusively reserved for first-person narrators, the dispute has not yet been settled. Wayne C. Booth, who introduced the idea of unreliable narrator, connects the notion with the intention of the implied author, whereas Ansgar Nünning's analysis of unreliable narrator is based on a reader-response framework. On the other hand, Seymour Chatman has introduced a similar notion of *fallibility* in reference to reflector figures. Following Chatman's idea, a reflector character is fallible due to his or her limited view of the events (Fludernik 2009: 27-28).

In the considered novel, the story which is presented to the reader does not necessarily accord with what may really have happened in the past. The narrator's account, filtered as it is through the perspective of children, is distorted because children perceive and understand reality differently than adults. The readers may get confused with what they should consider authentic and what is supplied by the children's imagination because they are limited to the girls' perspective. The author herself stated that:

> To me it's important that there are two little girls telling a story about history because I think the idea of a historian being a small girl is not one our culture believes in. (Newman 2004)

The latter idea is reflected in the novel, as the girls' stories are initially treated patronizingly by authoritative voice of adults.

The fact that the adult characters refuse to believe in some of the stories that the girls share with them adds to the uncertainty. At some point both Thérèse and Léonie claim to have witnessed a vision in which a figure of a woman appeared before them. Later they refer to the apparition as "Our Lady". Although their stories are initially rejected by adults as delusions, eventually Thérèse's version is appreciated by the bishop and she becomes a local visionary believed to be able to communicate with "Our Lady". The only person who consistently disbelieves Thérèse's revelation is Léonie who accuses her cousin of stealing the Lady from her. Unfortunately for Léonie, her description of the Lady does not adhere to the image accepted by the Church:

> The red lady. The golden woman in red. She swam up slowly. She developed, like a photograph. She composed herself, a red and gold figure on a red ground. (Roberts 1993: 87)

Thérèse's version, on the other hand, is in accordance with the Christian tradition of portraying the Mother of God: "She had a long blue dress. Her hair, which was long and fair, was almost entirely covered by her white veil. Her hands were clasped, and she carried a crystal rosary over one arm. Her feet were bare, and there was a golden rose resting on the toes of each one" (Roberts 1993: 95). Thus, the reader is presented with a choice whom to trust and whose story to accept as the true version of what happened. The dispute over "Our Lady" causes a rupture in the girls' relationship as it remains unresolved until the end of the novel, when the narrative picks up where it initially stopped to make room for the anachrony.

4. Conclusion

Summing up, the reader of Michèle Roberts's *Daughters of the House* finds themselves in a position of a child for a number of reasons. First of all, s/he is compelled to follow most of the

events of the story through the narrative focalized by two children characters. Moreover, the reader is introduced to these characters as guides whom s/he follows throughout the novel in an attempt to explore and explain the past. Owing to analeptic returns to the past, both the characters and the reader, reevaluate the past events in order to be able to understand the present. The reader's understanding of events is limited similarly to the children's who are compelled to believe in what the adults choose to share with them. What the reader gets from the narrator are only glimpses of truth, which may be distorted not only by the distance of time but also by the minds of children who have their own way of perceiving and interpreting reality. In her/his uncertainty the reader is like a child lost in the hostile and mendacious world of adults.

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Joanna Morawska
Filologiczne Studia Doktoranckie
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
mor.joanna@gmail.com

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The maturation of the children and the transformation of the society in Patricia Grace's *Baby No-Eyes*

EWA KROPLEWSKA

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Abstract

Patricia Grace's novel Baby No-Eyes addresses the issues of contemporary Maori society dealing with the aftermath of the colonial heritage. The author sheds light on the past and present abuse of the Maori: harm is done to the children's and adults' bodies and their land. At the same time, attention is drawn to the Maori spirituality and beliefs. Grace also underlines the importance of regaining voice and sight by the suppressed Maori community, suggesting that it must undergo a transformation to fit the new bicultural reality. This transformation is juxtaposed with the children's maturation process.

Key words

postcolonialism, Maori people, child, Patricia Grace, *Baby No-Eyes*, abuse

Dojrzewanie dzieci i transformacja społeczeństwa w powieści *Baby No-Eyes* Patricii Grace

Abstrakt

Powieść Patricii Grace Baby No-Eyes porusza problemy współczesnej społeczności maoryskiej próbującej poradzić sobie z brzemiennymi skutkami kolonializmu. Autorka rzuca światło na nadużycia fizyczne wobec Maorysów i ich ziemi, zarówno w przeszłości, jak i obecnie: krzywdzone są ciała dzieci i dorosłych, ale też należąca do nich ziemia. Uwaga zwrócona jest również na maoryską duchowość i wierzenia. Grace podkreśla także, jak ważne jest odzyskanie własnego głosu i wzroku przez uciśnioną społeczność maoryską, sugerując, że musi ona przejść transformację, by móc wpasować się w nową dwukulturową rzeczywistość. Ta transformacja zestawiona jest z procesem dojrzewania dzieci.

Słowa kluczowe

postkolonializm, Maorysi, dziecko, Patricia Grace, *Baby No-Eyes*, przemoc

1. Introduction

Patricia Grace (b. 1937) is one the authors whose career began during the Maori Renaissance of the 1970s – a period of the revival of Maori art and culture. She was among the first artists who attempted to give voice to problems of her Maori people. Patricia Grace's novel *Baby No-Eyes* was published in 1998 and is one of her novels through which the author attempts to shed light on the conditions of Maori people in the postcolonial times. Just like Grace's other works, *Baby No-Eyes* shows the Maori community on the edge. The postcolonial world becomes overwhelming for the members of the society. They need to assert their common identity, to find their voice in the new, bicultural reality and face their repressive past. The article attempts to review this process as parallel with the

development of children characters in the novel. The analysis consists of three parts: first I compare the uncertainty of the state of the unborn child with the current condition of the society, then I point out the similarity of exploitation of the child's body and of the land paying special attention to the issue of good and evil in the novel, and finally I arrive at the conclusion about the importance of regaining voice/sight – both for the already mature characters and for the whole community.

2. Uncertainty

In her article "Suffering and Survival: Body and Voice in Recent Maori Writing", Janet Wilson provides a very accurate introduction to this, and many other novels produced in the time of the Maori Renaissance:

> The Maori today live between two cultures, the Polynesian and the European. Contemporary Maori literature is about realignment. Positioned between English and Maori languages, between the rural, pre-contact past and the urban, bicultural present, between the spiritual realm of traditional *Maoritanga* and the global world or corporate capitalism, the writers of the Maori Renaissance inscribe some of the values of biculturalism – two peoples, one nation – in a way that Pakeha[1] literature, inevitably more monocultural and eurocentric, does not. Speaking from this in-between place, their voices proclaim marginality as a contested position. The political consciousness of such writing, in foregrounding ethnic marginality, relies on a celebration of the corporeality of the body to affirm the interconnectedness between the members of the community and the common identity between the individual, *whanau* and the land. This is central to Maori identity as *tangata whenua* (people of the land). (Wilson 2008: 267)

[1] The adjective refers to non-Maori people and phenomena in New Zealand culture (www.thefreedictionary.com).

Baby No-Eyes tells the story of an unnamed girl, throughout the novel referred to as Baby, who dies during an accident. Initially her body is disposed of, and it is only when the family orders the hospital to retrieve the body for the burial rite that the body is taken out of the rubbish. Still, the body is retrieved incomplete: her eyes have been removed to serve medical research. Yet Baby dies only in the physical sense. Unable to cross the line between the living and the dead because of the lack of eyes, she is spiritually present in the world of the living – by means of accompanying her younger brother, Tawera, during his childhood and schooldays until his maturation.

The state of Baby is uncertain – she is neither alive nor dead. As Jen Crawford explains in "Spaze: Void States and the Mother-Child Relationship in *The Matriarch*, *The Dream Swimmer*, *Cousins* and *Baby No-Eyes*", this state is a "transitional realm" referred to as the *wheiao* in the Maori tradition (2005: 268). Cleve Barlow defines the *wheiao* as "that state between the world of darkness and the world of light" (quoted in Crawford 2005: 268). As Crawford claims, this realm "traditionally encompasses a number of earthly and supernatural processes, including both birth (from the onset of labour to the child's first breath) and death (from the departure of the spirit to its arrival in the spirit world)" (2005: 268). But Baby is not born through the power of nature, she is taken from her mother and deprived of her eyes. Neither is her death fully realised since she cannot go to meet her ancestors. As Crawford asserts:

> [Baby's] spirit is lodged first in the consciousness of her mother, and then of her brother Tawera, after medical interference with her body delays her departure to the spirit world […]. [The child] is suspended in this space due to a disruption of the natural progression of the soul from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead. […] The disruption [is] due to incompletions or violations of accepted ritual process, and in particular the process of acknowledging and giving due respect to all life, not matter how embryon-

> ic. [This] disruption [occasions] the presence of the *wheiao*. Where the conditions of characters' lives had led to a loss of identity as created or affirmed through ritual, the *wheiao* transcends those conditions, enclosing the disembodied and dissipated child identities in a containing narrative. (2005: 269-270)

Baby is a *kehua*, a ghost child and she is present in the life of her family and community. She asserts her identity by dwelling in the consciousness of her mother, and then accompanying her younger brother. Crawford confirms Baby "participates in mundane life through her living sibling's consciousness" (2005: 271). Indeed, she is inseparable from her brother. They play together, participate in lessons, and act in a school play. The relationship between Tawera and his sister is very deep and, at the same time, disturbing. Reina Whaitiri comments on the relationship in her book review:

> Tawera carries his sister inside him. Dead she may be, but far from lifeless, she is rather highly animated and vociferous. Being older, she dominates her brother, making demands and giving orders, at times physically attacking and bullying him. Nothing makes her angrier than being ignored. (2000: 555)

Crawford views the *wheaio* state of Baby as an organic metaphor for "invalidated identity of both culture and individual" (2005: 271). The process of development and maturation of both Tawera and Baby are paralleled by the arising consciousness of the Maori people and their persistent fight to regain their land:

> The threats to individual children that appear in [this novel] do so in the contexts of the novel ['s] concerns with the survival of Maori people and culture within the colonised world. The struggles for land rights and for the maintenance of cultural heritage are consistently foregrounded. These movements respond to conditions of cultural and material depletion, which in the [novel] are seen to have negative impact on individual children. (Crawford 2005: 272)

The negative influence that Crawford mentions is visible not only in the tragic state of Baby, but is also to be noticed in the story told by Gran Kura. After sixty years of suppressing memories, she decides to reveal the story of her younger cousin Riripeti, who died because of maltreatment at school. In "The trauma of goodness in Patricia Grace's Fiction", Irene Visser comments on the parallelism between the situation of the children and the state of the community:

> *Baby No-Eyes* continues Grace's interrogation of hegemonic repression, injury and eventual destruction of the selfhood of vulnerable schoolchildren and brings it to a conclusion. […] The hospital setting accentuates the inhumanity of medical procedures and adds force to Kura's insight of evil parading as goodness to her subsequent narrative of the traumatic legacy of the colonial system and its memories of shame, obedience, numbness, and complicity. (2012: 308)

Visser goes even further in her analysis of the novel's political stance. In her view,

> *Baby No-Eyes* denounces the practices of Western academic and scientific appropriation of Maori knowledge and identity in no uncertain terms, equating the imperial practice of land expropriation (the "old business" of taking land) with late twentieth-century genetic research among Maori (the "new business" of taking eyes to collect indigenous genes). (2012: 298)

3. Trauma to body, trauma to mind, trauma to land

Chris Prentice in his article "From Visibility to Visuality: Patricia Grace's *Baby No-Eyes* and the Cultural Politics of Decolonization" agrees with Visser's idea of the similarity between the expropriation of land and the genetic research on humans, adding that "land and bodies figure [as] sites of colonial expro-

priation, exploitation, and violence" (2009: 322). Following this line of thought, Wilson explains:

> The abused, battered bodies of the children at the centre of [...] *Baby No-Eyes* can, on the one hand, be interpreted as metonymic of the disintegration of the essential, indigenous tribal body under colonial rule. On the other hand, desecration of the body's autonomy calls for recuperation: physical healing and physical amendment. In suggesting the need for a new order, a change in the social sphere, these bodies appear as potential spiritual sources of agency. (2008: 275)

Wilson proposes yet another role for the figure of Baby. In her opinion, Baby's role is symbolic: "She comes to represent those lost figures who were rendered invisible during colonization, but who are now summoned up through the artist's act of will" (2008: 277).

Similarly to the nation's complicated in-between state, Baby dwells in the aforementioned *wheiao* state, a "specifically Maori mode of existence" (Crawford 2005: 269). According to Crawford this state is "complex in being simultaneously an affirmation of a particular cultural reality, and a representation of the internal and external dangers that threaten cultural identity" (2005: 269). The inclusion of a character set in *wheiao,* or, as Crawford calls it, "a void state" (271) draws attention to the in-between state of post-colonial New Zealand/Aotearoa. Moreover, the political and social relevance of the novel is underlined by the fact that the plot is based on true events. As Paola Della Valle claims, "the fate of the unborn baby in *Baby No-Eyes* was inspired by an incident recorded in the media" (2010: 159).

The parallel between the land and body abuse is an important motif in Grace's novel. Young members of Maori community decide to retrieve the land that once belonged to them and they decide to occupy a part of the town in order to attract public attention. Exploitation of land becomes an important theme in the novel consistently interwoven with the main plot,

where medical research and land exploitation are asserted as equally urgent problems in the postcolonial Aotearoa.

The postcolonial heritage is also connected with the problematic and complex relationship between good and evil presented in the novel. As Visser asserts,

> Goodness, as a legacy of the colonial situation, is revealed as a trauma: a poisonous force that undermines, weakens, and even destroys life. […] In *Baby No-Eyes* this process is dramatized most poignantly in narratives that confront the memory of the paradoxical imprint of goodness-as-evil. (2012: 301)

The aforementioned settings of hospital and school should be safe places, proving help and care. Yet, paradoxically, they are the places in which traumatic experiences take place. Visser observes:

> In Grace's fiction the trauma of goodness, which leaves as its aftermath an insidious 'nervous condition,' is incurred in the settings of school, orphanage, and hospital – institutions normally associated with care rather than woundings. In primary school settings, the concept of goodness is contaminated to the extent that it becomes indistinguishable from evil, not only in its guise as good behaviour that is inimical to children's cultural and racial identity, but also in the children's felt sense of self. (2012: 301)

Gran Kura considers her cousin Riripeti to be too good to understand the school situation: "Riripeti was too good to guess what to say, too good to know what lies to tell, too good to know what to do" (Grace 1998: 33). According to Della Valle, the primary aim of the repressive school was not to teach, but to "erase the identity of Maori children through the suppression of their native language" (2010: 162).

The mother figure plays an important, yet again ambivalent, role in the novel. According to Crawford, "Kura's interpretation [of reality] is consistent with a pattern of representation that appears in [the book], in which mother figures are neither vic-

tims nor innocents; though they may provide life and support for life, they also hold the potential to inflict great damage on their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren" (2005: 273). At some other point, Crawford also comments that

> [s]urvival of or liberation from the mother as void is an intimate task for the struggling child figure; their images evoke a very close and very early coupling of the processes of identity formation and destabilisation. (2005: 70)

Yet Grace manages to counterbalance this destructive power of the mother with the care and love that Tawera's mother, Te Paania, offers to her child/children. Since the novel abounds with references to the body, the image of the female body is also endowed with special meaning. Wilson claims that

> [i]n Patricia Grace's work, the most powerful body is that of the pregnant woman: active, whole, and fertile, she functions as a natural principle of unity because her body is anchored within a space and time continuum (2008: 269).

Grace even portrays the movements of the unborn child in the mother's womb, thus underlining "[t]he infant's immersion in the mother's body" (2008: 270).

Following the corporeal imagery, the leading metaphor of the novel is that of eyes which, however paradoxical it may seem, do not provide sight. In this way the relationship between seeing and knowing, or seeing and believing is subverted, as argued by Paloma Fresno Calleja in "Imag(in)ing the nation through Maori eyes/I's":

> In *Baby No-Eyes*, Baby's blindness triggers a series of narratives which focus on multiple deprivations but which transcend their mere physical consequences. The young victim, from then on called Baby No-Eyes, according to the Maori custom of naming children after events surrounding their births, is made to endure her physical disability as a trade mark, a real blindness which is

> extended to the rest of the family members, who in turn are confronted with different types of what might be called 'cultural blindness'. (2003: 28-29)

After the intervention of the family, Baby's eyes are sewn in her stomach. She cannot see the world around her, but "her stomach-eyes become the reminders of cultural loss and intercultural misunderstandings, while acquiring a deeper meaning, since they stand for cultural insight, rather than mere physical sight" (Fresno Calleja 2003: 38).

4. Maturation: sight and voice retrieved

The trauma of goodness, with its subverted meaning, is still an issue with the Maori people in the novel. Their sight needs to be restored – more metaphorically than literally, though. Fortunately, storytelling retains its curative force (Visser 2013: 311). This is true not only for Kura, who tells about the trauma of the past in order to compensate for her own silence and inaction, but also for the whole novel which becomes yet another step in the revival of Maori culture.

In asserting Maori identity, voice plays an equally important role as sight. Oral culture characterized Maori community until the time of the Maori Renaissance, so the orality of storytelling is underlined in the novel and serves as a tribute to the achievements of the ancestors. Hence, the novel, just as a number of other texts by Grace, has a polyphonic form. Grace allows a variety of speakers to present their points of view and in this way she allows for a holistic representation of the Maori society, allowing minorities to speak for themselves. Such a multitude of perspectives is also crucial for achieving the effect of blending past and present as well as the mythical, mythological and metaphysical with the real (so that the novel may be viewed in terms of magical realism; Crawford 2005: 269). Gran Kura's voice is the most important part of this po-

lyphony as she is viewed as the link between the old world and the new practices:

> The Maori world of the past is described in *Baby No-Eyes* in the chapters narrated by Gran Kura, interspersed among the other stories set in the present. Gran Kura draws upon the memories of her childhood or events reported to her. She is the living book of the *whanau*, the repository of its history and its stories, which must be passed on according to the oral tradition. (Della Valle 161-162)

According to Fresno Calleja, it is the story told by Gran Kura that "[allows] her family to look back in their past, to keep their eyes open to the future and to speak out against historical and contemporary injustices as they manage to articulate their identity in present-day Aotearoa" (2003: 30). Wilson claims that by telling the whole story of the past, Grace creates a scheme for Maori survival by establishing a link between the past and present (2008: 276). The brutal treatment of Maori pupils in English schools in the past is contrasted with the present state of education, as Tawera attends a bilingual school where Maori cultural heritage is cherished and cultivated, as argued by Paola Della Valle in her book *From Silence to Voice: The Rise of Maori Literature* (2010: 162).

Allowing a variety of narrators to tell their stories provides a frame for recounting events from the past and comparing them with the present, and in this way showing the progress that the society has made towards regaining its rights:

> [The plot in the novel develops] as a jigsaw puzzle, each piece adding to the complete picture and representing a different point of view. The overall story of [the] book is therefore composed of many interlinked stories, as well as by many narrative perspectives, which may be read as an assertion of the notion of history as an essentially fictionalised story and consequently subject to multiple interpretations. (Della Valle 2010: 163)

But Della Valle also asserts, as has been already mentioned, Grace's reference to the old ways of storytelling, with special attention to the "ritual of *whaikorero* (oratory), where different orators speak in turn on the *marae* articulating individual points of view on the same subject" (2010: 163-164).

The characters in the novel undergo various processes of transformation. The first and most important is the one concerning Baby just after her birth. She is supposed to pass from the world of the living to the world of the dead. She even describes the experience of this passage to her brother, Tawera:

> There's a road. If you were dead you'd see it... You'd be walking along the roadway and you'd see all the different people gathered at their houses, all the different houses – people gossiping, laughing, playing games, laying out cards, decorating themselves while they waited. You'd hear singing and dancing. There'd be people having turns up in the lookouts where they keep watch day and night – except that there's no day and night, there's perfumed light and weightless air. (Grace 1998: 222)

Unfortunately, Baby does not arrive to meet those people as she is suspended in the *wheiao* state. Crawford comments on Baby's description of the passage to the dead, claiming that Baby's vision of neither the reality of the dead nor that of the living is fully hers:

> Turned back from this road by another spirit, Baby is lodged first in her mother's consciousness, then her brother's; her experience beyond this turning back until the point of her final departure to the spiritual realm is a limited, neophytic version of the reality her 'host' characters experience. She struggles to participate more fully in that reality, but as she grows (the development of her consciousness is a shadow version of the normal development of a living child) she feels the limitations of her ethereal state more acutely, until her existence in the realm of the living is no longer tenable and she finally departs for the spirit world. (2005: 271)

In "Words against death" Irene Visser asserts that death and life are inseparable and interconnected (2010: 284). The final passage of Baby to the world of the dead where she belongs is possible only through the death of Gran Kura:

> [o]n her deathbed Kura asks Tawera to let the ghost accompany her, and he realizes that his sister belongs more to his great grandmother than to himself. (Wilson 2008: 276)

Kura's death and the parting with his sister mark another crucial transformation process, that is, Tawera's maturation. When Tawera is born, his family perform a ceremony during which they bury his placenta. Also, upon his birth, Te Paania informs Tawera of his deceased elder sister. Yet Tawera enables the dead one to live, by accepting her as a part of his own consciousness. His decision to let her go marks his growth into independence. In a more metaphorical sense, Gran Kura is also transformed: her rebirth as a social activist fighting for the revival of the Maori language is only triggered by the death of her cousin, which she recounts years after the incident (Visser 2010: 284). Te Paania's process of development is an equally important example of transformation:

> Te Paania makes a [...] painful life-passage. Sent away from home at the age of fifteen to attend school in Wellington for three months, she stays there for three years, making the crossing from childhood to maturity largely on her own. Her de-ruralization course teaches her that her speech, customs, even her clothes 'were all wrong' (Grace 101). Once she has learnt this, she moves on, knowing that she must get a job and provide for herself, and 'keep my mouth shut'. Her passage to maturity progresses when she attends night classes and when she protests against discrimination at work. Learning to speak up for herself and to live independently, Te Paania, however, also absorbs the dominant society's individualism. (Visser 287)

The transformation of all the characters: Mahaki who decides to fight for his land, Kura who acknowledges the need to re-

gain her native language, Te Paania who becomes a self-assured mother, Tawera who finally renounces the dominance of his sister and becomes a fully-realized artist – emphasize the theme of transformation which the novel presents as a necessity in personal and social development.

To conclude, Patricia Grace's novel serves as a medium to (re)present the Maori culture. By giving voice to a variety of Maori speaking and by recounting both true and fictional events from Maori reality, she provides the reader with an insight into the lives of the Maori. As Fresno Calleja asserts,

> Grace manages to 'reverse the mirror', to go back to Beatson's words, and to make non-Maori readers see through different eyes/I's, amplifying the meaning of physical vision and transcending its limitations so that we gain insight, rather than mere sight, of relevant notions of Maori cultural identity. (2003: 13)

Michelle Keown in "Maori or English? The politics of language in Patricia Grace's *Baby No-Eyes*" concludes that the novel is a field of "a continual process of linguistic deterritorialization, and Grace's use of narrative polyphony enacts a form of collective enunciation" (2003: 422). But the role of the novel is more complex. By producing a new cultural text Grace attempts to revive what has been long forgotten and suppressed. By simultaneously showing two types of development: the individual maturation of children and the transformation of the society, Grace attempts to prove that these two are equally natural and necessary to occur. Her novel seems an attempt to help in building the new Maori identity for the postcolonial times and in acquiring a consciousness of the inhabitants of a bicultural world.

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Ewa Kroplewska
Filologiczne Studium Doktoranckie
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
ewa.kroplewska@gmail.com

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Religion and the nursery: Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*

ALEKSANDRA SŁYSZEWSKA

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Abstract

Brideshead Revisited is often seen as a culmination of Evelyn Waugh's early literary endeavour. In spite of its satirical elements, the novel engages in a serious religious discussion and acquires features of a conversion narrative. The motif of childhood is vividly present in various aspects of the novel: it contributes to the creation of characters and depiction of relationships between them; places associated with childhood become central to the characters' life experience; references to children's literature help shape the fictional world of the novel; finally, the motif of childhood is also employed to present various, often contrasting, approaches towards religion (Catholicism in particular). The article seeks to explore all these elements and indicate how the motif of childhood contributes to the thematic and stylistic aspects of Waugh's first overtly Catholic novel.

Key words

religion in literature, Catholicism, childhood, Catholic novel

Religia i obraz dzieciństwa: *Znowu w Brideshead* Evelyna Waugha

Abstrakt

Powieść *Znowu w Brideshead* jest często postrzegana jako moment kulminacyjny wczesnej twórczości Evelyna Waugha. Mimo elementów satyrycznych powieść podejmuje poważną dyskusję o charakterze religijnym i staje się historią o nawróceniu. Motyw dzieciństwa jest bardzo widoczny w różnych aspektach powieści: przyczynia się do kreacji bohaterów oraz do opisu relacji między nimi; miejsca utożsamiane z dzieciństwem stają się kluczowe dla życiowych doświadczeń bohaterów; odniesienia do literatury dla dzieci pomagają kształtować świat powieści; wreszcie, odniesienia do dzieciństwa pozwalają na prezentację różnych, często kontrastujących ze sobą postaw wobec religii (w szczególności katolicyzmu). Artykuł ma na celu zbadanie wszystkich tych elementów i wskazanie, w jaki sposób motyw dzieciństwa kształtuje sferę tematyczną i stylistyczną w pierwszej otwarcie katolickiej powieści Evelyna Waugha.

Słowa kluczowe

religia w literaturze, katolicyzm, dzieciństwo, powieść katolicka

1. Narration of a search

Due to a number of recurring elements and themes, novels and short stories by Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) comprise a remarkably coherent collection. It is even argued that his works from *Decline and Fall* (1928) to *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), with their parallel literary themes and motifs as well as similar sociohistorical concerns, can be read almost as “one developing narrative” (Spender 1953: 159). Waugh repeatedly relies on episodic plot, dialogue-based, satiric characterisation and on specific characters who function either in extremely primitive or sophisticated surroundings (from the jungle and

kingdoms of East Africa to aristocratic houses and European capitals).[1] While repetition and economy of expression in the early comedies may be ascribed to the comic writer's reliance upon types, in the later much more serious and increasingly complex novels, it may indicate attempts at revising and retelling the same story in different versions in order to enrich and clarify it. In fact, most of Waugh's works reveal his deep concern with demonstrating in various ways the contrast between the greatness of "the old England" and the extravagance and absurdity of the "Bright Young Things" of the 1920's and early 1930's (Spender 1953: 159). In this context, childhood, especially upper-class childhood combining high sophistication and innocence, is depicted as a very deep experience. Moreover, Waugh returns to this motif in a number of works. Much attention is given to relations between children and their parents and, in a broader perspective, to the way one generation affects the other, and to the inevitable lack of understanding. Waugh's presentation of these relations indicates his concern with growing indifference towards traditional social and family values.[2]

The issue of values, present throughout Waugh's oeuvre, is particularly visible in *Brideshead Revisited*, Waugh's first overtly serious novel, published in 1945.[3] His "narration of a *search*" (Spender 1953: 162), initiated in *Decline and Fall*, seems finally to come to an end here, as religious preoccupa-

[1] For more information see Stephen Spender (1953), Marston LaFrance (1964), and Thomas Churchill (2003).

[2] The rejection of these values, which resulted from dramatic social and cultural changes that took place in England after the First World War, was particularly painful for Waugh and his generation, as their own childhood memories were those of pre-war idyllic country life, with the nursery at its centre (Spender 1953: 159).

[3] When in 1930 Waugh was received into the Catholic Church, his writing did not seem affected by his newly acquired religious affiliation. In 1933 he decided to express his spiritual concerns in "Out of Depth", a short story of the future. However, as Richard Griffiths argues, the story is highly derivative, and it is *Brideshead Revisited* that should be treated as Waugh's first work with serious Catholic content (Griffiths 2010: 180-183).

tions offer a possible solution to the problem of disintegrated values. The book introduces the motif of Catholic faith and it instantly becomes the dominant element of discourse. For the first time Waugh presents his characters' emotional, moral and spiritual development largely without elements of comedy or satire. It is argued by some critics that this substantial change in tone and subject matter was introduced at the cost of stylistic integrity and was not altogether beneficial to Waugh's writing.[4] On the other hand, however, it enabled him both to recapitulate the ideas encompassed in his early works and to offer a new point of departure (Spender 1953: 168). The motif of childhood is exemplary in this regard, as the childlike innocence of "the Garden of Eden in *Decline and Fall*" gives way to the "false dream" and "awakening into the nightmare of war" in *Vile Bodies* (Spender 1953: 163), to reappear once again in *Brideshead Revisited* as an evocation of "the lost paradise of childhood" (Kennedy 1990: 23).

In the latter novel the theme of childhood is more strongly emphasized than in other texts by Waugh. As I will show, imagery of childhood contributes to the presentation of characters, settings and events. My main argument, however, is that childhood in *Brideshead Revisited* becomes a crucial element serving to explore problems of theology and to show how religion shapes and transforms human life. The importance of the theme of childhood is emphasized by references to classic children's texts by Lewis Carroll, Frances Hodgson Burnett and J. M. Barrie.

[4] Critical comments were voiced, among others, by Edmund Wilson who considers the final scenes "extravagantly absurd" (1946: 72), Ian Littlewood (1983) who finds the use of miracles unconvincing, and Valerie Kennedy (1990) who points at deficiencies in narrative technique and characterisation.

2. Childhood and the comical

The plot of *Brideshead Revisited* revolves around Charles Ryder and his gradual progress as an artist and a man of faith. Vital to this process of artistic and spiritual development is his relationship with the aristocratic and recusant Catholic Flyte family. Although it is they who influence his art and faith the most (especially Sebastian, his friend, and Julia, his lover) much attention is also given to the relationship with his father. The scenes of their meals and conversations are what Thomas Churchill recognises as "happy recollections" of the earlier Waugh, reminiscent of the old conflict between the generations "which Waugh had seen as the principal agent of his comedy" (Churchill 1967: 214).

Inherent in the presentation of Charles' family life is an insistent military metaphor. The word "battlefield", for instance, characterises their dinner table; "war aims", "manoeuvres" and "counter-attack" depict their everyday occupations, an example being the "weapon" which Charles uses against his father when, to irritate him, he asks an old and disliked acquaintance of his, Mr. Jorkins, to dine with them. Mr. Ryder, to the great confusion of his guest, treats him as if he were an American. Subsequently Mr. Ryder delivers his "counter-attack": he organizes a dinner party and, pretending he wants to entertain Charles, invites people who, in fact, are "carefully chosen to [Charles's] discomfort" (Waugh 2000: 59-63). These elements of petty deceit and malice are stressed by Thomas Churchill, who also points out that the skirmishes which occur between Charles and his father are similar to those presented in Lewis Carroll's Alice novels, as in both cases "the characters change shape and may impose another identity upon their combatant" (Churchill 1967: 215). Charles's and his father's pretences and astringencies are never voiced openly but are always disguised as friendly remarks, which as such might result in equally "friendly" reactions. It seems that in the presentation of the

difficult father-son relationship Waugh was inspired by the children's story *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* He used this inspiration to comical effect and to evoke the light tone of his early works; this "revival of the Alice-like relationship", as Churchill calls it, in *Brideshead Revisited*, can be traced back, for example, to *Vile Bodies* and the relationship between Adam Symes and Colonel Blount (1967: 214).

While the relationship of Charles and his father pertain to the theme of parents-children relation, a direct reference to childhood is made in connection with Anthony Blanche. One of the central characters in *Brideshead Revisited*, he introduces another aspect of the parent children relations which connects the novel to the earlier works of Waugh. Anthony accompanies Charles and Sebastian Flyte in their adventures at Oxford and, with his exotic past and cheeky character, is presented as a ruthless critic of art as well as a valuable source of information on the Flyte family. It is he who first recognises artistic sensibility in Charles and encourages him to take up painting; it is also he who warns Charles against the Flytes. Also, his presence invariably introduces elements of comedy, as his behaviour is strikingly different from the commonly accepted social norms. Moreover, his originality and rich experience seem to have their roots in his unusual childhood, as it is described by Charles:

> […] while we have been rolling one another in the mud and gorging with crumpets, Anthony had helped oil fading beauties on sub-tropical sands and had sipped his aperitif in smart little bars, so that the savage we had tamed was still rampant in him. He was cruel, too, in the wanton, insect-maiming manner of the very young, and fearless like a little boy, charging, head down, small fists whirling, at the school prefects. (2000: 40-41)

Forced to escape from Europe with his mother due to their Jewish origin, Anthony became accustomed to highly sophisticated surroundings and acquired unusual habits and inter-

ests. His exotic travels and extravagant lifestyle sharpened his artistic sensitivity, but at the cost of a healthy childhood. He did not learn as a boy to harness his instincts, and as a grown man he is unwilling to conform to social standards of conduct, which leads to a number of awkward situations, for instance, when he takes a bath in a fountain in front of a group of "meaty boys" or recites "The Waste Land" from a balcony to a group of students. Anthony very consciously effuses the air of extravagance around him and constantly draws the attention of others with his outfits and actions. His childish need for attention and his shocking behaviour, acquired and developed during his early years spent abroad, result also in his lack of attachment to any particular religion, tradition or culture; his disturbed system of values and lack of cultural identity connect him to Waugh's other humorous characters.

What is more, Anthony is strongly contrasted with Sebastian Flyte, as the two represent strikingly different models of childhood. Sebastian, with his nursery innocence and profound attachment to Catholicism, makes religion a point of reference in most of his decisions though he not always follows the rules of his faith, in spite of being well aware of them. While it is relatively easy to sympathise with him, this can hardly be said of Anthony. Although very perceptive, sophisticated and definitely original, Anthony is, as Spender states, "more or less condemned" in the novel (1953: 169). Waugh seems to convey in him the features that he finds so displeasing in the generation of the Bright Young things: cynicism, frivolity and superficiality.

3. The nursery

The novel, apart from constituting a stylistic and thematic continuation of Waugh's early satires, is one of his most elaborate works. Its main purpose – to depict "the operation of divine grace on a group of diverse but closely connected characters",

later considered "presumptuously large" by the author himself (Waugh 2000: ix) – involves the implementation of the overarching childhood metaphor which governs the first part of the novel and echoes in the next two. Departing from his comical mode, Waugh approaches the matter seriously, to the extent that the narratorial voice reveals a sense of yearning – tinged with nostalgia for the lost past. The elements that refer to the period of childhood and its various manifestations are prominent in the creation of spaces, the nursery being an important part of the family's estate and an object of frequent visits by the protagonists. Childhood is also a vital aspect of characterisation: the Catholic upbringing clearly affects the children of the family, their worldview and life choices. Images typical of childhood are also employed in the presentation of the most prominent character, Sebastian Flyte.

On Charles's first appearance in Brideshead, the Flytes' family estate, he is prevented by Sebastian from entering any other room but the nursery. The short visit clearly shows that this is the only place that Sebastian is willing to share; he leaves the rest of the house closed to his guest. The nursery, incorporated into the family house, is frequented on a number of occasions by the youngest generation of the Flytes. They clearly value the place even when most of them are already adult. On his first visit Charles briefly describes the place:

> It was a charming room, oddly shaped to conform with the curve of the dome. The walls were papered in a pattern of ribbons and roses. There was a rocking horse in the corner and an oleograph of the Sacred Heart over the mantelpiece [...] Sebastian's nanny was seated at the open window; [...] her hands lay open in her lap and, loosely between them, a rosary; she was fast asleep. (Waugh 2000: 30-31)

Already at this first glance it is suggested that the nursery, apart from fulfilling its original function as a place of care and fun, serves also as a source of early religious instruction; ele-

ments of Catholic devotion and the nanny, with her habit of praying daily, inculcate devotional practices in the children's minds. The nanny is part of the family as much as the nursery is part of the family home.

Nanny Hawkins is the first and for a long time the only member of the family Charles is allowed to meet (Sebastian even avoids having his friend meet his sister Julia who, by chance, is also in the house). She is an inconspicuous figure; events central to the plot seem not to concern her in the least and her main occupations seem to be listening to the stories told by the "children" (who by now are already grown-ups) and voicing conservative and slightly disapproving opinions on Julia's hairstyle and manners or Brideshead's tardiness in finding a wife. It might seem that she can hardly be called a character at all, rather a part of the setting, together with her oleograph and collection of children's souvenirs. Yet she is one of the very few elements in the world of Brideshead that remain unaltered by the anxieties, perturbations and dramatic changes taking place all around. Also, her disapproval, aimed mainly at Julia and Brideshead, is not coincidental or based solely on personal preferences.

Throughout the novel the younger siblings, Sebastian and Cordelia, the objects of Nanny's unconditional love and tenderness, are repeatedly presented as more sincere in their faith, more impulsive and straightforward, driven by emotions rather than obedience to any fixed set of rules. The ritual and theological dimension, so important to Brideshead, is ignored by Sebastian, who does not even bother to attend Mass but often feels a sudden need to visit the Botanical Gardens; the social aspect, which is Julia's main concern throughout a large part of the novel, is of no importance to Cordelia, who openly admits to her strange religious habits (a novena for her pig being one of them). At the same time, however, the religious attitudes of the younger siblings seem more profound, as religion, taking more emotional forms, penetrates different as-

pects of their lives. They are evidently more open to dynamic changes that spiritual transformation may bring. Nanny Hawkins' sympathies, then, despite her seemingly simplistic reasoning, reveal great depth and turn out to be very accurate. Her presence not only provides a vital point of view on other characters' behaviour, but also indicates a larger Catholic paradigm against which their actions may be interpreted. Her easily underestimated role in the novel resembles Charles' initial treatment of Sebastian's Catholicism as nothing more than a minute irrelevant detail, only a decorative element of his colourful personality; with time Charles realises that, in fact, it constitutes a powerful driving force that governs his friend's and eventually his own life.

4. A catalogue of unexpected things

The oleograph and the rosary in Nanny's hands (mentioned in the passage quoted above) point to the Catholic status of the Flyte family and the deep and early-developed connection of the children with Catholicism. As the years pass, this strong influence is still visible and seems to govern their lives, although it takes Charles some time to realise how profound this connection is. Catholic values are most overtly professed by the eldest and the youngest offspring, the other two humorously called "half-heathens" by Sebastian. Brideshead, the heir, well acquainted with the rules of his faith, plays the role of the family theologian. He does not hesitate to voice his opinions on religious matters but, although he seems to practise what he preaches, his remarks are hardly ever practical or helpful; he clearly lacks the sensitivity and compassion necessary in a truly Christian life. The youngest child, Cordelia, also treats religion as an integral part of everyday life, although in her case this takes a much more emotional form. In her naivety and straightforwardness she connects various aspects of her faith with her daily duties, often to a hilarious effect:

> D'you know [Charles], if you weren't an agnostic, I should ask you for five shillings to buy a black goddaughter [...] It's a new thing a missionary priest started last term. You send five bob to some nuns in Africa and they christen a baby and name her after you. I've got six black Cordelias already. Isn't it lovely? (Waugh 2000: 84-85)

The simplicity of her faith as well as her fearlessness in voicing her opinions is often a source of conflict with her guardians:

> [...] I refused to be an Enfant de Marie. Reverend Mother said that if I didn't keep my room tidier I couldn't be one, so I said, well, I won't be one, and I don't believe our Blessed Lady cares two hoots whether I put my gym shoes on the left or the right of my dancing shoes. Reverend Mother was livid. (Waugh 2000: 82)

The playful combination of religion and childhood logic may result on the one hand in comically exposing adult expectations and hidden intentions, as it reveals Reverend Mother's attempts at forming the children's habits of orderliness; on the other hand, Cordelia's passion, honesty and complete trust in religion make her one of the most devout and cheerful characters in the novel. She never loses her sense of purpose and is able to face difficult life choices. Although presented as not so attractive as Sebastian and Julia, and far less theologically informed than Brideshead, her childhood equips her with something far more important: trust and the need to offer help and consolation to the less fortunate.

In actual fact, Waugh's combining religion with childhood logic may contribute to better understanding of religious truths, especially when they are to be grasped by non-believers. In one of her conversations with Charles, Lady Marchmain (Sebastian's and Cordelia's mother) uses a children's story to reveal to him what she considers one of the basic rules of Catholicism:

> [...] of course, it's very unexpected for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, but the gospel is simply a catalogue of unexpected things. It's not to be *expected* that an ox and an ass should worship at the crib. Animals are always doing the oddest things in the lives of the saints. It's all part of the poetry, the Alice-in-Wonderland side, of religion. (Waugh 2000: 116)

The reference to Lewis Carroll's story allows her to explain to an agnostic the mystery behind various aspects of the Catholic faith that he cannot comprehend.[5] Later in the novel the ability and readiness to accept the mysterious and the miraculous become a substantial part of Charles's life and, eventually, contribute to his conversion.

Although the use of references to childhood and children in religious contexts usually produce humorous effects or at least lighten the tone, there are also instances when the effect is much darker. When Julia Flyte decides to live with Rex Mottram, a divorced man who treats her religion merely as a peculiar decoration, she consciously condemns herself to living in the state of sin. She refuses to go to confession and without her contrition the sin cannot be absolved; it haunts her, taking in her imagination the form of a burden that a mother of a handicapped child is forced to carry:

> *Living in sin*, always the same, like an idiot child carefully nursed, guarded from the world. 'Poor Julia,' they say, 'she can't go out. She's got to take care of her sin. A pity it ever lived,' they say, 'but it's so strong. Children like that always are. Julia's so good to her little, mad sin'. (Waugh 2000: 268-269)

[5] In fact, a number of Catholic writers choose to employ metaphors related to childhood experiences in depicting religious aspects in their works. David Lodge in *How Far Can You Go?* (1980) uses the analogy of a children's board game to describe the Catholic worldview (sin and virtue as Snakes and Ladders); the metaphor of the candy in Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* (1938) may suggest that even the devilish Pinkie, due to his Catholic upbringing, hides a capacity for goodness deep in his heart.

Julia is fully aware of the consequences of her actions, especially the heavy weight on her conscience and the destruction of her spiritual life, as well as the growing burden of guilt and shame that she is unable either to reject or to cope with.

5. The secret garden

However, images connected with childhood and children's literature in Waugh's novel do not serve religious purposes exclusively. Apart from Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a number of other literary references are made which determine the way the fictional world is constructed. For instance, the image which governs the first part of the book, that is, Charles' first meeting with Sebastian, has a children's story as its source:

> I went there uncertainly, for it was foreign ground [...] and I went full of curiosity and the faith, unrecognized apprehension that here, at last, I should find that low door in the wall, which others, I knew, had found before me, which opened on an enclosed and enchanted garden, which was somewhere, not overlooked by any window, in the heart of that grey city. (Waugh 2000: 26)

The image is evoked again when Charles is to visit Sebastian's home for the first time: "suddenly a new and secret landscape opened before us" (Waugh 2000: 29). The reference to Burnett's *The Secret Garden* allows Sebastian's world to be presented as alluring and full of secrets, which are especially important to Charles who as a child was utterly lonely while Sebastian was "given a brief spell of what [Charles] had never known, a happy childhood" (Waugh 2000: 39).

In fact, Sebastian is presented in the novel as a child; it is revealed for example in the way he treats his mother, Lady Marchmain: he repeatedly calls her 'Mummy' (2000: 27, 54) and relies on her in virtually all matters. He has a teddy bear

Aloysius as his closest friend and companion, and his life "is governed by a code of imperatives:

> 'I *must* have pillar-box red pyjamas,' 'I *have* to stay in bed until the sun works round to the windows,' 'I've absolutely *got* to drink champagne tonight!' (Waugh 2000: 34)

Although not all of them are typical of a child, they nevertheless evoke the picture of a small boy and his fancies. This image, combined with Sebastian's stubborn refusal to face adult life, makes him a truly Peter Pan-like figure, which is further reinforced in the name of his horse Tinkerbell as well as the fact that when accompanied by him, Charles feels as if he were suspended "a few inches above the ground". To Charles, Sebastian becomes much more than a childlike (and childish) figure. He is depicted as incredibly beautiful, "entrancing, with that epicene beauty which in extreme youth sings aloud for love" (Waugh 2000: 26). At his approach other people "seemed quietly to fade into the landscape and vanish" (2000: 23). His influence on Charles is remarkable, as the latter states: "It seems to me that I grew younger daily". Sebastian is a hero of his own story, a boy who refuses to grow up and, in love with his childhood, celebrates youth, indulges in innocent pleasures and introduces nursery freshness into Charles's life.

However, like all other stories, their own must also eventually come to an end. Both Charles and Sebastian are forced to abandon their carefree lifestyle, the illusion of childhood that they had created for themselves, and it is this newly acquired disillusionment that resonates so bitterly in Charles's memories:

> I had left behind me – what? Youth? Adolescence? Romance? The conjuring stuff of these things, 'the Young Magician's Compendium', that neat cabinet where the ebony wand and its place beside the delusive billiard balls, the penny that folded double, and the feather flowers that could be drawn into a hollow candle.

> 'I have left behind illusion,' I said to myself. 'Henceforth I live in a world of three dimensions – with the aid of my five senses […]I have since learned that there is no such world, but then, as the car turned out of sight of the house, I thought it took no finding, but lay all about me at the end of the avenue. (Waugh 2000:158)

In *Brideshead Revisited*, childhood is not something to be easily rejected or forgotten. It takes considerable courage and determination from Charles to finally realise that he must renounce the newly found innocence and happiness and that, after all, they might have been only a trick of his own imagination. At the time this painful rejection appears definite and the Paradise seems irrevocably lost, and yet Charles and other characters sooner or later realise that these moments constitute a vital part of their experience, that they might become the source of freedom and imagination that allows them to grasp what is otherwise out of reach.

6. Conclusion

In *Brideshead Revisited* the theme of childhood is developed much more elaborately than in any other novel by Evelyn Waugh. Its imagery is evident in the presentation of events as well as in the creation of characters and their surroundings. Elements characteristic of Waugh's early satires connecting childhood mainly with mischief and misguided morality are also present, especially in the depiction of the protagonist's family life and in the characterisation of some of the major figures. However, these aspects are not central and seem only to supplement Waugh's new endeavour: to make childhood a crucial element, a starting point from which to present theological questions and investigate various ways in which religion informs and transforms human life. To achieve this aim, the novel not only makes use of the motif of childhood itself, but also draws heavily on literature for children, mainly on

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.

The way Waugh elaborates on the motif of childhood and incorporates it into the fictional world of *Brideshead…* results from personal as well as literary engagement. The conversion of the narrator Charles Ryder, as well as his idealised vision of high-class country childhood, bears a close resemblance to Waugh's own experiences (Crowe 2010: 46). This may be considered both a great advantage of the novel and, due to sentimentality, its most serious flaw; but however the novel is judged, *Brideshead Revisited* is generally seen as the climax of Waugh's writing. Its vision of a traditional English country childhood in an aristocratic home, with the nursery at its centre, greatly contributes to this perception.

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Aleksandra Słyszewska
Filologiczne Studia Doktoranckie
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
olaslyszewska@gmail.com

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Pupil passive, learner active in schooling and the work of fiction: William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

MARTIN BLASZK

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Abstract

In connection with a traditional model of schooling, John Dewey describes the pupil as a "theoretical spectator", someone who absorbs knowledge rather than being involved in experience. The consequence of this, meanwhile, is that the child is often unable to make sense of what she/he is given let alone apply it in the world outside of school. As an alternative to this Dewey puts forward a vision of schooling in which the learner (rather than pupil) is actively engaged in experimentation in the classroom, constantly prompted to understand and give meaning to what she/he is doing. In terms of contemporary schooling these ideas can be related to developmental and social constructivist models which, similarly, place the learner as an active constructor of knowledge, either with or without the help of an adult (teacher).

In the article a brief outline of traditional schooling in contrast to contemporary practices is given. Following on from this, the question as to what extent works of fiction show these models of education in the attitudes and actions of their protagonists is posed. In doing so, a number of events from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are considered.

Key words

passive pupil, active learner, traditional schooling, contemporary schooling, fiction, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

Uczeń bierny, uczeń aktywny w edukacji a dzieła literackie: *Władca much* Williama Goldinga

W związku z tradycyjnym modelem nauczania, John Dewey opisuje ucznia jako „teoretycznego widza", kogoś, kto absorbuje wiedzę, a nie angażuje się w doświadczenie. Konsekwencją tego jest to, że dziecko często nie jest w stanie zrozumieć, co otrzymuje, ani zastosować tego w świecie poza szkołą. Jako alternatywę Dewey przedstawia wizję nauki, w której uczeń aktywnie angażuje się w eksperymenty w klasie, nieustannie zachęcany do zrozumienia i nadania znaczenia temu, co robi. Pod względem współczesnej edukacji koncepcje te mogą być związane z modelami konstruktywistycznymi: rozwojowymi i społecznymi, które podobnie przedstawiają ucznia jako aktywnego konstruktora wiedzy, z pomocą lub bez pomocy osoby dorosłej (nauczyciela).

W artykule podano krótki zarys tradycyjnego szkolnictwa w porównaniu z współczesnymi praktykami. Potem pojawia się pytanie, w jakim stopniu dzieła fikcyjne ukazują te modele edukacji w postawach i działaniach bohaterów. Jako przykład posłużyła powieść *Władca much* Williama Goldinga.

Słowa kluczowe

uczeń pasywny, uczeń aktywny, tradycyjna edukacja, współczesna edukacja, fikcja, Władza much Williama Goldinga

1. Introduction

In connection with a traditional model of schooling, John Dewey describes the pupil as a "theoretical spectator", someone

who absorbs knowledge rather than being involved in experience. The consequence of this is that the child is often unable to make sense of what they are given, let alone apply their knowledge in the world outside of school. As an alternative to this, Dewey puts forward a vision of schooling in which the learner (as distinct from pupil) is actively engaged in experimentation in the classroom, constantly prompted to understand and give meaning to what they are doing. In terms of contemporary schooling, these ideas can be related to developmental and social constructivist models which, similarly, place the learner as an active constructor of knowledge, either with or without the help of an adult (teacher).

In the present article, Dewey's description of the pupil is followed by a brief outline of traditional schooling in contrast to contemporary practices. Then a number of events from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* are considered in a discussion of how the attitudes and actions of the protagonists shed light upon the type of education they received placed in relation to Dewey's conceptions and the application of contemporary practices. In doing so, Golding's own schooling and his role as a teacher are also described.

2. The passive pupil and traditional schooling

In his book *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey, the American philosopher and educationalist, describes how the pupil is involved in the traditional school:

> In school, those under instruction are too customarily looked upon as acquiring knowledge as *theoretical spectators*, minds which appropriate knowledge by direct energy of intellect. The very word pupil has almost come to mean one who is engaged not in having fruitful experiences but in absorbing knowledge directly. Something which is called *mind or consciousness is severed from the physical organs of activity*. The former is then thought to be purely intellectual and cognitive; the latter to be an irrelevant and intrud-

> ing physical factor. The *intimate union of activity and undergoing its consequences which leads to recognition of meaning is broken*. (Dewey 1966: 140)

This also translates into descriptions of traditional schooling (Klus-Stańska 2002: 79-83, Gołębniak 2007: 109) where:

- knowledge comes second-hand, presented as a subject for study divorced and isolated from a real world context (in which case it will most likely be distant and alien to pupils);
- knowledge comes from a source that cannot be questioned, either given by a teacher or presented in a textbook;
- knowledge is (usually) passed on through the spoken or written word;
- pupils accumulate ready-made knowledge, which they then give back (usually through testing) without necessarily having ever experienced it;
- pupils do not have the opportunity to voice, let alone share, their own ideas;
- pupils sit (still) at their desks, face forwards towards the teacher, and (are supposed to) concentrate on the subject at hand;
- there is an emphasis on the cognitive to the negation of the bodily and physical;
- pupils are not challenged to deal with the unexpected, rather there are attempts to eradicate it completely through the stringent adoption of a plan that guides both what the teacher and pupils will do from the first to the last minute of each lesson.

Thus, in Dewey's description of the pupil as well as in that of traditional schooling, the child is a passive subject who does not act but is acted upon and who does not have the chance to actively (physically) engage with and experience knowledge: that is, to deploy it to construct meaning for themselves. Therefore, a cycle of action and reflection that would allow the child to consider the consequences of their involvement and move forward in light of informed decisions is not possible.

3. The active learner and contemporary schooling

In contrast to the above, in Dewey's (1966: 152-163) proposition for education:

- learners are involved in ideas and themes through real-life activities;
- learners construct knowledge through active involvement in activities and events to which they react, leading to further inquiry;
- learners are involved both physically and mentally;
- learners and teachers work in partnership;
- learners put forward and experiment with their own propositions and judgements, forming their own opinions.

In contemporary schooling, meanwhile, Dewey's proposition finds its equivalent in a constructivist paradigm which has two strands: the *developmental constructivist model* and the *social constructivist model*. The former is the more challenging, where, as Klus-Stańska (2009: 61) describes it, "Learning is presented as active and exploratory, as well as independent in terms of the conceptual and decisive construction and reconstruction of the mind's model of reality." It is also a continuous process where both the learner and the teacher are involved, in equal measure, in creating meaning (Klus-Stańska 2009: 61). The other form of constructivism that might be adopted is less demanding on the learner at an individual level and also privileges the teacher as someone who is more knowledgeable, and therefore can help the learner towards understanding. In the social constructivist model

> the child is treated as less independent and self-sufficient than in the developmental-constructivist discourse. His general knowledge, gained without the involvement of adults, through spontaneously initiated and realised experimental procedures, is not enough […] to build accurate or [even] adequate knowledge. From this it follows that a fundamental condition for successful

> learning is with the teacher's support (although not through transmission and instruction). (Klus-Stańska 2009: 66, translation mine)

In the most modern form of social constructivism, meanwhile, the relationship in the creation of meaning (learners-learners; learners-teacher) is one of equals, where a procedure of joint negotiation is emphasised (67-68).

4. Schooling in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

The novel concerns a number of schoolboys who are on a desert island after a nuclear event. The boys are by themselves with no adult guidance or contact with the outside world. The book describes their initial decision to work together as a group to find food and build shelter as well maintain a signal fire with the hope of being rescued. It also describes the island and the boys' interaction with it. At first, the island is seen as a paradise, but this changes as the younger boys and then the older ones grow fearful of an unidentifiable danger which they feel to be a threat to their safety. Gradually, this threat takes on a tangible form as the boys turn on one another. What begins as a series of minor disputes escalates into physical attacks and the violent deaths of two of the boys and the vicious hunt for a third, with the aim of killing him. This descent into barbarity and chaos is only checked by the intervention of adult authority from the outside world.

As can be seen from this brief synopsis, *Lord of the Flies* does not show its protagonists in school, rather, in the first part of the novel[1] references to school are contained in physi-

[1] In their introduction to the Educational Edition of *Lord of the Flies*, Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead-Weekes suggest a three-part structure to the novel. The first part deals with the boys' arrival on the island and decisions about what should be done, so that "Everything contained within this part of the book is contained within law and rule" (Golding 1996: iv). The second part of the book describes the breakdown of this attempt at order, where the fears of the boys start to undermine the system of values they have tried to

cal descriptions of the boys and the ways in which they act. The type of schooling they received is shown through their actions or, in a number of cases, their inaction or unsuccessful action.

To illustrate this, in chapter 1, when the boys gather for their first meeting together, a number of them are described as "more-or-less dressed, in school uniforms; grey, blue, fawn, jacketed or jerseyed. There were badges, mottoes even, stripes of colour in stockings and pullovers" (Golding 1996: 25). Additionally, when the choir and its leader, Jack Merridew are introduced, they are "dressed in strangely eccentric clothing. Shorts, shirts, and different garments they carried in their hands: but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge on it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone thrill" (1996: 26). The choirboys' entry to the place where the meeting is staged also displays allegiance to the actions and gestures of a strict school regime, as they march in step in two parallel lines and continue to wear their school cloaks even though the heat is overwhelming (1996: 26).

Furthermore, at the second meeting, rules begin to be established for how the meetings should be run, with one of the foremost decisions being that "We can't have everyone talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up' like at school" (43). It is also interesting in the pages that follow that the word *assembly* is first used and then predominates over the use of meeting to describe these sanctioned gatherings of the boys; thereby making further reference to a practice in which matters that are of concern to the whole of a school are presented.

The official face of school is not the only one represented in the novel, as there are also hints of the ways in which boys at

implement and follow. In the third part of the novel, "moral anarchy is unleashed" (vi) by the murder of one of the protagonists followed in quick succession by the death of another and the hunt for a third.

school interact amongst themselves. This is strongly evidenced in the initial meeting between Ralph and Piggy, two of the main protagonists, when Ralph first finds out the other boy's nickname:

> "I don't care what they call me," he said confidentially, "so long as they don't call me what they used to call me at school."
>
> Ralph was faintly interested.
>
> "What was that?"
>
> The fat boy glanced over his shoulder, then he leaned towards Ralph.
>
> He whispered.
>
> "They used to call me 'Piggy."
>
> Ralph shrieked with laughter. He jumped up.
>
> "Piggy! Piggy!"
>
> "Ralph – please!"
>
> Piggy clasped his hands in apprehension.
>
> "I said I didn't want – "
>
> "Piggy! Piggy!"
>
> Ralph danced out into the hot air of the beach and then returned as a fighter-plane, with wings swept back, and machine-gunned Piggy.
>
> "Sche-aa-ow!"
>
> He dived in the sand at Piggy's feet and lay there laughing.
>
> "Piggy!" (Golding 1996: 16-17)

In addition to this personal contact, which shows an initial fixing of power relations between Ralph and Piggy, a hierarchy establishes itself through the ways in which the younger boys – "the littluns" – are treated, as well as those who are felt to be different or inferior to the rest of the group: namely Piggy and Simon, who towards the end of the novel both end up dead.[2]

[2] It can be surmised that their deaths are in some way linked to their difference but especially weakness in relation to the rest of the group. Piggy is continuously ridiculed because of his size, but also has problems with asthma which at times leaves him weak or immobilised. Simon is the choirboy who fainted and is noticeably smaller than the main protagonists. Indeed, when he is described, he is said to smile "pallidly" at Ralph (Golding 1996:

Deference to a power structure also shows itself in the boys' constant references to and approbation of the adult world, as a "place" that would supply an authority to confirm or otherwise their decisions and actions. As a result, there is a need for a chief (Golding 1996: 29) and a need for rules (1996: 44), where Ralph with the conch is "a link with the adult world of authority" (1996: 75) to whom the boys as a whole give "simple obedience" (1996: 25). Meanwhile, when things go wrong or start to fall apart at the start of the boys' decline into barbarity, authorities in the shape of adults (teachers) are called upon or fearfully missed as a force that would have the appropriate knowledge and "know the right thing to do". This shows itself a number of times. Here, at the end of the first part of the novel, Ralph, Piggy and Simon are talking:

> "We're all drifting and things are going rotten. At home there was always a grown-up. Please, sir; please, miss; and then you got an answer. How I wish!"
>
> "I wish my auntie was here."
>
> "I wish my father... O, what's the use?" […].
>
> "Grown-ups know things," said Piggy. "They ain't afraid of the dark. They'd meet and have tea and discuss. Then things 'ud be all right ———"
>
> "They wouldn't set fire to the island. Or lose ———"
>
> "They'd build a ship ———"
>
> The three boys stood in the darkness, striving unsuccessfully to convey the majesty of adult life.
>
> "They wouldn't quarrel ———"
>
> "Or break my specs ———"
>
> "Or talk about a beast ———"
>
> "If only they could get a message to us," cried Ralph desperately. "If only they could send us something grown-up…a sign or something." (Golding 1996: 116-117)

29), being "a skinny, vivid little boy, with a glance coming up from under a hut of straight hair that hung down, black and coarse" (1996: 32).

It is interesting too that the character of Piggy, who might be seen as the voice of reason within the discussion decision-making elements of the novel, only rises in Ralph's estimation as Ralph has doubts about the decisions he is making and with this, about his own authority (1996: 95-97). It is as if this element of reflection, of thinking upon the consequences of one's words and actions is something new to Ralph, being "that strange mood of speculation that was foreign to him" (1996: 97). In contrast, Piggy, when he is "active" in the novel is constantly in this mode; he is the voice of reason, or at least common-sense, someone who can "go step by step" (1996: 97) and think through a problem. Ralph, but more especially Jack and the boys he employs to his causes, are not involved in such reflection; even when it comes it is pushed away or denied as something embarrassing or belittling of their own authority. In the discussion of whether or not there is a beast on the island, Jack interrupts the assembly and then denies Ralph his authority, thereby undermining the assembly's power and the possibility of finding a reasonable explanation:

> "And you shut up! Who are you, anyway? Sitting there – telling people what to do. You can't hunt, you can't sing – "
>
> "I'm chief. I was chosen."
>
> "Why should choosing make any difference? Just giving orders that don't make any sense – " […].
>
> "Bollocks to the rules! We're strong – we hunt!" If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat – ." (Golding 1996: 113-114)

The narrator describes the break-up of the assembly:

> He [Jack] gave a wild whoop and leapt down to the pale sand. At once the platform was full of noise and excitement, scrambling, screams and laughter. The assembly shredded away and became a discursive and random scatter from the palms to the water and away along the beach, beyond night-sight. Ralph found his cheek touching the conch and took it from Piggy. (Golding 1996: 114)

This scene would imply that action and reflection is not a model which the majority of the boys, and especially the main protagonists, apart from Piggy, have experienced to any great extent, and certainly not in school. Indeed, Piggy's ability to reflect and suggest action (although significantly, not necessarily to act) seems to be connected with personal situation: he has had an unspecified tragedy in his close family (Golding 1996: 19) and he suffers from debilitating asthma which means: "I been in bed so much I done some thinking" (1996: 116). His ability, therefore, does not result from anything formal education might have given him.

Piggy is also the only protagonist in the novel who is able to mediate a number of different voices. It is he, at the beginning of the novel, who suggests the conch as a way of signalling assembly (1996: 22) and he also creates a space for the "littluns" to give voice to their fears (1996: 46, 105). This is in stark contrast to Jack, who is "the boy who controlled" (1996: 26) his choir and later his hunters, and someone who intimidates Piggy because of his "uniformed superiority and offhand authority in […] [his] voice" (Golding 1996: 28).

In connection with the actions of the boys, there are also two significant and recurring motifs – the need to build shelter and the need to keep a signal fire burning – that show the boys' inability to act, reflect upon what they have done and then act upon the knowledge they have gained, as well as include everyone in a practice of informed action. This lack of success appears to stem from the boys' inability to see actions through to a proper and successful end, as if the influence of the adult world of regulation and order which they try to establish is continuously in conflict with and undermined by the boys' inherent childishness. As a result, whatever the boys do, they end up acting "Like a crowd of kids –" carrying out actions with the "senseless ebullience of children" (1996: 50). This in turn leads to shelters that are shaky or in ruins (1996: 64) and a signal fire that goes out of control and almost en-

gulfs the whole island (1996: 57-60), but then later is allowed to go out at the moment it would have provided a signal of rescue to a passing ship (1996: 82-85).

In light of these failures, it can be speculated that in their schooling there was little opportunity for a type of teaching-learning that allowed the boys to experiment, try out ideas and deal with the consequences of their actions, as in the developmental-constructivist model, or to mediate their ideas with others to reach shared decisions which would then translate into joint and responsible action, as in the social-constructivist model.

There are, however, clear indications within *Lord of the Flies* of the type of schooling which the boys received. It is one in which they had little experience of active inquiry and where reflection upon their actions was not encouraged. Rather, their education encouraged them to be obedient to absolute authority, where the strongest voice or actor is empowered over and above all others.

5. Dewey, the individual and society

The favouring of the (strong) individual over the group – and for group it is appropriate here to write society – is at odds with the more balanced approach that Dewey promoted through his educational theories. Significantly, Dewey's concern for the individual within society forms the basis for his educational-democratic project (Melosik 2007: 311-316). As a result, "the pragmatic philosophy of Dewey can be understood as an attempt at solving the tension between the 'mass integration and individual developmental educational impulses' found in liberal-capitalist societies" (2007: 316; my trans.). Democracy for Dewey is more about the way we live a communal life and less about a form of government, it is "a total way of social life" (Melosik 2007: 316) which also includes respect for the individual. Meanwhile, in terms of education, this holis-

tic viewpoint brings together the form and content of learning, as well as the type of participation expected. It also strongly connects school and society, so that the curriculum includes references to the community with the intention of improving the present existence of the individual and society (Dewey 1966: 191). In such a case, a reciprocal process is set up where "A curriculum which acknowledges the social responsibilities of education must present situations where problems are relevant to the problems of living together, and where observation and information are calculated to develop social insight and interest" (1966: 192).

In practice, this translates into classes where ideas and activities that relate to the outside world are allowed into the school, and where learners are actively engaged through experimentation that requires handling of materials and involvement with other people. Additionally, as Dewey stresses, this possibility for experimentation and contact is not only a means to motivate but also "more real" in relation to the needs of life outside of school. It opens up opportunities for learners to be involved in a form of imagination (and imagining) that is closer to "the medium in which the child lives" (Dewey 1956: 61), rather than the limited use of the imagination that comes when activities are thought up and directed by a teacher. In turn, this gives the child greater insights than mere facts and figures to learn or memorize. It also means that the children are always at the centre of the educational experience, creating meaning for themselves helped by the teacher who ensures that the situations the learners are involved in are meaningful and at an appropriate level.

One can only wonder whether or not the boys' lot on the island might have been different that if they had received an education where the teacher had helped them to formulate questions and then find solutions for themselves. It also begs the question of the type of education the boys actually did receive.

6. Golding the teacher

To gain an idea of the type of education the protagonists in *Lord of the Flie*s might have received, it is appropriate to look at Golding's own educational experience and, indeed, the type of teaching he himself dispensed when he worked as a teacher between 1945 and 1961.

Golding went to Marlborough Grammar School when he was ten years old. It was a segregated school in which Golding did well. Golding's father, Alec, was a teacher at the school, so in terms of the education Golding received, a description of his father's performance is insightful (Carey 2010: 31-32).[3] It shows a person who was dedicated to the practice of teaching, able to engage the boys with demonstrations, and use analogy to help them understand better the knowledge he was trying to impart:

> He talked and gestured so intensely that it was like watching an actor. To illustrate the relative nature of sense impressions, for example, he would "hang" three imaginary bowls of water in the air before the class and pretend to be dipping his hands in them. The bowls, he explained, contained hot, medium and cold water. He put his left hand in the hot and his right in the cold. It was spell-binding [...] he repeated Galileo's experiments, rolling an iron ball down a sloping plank, and exhausting the air from a glass tube to show a feather and a penny dropped at the same speed. [...] He drew human analogies, to make science more palatable. The so-called "noble gases", he explained, were the ones that would not have anything to do with the other elements, while the non-noble gases grabbed whatever was around. Coal gas, for example, would combine even with the haemoglobin in human blood, which was why people put their heads in gas ovens to commit suicide. (Carey 2010: 31-32)

[3] Carey (2010: 31) writes about his "father's genius as a teacher", and that he was "far and away the best teacher in the school" (2010: 32).

It is fair to say, however, that not all the teachers at the school were as genuinely interested in helping the learners or as gifted as Golding's father (2010: 32).

Regarding William Golding as a teacher, accounts of his teaching are mixed. As Carey (2010: 111) recounts, Golding "never knew what education was about" and was, as one colleague described him "neither a dedicated nor a gifted teacher" (2010: 115). Teaching was simply a way to make a living, it was a means to support his family (2010: 111). Golding was more interested in writing. As a result, in class, he would set tasks for the boys to do and then get on with his own work or read finished extracts of his novel (*The Lord of the Flies*) to them (2010: 150). Additionally, Golding neglected his duties. Piles of exercise books could often be found in his classroom with notes from his learners asking him to look through their assignments (2010: 115).

In contrast to this, some learners did find Golding's lessons inspiring as he "provoked them into thought instead of trying to cram them full of facts" (2010: 125). In this respect, another passage from Carey's biography is illuminating as it describes a particular activity that was a starting point for a discussion:

> In one RE lesson he came into the room, took a piece of chalk and, starting at the door frame, drew a line round the walls of the classroom at shoulder height. He put X about six feet from the door, and another X at the end of the line on the fourth wall. The line, he explained, represented their spiritual life. The first X was the moment of conversion when a person consciously acknowledged his faith in Jesus Christ. The second X marked the moment of illumination, the ultimate stage in spiritual development when a person achieved a knowledge of God's presence and eternal union with him. "Needless to say he offered us no certainty that many of us would reach this stage in our lifetimes". (Carey 2010: 125)

The use of such a technique shows that Golding was interested in developing the thinking of the boys, with such "Dramatic

and gripping [...] exhibitions" (Carey 2010: 125) being, perhaps, an extension of the purpose of his writing[4] into the arena of the classroom.

As a whole, the teaching of Golding, both father and son, would appear to fit with general accounts of teaching in England at that time, which in all sectors of schooling was considered to range from inspiring to satisfactory but where the percentage of poor teaching was high and where "there were vast tracts of rote learning" (Benn 2012: 45). And, even though Alec Golding's demonstrations and William's provocations to thought are far from the worst of what was occurring at the time, which in some sectors was described as "dull and arid" (2012: 45), the type of teaching they demonstrated still does not fit with the active participation that Dewey advocates or the active involvement of the learners that is proposed in the constructivist models outlined in section 2 of this article.

In Alec's lessons the teacher "performs" the experiments and the boys watch, while with William, the teacher provokes and leads an inquiry for which he then has the answer (however unsatisfactory it may seem). This, therefore, although entertaining and provocative, is still in line with traditional schooling where the teacher remains in control and the cognitive aspect is superior to the physical. This is a situation which is different to the "active learning" of constructivism, where learners are given the opportunity to physically engage with materials and objects, but more importantly, manipulate ideas through the use of language, and thereby "talk their way into understanding" (Barnes 2010: 9). This means they:

[4] In relation to *Lord of the Flies*, in their introduction to the novel, Gregor and Kinkead-Weekes remind us of Joseph Conrad's comment about the function of the novelist: "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*" (Golding 1996: vii). Apart from "the written word", this would also appear to fit with Golding's purpose as a teacher.

> ask questions, raise difficulties, look for examples that support or seem to contradict, put forward hypotheses, suggest explanations, offer evidence and so on. They try to link new knowledge with what they already know, finding relationships even with ideas that are not necessarily relevant to the subject in hand, but important to them as individuals. They notice good examples of the principles they are learning about, but at the same time notice situations where it would not apply, so that they contextualize their new knowledge and understand its limits. They are able to explain the meaning and significance of the new knowledge, and to identify those areas where they are not certain they understand. (Barnes 2010: 9)

This is a classroom, therefore, in which the learners rather than the teachers do most of the talking and within which "learners engage with the subject matter in a way that will shape how they retain and use what they have learnt" (Barnes 2010: 9). This implies a critical edge to the educational process as learners need to understand content (and form) in relation to their own level of experience. Learners are scrutinizing what they are presented with and probing it for "points of weakness" (2010: 9). Barnes believes that such a situation is not limited to school and the subjects encountered there, but instead applies to the "social, moral and physical reality" to which the learners belong (2010: 9). To reiterate what was postulated at the end of the previous section, if this form of probing and scrutiny had been part of the educational experience of the boys in *Lord of the Flies*, allowing them to "think for themselves, and make informed judgements" (Barnes 2010: 9), there might have been a different set of outcomes on the desert island.

7. Conclusion

There are many novels in which the action takes place in and around school. Two obvious examples from the canon of British literature are *Tom Brown's School Days* by Thomas Hughes

and *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens. In *Tom Brown's School Days* the majority of the action of the novel is located within one school, whereas in *Nicholas Nickleby* the school shown and the action that unfolds there is one of a number of episodes that form part of the main character's life as recounted in the novel. Looking at these books, the type of schools they describe might be categorized in the first instance as a boarding school run by an enlightened headmaster and in the second instance as a monitorial school made possible by "the monstrous neglect of education in England, and the disregard of it by the State as a means of forming good or bad citizens, and miserable or happy men" (Dickens 2000: 3). Each of these schools, meanwhile, has a particular *modus operandi* relating to how the child is viewed, the form of teaching-learning that takes place and the set of outcomes that are desired.

In this article, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is analyzed from the perspective of education though the novel does not place its protagonists in school, but rather depicts them in an extreme situation and shows how they deal with it. The analysis relates the protagonists' actions to the type of education which they might have received. It is suggested that the boys' schooling did not prepare them adequately to cope with the circumstances in which they found themselves, because they have a need for constant approbation from the adult world (authority) which, because it is lacking, means they are unable to act. As a result, they fail to accomplish activities that are essential to their well-being and eventual rescue: the building of huts for shelter and the maintenance of a signal fire. Additionally, a reliance upon a strong and unquestionable authority means that with the appearance of a leader who is driven by animal instinct rather than rational thought, the boys descend into a chaos of fear and violence in which two of their number are viciously killed and a third is hunted down like a wild beast.

In effect, a different form of schooling to the one the boys received may have had a different outcome. If the boys had been given opportunities to propose, engage with and then accept or reject different ideas, that is, to put them into practice and experiment, a process for working with and reflecting upon different problems might have been developed that would have served them well on the island. Moreover, working in groups to achieve this in school would have meant that when they were on the island there would have been a mechanism ready at hand by which they could have worked together to achieve shared goals rather than have aims imposed upon them by a leader (even an elected one) which were then ignored or only half-heartedly embraced.

Of course, the aim here is not to apportion blame in hindsight to a particular education system – how it was run and how it might have been run differently. Rather the intention has been to show how *Lord of the Flies*, even though it does not show its protagonists in school, might still provide insights into the boys' educational experiences and thus suggest a possible explanation for a number of actions taken or not taken during their time on the island. Additionally, even though William Golding's original idea was to write "a book about children on an island, children who behave in the way children would behave [...]" (Carey 2010: 149) with the deeper purpose of showing up the true savagery of human nature,[5] this objective needs to be qualified, as the book shows how a group of boys on an island relate to a particular set of circumstances contingent upon the type of education they received.

Finally, if, as Jerome Bruner (1999: 149) insists, narrative construals are important to our negotiation of the world, and that they are what we impose upon the reality in which we ex-

[5] Carey (2010: 150) reports that in the covering letter that accompanied the manuscript of *Lord of the Flies* on its rounds of the publishers, Golding stated "Its plan was [...] original, showing how a group of boys try to make 'a reasonable society for themselves', and how, 'even if we start with a clean slate like these boys, our nature compels us to make a muck of it'".

ist, but can also come from the work of fiction to impact upon that reality (1999: 136), then the work of fiction has much to offer in terms of what exists. In such a case, works of fiction which portray education and/or its effects are worthwhile areas of study not only for literary studies researchers but also for educationalists who are interested in investigating educational realities. It seems fitting to end with an extensive quotation from Bruner, who believes pedagogical investigation needs to concern itself as much with narrative construals (and here works of fiction are included) as the more usual hard data of science:

> We devote an enormous amount of pedagogical effort on teaching the methods of science and rational thought: what is involved in verification, what constitutes contradiction, how to convert mere utterances into testable propositions, and on down the list. For these are the "methods" for creating a "reality according to science". Yet we live most of our lives in a world constructed according to rules and devices of narrative. Surely education could provide richer opportunities than it does for creating the metacognitive sensitivity needed for coping with the world of narrative reality and its competing claims. Is it so bizarre, given what we know about human thought, to propose that no history be taught without historiography, no literature without literary theory, no poetry without poetics? Or that we can turn our consciousness to what narrative construal imposes on the world of reality that it creates? (Bruner 1999: 149)

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Martin Blaszk
Instytut Anglistyki i Amerykanistyki
Uniwersytet Gdański
Wita Stwosza 51
80-308 Gdańsk
Poland
brcmart@ug.edu.pl

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