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**Adulthood in Children's Literature: Toward the Awareness of
Adults' Presence in Children's Literature**

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the notion that adults' response to children's literature is profoundly different from that of children, and aims to identify a pattern in texts by which adults' response can be systematically explained. The study suggests that adults respond to certain elements in the text that resonate with their assumptions about children's literature. On this basis, the concept of adultness is introduced to refer to these textual elements, and the way in which they can be identified in the narrative is investigated. This study concentrates on literary books, mostly published after 1960, since the issues discussed are more directly relevant to literary works than to popular fiction or classic children's literature.

Brief surveys of historical development of children's literature and changes in the social perceptions about the relationships between adults and children are undertaken in order to understand the backgrounds of adults' assumptions about children's literature. Discussions about adults' perceptions of children's literature today are also reviewed.

Texts from a wide range of children's literature are examined within the theoretical framework of narratology with a particular reference to the functions of the narrator. The examination has identified two types of adultness: direct adultness which is largely related to adults' ideas about childhood, and indirect adultness which is related to adults' interest in what may be relevant to the child readers of the book. The third type of adultness is termed as *Haddon's ring*, which refers to the textual features that are used by authors to keep the narrative safe for child readers. It can be used without losing the narrative integrity or it can be used to manipulate the narrative development.

The study concludes that adults' response could be explained by referring to the three types of adultness. Adultness can be broadly understood in terms of the textual signs that indicate the presence of the mutual understanding between the author and the adult reader on what has been left out from the text and why the author has held it back.

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Notes

1. Authors of novels are referred to by their full names but when the author is referred to as a critic or a reviewer, and when they are repeatedly referred to in the discussion, the convention of referring only to the last names is applied.
2. The quotes from picture books have no page numbers provided, as the books are not marked with page numbers.
3. The terms 'the child reader' and 'the adult reader' are used when discussing a particular book, and 'child readers' and 'adult readers' are used when the discussion is about reading in general. However, where this distinction is not critically important either set is used depending largely on the structure of the sentence, i.e. mainly to avoid the use of the pronouns, s/he and her/his.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale and scope of the study

I imagine the perfectly achieved children's book something like a soap-bubble: all you can see is a surface – a lovely rainbow thing to attract the youngest onlooker – but the whole is shaped and sustained by the pressure of adult emotion, present but invisible, like the air within the bubble (Jill Paton Walsh in Hollindale 1997, p.40).

This description of children's literature leaves little to argue against except for the use of 'you'. When this 'you' is an adult, what is inside the bubble is by no means invisible. Paton Walsh's choice of metaphor is apt in that, colourful they may be, soap-bubbles are transparent and adults cannot help but see the 'adult emotion' at work through their rainbow-coloured surface. Moreover, if adult readers are able to see what is meant to be invisible to child readers, it can be speculated that the same text of children's literature is likely to produce different responses in adult and child readers.

Few would argue against the notion that, when reading literature, children and adults read differently and the difference is often considered to reside in the quality of reading skills: children have not yet fully developed skills in reading literature (Rosenblatt 1965, Postman 1982). This further implies that children can be helped

by adults to understand what adults appreciate. This may be the case with *general literature*, which in this study refers to the literature that is not classified as *children's literature*. In the case of children's literature, it has been pointed out that the difference is not a matter of degree but of the nature, in that adults cannot read children's literature as children do (Hunt 1996, Hollindale 1997, Nodelman 2008). Adults may occasionally think or even believe that they are reading a children's book as a child does, but this is a misperception. Since texts of children's literature are created in a particular way, as Paton Walsh's description suggests, adults cannot read children's literature as children do, any more than they can be children. Despite the awareness that there is a difference, in what way adults' response to children's literature differs from that of children, and how the difference influences adults' views about the book they read, have so far not been given a great deal of attention.

Since criticism and reviews of children's literature are almost entirely based on adults' reading, it is essential to understand adults' response if children's literature criticism is ultimately to serve children for whom the books are written. Based on this belief, this study asks the question:

When adults read and evaluate children's literature with the aim of mediating the book to children, how do we take into account the fact that we are adults?

The italicised phrase defines the scope of this study: it focuses on adults' response

to children's literature when they are reading on behalf of children, since it is this particular reading context that demands a distinct approach to evaluation. Adults may read children's literature as a piece of literary work for their own interest or they may read it for the purpose of social, historical or other fields of academic research. These reading situations are outside the concern of my study, since each case is likely to require its own critical criteria, and the question of different response between adults and children may not be a relevant issue when children's literature is read for these purposes. It is also out of the scope of this study when adults read a work of general literature even if their aim is to mediate the book to children, since established methods of evaluating literary works with appropriate modifications are likely to be sufficient for this purpose.

How adults read texts that are not designed for them is one of the key issues in children's literature criticism. The aim of this study is to identify in texts of children's literature a pattern of textual elements by which adults' response can be explained, and the identified pattern will be formulated into a model by which adults' responses may be examined when they read children's books on behalf of children. It is hoped that the model will provide a new perspective from which children's literature can be studied with particular reference to adults' response to the text.

The first significant critical work that drew attention to the idea of dual response to children's literature was Wall's *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Literature* (1991) which argued that the narrator of children's literature could

address adults while talking to children. Wall classifies the narrator's voice into single, double and dual address, and traces the historical development of narrator's voice in children's literature. She argues that double address was typically found in works written in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries when authors had not yet found an appropriate voice to address children. In contrast, most children's literature published today has the narrator that uses single address: the narrator talks exclusively to a child audience. Dual address refers to the narrator's voice that addresses adults without excluding children but the concept of this voice does not seem to be fully developed. Wall does not always distinguish the narrator from the author or the narratee from the reader, and her examination often focuses on authors' attitudes and their quality of writing instead of textual analysis of the narrative. Despite these problems, Wall's argument clearly illustrates the way in which the same text produces different responses in adults and children. My study draws substantially on Wall's examination of double address.

The most extensive study of adults' response to children's literature to date is *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* by Nodelman (2008) who argues that when reading a children's book, the adult reader senses the presence of 'a second point of view: that of the narrator' (p. 20). He terms this second point of view 'shadow text'. Nodelman discusses in detail, how the narrator's view that is hidden behind what the narrator is actually telling in the text can convey the author's adult views about children and childhood to the adult reader. He selects six books for the basis of his argument but except one that was published in 1991, all were published before 1965, three of which were pre-war publications. This may be one of the

reasons why Nodelman's views about adults are largely linked with the notions of adults' authority over children and their idea about childhood innocence. Reflecting the change in social perceptions, many children's books published after 1965 question about adults' authority over children. The ways in which the images of childhood and the notion of adults' authority have changed are discussed in detail in chapters three and four.

In British children's literature (Nodelman is Canadian), the period between the late 1960s and the late 1980s was a critical era where relationships between children and adults are concerned. During this period, reflecting the changes in society, adult characters in children's literature, especially parents, ceased to be automatically the figure of authority over children, and child characters were now able to observe adults around him/her and to form his/her opinions about them. Adult characters in modern children's literature are likely to be portrayed as the child reader may see them in his/her real life, while the narrative may provide the adult reader with new insights into the perceptions of children s/he knows in his/her real life. The presence of these new types of characters is likely to have influenced adults' response to children's literature in various ways, which needs to be investigated if the response of today's adult readers is to be understood in the contemporary context.

Notwithstanding what could be regarded as insufficient reference to current children's literature, the concept of shadow text explains one of the fundamental differences between children's literature and general literature, and provides an

invaluable theoretical platform on which to explore adults' relationship to children's literature.

Shadow text is a concept rather than an actual textual feature, in that Nodelman's discussion focuses on what causes shadow text. Drawing on his discussion, my study attempts to identify the result of shadow text: how shadow text manifests itself as textual elements in texts of children's literature. The investigation is through close textual analysis of children's books published mostly in Britain from the 1950s to the present day. As a basis for the investigation, this study proposes a notion of 'adulthood' in texts of children's literature. Adulthood refers to the textual element that produces responses in adult readers that are significantly different from responses which they may produce in child readers.

Whilst this study refers to adult readers' response, the focus of the investigation is not on the actual readers but on texts and the potential response. The idea that the reader's response can be described by examining the text draws on the theory of the implied reader developed by Iser (1978) who argues that 'literary texts must already contain certain conditions of actualisation that will allow their meaning to be assembled in the responsive mind of the recipient' (p34). This is a particularly useful principle to this study in that it provides a framework in which to investigate the conditions of actualisation that are contained in the text and how the meaning may be assembled in the mind of the responsive recipient to whom the text is not intended.

For the textual analysis, a number of concepts from narratology are used. One of the main concepts that forms the base for this investigation is that of focalisation, the concept most notably developed by Genette (1980), who points out that when examining the narrator's voice, 'who sees' and 'who speaks' must be distinguished (p.186). In other words, the narrator may be telling what the character is seeing, or s/he may be telling his/her own perceptions and thoughts about what the character sees. This is a particularly relevant point to be noted in texts of children's literature. Whilst the narrator in children's literature is an adult who represents the child character and recounts the child's perceptions, it is inevitable that the narrator's adult consciousness is expressed in various ways and degrees in the course of the narrative development. These expressions of the narrator's adult consciousness are the textual elements that can be identified as adulthood in texts of children's literature.

Defining what children's literature is, is a complex matter, as Hunt (1996) points out, 'definitions are controlled by their purpose' (p.2). A definition for the purpose of answering the question of whether or not a particular book constitutes children's literature is not the main concern for this study, since the adults in this study are reading the book on the understanding that they are reading books written for children. The most appropriate description of children's literature to this study is, therefore, 'a book which appears on a children's list of a publisher' (Townsend 1971, p.10). However, since a children's list of a publisher can contain many different types of books, it is necessary to clarify with which type of children's books this study is concerned.

Children's literature in this study does not include books that are written for adult readership but have consequently gained child readership, for example, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Christmas Carol*, or *The Catcher in the Rye*. The texts of these books were not originally created for child readers. This point may be highlighted by the views expressed by a number of authors of children's literature. Interestingly enough, these authors initially reject the idea that there is difference between writing for children and for adults and state that they do not write for children but write for themselves. Catherine Storr (1975) says she writes 'for the child one still is' and refers to William Mayne's comment 'for the child I once was' (p.27). Rosemary Sutcliff (1997) comments 'I do not write for children at all, but simply for myself' (in Hollindale 1997. p75), and Alan Garner (1977) 'I don't write for children but entirely for myself' (p.196). Hollindale (1997) refers to the similar statements made by Nina Bawden and Ivan Southall.

Nevertheless, these authors' comments clearly indicate that they are conscious of their readership. Storr's (1975) article, from which the above statement is quoted, is entitled 'Why Write? Why Write for Children?' Sutcliff (1974) explains that to write for children is to write 'to a certain extent with one hand tied behind your back...and you have to get your effects in a slightly simpler way, whereas if you are writing for adults, there's nothing you can't say or do' (in Wintle and Fisher 1974, p.184). Garner (1977) considers that children between ages ten and eighteen are the best readers, as he needs to write by reducing what he writes 'to its pure form' (p.197) in order to connect to these readers successfully. Townsend (in Wintle

and Fisher 1974) also talks about an author being a craftsman who needs to be able to communicate effectively within the scope of readers' experience. These comments are a reminder that texts of children's literature are created for child readers and adults cannot respond to them as children do. This study explores how these aspects may manifest themselves as textual elements through detailed textual analysis of wide ranges of children's literature.

The initial response of the authors that they do not write for children may be an act of self-defence against the assumption that exists in the field of literary criticism and in society to a large extent, that children's books are easy to write, implying that they have little literary value and are not worth the attention of serious adult readers. Le Guin's (1992) conversation with one of her readers illustrates this point:

‘You are a juvenile writer, aren't you?’

[...]

‘I love your books – the real ones, I mean, I haven't read the ones for children, of course!’

[...]

‘It must be relaxing to write simple things for a change.’

(in Hunt and Lenz 2001, p.36)

Needless to say a large number of the books that appear on a children's list of a publisher are formulaic popular fiction that can be regarded as of little literary value. These books are outside the concern of this study. The books selected for

detailed examination in this study are what can be termed as ‘literary’ books, in that almost all books are either winners of, or shortlisted for, literary awards for children’s books, written by authors who have won or been shortlisted for the awards, or books that have been praised in review journals such as *The Signal Selection of Children’s Books* or *Books for Keeps*. Detailed discussion of the literary quality of children’s literature in itself is outside the scope of this study, since the study is concerned with books that are considered by adults to be literary. On this basis, and for the purpose of the discussion, the award criteria of the Carnegie Medal, one of the most prestigious children’s book awards in Britain, is sufficient to describe what can be generally regarded by concerned adults as literary books for children.

The book that wins the Carnegie Medal should be a book of outstanding literary quality. The whole work should provide pleasure, not merely from the surface enjoyment of a good read, but also the deeper subconscious satisfaction of having gone through a vicarious, but at the time of reading, a **real** experience that is retained afterwards (original emphasis).

In addition, whilst Nodelman (2008) tends to view the narrator in children’s literature as an expression of adults’ desire for authority over children, he does find that the narrator generally encourages the child reader in various ways to move toward the knowledge of self-perceptions (p.31). This can be considered as another quality of a literary book.

There are two main reasons why literary books have been selected for this study. Firstly, the study focuses on adults' response to children's literature when they read and evaluate children's books with the belief that reading literature has a positive influence on children's development: therefore the books examined are necessarily those that are recognised as literary works. The way in which adults may determine whether or not a book has the quality of a literary book is not the main concern of this study. Secondly, texts of literary books are more suitable vehicle through which to examine one of the main issues of this study: 'dishonesty' in children's literature. Nodelman (2008) points out that the narrative of children's literature usually presents positive views and almost always has a happy ending. These characteristics are generally regarded by critics and other concerned adults as beneficial to child readers. However, Nodelman goes on to argue that, to approve the idea that children's literature necessarily presents positive and hopeful narrative is to recommend that 'adult writers lie to child readers – for their [adults'] own good' (p.217). The idea that lying to children could be inherent in children's literature is part of Nodelman's broad argument: texts written for children characteristically represent holding back of the author's knowledge about the truth (p.142). This view on holding back, as well as the contrast with the notion of interpretation in general literature, will be explored in detail later in this study but the main relevance of the concept to my discussion is that the issue of 'dishonesty' is linked to the question of how what is held back is compensated in the texts. This point will be discussed later in the study through detailed analysis of texts from various perspectives. The question of 'dishonesty' is likely to be less relevant in books that are viewed by adults as primarily for entertainment purposes, whereas in

books that have been acknowledged to give child readers a real experience at the time of reading as described above, understanding in what way ‘dishonesty’ in texts influences adults’ views about the book is of critical importance.

The term ‘dishonesty’ is used in this study in order to maintain the discussion’s conceptual link with Nodelman’s argument referred to above that adult writers lie to child readers. It has to be noted, however, that in practice, authors’ act of lying to child readers in the sense implied by Nodelman is largely a matter of convention and not necessarily a deliberate decision made by the author.

Discussion related to Nodelman’s comment ‘their [adults’] own good’ will be referred to later in the study.

The discussion of this study is structured on the basis of adult-child binary. The idea draws on Hunt’s (1996) description of texts of children’s literature that they are ‘designed for a non-peer audience’ (p.4) implying that adults and children belong to two distinct groups. The idea of binary would be untenable if the subject of the study were the actual readers, since there are too many factors in terms of personal backgrounds that cannot be attributed only to adults or to children. However, the distinction can be made when the discussion is about ‘ways of reading and the way in which a book allows itself to be read’ (Hunt 1980, p.226) (*italics in the original*), since ‘adult readers can never share the same background with children in terms of reading experience’ (Hunt 1996, p4). In other words, in terms of reading experience, adults and children are distinct from each other.

It could be explained that ways of reading are different between adults and children because children do not possess 'as grand a collection of scripts and scenarios and event schemes as adults do' (Bruner 1986, p.68). This is, however, a difference in degree and as such, cannot be considered as the principal factor on which the binary can be established.

Hollindale (1997) defines a child as an individual 'who is still in the business of constructing his or her own childhood, and aware of its presentness – aware that it is not yet over', whereas adults are 'readers who know that their childhood is not a current event' (p.29). By way of explaining why adults cannot read a children's book as children do, and also referring to the tendency that is often found in adults that the child s/he once was is still alive in themselves, Hollindale emphasises that 'retaining the child in yourself is not the same thing as being a child' (p32). This is because:

Once we are adults, the child in ourselves may not be dead, and we may be able to reconstruct a childhood of the mind and imagination, but childhood itself is over. Its presentness is irrecoverable (p32) (*italics in the original*).

A reverse of this idea could apply to children: children may be able to construct in their imagination what it is to be an adult. They may even be able to imagine what childhood may seem like to adults but they are aware that adulthood itself has not yet arrived and is still outside their own experience or immediate field of relevance.

One of the main implications of the difference between adults and children to reading experience is that, to children, children's literature is about themselves, whereas to adults, it is about children. In other words, to children, each book presents an individual narrative world that is concerned with childhood as their own current event. Whereas to adults, books as different as *The Midnight Folk* and *The Sheep-Pig* are part of a body of work that is perceived as children's literature to which they approach with certain assumptions and expectations. One of the principle points of Nodelman's (2008) discussion about adult readers of children's literature is that they tend to associate children's literature with various aspects of childhood which are often based on their own idea of childhood. Hunt (1994) points out that adults generally expect children's books to be educational in some way by having some moral or ideological point in the narrative. In addition, as mentioned above, there is an assumption amongst adults that children's literature has little literary value and is not worth the attention of serious adult readers. The way in which these assumptions about children's literature and expectations for it influence adults' response is one of the main discussions of this study and will be explored from various aspects.

On the above basis, the notion of a binary between children and adults can be considered to be a workable base on which to develop discussion about adults' response to children's literature.

However, since the transition from childhood to adulthood is a gradual process, the

question of the boundary between childhood and adulthood still needs to be addressed. The question with which this study is concerned is not the age of readers of children's literature. Instead, it is concerned with adults' response when children's literature seems to 'lie in no-person's land between adults' and children's books [...] where questions of quality and value become most confused' (Hunt 1980, p.226). In other words, this study explores adults' response when children's literature presents subject matter that could be more readily associated with general literature. The study examines this aspect through textual analysis of recent young adult novels, and argues that adults' response to these books can highlight some of the fundamental issues of adults' response to children's literature in general. Hunt's views on quality and value will be discussed later in the study but the main point of his discussion is that how well the story is crafted (quality) and a judgment about the profundity of the narrative (value) are not always distinguished by adults.

In her study of the narrator's voice in children's literature, Wall (1991) defines the subject of her study as 'by children I mean boys and girls up to the age of twelve or thirteen. I am not writing about young adults' (p.1). Wall gives no explanations of why she feels thirteen is the decisive age or why she categorically excludes young adults from the readership of children's literature. For the first point, it can be speculated that Wall simply observed the convention in children's book publication at the time of her writing. In 1986, 12 and upward was the oldest age range in a review journal *Books for Your Children*. The 1987 Puffin catalogue suggests ages 'up to 13' for Puffin Story Books which are the main list in the Puffin publications. *The Signal Selection of Children's Books 1989* has a section for '14 up' whereas the

rest refers to specific age ranges (e.g. 7 to 11 or 10 to 13), which suggests that fourteen belongs to the 'rest', i.e. to adult/general literature.

As for the question of the end of childhood, discussing the idea of best companion in children's adventure stories, Tucker (1989) writes that when the interest in the relationship with the opposite sex, as opposed to the interest in adventure, occurs in a child's life, it heralds the end of child's need for children's books and eventually the end of childhood itself. He observes that the voices of sexually aware young people are distinct voices, 'no longer searching for a companion [for the adventure]' (p. 146). It is possible that Wall had a similar view about the scope of children's literature, which she did not feel inclined to make explicit. It can also be speculated that Wall's exclusion of young adults from her study may be the result of her wish to avoid her discussion being associated with 'teenage fiction' which, in 1991, still had not quite shaken off the image from the earlier time: 'romantic fiction for girls' (Townsend 1987, p.279), or a 'simple children's book with added sex, violence, and family collapse' (Hollindale 1996, p.316).

Considering the disapproving way in which young adult fiction was once viewed, it is interesting to note that one of the areas in children's literature that has received considerably more critical attention than other areas in recent years is the field of young adult fiction. These books appear on publishers' children's lists but one of the most pronounced themes of these books is 'the interest in the relationship with the opposite sex' which, as in Tucker's words, heralds the end of child's need for children's books.

There were many books published before 1990 with a serious intention to communicate with older children, for example: *Tulk* by Peter Dickinson, *The Ennead* by Jan Mark, *The Flambards* series by KM Payton, and *The Scarecrows* by Robert Westall were all published in 1987 in the Puffin Plus series aimed at older readers than those of Puffin Books. Although clearly aimed at older readers, these books still have a definite air of being children's books: they give an impression that the intended readers are still in the secure enclosure of school where life is organised for them, and whilst their understanding of the world outside has grown, their interest is still relatively self-centred, and their interest in the opposite sex is on the whole in the background rather than being the focus of the narrative.

In comparison, amongst more recent publications, there is a growing body of novels that appear to be aimed more at young adults than older children, typically sixth formers who, although still within the range of the school education system, are inevitably focused on the life beyond school. Examples of these books are *Postcards from No Man's Land* by Aidan Chambers (1999), *The Shell House* by Linda Newbery (2002), *Tamar* by Mal Peet (2006) and *The Widow and the King* (2005) by John Dickinson. The late 2000s could also almost be called the golden age of young adult fiction on the basis that the majority of books that have been awarded recent children's book prizes are from this category as listed below (the recommended age groups are from Books for Keeps).

The Carnegie Medal

2009 Bog Child by Siobhan Dowd (14+ secondary/adult)

2008 Here Lies Arthur by Philip Reeves (10-14 middle/secondary)

2007 Just in Case by Meg Rosoff (14+ secondary)

The Guardian Children's Fiction prize

2009 Exposure by Mal Peet (14+ secondary/adult)

2008 The Knife of Never Letting Go by Patrick Ness (10-14 middle /secondary)

2007 Finding Violet Park by Jenny Valentine (14+ secondary)

So prominent are these books that what used to be the main body of children's books, such as the majority of Puffin Books are now often referred to as books 'for the middle years'. Many young adult novels published today effectively invite readers into the world which is probably beyond the interest and possibly the comprehension of most pre-GCSE children who are usually younger than fourteen, the upper age limit set by Wall (1991).

One of the focuses of this study is the almost unprecedented critical interest that young adult fiction has been receiving in recent years. The study examines adults' response to the books that are published as children's literature, yet whose subject matter is beyond what is traditionally considered to be of interest to children. The examination has found that the combination of adults' assumptions about children's literature and the subject matter that is closer to their own interest than those that found in books for younger children seem to produce notably strong response in

adults. The study argues that such response as this to young adult fiction can highlight some of the essential nature of adulthood in texts of children's literature in general.

Based on a hypothesis that texts of children's literature contain certain elements that produce responses in adult readers that are significantly different from responses they may produce in child readers, this study proposes a notion of 'adulthood' in children's literature and explores the possibility of formulating a model for identifying and examining the textual elements that are the signs of adulthood.

Having examined a number of aspects of adults' relationship to children's literature, the study has identified three types of adulthood:

- direct adulthood
- indirect adulthood
- *Haddon's ring*

Direct adulthood is related to the adult reader's own interest in children's literature, whereas indirect adulthood is related to what the adult reader perceives to be relevant to the child reader's interest. *Haddon's ring* is a type of textual feature that functions as the safety ring. It is named after Mark Haddon (2003), the author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, who points out that children's stories always have a safety ring by which the author keeps the narrative safe for its

readers. It is closely linked with the notion that children's literature can be 'dishonest' in order to keep the narrative appropriate or safe for child readers.

The idea of adultness in texts of children's literature has been developed from two theories that discuss adult readers' response to children's literature: they are Wall's (1991) double address and Nodelman's (2008) shadow text. Both concepts indicate that the same text of children's literature produces different response in adults and children. Using the model of adultness, adults may be able to identify this doubleness in texts of children's literature in the form of actual textual elements. Identifying adultness may, in turn, encourage adult readers to examine their responses in a new perspective when they read children's literature on behalf of children.

The fact that children's literature criticism is based on adults' reading tends to be taken for granted and the distinction between adults and children as readers of children's literature is not always given adequate attention. It is hoped that this study will draw attention to some of the implications of adults' response to texts that are not designed for them and will also provide a method of studying texts of children's literature that takes into account some of the distinct responses that texts of children's literature produce in adult readers.

Overall view of the study

This section presents an overall view which illustrates how the study has arrived at the formulation of the model of adultness in texts of children's literature.

Chapter two presents a brief history of children's literature from the period of time that is known as The Golden Age of Children's Literature, between 1860 and 1930 to the present time. The survey starts at this particular point in history of children's literature because this is arguably the time when children's literature came to be regarded as an embodiment of childhood as an idyllic world in the Arcadia. One of the most strongly held assumptions by adults about children's literature is that it represents childhood innocence, it is therefore, necessary to understand the background of the assumption if adults' response to children's literature is to be understood. The survey traces the way in which childhood is presented in children's literature over time with particular reference to the relationship between children and adults in the narrative. The image of childhood that was established in The Golden Age was that of an idyllic world separated from the world of adults. In contrast, today's children's literature presents the child character as an integrated part of society and his/her relationship with adults around him/her is one of the main subjects in the narrative. Despite the fact that childhood in children's literature has changed, the idyllic image established in the past still remains one of the most potent ideas that underlie adults' response to children's literature.

Chapter three explores the historical background of relationships between adults and children. Based on the observation that children's literature is often viewed by critics to be an expression of adults' power over children, this chapter investigates how this notion came to be established and how it has changed. The survey traces the changes in social perceptions about adulthood from the time when adults were

responsible for guiding children to ensure that they would become a valuable resource for society, to the present-day when adults' authority over children is no longer taken for granted but it is a quality that needs to be earned. The survey has found ample evidence that the changing relationship between adults and children in society is reflected in children's literature. In order to highlight the change in the perceptions about adults' role in children's literature, this chapter presents a selection of excerpts from children's literature published between the 1950s and the present day. These excerpts draw attention to the aspect that is not often recognised: adults' status in children's literature today is substantially different from that in the works published before the early 1960s. The discrepancy between the traditionally held images and what is presented in the narrative can be one of the factors that produce a distinct response in adult readers.

This study argues that adults approach children's literature with a set of assumptions and expectations. Chapter four investigates what these assumptions and expectations are and how they may influence adults' response when they read on behalf of children. Whilst it is not as explicitly didactic as it once was, children's literature is still assumed by those who are concerned with children's education to be an effective means of guiding them to develop their self perception and social awareness. This chapter explores how this view has been expressed by critics and reviewers of children's literature. These views are to be one of the main factors on which the notion of adulthood is formulated later in the study. Another assumption that adults tend to have about children's literature is that it is concerned with childhood and that reading children's books allows them to reach back to their

own childhood. This assumption can undermine adults' response, as they may expect the book to sustain their interest in childhood rather than in what is relevant to child readers. This chapter also reviews existing discussion about the way in which adults actually read children's books in order to understand some aspects of the reasons why adults respond to children's literature in the way they do.

Amongst all adults who are involved in children's literature, it is arguably authors who play the most crucial role in creating children's literature as it is today. Chapter five presents a selection of comments made by authors of children's literature whose works have been published since the 1960s. These comments support one of the main arguments of this study: texts of children's literature are created in a way that is distinct from texts of general literature. The comments also demonstrate that these authors are aware of the responsibility of being creators of works that are potentially influential to children, and write with an intention of offering child readers literary works from which child readers can gain real experience at the time of reading. This selection presents the key reference point in relation to the issue of 'dishonesty' in children's literature when questions are asked later in the study as to whether adults respond to the subject matter of the narrative regardless of how the book is written. In addition, the selection suggests that one of the priorities for today's authors of children's literature is to continuously learn from and understand children who are their primary readers. The implication of this is that adult readers will not necessarily find in the texts the images of childhood which they have, and this is likely to influence their response to the book.

Chapter six examines adults' relationship with children's literature by drawing mainly on the concept of shadow text which is 'the sense that there is a second point of view in texts of children's literature' (Nodelman 2008, p.20). The examination focuses on texts and investigates how the presence of shadow text may be recognised. One of the ways in which 'the second point of view' can be detected is by observing the narrator's voice. The narrator may address the adult reader while on the surface telling a story to the child reader, or the narrator may address the child reader irrespective of the adult reader's presence. For this examination, short extracts from two books that are aimed at the same age group are compared and different ways in which texts may produce responses in adults are considered. This study argues that shadow text is a product of the combination of the unique way in which texts of children's literature are created and the assumptions about children's literature that adults tend to have. In order to test this argument, the chapter presents an example of a case in which the adult reader's assumptions about children's literature is absent, and another in which the text is not created for children despite the fact that the book appears to fit the description of a children's book. The result seems to support the argument. Occasionally, texts of children's literature explicitly express ideas that are likely to be more resonant to adults than to children. The examination in this chapter suggests that this is one of the common features in children's books that have become classic. This chapter has established a number of links between the concept of shadow text and narrative elements in texts. These links will be investigated further in the next chapter in order to formulate the model of adulthood.

Chapter seven focuses on the mechanism of texts and investigates how ‘certain conditions of actualisation contained in the text allow their meaning to be assembled in the responsive mind of the recipient’ (Iser 1978, p34). The ‘recipient’ is the adult reader, and the way in which his/her mind is ‘receptive’ has been examined from various aspects in the previous chapters as adults’ assumptions and expectations. Texts drawn from a wide range of children’s literature are analysed within the framework of narratology with special reference to the role of the narrator. From the point of view of narratology, children’s literature is unique in that the relationships between the author and the reader, and the narrator and the narratee are, by definition, in parallel: in both relationships, an adult addresses a child. In general literature, there are no pre-set conditions to determine either relationship. It must be noted, however, that being in parallel does not suggest that the narrator can be identified with the author as an individual; it is their roles that are in parallel. The narrator in children’s literature represents the child character’s perspective, yet being in the parallel role as the author, the narrator’s views are inevitably influenced by the author’s adult knowledge and experience. On this basis, this chapter explores the narrator’s functions in different narrative settings and identifies the ‘certain conditions’ as textual elements which may allow the adult reader to assemble the meaning, in particular, the meaning that may not be intended for the child reader.

Another focus in this chapter is the notion of ‘dishonesty’ in children’s literature and its related concept, *Haddon’s ring*. Authors of children’s literature leave out some knowledge in order to create texts that they consider to be appropriate for

child readers. Texts of a number of books that won or were nominated for children's literature prizes are analysed in order to consider whether what is left out of the narrative is compensated in the way which still offers the child reader a 'real' experience at the time of reading. The examination has found that in a number of texts, despite the critical acclaim, the compensation seems inadequate to justify the introduction of often serious and complex subject matter. The chapter discusses in what way this observation may be implemented when the model of adulthood is formulated.

Chapter eight presents an extensive textual analysis of a novel. The aim of the analysis is to identify signs of adulthood in the context of a novel. The book selected for the analysis is *The Tears of the Salamander* by Peter Dickinson (2003). The analysis focuses on the narrative events and textual features that may illustrate how texts of children's literature could produce different responses in adults and children. A number of linguistic features and the way in which cultural reference are used that could divide the response between the child and the adult readers are identified. A substantial part of the analysis focuses on the way in which the concept of focalisation is realised and how this may produce responses that are specific to the adult reader. The concept is investigated within the theoretical framework of gestalt grouping (Iser 1978); the reader apprehends the text by making connections between the textual elements. For this to happen, the elements need to be selected and organised in such a way that the reason for the selection can be conveyed to the reader. Gestalt grouping also prevents the reader from projecting an arbitrary meaning on the text. Through the analysis, two patterns of

gestalt grouping have emerged. In the first pattern, the narrator recounts the event by linking it closely to the experience and knowledge of Alfredo (the book's main character) as they are found in the narrative. This indicates that the narrator's focus is on Alfredo and the reader is guided to visualise what he has perceived. In the second pattern, the narrator presents views that are less specific to Alfredo but more general and abstract ideas that are concerned with various aspects of childhood. This suggests that the narrator's focus has departed from Alfredo, which allows the adult reader to make connections between the elements in the narrative and his/her own perceptions about childhood and to project the meaning accordingly. The analysis also focuses on the notion of 'dishonesty' in children's literature. A number of narrative incidents are analysed and the examination concludes that 'dishonesty' can be considered legitimate in some cases.

In chapter nine, the result of the analysis is discussed in the wider context of children's literature that has been explored in the previous chapters. It attempts to formulate a model of adulthood, and it first classifies adults into three groups according to their relationship with children's literature. The three groups are the author, the narrator, and the reader. Authors of children's literature are well aware of the educational nature of their works and many authors have expressed their wish to help their child readers grow up. The narrator of children's literature is an adult representing the child character's viewpoint, but it is inevitable that the narrator expresses the author's views on children and childhood from an adult's perspective. Adult readers tend to approach children's literature with assumptions that it is useful for children's education, that it is about childhood, and that it is a

simple type of literature both in its content and format. With these findings as the base, a model of adulthood has been formulated. There are three types of adulthood: direct adulthood refers to the narrative elements that may produce adult readers' response that is largely based on their interest in what children's literature may offer them; indirect adulthood refers to the adult reader's response to the text when it is based on what s/he perceives to be relevant to the child readers' interest, and *Haddon's ring* is a type of textual feature that functions as the safety ring and can be regarded as a strategy to detect and examine 'dishonesty' in children's literature. The model could be regarded as a warning system to alert adult readers when their response is characteristically that of adults.

Chapter ten explains how the study was conceived and how the discussion progressed. It presents a summary of the study and concludes that adults cannot read children's literature as children do because what is held back by the author when s/he creates the text, and the reason why s/he held it back, are likely to be known to the adult reader although s/he may not necessarily be conscious of the awareness. This implies that what adults appreciate in the text is not necessarily of relevance or interest to the child reader.

The chapter also suggests some of the possible areas where further research may be beneficial to the field of children's literature studies.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

This chapter explores the link between children's literature and childhood, and examines how the way in which children's literature represents childhood has changed. The examination suggests that, despite the fact that childhood in modern children's literature is hardly confined in an enchanted world it once was, the established image of childhood innocence is still one of the most potent factors that influence adults' response to children's literature.

The obvious questions which we ask when reading a children's book – “is it good?; “is it good for children?” – are hardly as obvious as they seem. What do these judgements mean? The first question is really two – a distinction between “quality” and “value”; the second really a distinction between “suitability” and “accessibility” Hunt (1981, p.24).

This ‘hardly obvious question’ is made even less obvious by the fact that the standards by which these judgements are made are not fixed. They are based on the perceptions about childhood that are specific to the society at a particular time in history. In order to gain clearer insight into how we have come to respond to children's literature in the way we do today, a historical perspective of childhood in children's literature is examined in this section.

Whilst it could be argued that history of children's literature goes back to Aesop's Fables, for the purpose of this study, the reference point is set at the period of time that is known as the Golden Age of Children's Literature. This is roughly between 1860 and 1930 when children's literature became established as the type of literature we recognise today. James Barrie, Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame and A.A. Milne are some of the best known authors associated with this period. Prior to this development, reading matter for children tended to be either for amusement or instruction: although not specifically written for children, Aesop's Fables, legends of King Arthur, Robin Hood and other popular tales were widely read by children for entertainment. As for instruction, a considerable amount of reading matter was produced by Puritan churches that saw these popular literatures as a spiritual danger to children who needed to be protected from corruption (Carpenter 1985). By contrast, the works associated with the Golden Age of Children's Literature are marked by literary quality: the quality that is not merely for entertainment or instruction but 'more lasting, more profound [...] it implies a resonance in the words we read from levels of human significance which are not merely personal' (Hunt 1980, p.226). A definition of literary quality in children's literature is expressed in the criteria of Carnegie Medal as being able to give the child reader 'at the time of reading, a **real** experience that is retained afterwards' (see Chapter 1) (original emphasis). In his examination of works in this period, Carpenter argues that, apart from the sheer quality of the books, the works in this era are unique in that many authors set out in their stories to recapture the sensations of childhood which they seem to see as part of the Golden Age. In the introduction to his book, *Secret Gardens*, Carpenter explains the reason for the choice of his book's title: it

would ‘convey the more subtle nature of the theme of so many children’s writings: Arcadia, the Enchanted Place, the Never Never Land, the Secret Garden.’ (1985, p.:x). The implications of this new development in the history of children’s literature to my study is that as children’s books no longer had specifically practical purposes, adults’ relationship to children’s literature became notably ambiguous. Publication of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* could be seen as evidence of the ambiguity: Carpenter (1985, p.68) points out that despite the remarkable publishing success at the time, in the survey of children’s reading habit conducted in 1888, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* did not feature in popularity polls. This could be an indication that Alice was a children’s book that was more attractive to adults who bought the book than to children.

Whilst in modern children’s literature, the image of childhood being an idyllic and enchanted place is no longer as explicit as it once was, it is still arguably one of the most potent ideas that underlie adults’ response to children’s literature. Wall (1991) observes that the great children’s classics are those that have nostalgia for childhood as the subject and have a strong appeal to adults. Similarly, Nodelman (2008) argues in his extensive study of adults’ relationship to children’s literature that one of the most significant factors that influence adult readers’ response to children’s literature is their often nostalgic ideas about childhood innocence. Carpenter (1985) ends his exploration of the Golden Age at the point of Winnie-the-Pooh and The House at Pooh Corner by A.A. Milne, published in 1926 and 1928 respectively. Hunt (2001) classifies these two books not in the Golden Age but in the ‘Between the World Wars’ period. This may, however, be based on the

publication dates, since the two books are inseparable from the idea of the Enchanted Place that is the very essence of the Golden Age of Children's Literature.

Two years later, in 1930, children's literature took a critical step into a new era with the publication of *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome. The book captured the notion of childhood that was being experienced by the contemporary child readers at the time of publication, instead of 'idyllic, ruralist fantasy' that was the trend amongst many English authors of pre-World War I (Carpenter 1985, p. 210), for example, *The Golden Age* (1895) or *Dream Days* (1898) both by Kenneth Grahame. Nevertheless, the view of childhood represented in Ransome's novels is now often regarded as idyllic on the basis that the children's activities are almost entirely independent from the world of adults. Carpenter (1985) sees the Golden Age as the time when children occupied a separate world from that of adults. Despite its realistic settings, *Swallows and Amazons* is in a sense still set in an enchanted world of childhood.

Whilst the world changed radically in the next three decades and a new kind of novel began to appear, the 1950s and much of the 1960s were still part of relatively 'peaceful era' for children's literature (Townsend 1987, p.188) when fictional childhood remained largely unaffected by the changing world. In the children's novels from this era, adult characters are mostly either villains to be outwitted by children, as in the 1951 Carnegie Medal winner *The Woolpack* by Cynthia Harnett, or dependable adults on whom children could always rely and who often appear

just in time to save the children from a disaster: Mr. Howson, a friend of the children's family in *The Twelve and the Genii* by Pauline Clarke, the winner of the same prize in 1962, is just such an adult. Any adults who might cause the slightest inconvenience to the children's adventure in hand, most typically parents, hardly made an appearance. Often they have been sent away as in *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl (1967), or killed off before the story began. Barney in *Stig of the Dump* by Clive King (1963) makes friends with a Stone-Age man living in a rubbish dump just round the corner from his grandmother's house without the slightest concern of being discovered. In a historical survey of fantasy fiction for children published in Britain, Manlove (2003) comments on the book, 'one of the truths that King has hit on is that little boys are perfect friends for Stone Agers, because their interests very often coincide' (p.106). This suggests that the concept of childhood was still relatively undisturbed when the book was published. Similarly, the four children in C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* stories (1950 - 1956) are a self-contained unit and the absence of their parents has no great significance to the stories. Most of the characters in the stories are adult only in their physical appearance, and Aslan could be seen as a personification of the wisdom and the power of adults.

Children's literature was still "safe" for adults and for adults' concepts of childhood' (Hunt 2001, p.9). Whilst the traditional image of childhood was still prevalent in children's fiction in the 1960s, children's literature was to undergo a profound change during the decade as new authors began writing novels for children about children's lives rather than their fantastic adventures. *A Dog So*

Small by Philippa Pearce (1962) is a story of a boy who wants a dog and gets one in the end but the actual narrative develops around the details of Ben's everyday life as one of the five children of a working family in London. Even in fantasy fictions which are adventure stories almost by definition, in that they offer 'strangeness rather than familiarity' (Fisher 1986, p.15), the themes were often about a question of identity or the children's relationship with people around them as well as the world they lived in. In *The Borrowers Aloft* (1961), the fourth book of *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton, the battle into which Arrietty and her parents are drawn is not between the good and the evil but a confrontation between the old and new social values. While trying to cope with the troublesome ghost in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* by Penelope Lively (1973), James learns to see the people around him beyond the way in which they are now. Unlike books written for children in the previous decades, these new novels needed adult characters who were credible if the stories were to be meaningful.

Assessing the changes in the world of children's books that took place in the 1960s, Townsend (1996) writes that, before then, there had been an unwritten social contract between children and parents which was reflected in fiction for children. But in the 1960s, parents lost the confidence that they were the embodiment of wisdom and that their authority was unquestionable. Since then this hitherto accepted contract has been increasingly breached. One of the ways in which this new condition is reflected in children's literature is that the child characters were now expected to face the harsh realities that surround them, the conditions from which they would have been spared in the books published in the previous

generation. One of these 'harsh realities' is the child characters' relationship with adults around them. Manlove (2003) observes that fantasy fiction for children written from the 1950s onward is profoundly different from the earlier fantasies which were 'past-orientated and pastoral-idyllic' (p.82). New fantasies, in contrast, look to the future and emphasize spiritual growth and development of the child characters, and how they strive to fit in the world in which they live. In such novels, parents and other adults are no longer simply the understanding figures in the background but a significant reality in the narrative development. Writing in 1977 about criticism made of *Finn's Folly* by Ivan Southall, Pirani (1977) notes that some of the reviewers were disturbed by the way in which adult characters were presented in the book: children's books were expected to have at least one good adult on whom children can depend, yet Southall offers no such adult characters in the story. Whilst this was clearly seen at the time as an exception, the absence of dependable 'good adults' was soon to become more the norm than the exception.

One of the new trends in children's literature that can be seen as a reflection of the changing state of adulthood in the 1960s referred to by Townsend, is the appearance of adult characters who have their own problems which the child protagonists must confront. Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* (1967) and Townsend's own *The Intruder* (1969) are two of the early examples that show such adults. Gwyn's mother in *The Owl Service* is unable to be reconciled with her past and resents the family of the present owner of the house where she used to work as a young girl, and where she is now employed as a temporary housekeeper. Gwyn has long been resigned to his mother's inexplicable outbursts of fury and has learned to

handle the situation so that he can keep himself as much as possible from being affected. The fact that she is referred to by her name rather than as 'his mother', suggests the absence of the superiority traditionally assigned to parents. Arnold in *The Intruder* lives with his grandfather who is now physically and mentally too feeble to take charge of his and his grandson's life. When the intruder appears, claiming to be a nephew of his grandfather, Arnold has to confront the man in order to protect his grandfather's property. This is, however, not a tale of a boy hero outwitting a villain. The villain here is a man who is driven but pathetic, and his appearance deeply affects Arnold who has never worried too much about his identity until then. The Admiral, who employs Arnold as the sand pilot, at first appears to be the traditional dependable adult but he turns out after all no more than a well-meaning bystander who would only advise Arnold in general terms. These two novels clearly depart from the earlier tradition by showing how children's lives are inextricably linked with the world of adults, and they emphasise that adults are often far from 'the repositories of society's wisdom' that 'guide and set an example to children' (Townsend 1996, p.331).

This sea change continued throughout the 1970s and the 1980s until the traditional 'good adult' seems to have become all but obsolete. Exasperated or resigned (possibly both), Townsend (1996) describes the state of children's literature as a result of the change:

The happy two-parent white family ceased to be the fictional norm. Not only were there one-parent families and broken homes; parents slid rapidly

down the moral slope. In young-adult books particularly, parents were more and more likely to be useless or positively vicious, reaching bottom probably with the collection of no-good and alcoholic parents populating the novels of Paul Zindel (p.332).

Hunt (2001) views the situation more positively. In his view Anne Fine, whose books typically feature parents who have 'slid down the moral slope' in one way or other, 'epitomises the successful contemporary British children's writer' (p.63). Fine's *Madam Doubtfire* can be regarded as one of the best known book in this category.

Whether we see the state of contemporary children's literature described above as lamentable or encouraging, we cannot but acknowledge the fact that one of the most notable characteristics of children's novels over recent decades is the presence of parents who are the main trouble in the protagonist's life. An infantile mother and a terrorist father in *Wolf* by Gillian Cross (1990), and the mother's abusive boyfriend in *Jake's Tower* by Elizabeth Laird (2002) are typical examples. As if to confirm the trend, BBC News reported in 2004 that Jacqueline Wilson had been named the most borrowed author in the UK library lending chart. The news describes Wilson's novels as 'dealing with gritty social subjects including divorce, bereavement and children in care'. The 1980s and 1990s saw the publication of vast numbers of novels for children that were dealing with social problems. Whilst it is often termed as social 'realism', it is not the realism most people encounter (Hunt 2001, p.17), and in British children's literature on the whole, the presence of

parents does not necessarily mean trouble. It is the very presence of adults and the way in which they are involved in the narrative development that distinguishes children's fiction in this period. These adults may be exasperated and worried about the event in which the children are involved but they have little power over it. They may be wiser but are not in a position to offer any immediate solution to the problem.

Trillions by Nicholas Fisk published in 1971 is an example. In this story about how thirteen-year old Scott solves the problem caused by millions of mysterious, tiny objects that descended on the town, the relationship between Scott and the adults around him is remarkably non-hierarchical. Scott's parents and the ex-astronaut Blythe 'Icarus' are present throughout the story and are involved in Scott's action in various degrees but are not in the position to solve the problem at crucial points. The ways in which adult characters are presented in children's literature will be discussed in detail later in the next chapter but for the present, it can be suggested that in the new trend of children's literature, adults are portrayed as children may see them in real life rather than as fictional types, or as Tucker and Gamble (2001) put it, 'they [adult readers] would find themselves facing some home truths' (p.50). How such changes can be found in the text and how they might affect adult readers' responses are two of the main concerns of this study.

As with any other literature, or any other creative activities for that matter, children's literature reflects its contemporary society. In the next chapter, the way in which the concept of childhood has changed is reviewed in order to put into

perspective the changes that have taken place in children's literature. The review is partly based on *Childhood and Society: Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty* by Lee (2001), a study of childhood from a sociological perspective. One of the aspects that Lee examines which is particularly relevant to my study is the way in which the changing status of adults influences the concept of childhood in society.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: CHILDHOOD

This chapter investigates the historical background of relationships between adults and children in order to understand how the notion of adult authority over children was established and in what way this notion has been reflected in children's literature. The chapter presents a selection of excerpts from children's literature published after the 1950s for the purpose of illustrating the changing relationship between children and their parents.

In 1982, Postman warned in his book *The Disappearance of Childhood* that childhood was disappearing from modern society. He defines children as a 'group of people who do not know certain things that adults know' (p.85) (italics in the original) and believes that the value of childhood lies in the 'growing awareness of the power of well-ordered questions to expose secrets. The world of the known and the not yet known is bridged by wonderment' (p.90). In today's society however, television and other mass media offer knowledge indiscriminately to adults and children alike thereby making wonderment redundant and diminishing the experience and quality of childhood itself. In Postman's view, part of the distinction between adults and children is that adults are more literate: a literate person is someone who has acquired a new kind of consciousness with enriched capacity for conceptual thought (p.36). Postman argues that this 'Literate Man' (p.36) is a product of the invention of the printing press with movable type in the middle of the fifteenth century, and 'in his coming, [the Literate Man] left behind the

children' (p.36); thereafter children become 'unformed adults,' (p.41) the state which has come to be known as childhood. Postman bases his argument on the assumption that this newly developed way of reading as a result of the invention was categorically a reflective and intellectual activity, thus distinguishing adults who read from children who did not. Postman's reasoning may, however, be an over-generalisation.

In his book *A Social History of Knowledge*, Burke (2000) points out that the printing press changed the physical format of books as well as the practical ways in which they were read, but many of the newly printed books were 'designed for some use other than close or intensive reading' (p.183), which culminated in the publication of the *Encyclopedie* from 1750 onward. He goes on to explain that the invention of the printing press made knowledge widely available which enabled people to compare and contrast a number of different accounts of the same phenomenon or events. Whilst this new way of reading 'encouraged scepticism,' (p.11) this scepticism is largely functional and not of the reflective nature that is suggested by Postman. In fact, Burke's discussion of the effects of the invention of the printing press appears to contradict Postman's argument in that, according to Burke, the invention made knowledge available to anyone who could read, and there is no reason to exclude children, many of whom were by no means illiterate.

Notwithstanding the problematic development in the argument about the definition of childhood, Postman's view that the level of reading skill is an indication of the general quality of adulthood is not unique. Rosenblatt (1965), who was one of the

first critics to draw attention to wider social aspects of reading, describes adolescent readers as those who have ‘not yet arrived at a consistent view of life or achieved at fully integrated personality’ (p.31). It can be inferred from this comment that, in Rosenblatt’s view, adults have not only achieved sophisticated reading skills but also a fully integrated personality and have gained a consistent view of life, all of which adolescent readers have yet to achieve. This is almost an exact echo of Postman’s description of Literal Man: a person who has acquired a new kind of consciousness with enriched capacity for conceptual thought.

Whilst the ability to read critically is one way of distinguishing between adults and children, the concept of childhood is best understood in parallel with the assumptions about adulthood in a wider social context. This chapter traces how the ideas of childhood and adulthood have changed in society, and how children’s literature has reflected these changes. This examination of changes in children’s literature focuses on adult characters in the stories and how they represent the norms and assumptions about adulthood in their contemporary society. The survey of changes in childhood is based on *Childhood and Society: Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty* by Lee (2001).

Dependable adults and stable home

The idea that adulthood is the state where an individual has realised his or her full potential is also prevalent in the field of sociology where Rosenblatt’s ‘fully integrated personality’ can be translated into ‘a state of personal stability and completion’ (Lee 2001, p.7). In this context, children have almost always been

perceived as fundamentally different from adults (Lee 2001), as once seen in children's literature: children living in an enchanted place away from the world of adults, is an overarching image in most well known works published in the latter half of the nineteenth century up to the early twentieth century (Carpenter 1985). From the sociological perspective, one of the ways of describing the division is to see adults as 'human beings' and children 'human becomings':

The human being is, or should be, stable, complete, self-possessed and self-controlling...capable of independent thought and action, an independence that merits respect. The human becoming, on the other hand, is changeable and incomplete and lacks the self-position and self-control that would allow it the independent of thought and action that merits respect (Qvortrup 1994, in Lee 2001, p.5).

The image of the 'human being' is plainly reflected in the good, dependable adult characters commonly found in children's fiction up to the 1960s as discussed in the previous chapter. The concept of human becomings is an almost exact parallel to Postman's (1982) idea of children being unmade adults. In Postman's view, the value of childhood lies in the effort that children make towards achieving literacy in order to enter adulthood, or to become human being. This suggests that childhood in itself has no value, yet Postman considers childhood as almost sacrosanct and the loss of it will be near enough tantamount to loss of humanity, because the growth in 'simple humanities in Western civilisation has followed the path of the growth of childhood' (pp.63-64). This is the paradox from which

children's literature cannot escape: children's literature celebrates childhood yet at the same time, it urges child readers to leave it behind. This duality in the nature of children's literature is one of the central themes of this study and will be explored in the following chapters.

The origin of the image of 'human being' or 'the standard adult' (Lee 2001, p.5) is specifically linked with the principles of mass production established by the motor-cars manufacturer Ford, hence the term 'Fordist' (Lee *ibid.* p.11). In order to ensure profit, Ford needed a long-term plan which involved the company's considerable financial commitment and large scale employment. From the employees' point of view, this meant that once they were employed, they would be working for the same company, with more or less the same people and doing more or less the same job for the rest of their working lives. These principles were globally adopted in key industries after the Second World War and became the standard model of employment. The influence went beyond factory workers: white-collar workers were found to have similarly stable life patterns, thus creating life-long stability for a majority of the population in industrialised nations. This stable, reliable and standardised world is symbolised by the image of the normal American family, the concept put forward by Parsons (in Lee 2001, p.15). It is an image of a married couple whose marriage is expected to last until one of the partners dies, the couple live together, share the income and bring up children.

It can be argued that children's literature reflected the idea of the normal family and the standardised life by not assigning particularly significant roles to parents. In

British children's fiction published before 1960, parents rarely made appearance in the story. For example, in *The Box of Delight* by John Masefield (1935) and in *Ballet Shoes* by Noel Streatfield (1936), the absence of the parents is often the prerequisite for the stories. When they are present in the novel, they are hardly involved in the children's activities as in *Five Children and It* (1902) and *The Railway Children* (1906) both by E. Nesbit. This may well have been because it did not occur to many authors in this period that they should write about parents, as they were assumed to be much the same no matter whose parents they were, unless the author wished to emphasise the anomalous parents as the reason for something undesirable. The parents of Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, one of the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis (1952), are vegetarians, non-smokers and let their son call them by their forenames: it is no surprise that Eustace is such a coward and so mean. When parents did appear, usually briefly, it was to remind the children that they always had someone to turn to. Walker children's mother in *Swallows and Amazons* (1930) may be seen as an example. Also in the stories in this era, the children invariably returned home when their adventure was over and found that they had changed but home was the same as always (Egoff and Sutton 1996). This 'away and back again' pattern was possible because, as parents were complete and stable, there were no reasons for children to think that home would be any different. This trend continued into the 1960s, though disappearing fast, when children could still have a strange adventure on their own while their parents and home remained as the dependable backgrounds: *The Night Watchman* by Helen Cresswell (1969) and *The Dark is Rising* by Susan Cooper (1973) are two examples. By the end of the 1970s, however, dependable parents and stable homes

all but ceased to be the fictional norm in children's literature.

Becoming beings

If adulthood is the state of completion and stability, childhood can be seen as a 'journey towards a clear knowable destination' (Lee 2001, p.7) (italics in the original), which is 'a journey toward being fully human' (Lee *ibid.* p.38). The journey takes the form of socialisation, and when the process is completed, the child who was a human becoming has been transformed into an adult who is a human being, having acquired the required knowledge for gaining one's place in society. Children are viewed as not fully human not only because they have neither stable job nor stable intimate relationships, which are the two essential properties of a 'complete' adult human being, but also because they are dependent on adults for their survival (Lee 2001). Children are physically vulnerable, which makes them naturally dependent on adults but their dependency goes beyond the needs of physical protection. Lee goes on to explain that children's dependency on adults in civilised society is more institutional in nature than the biological condition of children. The origin of this institutional dependency goes back to the seventeenth century when children were regarded as a resource or investment for the developing nation state. For the purpose of nation building, children needed to be formed in such a way that they would become part of the economic and military power of the nation. In order for this process to be successful, children had to be protected and guided by adults, and for this purpose adults' authority over children must be absolute. This tradition of preparing children for the purpose of the nation was a ready-made framework for the Fordist idea which expected children to

become the standard adults who know their place in society and are able to contribute to the economic growth of the nation.

It can be said that children's literature once included its fair share of preparing children to fit the purpose of the nation. In the eighteenth century, evangelical writers were producing numerous texts for children (Hunt 2001, p.11) and children's books published prior to the Golden Age of Children's Literature (see Chapter 2) were either for sheer entertainment or a tool for conveying moral and ethical messages to children (Carpenter 1985, p.2). Whilst such overtly didactic works are rare in modern children's literature, adults are still likely to want to feed children with a set of moral examples and to hope that 'the opportunity of providing models of ideal behaviour is not to be wasted.' (Carpenter *ibid*, p.1) Rosemary Sutcliff's books are often as much about the process of Britain becoming a nation as narratives in which the main characters develop their understanding of the world in which they live. *The Lantern Bearers* (1959) is set in the time when the Romans finally departed from Britain and the story follows Aquila, a young Briton in the Roman Army who decided to stay behind. The book ends at the point when Ambrosius, a figure loosely based on King Arthur, was about to start uniting the country. The friendship between Randal, the Saxon dog-boy, and Bevis, the son of Norman lord in *Knight's Fee* (1960) is a parallel narrative to the history in which two peoples were to become one nation. The title *Dawn Wind* (1961) is repeated by Owain at the end of the book expressing his belief that the dark days of the Saxons' barbaric rule would end in the same way as Owain himself had overcome prejudice and won the trust of his Saxon captor and master. In these settings, the stories deal

with ‘idealism, conflicting loyalties, the test set for the developing adolescent,’ (Carpenter and Prichard 1984, p.506) and in Sutcliff’s (1974) own words, her books are about ‘a boy growing up and finding himself, and finding his own soul in the process, and achieving the aim he sets out to achieve [...] And becoming part of society’ (in Wintle and Fisher 1974, p.190). As such, Sutcliff’s stories provide many adult characters who are the model of ideal behaviour to which the child characters look up. One of the most memorable of these adults is Herluin, the minstrel in *Knight’s Fee* who protects Randal even at the risk of losing his livelihood. It is the sense of loyalty to Herluin that guides Randal through hardships and many moments of despair, finally to accept his role as a knight and the lord of a manor. Herluin is an embodiment of the highest moral standard that we would hope all children to strive for. Sutcliff’s characters, both children and adults, have ‘officer-like qualities: brave and intensely honourable’ (Townsend 1987, p.198). Such heroic figures are, however, seen to belong to the past and ‘are no longer automatically required in historical novels for the young’ (Townsend *ibid.*, p.198). They could even be considered as a nostalgic representation of the lost values (Hunt 2001, p.134). Whilst it is highly unlikely that Sutcliff had such a utilitarian purpose as nation building, these qualities in her heroes resonate more with the society in which such high moral standards and heroic acts were commonly admired, and that which considered individuals to be ultimately part of society and the nation.

The period between the late 1950s and the late 1970s has now come to be known as the Second Golden Age of children’s literature. Many books written in this era

focus on the way in which the child character develops understanding about him/herself and the adults around him/her, which gives the story ‘unvarying emphasis on *growing up*’ (Carpenter 1985, p.218) (italics in the original). It can be said that the authors of these books were concerned with children’s personal growth and tell stories about ‘how the children grow wiser, braver and more generous as time passes’ (Meek and Watson 2003, p.1). Child characters did grow up before this era but the growing up in the stories then was often a declaration that the children were on their way to the approved state of adulthood.

The Ship that Flew by Hilda Lewis was first published in 1939, stayed in print until the mid 1960s and was reprinted in 1993. It is a story of four children who find a magic ship that takes them to adventures in faraway places and back in history. As time passes, the children gradually stop believing in the magic ship, forget that their adventures ever happened, and eventually, Peter, the oldest, reluctantly takes the ship back to the old man from whom he bought it. The old man tells Peter:

‘Of course you must forget,’ he said kindly. ‘You must make room for all new things you have to learn.’

‘I don’t understand,’ said Peter.

‘A chest will hold so much and no more’ said the old man. ‘If you put new things in, why then you must take old things out. It is very simple!’ (p. 243)

As Peter gives the ship back, the old man promises him his heart’s desire. At the

end of the book the children are grown up and have become a writer, a doctor, and an archaeologist. Sandy, the youngest ‘got married and had a lot of children – as she always said she would’ (p.246). Growing up in the time when *The Ship that Flew* was written was a journey to the ‘knowable destination’ (Lee 2001, p.7) (italics in the original): knowable because the destination was public knowledge. In contrast, growing up in children’s fiction written in the Second Golden Age occurs as ‘private moments of inner growth’ and ‘is entirely implicit’ (Meek and Watson 2003, p. 2).

Earthfasts by William Mayne (1966) is a story about two boys, David and Keith, who encounter a drummer boy from two hundred years ago walking out from the hillside. The drummer boy’s appearance causes a stream of supernatural phenomena in the area, and amidst all the disturbances, David disappears believed to have been struck by lightning. Towards the end of the book, when the inquest is over, Keith goes back with Dr. Wix, David’s father and a local GP to his surgery. Dr. Wix tells Keith that he will resign after the end of the year and move to Australia, as he does not want to carry on for another twenty years until he retires (David’s mother died some years ago).

‘I’ve got fifty years until I retire,’ said Keith.

‘Don’t start working it out like that at your age,’ said Dr. Wix. ‘I’m sure that your fifty years doesn’t look any longer than my twenty, for all that.’

Then he took his black notebook and started to enter his calls.

Keith left at the beginning of the surgery, and walked down through the town, thinking that today he had come to the last page of a book, turned it, and found the blank leaves at the end, without even advertisements on. Something was over and done with, he thought. Life was now another book, a fresh one, unopened, only unlike the real books in that he couldn't turn on a few pages and see what it was going to be like, or even look at the last chapter to see whether there was a happy ending, or even whether the last pages had anything printed on them at all (p.158).

Growing up is no longer an act of leaving a private world of childhood behind and entering into the public domain of adulthood. It is a gradual accumulation of subtle changes in the child character's perception and understanding of the world. It is also worth noting that in this process of growing up, adults' influence is rarely direct.

Whilst the ways in which children grow up in children's literature did change, it still largely occurred within the established social norms in the novels written until the end of the 1970s. The children learn to accept reality and to find their proper places in the world (Manlove 2003, p.82): where adults are still both the model and the authority. After successfully exposing the villain's plan to ruin his father's wool business, Nicholas in *The Wool-Pack* by Cynthia Harnett (1951) goes back to his perfectly orderly life where his parents know all there is to know and guide him to become a good wool merchant so that he can join his father's successful business when the time comes. The book ends without actually telling us what Nicholas did

next, as if to say that there is no need to state the obvious. Arrietty's parents, Pod and Homely in *The Borrowers* by Mary Norton (1952) are, despite their shortcomings and odd ways, unmistakably the standard parents: father is responsible for the safety of the family and mother cooks and cleans. The family works as a unit and the three of them carry out their allocated roles. *A Dog So Small* (1962) by Philippa Pearce is peopled with hardworking, down-to-earth and sensible adults who help Ben to learn the lesson: you can't have exactly what you want but if you accept what you can, life will be fine. In the 1960s, home was still a secure place, parents were dependable and there was always an adult whom the child could look up to, but as the decade progressed, parents in children's literature began to look more like living people than representations of the standard parents.

William Mayne's works stand out in this respect. In his books, parents and other adults, even minor characters are individuals and not merely fictional types. Susan's parents in *A Parcel of Trees* (1963) and as seen above, David's father in *Earthfasts* (1966) are by no means main characters of the stories but they are memorable in that they have their own concerns and opinions. Susan's treasure hunt takes place within life in her parents' bakery where the parents are both help and hindrance: they are helpful as long as they have time to spare but they expect Susan to help the bakery's work regardless of her convenience or wishes. Unlike traditional fathers, David's father openly shows his grief to his lost son's friend. The appearance of these parents can be seen as the first sign of the changes in the relationship between children and adults in children's literature that were to gather momentum in the next decade and onward.

The Standard no longer

By the late 1960s, the markets of mass production economies were coming to saturation point, and the newly industrialised South East Asian countries began to compete in the market with much cheaper labour available to them. The long-term investment of Fordism that had been the foundation of economic stability was too rigid to be adapted to the new demands of the market. Industry responded to the crisis by forsaking this stability for the sake of survival and in its place, adopted flexible employment systems thereby bringing to an end the 'conditions of employment that allowed us to think of adults as intrinsically stable and to associate adulthood with stability and completeness' (Lee 2001, p.14). One of the outcomes of these changes was 'democratisation of family' (Lee *ibid.* p.19), since parents' authority over the children was no longer taken for granted when they could not guarantee to provide a stable family life. Without the qualifying qualities for adulthood, the distinction between adult human being and child human becoming has become unsustainable. In this new, flexible working situation, many adults were just as much 'becoming' as children are and the end of the journey no longer existed. The reality of the diminishing of this boundary is especially stark where new media technology is concerned: children's expertise with new technology gives them access to new forms of communication and the means of acquiring knowledge that is often beyond parents' control, hence seriously undermining adults' authority (Buckingham 2000). Adults are no longer automatically those who know better.

It is interesting to note that, as the image of standard adulthood disintegrates, the prominence of adults in children's literature has increased, if only to emphasise the diminishing of their status in the world in general and in children's lives in particular. In Townsend's (1996) view, 'adults did what they liked: divorce, casual break-up of marriage or self-seeking in business and professional life, and it was up to children to face the consequences' (p.332).

With such selfish adults around, writers of children's literature routinely used adults 'as foils; they are the ones who cause the problems around which the plot revolves' (Egoff and Sutton 1996, p. 381). One of the books that immediately come to mind as a perfect example to demonstrate this trend is *Madam Doubtfire* by Anne Fine (1987). Here, the parents' divorce is not the background of the story but it is what the story is about: endless and vicious fighting between the mother who is a successful business woman and the resentful, juvenile, and self-righteous father who can hardly earn enough to support himself, let alone a family. *Madam Doubtfire* can be seen as an indication that the boundary between childhood and adulthood in children's literature has become far more complex than that which simply separates 'human becomings' from 'human being': there is absolutely nothing 'complete and stable' about the parents in *Madam Doubtfire*. By the time *Madam Doubtfire* was published, the broken family was no longer news. It had been commonly acknowledged by then that children had all the rights to voice their unhappiness but, in the early 1970s parental authority had not yet so completely dissolved and the children's voice was hardly heard.

A Game of Dark by William Mayne was published in 1971 when the 'standard family' was still largely the norm and children did not in general openly challenge their parents as they do in the books written later. From the outside, Donald's family is a standard family; his father dominates the family despite the fact that he is seriously ill, his mother makes sure the family's daily life continues as smoothly as can be while working as a teacher, and Donald obeys and helps his parents as he is told. Yet his father's unresolved grief and regret over Donald's sister's death isolates him from his parents so completely that, in his desolation, Donald escapes into a dream world where he is a medieval knight fighting a giant worm to save a village. At the end of the book, Donald does return home but not with the satisfaction of completing an adventure or with hopes for the future, as the children in traditional fantasy did, but with a deep sense of resignation. At first glance, this ending appears to belong to the early formula in which children accept reality and find their own place in the world: the world of complete and stable adults. The world Donald finds on his return is not an orderly world with a promise of happiness if you fit in but a world inhabited by confused and displaced adults. There is no ready-made journey with a knowable destination for Donald; instead, he will have to find his own way if he is to grow up. It can be said that these two novels helped to disperse the conventional image of childhood, and with it, the image of standard adulthood that was part of the idyllic world of childhood.

Adults in children's literature today

In the 1980s and the 1990s, children's books that are often termed as 'social realism' became markedly popular to the point of being fashionable. Many of these

novels include parents who are not only not dependable but often the source of the problem in the child's life as Townsend observes it (c.f. p.32). Townsend was mainly referring to young adult novels published in the United States but similar parents can be found in British children's books: the mothers in *Wolf* by Gillian Cross (1990) and *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson (1999) are two examples. In order to construct appropriate narratives around extremely immature mothers for child readers, in the case of *The Illustrated Mum* is for younger children, both stories necessarily depend on a setting and coincidences that are unlikely to be approved in general literature.

Cassy's mother in *Wolf* is living in a house where a man and his son are squatting. The man visits schools performing his wolf project assisted by his son and Cassy, while she is visiting her mother. Even in 1990 when school safety regulations were less strict than they are today, a school inviting a man who has no fixed address and who has two school-age children helping his performance during term time is an exceptional situation which requires an explanation if it is to be the setting of the story. The two girls in *The Illustrated Mum* show little strain of living with a mother who is completely indifferent to carrying out any tasks of daily life. The mother goes to a Rock concert and happens to meet the man who is the father of one of the girls, and introduces him to his daughter. The other girl makes a few phone calls from a public phone box and finds her father, who makes an arrangement for their meeting. Despite the term 'social realism' the world these adults live in could be regarded as a kind of enchanted world where awkward practicalities are safely kept away, since they are often not restrained by social

‘reality’.

On the whole, parents in British children’s literature are rarely positively vicious as in Townsend’s description. Polly’s divorced parents in *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones (1984) are indeed useless in that they make no effort to help Polly if they have to go out of their way. Similarly, Natalie’s parents in *The Tulip Touch* by Anne Fine (1996) are only prepared to see what they want to see about Natalie’s new friend Tulip rather than accepting the uncomfortable truth and getting involved in anything outside their direct concern. Whilst these parents are far from the image of the dependable, good adults, they are by no means the ultimate negative force in children’s lives: they simply reflect the state of adulthood that has become generally accepted in contemporary society. By the mid-1970s, the presence of adults in children’s literature became as much a matter of fact as it was in the real lives of child readers. In other words, adult characters in novels for children did not need to have specific reasons to be in the story, such as being the evil to be defeated or the help when the child was in danger, but simply a normal part of the child’s life.

The following excerpts illustrate how adults in children’s literature have changed since the 1950s. In order to highlight the changes in relationship with children, the examples focus on parents in the stories. The books have been selected to demonstrate the changing image of adulthood that has occurred in children’s literature and not as being representative of children’s fiction published in each decade.

The Borrowers by Mary Norton (1952)

The story begins by introducing a family of Borrowers: father brings home all that is needed for their daily life and mother keeps house:

It was only Pod who knew the way through the intersecting passages to the hole under the clock. And only Pod could open the gates.... His wife and child led more sheltered lives in homelike apartments under the kitchen, far removed from the risks and dangers of the dreaded house above (p.15).

The expression, 'his wife and child' reinforce the assumed father's role, and the child does not need to know things that her mother thinks not fit. Arrietty asks if she can have a white mouse as a pet 'like Egglestine had had':

'And look what happened to Egglestina!' 'What,' Arrietty would ask, 'what did happen to Egglestina?' But no one would ever say (p.15).

Homely, the mother, is busy getting tea ready for her husband to come home, and when he does:

Homely ran it [a little, silver, eighteenth-century eyebrow comb] through her hair and rinsed her poor red eyes and, when Pod came in, she was smiling and smoothing down her apron (p.25).

These passages represent such a quintessential image of the traditional family that if it were read without reference to the publication date, they could easily be seen as a parody of a 'good old' family life, even in children's literature.

A Dog So Small by Philippa Pearce (1962)

In the current trend of children's literature, a story about a boy who becomes obsessed by an imaginary animal would be likely to have a problem at home as the undercurrent of the narrative. *Catcall* by Linda Newberry, published in 2006, is a story about a young boy who resents the birth of a stepsister and becomes obsessed by a wildcat he saw in the zoo. In contrast, in *A Dog So Small*, it is the steadfastness of the family that brings Ben back when his dream dog becomes an obsession and he begins to drift away from the normality of life. As such, the story devotes a large part to the description of how dependable and wise the adults are, especially the grandmother. There are passages describing Ben's grandparents' life that are detailed and disproportionately long to the point of almost being irrelevant. One begins with:

He [Grandpa Fitch] and Granny had been married for nearly fifty years
(p.33).

The passage ends after a whole page:

You could not call scholarships charity [one of the children went to university]: they were worked for – earned. Now Granny and Grandpa

were old, and Grandpa had retired from road-work. They lived on their pension, and that was just enough (p.43).

The following passage implies that there is a pattern in life that everyone follows unless death prevents it.

He [Ben] went upstairs to the deep drawers that held all the letters from Granny's children [...] One pile was much smaller than the others, because it had not been added for many years; [...] These were the letters written by uncle Willy, who had been drowned before he had had time to marry and set up a family (p.37).

Ben gives up his dream dog and accepts the living dog he once rejected, and realises that he is happy with what he has. He will continue to learn and in time, will become a dependable adult who sets up a stable home like his own home where his mother is waiting:

After her morning's housework, Mrs Blewitt had washed all the loose covers, and pegged them out in the little back garden in the sun. Frankie and Paul had helped. Then it was dinner-time (p.152).

Thunder and Lightnings by Jan Mark (1976)

In *A Dog So Small*, adult characters exist in relation to Ben: they are his parents and grandparents, and even in the passages where Ben is not present, their thoughts

and actions are those of his parents and grandparents. Whilst they are described in detail and perfectly credible, they are still representations of grandparents and parents as types rather than individuals. By the mid-1970s, parents in children's novels are often seen to be individuals, suggesting that parents are not there just for the sake of children. Andrew's parents in *Thunder and Lightnings* have no inhibitions about arguing in front of their son, albeit light heartedly. When the family finally arrive at their new home:

“Only three hours to Pallingham,” said Mum, quoting something that Dad said earlier, before they set out. ‘Eighty minutes to the hour, by my watch.’

‘You should have followed my directions, I had the maps,’ said Dad, scrabbling for them underneath the car.

‘If I’d followed your directions we’d be a mile out to sea by now, and heading for Denmark’ (p.2).

It is a matter of fact to Andrew that his parents have their own interests and foibles as well as arguments that are irrelevant to his concerns.

Mum and Dad had come by twenty pound, unexpectedly, and were now discussing what records to buy with it. Dad was making a list to take into Norwich with him. Andrew knew that they would spend the evening listening to the records, and discussing them (p.141).

Andrew's mother shares her thoughts about what it is to be an adult with her son rather than giving him a moral lesson about how to become a sensible adult. When Andrew tells her how Victor's mother hit her son only because Andrew dropped the clean laundry on the grass, his mother answers as if thinking aloud:

'I dare say she knew that [it was not Victor's fault],' said Mum. 'It was probably you she wanted to hit and she took out on Victor instead. Some people have to lash out when they're angry. I do. I kick the furniture'

[...]

'It wasn't fair.'

'Nothing's fair,' said Mum. 'There's no such thing as fairness. It's a word made up to keep children quiet. When you discover it's a fraud then you're starting to grow up... (p.170-1)

It can be said that whilst the adults in *A Dog So Small* tell Ben what he would growing up to be, Andrew's mother in *Thunder and Lightning* tells her son how to grow up. She is also telling her son her own thoughts and opinions rather than a set of accepted common sense and social norms.

Archer's Goon by Diana Wynne Jones (1984)

Howard's parents have no choice but to be drawn into the extraordinary events that are being caused by a family of wizards. They follow their son reluctantly and clumsily. Throughout the book, they are more often referred to as Catriona and Quentin than mum and dad and hardly ever mother and father. They have rows

without any consideration for Howard and his sister. Howard finds this tiresome but nothing seriously alarming:

The rest of the day was devoted to a family row. It was an epic row, even for the Sykes household, and it went in three parts.

[...]

Since Quentin was the only person Howard knew who could stand up to Catriona when she was very angry, this part went on for some time. Howard was reminded of that saying about an irresistible force's meeting an immovable object (p.87).

Parents cannot expect to be respected simply because they are parents. Children are capable of observing their parents critically:

Dad's being a passenger again! Howard thought angrily, standing halfway up the mould, looking down on the bowed shoulders of the red and black checked coat. It really annoyed him sometimes, the way Quentin let life carry him along [...] Provided Quentin was comfortable, provided he could sit at his typewriter in peace, he did not let things bother him (p.177).

Nevertheless, these observations and criticism are borne out of Howard's trust and affection toward his father:

Howard grinned at him fondly. Quentin might have his faults, but he had been right about Archer. He was right about the right things. 'I need some more words from you, Dad' he said, 'And this time they have to be good' (p.225).

It would have been improbable in children's literature two decades earlier for a son to look at his father fondly. This is one of the many signs found in the book that indicate how profoundly the status of adulthood has changed.

Skellig by David Almond (1998)

Parents have work to do and various responsibilities but other than that they do not feel any need to behave differently from their children:

Dad belted through his beef and mushroom and the seaweed and prawn crackers. He said he was all clogged up with Ernie's dust and he swigged off a bottle of beer. When he saw I was leaving half of mine, he reached over with his fork.

I covered it with my arm.

'You'll get fat,' I said.

Mum laughed.

'Fatter!' she said.

'I'm famished,' he said. 'Worked like a bloomin' slave for you lot today.'

(p.21)

Parents are no longer the wise, stable figures who provide support when the child is in distress. When they find out that the baby is gravely ill, it does not occur to Michael's father that he is a parent and should act accordingly. Expressing and sharing the grief with his son is a perfectly natural way to behave:

And then we fought, my Dad and I, while we crunched burned toast and swigged tepid tea.

'No!' I yelled. 'I won't go to school! Why should I? Not today!'

'You'll do as you're bloody told! You'll do what's best for your mum and the baby!'

'You just want me out of the way so you don't have to think about me and don't have to worry about me and you can just think about the bloody baby!'

[...]

'Go to bloody school!' he yelled. 'Get out my bloody sight!'

Then he just reached across and grabbed me to him.

'I love you,' he whispered. 'I love you.'

And we cried and cried (p.133-4).

The book goes one step further in eliminating one of the traditional distinctions between adults and children in children's literature. Here, it is not the child but an adult, the mother, who experiences the crucial supernatural event and believes in it. She sees Skellig appearing as if in a dream in the hospital room where the baby is waiting for the operation, and tells Michael and his father afterward what she saw:

‘And the strangest thing of all was, there were wings on the baby’s back. Not solid wings. Transparent, ghostly, hardly visible, but they were there. Little feathery things. It looked so funny. The strange tall man and the little baby and the wings. And that was it. He put her back down, he turned and looked at me again, and it was over’ (p.150).

At the end of the book, when the baby comes home, Mina, who helped Skellig with Michael, gives Michael’s mother a picture of Skellig she drew.

Mum caught her breath.

She stared at me and she stared at Mina. For a moment, I thought she was going to ask something. Then she simply smiled at both of us (p.169).

Having examined the Golden Age of English children’s literature, Carpenter (1985) concludes that one of the differences from today’s children’s literature is that children are ‘no longer occupying a separate world [from that of adults]’ (p.218). Shifting the viewpoint slightly, we can say that in today’s children’s literature, adults are no longer occupying a separate world from that of children.

Uncle Montague’s Tales of Terror by Chris Priestley (2007)

Now that adults and children share the same world, parents are not only being observed but they can be almost patronised by children:

I was an only child and my parents were not comfortable around children. My father tried his best, putting his hand on my shoulder and pointing various things out to me, but when he had run out of things to point at, he was overcome by a kind of sullen melancholy and left the house to go shooting alone for hours (p.9).

These excerpts demonstrate how adult characters, especially parents, in children's literature have changed since the 1950s. In the 1950s and well into the 1960s, parents' roles and authority were taken for granted but in the 1970s, parents in children's fiction ceased to be the representation of the model parents and became individual adults who happened to be the parents of the child character in the story. In the 1980's, parents and children became equal in many aspects and from then on, parents' authority was no longer the given but that which they had to earn. From a different perspective, it can be said that parents in children's literature today are allowed to be themselves rather than having to keep up with the traditional image of ideal parents. How these changes may influence adults' response to children's literature will be discussed in detail later in the study.

CHAPTER 4

ASSUMPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Adults are likely to expect children's literature to have some aspects of educational value. Also, adults often assume that children's literature is about childhood. This chapter explores these assumptions and considers in what way they influence adults' responses to children's books they read. The chapter also examines the way in which adults actually read children's books and suggests that texts of children's literature may contain some elements that produce a distinct response in adult readers.

Only a monster would not want to give a child books she will delight in, which will teach her to be good. It is the ancient, proper justification of reading and teaching literature that it helps you to live well. No one can be sure it will do this; no one can be sure his or her child will grow up to be an excellent and happy person. But they want it, more or less passionately, and they do what they can to make it possible.

Inglis (1981, p.4)

They [critics of children's literature] all share the assumption that children's books lead on to adult books, that good books and/or good habits of reading – that is literary readings of literary texts (*italics in the original*) – will lead to a literary, literate life. And of course, the further assumption that that is a good thing of itself. I share that view: but it is an

article of faith, not a fact.

Hunt (1994, p.187)

Perceptions and assumptions about children's literature

These two quotes seem to suggest that, when adults evaluate books for children, they are searching for the quality that is good for the prospective readers, namely children. Hunt (1981) argues that when adults ask the question whether a children's book is good, they are making a judgement about two elements: quality and value (p.24). Quality is about how well characters are developed, whether incidents are arranged coherently or if the style of writing is appropriate to the intended readership: in short, how a story is written. Value, on the other hand is what lies beneath the surface story and what 'a book is really about' (Hunt *ibid*, p.25) (*italics in the original*). Hunt summarises that 'by combining the judgements of quality and value, we end up with some consensus about good.' (*ibid*) (*italics in the original*). Thus, a good book might be described as, for example in the following way:

The book has a profound, mysterious sense of time; it has the beauty of a theorem but it is not abstract; it is sensuously as well as intellectually satisfying (Townsend 1987, p.245 on *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce).

Or

[The author's gift] is to make memory itself a tangible subject for a mystery novel which is always actively exciting and thought-provokingly different [...] to the thoughtful exploration of the past, of memory,

growing up and into the future (Jackson (2007), review of *A Thief in the House of Memory* by Tim Wynne-Jones).

These descriptions highlight what could be considered as examples of quality and value of children's literature that are described above. This is one of the ways in which to answer the question, 'is this a good children's book?' However, the two passages quoted at the beginning of this section suggest that adults would not only ask if the book is a good children's book, but would also ask if the book is good for children. This implies that there is an assumption amongst adults that a good children's book is that which ultimately helps children to become a good person/adult. This belief that reading good books will have a desirable influence on children is deeply rooted amongst those who are concerned with children's development. A similar belief is expressed by Postman and Rosenblatt that adults are those who have achieved well-developed reading skills in literature. The belief is enforced by many children's literature critics who have expressed their views on how reading influences children's intellectual and emotional development.

Meek (1982), one of the most influential authors on children's reading, writes:

They [good readers] find in books the depth and breadth of human experience [...] They understand a wide range of feelings by entering into those of other people [...] Reading is so closely linked with their growth as individuals that often they cannot distinguish in memory what actually happened to them from what they read about (p.17).

In his book *Becoming a Reader*, Appleyard (1991) argues:

...reading is a way of exploring an inner world, especially as the child gets older [...] It is a way of testing the growing sense of self-possession that school-age children experience [...] ...but it also focuses of identity, in the image of the powerful or clever hero or heroine [...] (p.59).

Hollindale (1997) observes what reading does when a child approaches the stage of adolescence:

A literature of youth can show us the significant experiences which both consummate our early life and enable us to leave it behind (p.61).

The idea that literature is vital to children's development is not restricted within a theoretical world of children's literature criticism. One of the most seminal reports on English language education in post-war Britain, the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life* published in 1975, dedicates a chapter to the teaching of literature at school. The report quotes Smith's comment on the purpose of teaching literature at school; 'the formation of a personality fitted for civilised life' (p.124); the report then lists some of the claimed values of literature in education:

that it helps to shape the personality, refine the sensibility, sharpen the critical intelligence; that it is a powerful instrument for empathy, a medium

through which the child can acquire his values (Smith, in the Bullock Report 1975, p.124).

The report, however, acknowledges that there is no evidence that teaching literature actually produces such social and emotional effects as claimed. Meek (1982) also admits that reading may not necessarily make readers better people. Notwithstanding the lack of evidence, the report points out that it is possible to 'look to the results of various studies of children's reading as some indication of its value as a personal resource' (Bullock Report 1975, p.125). For example, stories can say something to the child's condition and 'help him to resolve these inner conflicts', or books can 'present him with controlled experience, which he can observe from the outside at the same time as being involved within it' (ibid, p.125). One such piece of research is *The Child's Concept of Story* by Applebee (1978). This is a study based on data collected by talking to children between the ages of two to seventeen and examines how children develop their response to stories. At the earliest stage, when asked about the story they have heard, children simply summarise the plot. Children in the next age group (from six or seven to eleven and twelve-year olds) show the first sign of 'verbal separation of objective and subjective responses' (Applebee ibid, p.105), in that they are able to talk about different types of stories and characters, and begin to respond to the story based on their personal experience. Children in the oldest age group develop the ability to 'generalise about the meaning of a work, to formulate abstract statements about its theme or message' (Applebee ibid, p.125), and are able to consider whether the work has had any effects on their own views. Applebee's study clearly

demonstrates how children ‘refine the sensibility and sharpen the critical intelligence’ as the Bullock Report (1975, p.125) states. Applebee’s findings are supported by Tucker (1981) and Appleyard (1991). Both studies show how children develop their understanding of stories as they grow older and become more able to identify with the characters and relate their own lives to the fictional experience. These studies do show how children develop their intellectual ability and become able to relate their own thoughts and lives to the story they read. Both Applebee and Tucker discuss their studies within the framework of Piaget’s theory of children’s development which is primarily concerned with their cognitive development and not with their acquisition of social skills or emotional maturity. It is, therefore, important to note that studies of children’s reading are not necessarily directly applicable to other aspects of children’s development such as how they become socially able and emotionally balanced individuals. In regard to the effects of reading on personality, it might be added that the traditional image of a ‘bookish child’ is often socially less well adjusted than his/her peers, and there are a number of great literary figures from past and present who must have been good readers as children but who are not exactly the model of ideally formed personalities. As Inglis declares, adults may passionately want to give children good books and believe that it helps them to grow up to be happy persons but it has to be said that, as Hunt admits in the passage quoted above, it is an article of faith, not a fact.

Adults’ approach to children’s literature

Realistically speaking, most adults would admit that a propensity for reading literature is no guarantee for a child to grow up into an emotionally balanced,

socially well adjusted adult. Nevertheless, since it is undeniable that a 'faith' in the personal value of reading good books is deeply embedded in the minds of adults who are in the position to evaluate books for children, it needs to be taken into account when examining how adults approach children's literature. Another 'belief' that is held by adults almost as widely as the 'faith' in the effects of reading is the belief that adults can read children's books as a child reads by reaching back into their own childhood, somehow retained in their minds. This idea is strongly disputed by Hollindale (1997) who points out that valuing the 'residual childhood that is carried into adult life' is a widespread tendency, and to 'refresh the links with their own childhood' (p.31) is a very deep-rooted desire in Western society. He argues that this desire to stay in touch with childhood can undermine adults' rational evaluation of children's books because their interest may be drawn more toward childhood and children rather than child readers. Hollindale emphasises that adults may be able to reconstruct the mind and imagination of a child but once childhood is over, its 'presentness is irrecoverable' and 'we cannot activate it [childness] by reading the text as a child reads' (p.32) (*italics in the original*). Hunt (1996) agrees that the process of adults reading a book intended for children is fundamentally different from adults reading a book intended for adults or a child reading a book intended for children. The latter two are similar in that the readers are the book's implied audience whereas adult readers of children's books are not.

Hunt (1996) observes that when adults read children's book, they are reading in four ways simultaneously:

(1) *as if they [the children's book they are reading] were peer-texts,*

- (2) on behalf of a child,
- (3) with an eye to discussing it with other adults, and
- (4) surrendering to the book on its own terms.

(1) as if they were peer-texts: a peer-text is written by an author who regards the readers of his/her book to be equal in terms of reading experience, which is not the case in the text of children's literature. In this regard, when adults read works of children's literature as if they were peer-texts, they will 'register the presence of, but 'reading against', the implied readership' (Hunt 1996, p.4). A typical response that this situation may produce is, 'a bit too juvenile for me (Wall 1991, p.19)'. Wall (1991) speculates over this remark about William Mayne's *No More School*, made by her friend who enjoyed other works by Mayne: 'it unconsciously revealed that he felt at a disadvantage when forced into the role of seven-year-old child addressee (p. 19)'. On the other hand, a response at the other end of the scale may be similar to '*Tom's Midnight Garden* and *Puck of Pooke's Hill* are wonderful books whoever you are, and that judgement stands whether or not your child can make head or tail of them' (Inglis 1981, p.7). Armstrong (2003) analyses her experience of reading her childhood favourite book and warns that it does not necessarily transport the adult reader back to the childhood landscape of 'blue remembered hills' but the hills are different shade of blue and 'may be no longer hills, but possibly mountains or, more likely molehills' (p.240). These responses are arguably a result of adult readers reading against the readership implied by the texts and, to a large extent, judging the text by the criteria they would use when they read

general novels. As Hunt (1996) suggests, 'it may be a more profound and perceptive reading than a child will make, but is it an appropriate reading?' (p.5)

(2) on behalf of a child: 'to recommend or censor for some personal or professional reason' (Hunt 1996, p.5). When reading in this way, adults are usually concerned with suitability and accessibility of the book and their evaluation of the book is likely to be based on 'some consensus' (Hunt 1981, p.25) about a good book that is arrived at by combining the judgements on how the story is written and what the theme of the story is. Whilst accessibility and suitability of a children's book may seem a matter of objective judgement, this judgement cannot be completely free from the influence of adults' assumptions about the effects of literature on children's development that is discussed in many critical writings about children's literature, including the Bullock Report. Consequently, adults may recommend or censor books in a way that is not necessarily beneficial to child readers. An author of many books for children, Peter Dickinson, warns against adults' excessive enthusiasm for literary values in his much quoted remark *A Defence of Rubbish*, originally made in 1970. Dickinson defines rubbish as 'all forms of reading matter which contain to the adult eye no visible value, either aesthetic or educational' (Dickinson 2002), and argues that, whilst he would not be happy to see a child reading only rubbish, depriving a child of this reading matter could prevent him/her from learning the culture s/he lives in as a whole. In regard to children's reading habits, Dickinson concludes his article by saying:

I know two or three of my contemporaries who were, by cultural standards, total philistines in their boyhood, but they used to read a considerable amount of rubbish and have now, from the habit of reading, become considerably more literate than I (Dickinson, 2002).

Similarly, Le Guin (2007) points out in her article *Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons*, how adults see little value in fantasy fiction and often seem reluctant to let children read it. Their reasoning for this is that fantasy has no use in real life and children may confuse the fantasy and reality. Le Guin is arguing here about the importance of imagination but the article illustrates well how adults can be unaware that their judgement on the value of a children's book may not be relevant or appropriate. Le Guin insists that adults should trust children because 'normal children do not confuse reality and fantasy – they confuse them much less often than we adults do' (p.431). The two articles are reminders that when adults read on behalf of children, they must be aware that their idea of values are not necessarily the appropriate criteria for making judgements about books for children.

(3) with an eye to discuss it with other adults:

Hunt (1996) observes that reading in this way, adults are reading with an intention of modifying their response into 'acceptable communication' (p.5). It can be argued, however, that when adults read children's books in this way, it is not the response but the actual reading that is modified. Mackey (1995) examines how she reads when she 'propose [s] to speak or write [s] in public about a book' (p.193) by

reading the same book (*Dangerous Space* by Margaret Mahy 1991) more than once and analysing how each reading differs. For the first reading, referred to as Reading A, Mackey read the book without keeping a record. She does not mention her immediate response from this reading except for the fact that, after six months, she could hardly remember anything about the book other than a few fragments of images and the sense of disappointment. For the second reading, Reading B, Mackey used Post-it slips to keep notes on the pages. She describes this reading as 'very forced and laborious' (p.197). It is interesting to note that the notes Mackey was making in the Reading B were those of affective response which was 'an emotional ebb and flow' and not of cognitive response. She observes that 'any analysis of what made me feel the way I recorded at the time was very much an afterthought'. The third and final Reading C appears to be partially unplanned: this is partially because Mackey was still thinking about *Dangerous Space* but not looking for specific references concerning the book. She picked up a book of names in a bookshop and discovered that the names of the two main characters were linguistically linked (Flora – flower and Anthea – flowerlike). With a new perspective opened up by this knowledge, Reading C was a 'much more literary reading, looking for evidence of craftsmanship, focusing on the organisation of the book and not on the emotional impact of the story' (Mackey1991, p.205). This resulted in a considerable shift in her assessment of the story. Mackey's experiment demonstrates that a reader employs specific reading strategies when reading with an intention of discussing his or her response with others. In the case of Mackey, the focus of reading was on the literary aesthetics of the book but if the purpose of reading in this way is to read the book on behalf of a child, the reader's focus is

likely to be on accessibility and suitability, as discussed in (2) above. Adults, therefore, need to be aware that their evaluation of the book may be based to a large extent on their value judgements as adults who are responsible for the child's education, which may not necessarily be appropriate criteria for evaluation when mediating a book to children.

(4) surrender to the book on its own terms: In other words, an adult reader accepts the implied reader's role, i.e. a child. This is as close as an adult can get to reading as a child but Hunt (1996) points out that it is 'a very long way from reading as an actual child does' (p.5). Hollindale (1997) also emphasises that adults cannot read children's literature as a child does but only read these works 'as a body of literary texts' (p.32). Whilst few would argue against Hollindale and Hunt, a comment made by Hunt (1996) that this way of reading is 'the most unacknowledged by those uncertain of the status of the activity' (p.5) (my own italics) could suggest that the experience of 'reading like a child' may exist relatively commonly amongst adults. Falconer (2009) describes her encounter with the first book of Harry Potter series.

I was hooked. I had become the child-reader I once was: voracious, oblivious to time, suspended by words in an attic room of excitement, fun, friendship and bravery (p.1).

It appears that Falconer did indeed read as a child would do, even if it is only as a figure of speech, in that she was seemingly identifying herself entirely with the

child character in the book as a child is likely to do. It also appears that Falconer was expecting her experience to be shared with the readers of the book. The quote is taken from the beginning of Falconer's book, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* published in 2009, yet this particular sentence is written in an informal, personal manner unlike the rest of the book. It can be speculated that Falconer was not presenting a theoretical concept by this sentence but describing her personal experience with an expectation that many readers would understand because they had similar experiences of reading a children's book as if they were children again. It can be further suggested that there are some elements inherent in the text of children's literature that appeals to adult readers in various ways: elements that draw adults in beyond their initial purpose of reading children's books, which is to evaluate them on behalf of child readers. Paton Walsh describes children's literature as a rainbow coloured bubble that is 'shaped and sustained by the pressure of adult emotion' (in Hollindale 1997, p.40). It may be that when an adult reader feels as if s/he is reading like a child, s/he is in fact responding to the adult emotion inside the bubble that has infiltrated into the text without being apparent. No matter how carefully the author constructs the text for child readers, the trace of the author as an adult must be embedded in the text to which adult readers may respond. Furthermore, a text of children's literature may also contain particular elements that resonate with adults' desire to 'refresh the links with their own childhood' (Hollindale 1997, p.31). Wall (1991) contemplates why *The Wind in the Willows* has become such a celebrated children's classic despite the fact that 'the book has as its subject nostalgia for childhood, a feeling which children cannot share' and comments that 'the great children's

classics are those that appeal strongly to adults' (p.142). Also discussing *The Wind in the Willows*, Hunt (2002) argues that the work 'encapsulates an idea of childhood as a place of retreat and undeveloped security' (p.178), and concludes; 'The *Wind in the Willows* is much more an adult book than the superficial children's book elements suggests' (p.185). This could imply then that in some children's books, of which *The Wind in the Willows* is an example, an adult reader surrenders to the book on its own terms and accepts the role of the implied reader because the text actually has an adult as its other implied reader. The term 'implied reader' is used here in a broad sense referring to the audience of the book that is not necessarily intended by the author. The theory of implied reader developed by Iser (1978) will be discussed in detail later in the study.

Hunt's four ways of adult reading can happen simultaneously but they may not all happen at the same level of consciousness. Since my focus in this study is adult readers who are evaluating children's books in order to mediate them to children, (2) 'reading on behalf of a child' is prerequisite and as such, adults are clearly aware of it. In addition, since an act of evaluation usually entails, in various ways, modifying the reading strategies in order to present their responses as 'acceptable communication', (3) 'reading with an eye to discuss it with other adult' can be considered as part of (2) 'reading on behalf of a child'. With the possible exception of experts in the field of children's literature, when adults read a children's book on behalf of a child, they are more likely to seek in the story for the elements that may have positive developmental effects on children as discussed in the previous section rather than to judge by their own interest in the story. These values are often

discussed in critical studies as referred to in the previous section but similar comments are also found in various publications aimed at parents and other adults who are unlikely to read such academic books and articles. In the 1986 edition of *The Good Book Guide to Children's Books* published by Penguin Books, there is a short article by Blishen, entitled 'The Power of Story' as part of the introduction to the book selection. Blishen (1986) begins the article by recounting the pleasure he had of reading books to his sons when they were young and concludes the paragraph as follows:

But the reading of fiction done by children offers more than imaginative delight – though that is much to have received. It also offers, in a form for which there is no substitute, a preparation for life (p.9)'.

Blishen explains further later in the article:

...stories admit children to a world infinitely larger than that lived in by the most travelled child. They extend the sense of time and place [...] Stories are also rehearsals for the managing of human relationships, and assessing of human character [...] ...they learn through fiction to make themselves at home in situations in which courage, cowardice, fear, love, jealousy, hate, loom large (ibid).

When reading on behalf of a child, adults will try identifying these points in the story they read. It is a task: adults have an official reason to be reading a book that

is not intended for them. Whilst the reason why they read a children's book and how they evaluate it can be expressed in official and rational terms, how they actually respond to the book is quite another matter, since the individual's initial response to the book is, as Mackey (1995) explains, extremely inchoate and not an action that is the result of the decisions they have made. On the one hand, if adults read a text of children's literature 'as if it were a peer-text', that is to say, as if they were reading general literature, they are likely to approve or disapprove of the book for reasons that are not relevant for children's books. On the other hand when they find themselves 'surrendered to the book on its own terms' it may be that they have surrendered to certain elements in the text: i.e. the elements in which thoughts and emotions of the author as an adult are expressed but which are irrelevant to child readers. Although these expressions are unintentional in most cases, adult readers may be able to identify their particular characteristics as textual features and respond to them even if they are unaware of it themselves. When an adult reader is responding to the text of children's literature in this way, whilst s/he is not reading as a child does, the reading is a private experience rather than an act of evaluation. Whilst adults are not necessarily conscious of the way in which they are responding to the text, it has crucial influence on their evaluation of children's literature. How these elements to which adults readers may respond manifest themselves as textual features and how they might influence adults' responses will be discussed in detail later.

CHAPTER 5

AUTHORS' VOICE

This chapter focuses on authors' views about children's literature. Most authors express their interest in children who are their readers rather than in their ideas about childhood. They also acknowledge their responsibility for their readers' education in a broad sense. The views presented in this chapter are one of the key reference points in relation to the discussion of 'dishonesty' in children's literature.

'Who would not want his or her child to read the best books?' asks Inglis (1981, p.3) in his book *Promise of Happiness* and argues passionately about the importance of adults being able to say 'what some of the best books are like,' in order to hand these books to our children. Inglis regards this act as an 'expression of gift relationship' (p.3). It has to be said that one group of people who play the most crucial role amongst all adults who are involved in children's literature is the group of authors. It is authors who are in the position to produce and deliver the 'promise of happiness' to children which Inglis argues that adult readers so earnestly seek. One of the marked peculiarities of the discourse of children's literature is the fact that authors are persistently questioned about the readership of their work: for whom they write or how they write for children. These questions may be asked simply from curiosity but it may also be an indication that adults are anxious to ensure that authors are writing the 'right' books for child readers. In

order to gain some insight into the ways in which authors regard their responsibility and how they approach the roles that are expected by concerned adults, this section presents a selection of authors' comments about children's literature and their readers.

When authors of children's literature are asked 'do you write for children?' the answer is very often 'No': the most often quoted answer is that of Arthur Ransome's:

You write not for children but for yourself, and if, by good fortune, children enjoy what you enjoy, why then you are a writer of children's books' (in Chambers 1985, p.41; Wall 1991, p.29; and in Hollindale 1997, p.26), (*Italics in the original*).

Hollindale (1997) describe Ransome's answer and other similar comments made by a number of authors of children's literature as 'authorial protestations' (p.26). Hollindale is referring to the fact that these authors are often exasperated by the assumption that exists in the field of literature as well as in society in general that writing for children is 'something demeaning' (Wall 1991, p.29). Chambers (1985) argues that Ransome may have believed that he was not writing for children but if he had been addressing adults as the prime audience, he would have adopted a different tone of voice and treated the stories differently. In other words, Ransome was conscious that he was writing for children despite what he claimed. However, if we consider his answer in the historical context of the development of children's

literature, it is possible to acknowledge that Ransome meant what he said. In her discussion of narrator's voice in children's literature, Wall points out that Ransome wrote novels for children which were distinctly different from children's books that had been and still were published when he wrote *Swallows and Amazons* (the book was published in 1930). Wall (1991) argues that the authors in the previous era were conscious of the presence of adult readers and were 'vividly aware that, although they were writing for children, they needed also to satisfy adults standards of what was considered appropriate for children' (p.40). In contrast, Ransome was unconcerned with the adult audience's view and developed a type of narrator who is 'a friendly adult talking seriously to children and without condescension to children (p.30)'. Wall identifies Ransome as the first author of children's literature who developed a mode of address which she terms 'single address' (p.9) (italics in the original), where as in the previous era, the mode was largely 'double address' (ibid). Wall argues that in double address, the author is writing to children whereas Ransome was writing for children, which may explain why Ransome answered as he did. At the time of the interview, writing for children was in fact writing to children, which was, in Ransome's view, not what he was doing. The issue of address will be discussed in detail later.

Other authors made similar comments (See Chapter 1), yet most authors are not only aware of their readership but also acknowledge the role of children's literature in modern society and their responsibility as its creators. Following is a selection of comments made by authors whose books have been awarded major children's literature prizes or who are frequently recommended by children's literature

journals such as *Growing Point* or *The Signal Selection of Children's Books*.

Leon Garfield

It's an utterly different relationship now [from the time when Nesbit was writing]. There's a far greater literacy that there was then, and the cosiness has gone [...] in that childhood, as many people have said, was almost entirely a Victorian invention. In some ways, it's ceasing to exist. It's no longer seen as a separate area of one's life, but as the beginning of something. And there's no reason at all why certain vistas shouldn't be presented – from an intelligent standpoint (in Wintle and Fisher 1974, p.206).

Whilst many of Garfield's novels for children appear at first glance to be traditional adventure stories set in the past in which children were usually free from adults' interference, Garfield clearly differentiates himself from the authors of this genre by making the point that his readers do not live in a separate world from where he and other adults live. He sees children as people with whom he can share intelligent imagination and not as those who need to be provided with childish dreams especially created by adults. Garfield's eighteenth century London is a 'setting designed by himself (Townsend 1987:203)' and his style of writing is extravagantly imaginative. Some of his heroes are not even children: *The Ghost Downstairs* (1972) is the story of a solicitor's clerk who sold his childhood to the Devil. Garfield could not have expected all his child readers to recognise the allusion to Faust but he expects the readers to appreciate and enjoy the story that he, an adult,

enjoys telling.

Nicholas Fisk

Today, the nurseryless child lives in the company of adults, occupying the same room, joining in the family conversation and (most important) watching many of the same TV programmes [...]

Children are less literate [...] Then ignore their ignorance and insist that they keep pace with you, the writer. Adults, too, must be permitted to express themselves. [...]

It is even possible to persuade oneself that by writing for children, one is doing some good (Fisk 1975, pp.118, 119,122).

Fisk is one of the first authors who created science fiction in a realistic setting in children's literature. Since children can have almost as much information about science as adults from watching the same programmes on the television, Fisk believes that he, an adult author, and his child readers stand on the equal starting line. Fisk, however, acknowledges at the same time that children are still developing and need an inspiring guide. His insistence on adults being themselves is clearly manifested in his books, notably in *Trillions* (1971) in which an ex-astronomer acts as a working partner to the 13-year old Scott. Blythe, the astronomer, could have been a typical dependable adult who appears when children are in difficulty. He is, however, present throughout the story and whilst he plays the role of a guide to Scott, Blythe is by no means the provider of the right answers or even any answers. By creating the character of Blythe who is an astronomer but

of a failed space mission and who calls himself Icarus, Fisk seems to be saying that it is precisely the adults who know what it is to fail who are best placed to inspire children of today. Blythe-Icarus stands in a clear contrast to a traditional adult figure with unquestionable authority, the parallel metaphor of which would arguably be Zeus.

Joan Aiken

In fact, it is the problems that make a story, not the solution. [...] They always want to know what happened next, what did the Hobbit do after he returned home... it's a kind of denial of the end, a denial of death and old age, very natural (Aiken 1984, p.149).

Aiken's full length novels and short stories both give an impression of traditional stories, the former historical adventure and the latter folk/fairly tales, yet they are peculiarly incongruent to their types. This is possibly because there is little sense of moral achievement at the end of the stories. For example, Mr. Jones in the title story from *A Necklace of Raindrops and Other Stories* (1968) helps the North Wind but not by going out of his way, and his daughter Laura is nice but not exceptionally virtuous. It was simply a case of good fortune that Laura had the magic necklace and managed to help the kingdom of Arabia by bringing the rain. At the end of *The Three Travellers* from the same collection, the three station attendants in the middle of a desert decide that an oasis just over a dune is a better place to spend their weekend than faraway mountains and seaside, simply because they like it there better and not because an oasis has any intrinsically higher moral

values. It is as if Aiken insists that children should be left alone while they are children without interference from adult's values.

Diana Wynne Jones

'Adults', she feels, 'often have these arbitrary rules, like "all adults must be good"'. [...] She felt that one thing that children's books could do was to help children to deal with the adults that they have to spend about half their existence coping with (Lafferty 1987, p.3).

If Diana Wynne Jones is helping children with her books to 'deal with the adults that they have to spend about half their existence coping with', it is probably by providing children with imagination in the form of exceptionally well constructed fantasy novels which are unbounded by any conventions. In Jones's fantasy, magic is a matter of practicality rather than a supernatural event, and the alternative world such as that of Edwardian England in *Charmed Life* (1977) and *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988) is more a parody of the actual world than Other world. The multiple universes in *The Lives of Christopher Chant* show not different worlds but the same world viewed from different perspectives. The extremely complex relationship between the reality and non-reality in *Archer's Goon* (1984) and *Fire and Hemlock* (1985) can equip child readers with what could be called an extra eye to see beyond the normal. This could give children a certain sense of moral advantage over adults in a life which is, in practice, entirely controlled by adults.

Maurice Sendak

I do care about children a lot. And when I say I don't write for them, it doesn't mean I don't care for them. I project into all my favourite music and pictures an intense nostalgia for childhood, a passionate affiliation with childhood. It's the same as literature – from Melville to James, I always seem to find a sub-text that involves children. Those are the reverberations that get to me and enter into my work (Sendak 1989, p.5).

Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) is not only one of the most often discussed picture books in the English speaking world in the last half a century, but it is probably the only picture book, often with *In the Night Kitchen* (1970) and *Outside Over There* (1981) which are loosely connected with their theme of subconscious images, in the same period that is discussed with extensive reference to the author's own childhood experience. The authors of other picture books that have become classics, for example John Burningham, Allan Ahlberg (with his late wife Janet) or Shirley Hughes, rarely become a subject of such discussions: their picture books *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* or *Jolly Postman* and others do not in the same way allow adults to discuss subconscious fears and complex emotions of childhood as Sendak's books seem to do. Whereas Burningham and other authors write for children, it can be speculated from the quote above that Sendak writes about childhood.

Jan Mark

Most animals are 'children' for weeks or months. A human is a child for

years, continuously learning. Whether or not children's authors intend to teach, they know perfectly well that their readers are in a learning mode. Most hope to leave their readers at the end of a novel or short story with some idea, attitude or opinion they didn't have when they began reading, even if they are unable to articulate this (in Meek and Watson 2003, p.132).

Many of Jan Mark's books have a plot that seems to evade being summarised despite the fact that the stories are about perfectly recognisable everyday lives of contemporary children. In *Thunder and Lightnings* (1976), Andrew starts a new school but does not find it a serious problem. He meets Victor and they talk about school projects and old fighter planes throughout the book. Erica in *Handles* (1983) likes motorbikes but has to spend her holiday with her aunt's family in the country. By chance, she finds a motorbike repair shop and spends most of her time there during her holiday. Both books tell the characters' day-to-day lives without any extraordinary events around which the narratives may revolve, which makes it hard to say what each story is about. Jan Mark seems to believe that if child readers can articulate what they have learned from it, the book is too easy and the readers are not learning anything worthwhile. This speculation is supported by Jan Mark's answer to my question at a conference in Cambridge 'Fiction for Children Come of Age' in April 2005. My question was, 'Why are those 'problem books' so popular?' Mark answered without hesitation, 'Because they are very easy to read'.

Philip Pullman

Children's fiction is to do with hopes and aspirations, the still-existing sense that there is something to be striven for, whereas adult fiction is so often about the destruction of aspirations [...]

Every story does teach, whether you intend it to or not. [...] We have to grow up and leave childhood behind; our task is to become wise and to leave our innocence behind (in Lambert 2002).

Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials* (1995, 1997, 2000) is the first children's book to win the Whitbread Book Prize (2002). The news was extensively publicised and the novel has been widely read by adults who are almost certainly aware that they are reading a children's book. Whilst the work's connection with earlier material from the canon of English literature is also well publicised, it is unlikely that such a vast number of adults would read a work of children's fantasy fiction with their prime interest in this allusion to classic literature. The more likely reason for the trilogy's popularity may be the fact that it has many traditional elements in the story which are rarely found in contemporary children's literature. Since the late 1960s, children's literature has been relentlessly exploring children's relationships with adults around them and has all but eradicated the concept of adults' unquestioned wisdom and their authority over children. It has also shown that children are capable of critically observing adults. In contrast to these trends, adults in *His Dark Materials* are all wise in their roles and Lyra never questions or resents their authority unless they are morally wrong: then she does not hesitate to confront them. In addition, Lyra's thoughts and feelings are completely open to adult readers. The quote above suggests that Pullman's view on childhood is

relatively traditional compared with other authors whose views are shown in this section. Pullman seems to regard childhood as being distinct from adulthood in that hopes and aspirations are not yet destroyed. He also sees that childhood can still be associated with the idea of innocence. It can be said that Pullman successfully revived the image of an innocent child that had long become obsolete in contemporary children's literature.

David Almond

Everybody is searching for the big crossover books at the moment, but I feel that you can actually go further by moving the other way. I know I am writing better now than I ever did for adults because I'm writing for an audience who know that they don't know everything (Almond 2003, p.16).

David Almond's novels for children give a distinctive impression of being an autobiography, i.e. the impression that he is telling the readers what he saw and felt as a boy. This is not because a number of his novels have a first person narrator, a notable exception being *Skellig* (1998), but possibly because it is hard to trace adults' perspectives in the narrative of his novels. Both *Skellig* and the clay figure that briefly comes to life in *Clay* (2005) are described in practical detail as Michael and Davie see them, yet their nature and implications in the narratives are left unexplained: they are simply there because Almond wants to tell about them. He seems to be confident that he can share what matters to him with his child readers and that there is no need to try to convince children, since they are capable of accepting the unexplainable if they can believe it to be true.

Mark Haddon

... the difference [between books for children and adults] is about death.
...that we have infinite dreams but find ourselves stuck in one body for
one life. [...]

But at eight, 10, 12, you don't realise you're going to die. There is always
the possibility of escape. There is always somewhere else and far away
[...] (Haddon 2004, p.1).

Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003) must be one of the rare examples of genuine crossover novels in that it is impossible to define the intended readership. The book has a definite appearance of a children's book: it is narrated by a 15-year old boy about his own thought and activities, the text has unconventional features but is not complex, and there is little in the content that is controversial for a children's book. On the other hand, there is little in the text which suggests to adults that they are reading a children's book. Contemporary children's literature often presents a child's perception about adults, and his/her thoughts about being a child living in the world controlled by adults. One of the essential driving forces of narrative development in contemporary children's literature is the child's growing understanding about the world in which s/he lives as s/he experiences the events. This accumulation of understanding is completely absent from *The Curious Incident*, since Christopher who narrates the story perceives each event he encounters without context. In other words, the book presents each event Christopher experiences as a practical problem to be solved

and not as a matter to be reflected upon from the point of view of a child who is trying to deal with life amongst adults. Christopher's views on the thoughts and feelings of the adults around him are also absent from the narrative. Haddon defines children as those who take it for granted that there is always somewhere else and far away. This definition does not apply to Christopher, since, as an autistic boy, it is only solid facts in the present that have any meaning to him. It could be said that Haddon effectively demonstrated what is not a children's book.

Frank Cottrell Boyce

There's billions spent these days persuading kids to addict themselves to crap, and to convince them that if they don't have crap, then they're going to be miserable. We're in dangerous times, but in dangerous times it's morally indefensible to be pessimistic. When you are writing for kids, you are working with dangerous chemicals. What they read at that age stays with them for life (in Hunt 2008, p.13).

Whilst children have a strong preference for humorous or comic stories, what they consider as humorous is often different from that which is found in fiction selected by adults for children: children prefer humour that does not demand wider cultural and literary knowledge in order to be appreciated (Munde 1997). 'The dangerous chemicals' Cottrell Boyce refers to in the quote may imply the comedy he creates by mixing the two different humorous elements. The comical elements in Cottrell Boyce's *Millions* (2004) and *Framed* (2005) are not at the expense of any characters but they derive from the absurd yet credibly structured settings of the

novels: two boys finding a bag stuffed with banknotes and the artworks from the National Gallery being evacuated and hidden in a Walsh village (the latter is based on a historical fact). Both books demonstrate that Cottrell Boyce sees children as well integrated members of society and as socially aware as adults around them are. At the beginning of *Framed*, Dylan, who narrates the story, tells about the log book for their family business, 'It looks like a Bible' (p.5). Cottrell Boyce expects that his child readers are aware of the complex social perceptions associated with the Bible and are able to appreciate the subtle humour based on the many implications that derive from these perceptions. Whilst he trusts children's ability to understand sophisticated humour, Cottrell Boyce believes that adult authors can still teach children something valuable and one way to do this is to use a carefully judged comedy that can dispel the adults' authority.

Michael Rosen

I think of children's books as not so much for children, but as the filling that goes between the child world and the adult world. One way or another, all children's books have to negotiate that space [...]

There is also an interesting line between the child you once were and the children you know now. If you want to write a book for children, you will find yourself travelling to and fro along this line, [...] Are there big differences, or is there some core child-ness that is unchanged? (Rosen 2008)

Rosen's comment seems to consolidate the thoughts about roles of children's

literature and its writers that are variously expressed by the authors presented above. Their comments suggest that, with an exception of Maurice Sendak, and to a certain extent Philip Pullman, the authors are less focused on childhood, either their own or as a concept, and more on ‘the children you know now’. Rosen was an exceptionally active Children’s Laureate (2007-2009): active in reaching out to children and not simply representing children’s literature to the wider society. The fact that he has undertaken extensive school visits and wide-ranging book-related activities, which involve not only children but also adults, makes Rosen’s comment uniquely persuasive, since it is most likely to be based on practical experience rather than intellectual speculation. His description of children’s books as the filling implies that children’s literature contains two properties: one to affiliate with the world of children and one with that of adults. *Michael Rosen’s Sad Book* (2004, illustrated by Quentin Blake) could be the realisation of this thought, since the book is about an adult’s grief (about the death of his son Eddie) told in the vocabulary of children. How child readers respond to the book is out of the scope of this study but to adult readers, it may have a strong appeal since they can feel they are included, even if they are not directly addressed. However, the two worlds need to be balanced carefully, as Rosen (2008) comments, ‘all children’s books have to negotiate that space’.

Rosen seems to have brought to the surface one of the key questions about writing for children: where do those who write for children stand in the relationship between adults and children? Whilst many children’s novels have successfully dispelled the idea of adults being the representation of wisdom and authority, the

authors themselves remained ‘in a position of singular responsibility in transmitting cultural value (Hunt 1994, p.3)’, which suggests that the transmission is primarily one-way from adults who know to children who need to be taught. The quotations examined above indicate that most authors were aware of the importance of understanding children as their readers (at the time of the interviews or the publication of the quotes) but it is Cottrell Boyce who, in 2008, first voiced the sense of being exposed to the world of children for whom he wrote. His words indicate that he sees the position of writers for children as uniquely precarious in that they are not detached from their readers and furthermore they must be accountable for what they choose to write rather than simply transmitting an already existing set of cultural values. This personal sense of responsibility for the readers is echoed by Michael Rosen who sees authors of children’s literature at an interface between children and adults; each author must choose his/her position between the adults’ world and that of children. The changes in the ways in which adult characters are presented in children’s literature in the last 50 years (See Chapter 3) can be seen as a reflection of authors’ increasing awareness of their own position as adults who write for children.

CHAPTER 6

HIDDEN ADULT

Children's literature reaches children laden with adult burdens

Watson (1992, p.13)

This chapter explores the concept of 'shadow text', the notion proposed by Nodelman (2008), that texts of children's literature produce a sense in adult readers that there is a second point of view behind the narrative that addresses child readers. Through detailed text analysis, this chapter identifies and examines a number of textual elements that could produce the effects of shadow text.

Addressing adults

In 1984, Rose published *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, one of the first substantial studies that focused on adults' relations with children's literature. As the title suggests, Rose bases her work on her analysis of biographical references to Barrie as well as various texts of Peter Pan, and argues that Peter Pan 'shows innocence not as a property of childhood but as a portion of adult desire' (Rose 1984, xii). However, taking into consideration that the creation of Peter Pan is a result of Barrie's friendship with the five Llewelyn Davis boys (Carpenter 1985, Wall 1991), it is somewhat debatable as to how relevant this study is in relation to modern children's literature. In contrast to the private nature of the background in the creation of Peter Pan, most authors of modern children's literature are aware of the public nature of their works and are conscious that their

works may have lasting influence on their child readers. Consequently, their works are usually focused on how children grow up rather than being an expression of their personal desire toward a particular child (see chapter 5). The fact that the majority of children's texts which Rose refers to in the book are publications from the 19th century arguably makes it even less relevant to criticism of modern children's literature.

In 2008, Nodelman published *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*: possibly the most extensive study of adults' relationship with children's literature to have appeared to date. He argues that children's literature imposes a 'vision of childhood innocence and incapacity on children to suit the needs and desire of adults – something I have suggested texts of children's literature always and certainly do' (p.45). Seen from this perspective, Rose inadvertently seems to have demonstrated the possibility of children's literature by attempting to establish its impossibility. In other words, Rose successfully revealed a unique characteristic of children's literature that had previously been unrecognised. The two studies differ in that the desire in Rose's argument refers almost exclusively to adults' sexual desire toward children (Rose discusses in detail a number of issues relating to child abuse in her introduction to the study) whereas Nodelman focuses more on adults' desire for dominance and control over children, though some of this may have a sexual undercurrent. More significantly, Rose (1984) insists that children's fiction is impossible because 'it hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child.' (p.1) Rose's use of the words 'impossible' and 'impossibility' is somewhat confusing since she is

referring to something that actually exists but that which ‘rarely ventures to speak’. It can be inferred that the ‘impossible’ here in fact means ‘unacceptable’ or more precisely ‘morally impossible to accept’. Nodelman, on the other hand, considers that adults’ desire over children is an inherent characteristic of children’s literature: an element that children’s literature has never existed without. He observes that one of the qualities by which a text intended for child readers can be identified is ‘a sense that there is a second point of view: that of the [adult] narrator’ (p.20). Nodelman calls this second, hidden view a ‘shadow text’ (p.8).

The idea that children’s literature can never be free from adults’ involvement is not new in itself. Despite the provocative title, Rose (1984) points out that children’s literature is not ‘something self-contained which can be examined exclusively with reference to itself’ (p.143) although she seems to be implying that the presence of adults is a rather undesirable additional element in some cases and children’s literature should ideally exist without being influenced by adults’ thoughts and desires: hence the subtitle of her book *The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*. Wall (1991), on the other hand, sets out her own discussion by affirming that children’s literature is a place where adults express their thoughts to children through the voice of an adult narrator to a child narratee. On this basis, Wall developed a model whereby the narrator’s voice in children’s fiction could be categorised into three modes of address: single address, double address, and dual address.

Referring to classic children’s literature written from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, Wall (1991) observes that many works from this period

show that the authors were using double address: i.e. a mode in which the narrator addresses an adult audience as well as a child audience. This mode was used by the authors who were aware of the presence of the adult audience and felt the need to satisfy adult standards of what was considered appropriate for children. Wall describes the narrator's voice when addressing this double audience as 'veering between friendly companionship and uncompromising authoritarianism' (p.40). One exception amongst the authors from this period was, according to Wall, Beatrix Potter who consistently used single address. Potter created characters who were simple enough to hold the interest of very young children but these characters were 'keenly observed, ironically presented human types' (p.165) if adults were willing enough to see beyond the surface stories. Yet Potter never makes use of the complexity of her characters in order to amuse adults.

In contrast, when the author uses double address, the text contains jokes that are aimed at adults at the expense of children. An example is Eeyore in Winnie-the-Pooh: Eeyore represents an ironic view of the world which is beyond the comprehension of Pooh who is the 'child surrogate' (Wall 1991, p.185). Wall considers double address to be a mode that is largely specific to the period when authors were searching for an appropriate narrator's voice in children's literature. By the 1930s, writers had learned to free themselves from the concerns of a potential adult audience so that they could concentrate on writing for children. Wall cites Arthur Ransome, John Masefield and Noel Streatfeild as some of the first authors who successfully created a narrator who used single address. They were 'Reconciled to, even delighted by, the idea of writing for children' (p.29). Their

works established single address as the most commonly used mode of addressing children in modern children's literature. As for dual address, Wall's definition is not very clear. She explains that the mode of double address that draws a dual audience of children and adults by alternating the direction of the address is not so rare in children's literature but dual address which addresses a child narratee while simultaneously satisfying adult readers is not so easily achieved. In other words, a text that uses dual address should be able to sustain adult's interest without excluding children. One of the authors who successfully uses dual address, in Wall's opinion, is T.H. White. This, and other aspects of textual structure, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Whilst Wall's model is a useful way of examining the narrative voice in children's literature, the definition of each model is not clearly set out. For example, Wall discusses Roald Dahl and Philippa Pearce as authors who use single address, and although excerpts of the text of both authors is presented, each point of discussion is not referred back to the detail of the text. Consequently, the process of classifying a text into each mode tends to depend more on each reader's impressions than on objective criteria. This becomes particularly problematic in dual address, since the defining characteristics of this mode seem to be more to do with the quality of the novel rather than the style of writing. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity of the definitions, Wall has demonstrated that the presence of adults is part of the narrative voice in children's literature.

Wall (1991) also draws attention to an important yet often overlooked issue in

evaluating children's books:

But the fact that some writers have been able to address children directly and yet at the same time command an adult readership by putting the adult reader comfortably in the position either of observer-listener or of teller surrogate, has helped to obscure the fact that writers who address children and leave adult readers no other role than child-addressee may also be both fine writers, and writers who serve children's needs' (p.36).

Wall is warning critics and other adults that, in their eagerness to give children what is best, they may be ignoring the possibility that what they consider to be best is not always best for children. Wall suggests that 'it would not be a waste of the beautiful piece of oak and the skills of the fine craftsman to fashion a chair specifically for children' (p.232). Furthermore, Wall's study highlights, though indirectly, that when adults read books written for children, they may be responding to a different voice in the text from that to which children respond.

Presenting a brief survey of the ways in which tone and address are used in the history of children's literature, Hunt (2001) argues that it is dual address that is most characteristic of the twentieth century children's fiction. He considers single address to be 'both practically and theoretically virtually impossible to achieve' because the 'boundaries [between child audience and adult audience] fundamentally set by narrative voice have been eroded in the last decades of the twentieth century' (p.14) thereby making the idea invalid that children can be

addressed as a distinct audience. Despite the difference in their views, Wall and Hunt both regard Arthur Ransome to be the most significant writer in the development of narrative style in children's literature in the twentieth century. More interestingly, not only do they ascribe the same significance to Ransome's writing but also do so for practically the same reason: Ransome wrote about what he knew and loved, and whether or not his books were of interest to adults was not his concern. Wall (1991) writes:

He was not uncomfortable, nor self-conscious, in addressing children, because he so loved what he was doing – that is, recreating his childhood, exercising on paper his practical skills and his knowledge relating to sailing and the outdoor life, [...] He had no viewpoint apart from theirs [the children he was writing about] (p.30).

Similarly, Hunt (2001) writes:

...his books are, after all, 'obviously' for children – and yet Ransome was writing for anyone who felt as he did. Just as he felt that there were 'no lower orders' in the Lake District, so he clearly did not distinguish between children and adults when they were occupied with skills such as fishing, sailing and camping. This may well account for the loyalty his books provoke in adults: his attraction is not, for them, nostalgia, but a shared enthusiasm (p.116).

Wall and Hunt also share their views on William Mayne whose books are often regarded as more interesting to adults than to children. Chambers (1985) comments that Mayne's books are 'notoriously little read by children and much read by adults' (p.43) and Carpenter and Prichard (1984) write; 'the question was being asked again and again: do children enjoy them?' (p.364). Against these views, Wall (1991) argues:

Mayne's commitment to children is so intense and so strong, and is borne out so forcibly in all his writing, that it is extraordinary that there can be a doubt about his intended audience (p.206).

Hunt's (2001) view is almost identical:

His single-minded devotion to writing for children and his capacity to ignore (avowedly) adult critics suggests that he is closer to the real readers among real children and their perceptions than virtually any other writer (p.97).

These shared views suggest that it is the 'labelling' that is different, and Wall and Hunt are in fact referring to the same quality in children's literature in the twentieth century: that the mode of address that is least characteristic of the twentieth century children's literature is double address which overtly addresses an adult audience in order to gain its approval or sustain its interest. The different 'labelling' may have arisen from the fact that Wall's study is primarily a structural examination of the

text and what is not present in the text is not its main concern. Hunt (2001), on the other hand, examines children's literature within a social and cultural context and is concerned with what is implied by the text: he concludes the survey 'Whatever the tone or the voice, children's literature cannot cease to be a site of power imbalance' (p.15). The question of address is, therefore, not about the extent to which adults are addressed but how they are addressed and ultimately for my study, how this might influence the ways in which adult readers respond to the text.

Whilst books that use double address as the main mode of address are rare in today's children's literature, the mode itself is by no means extinct. It is also important to note that authors rarely use one mode of address throughout a book. The three modes identified by Wall are used in various degrees throughout a narrative according to what the author intends to achieve.

Before exploring adults' relation to children's literature in more detail, it may be useful to review how the text displays certain features when the author is consciously addressing adults. Opening paragraphs from two books follow: *The Scarecrow and His Servant* by Philip Pullman (2004) and *Tumbleweed* by Dick King-Smith (1987), both recommended for the 8 to 10 age group in *Books for Keeps* (No. 151, March 2005 and No. 55, March 1989 respectively). In Wall's (1991) words, the voice that addresses double audience is self-conscious and shows the necessity to maintain its adult standing (p. 13). The former displays a number of characteristics of double address, and the latter hardly any. The aim of this review is not an extensive text analysis but to identify some of the features of double

address used in the text. Detailed discussion on text structures and text analysis will be presented in the later chapters.

One day old Mr Pandolfo, who hadn't been feeling at all well, decided that it was time to make a scarecrow. The birds had been very troublesome. Come to that, his rheumatism had been troublesome, and the soldiers had been troublesome, and the weather had been troublesome, and his cousins had been troublesome. It was all getting a bit too much for him. Even his old pet raven had flown away.

He couldn't do anything about his rheumatism, or the soldiers, or the weather, or his cousins, who were the biggest problem of all. There was a whole family of them, the Buffalonis, and they wanted to get hold of his land and divert all the springs and streams, and drain all the wells, and put up a factory to make weedkiller and rat poison and insecticide.

All those troubles were too big for old Mr Pandolfo to manage, but he thought he could do something about the birds, at least. So he put together a fine-looking scarecrow, with a big solid turnip for a head and a sturdy broomstick for a backbone, and dressed him in an old tweed suit, and stuffed him tightly with straw. Then he tucked a short letter inside him, wrapped in oilskin for safety. 'There you are,' he said. 'Now you remember what your job is, and remember where you belong. Be courteous, and be brave, and be honourable, and be kind. And the best of blooming luck.'

(The Scarecrow and His Servant by Philip Pullman)

Scarecrow and His Servant was the first book Pullman published after the completion of His Dark Materials trilogy (except for *Lyra's Oxford* which could be regarded as part of the trilogy). The trilogy had gained an adult readership that was exceptionally large for children's fiction and making Pullman into a well-known cultural figure as a result. With this background, the publication of Pullman's new book was an 'eagerly awaited event'. In such circumstances, it might be speculated that Pullman was aware that his new book would draw a great deal of attention from adult readers. This may explain why Scarecrow and His Servant shows the use of double address to an extent that is unusual in modern children's fiction.

One of the most pronounced features in the first paragraph, and to some extent in the second, is the use of repetitions. In spite of the amount of information presented, the paragraph gives the reader little idea as to where and when the story is set and what it is going to be about. Wall (1991) explains that the use of repetitions in double address is in common with a 'particular kind of oral story-teller, one who holds attention not so much by the quality of the story as by constantly demanding active audience response' (p.18). The narrator does not explain why being unwell made the farmer decide to make a scarecrow or why soldiers and cousins are mentioned. The way in which seemingly unrelated information is listed in the first paragraph may amuse adult readers but the tone is so casual that it can almost be seen as a lack of respect for child readers. The mention of building a factory that makes weedkiller and insecticide can appeal to adults not so much by its principle as by the adult narrator's cynical view of political correctness. The last sentence in the excerpt 'Be courteous, and be brave, and be honourable, and be kind. And the

best of blooming luck' resembles a playground chant. This could be another example of characteristics of double address: a 'slack colloquial language that the child may be familiar with' (Wall 1991, p.16). Having gained the status of such a high-profile cultural figure, Pullman seems to be uncertain about the best way to address young children. In the same way as the narrator of *Peter and Wendy* by Barrie, the narrator of *Scarecrow and His Servant* 'cannot resist the opportunity to make fun of the convention he is exploiting, thereby putting his narratee suddenly in an unanticipated position' (Wall 1991, p.25).

In contrast, Dick King-Smith could be a modern-day Arthur Ransome who had no difficulties in talking to children: the narrator of *Tumbleweed* is also a 'friendly adult talking seriously and without condescension to children' (Wall 1991, p.30).

The stillness of the forest glade was broken by a sudden noise.

It sounded like someone crying 'Help!' from inside a tin can, and in a way that's what it was. Sir Tumbleweed was in trouble again.

Sir Tumbleweed was a tall thin knight, with bright red hair and a long red moustache that drooped sadly at the either end. Of all the knights in Merrie England, he was the most accident-prone. He was also a very nervous man. For instance, he was scared of horses. They were so large (they had to be, to carry knights in heavy armour) that once he was mounted (hoisted aboard by block and tackle) he seemed to be a

frighteningly long way from the ground. Being scared of heights, Sir Tumbleweed would throw his armoured arms around the animal's neck. Off would go the startled horse, and off would come Sir Tumbleweed. Once down, he could not get up, and many a lonely hour he spent lying on the ground shouting 'Help!' inside his helmet.

This time he was luckier. At the third 'Help!' precisely, he looked up to see a figure bending over him. It was dressed all in black. It wore a tall black hat upon its head, and a long black cloak, against whose hem a black cat rubbed itself. A black scarf hid most of its face. All Sir Tumbleweed could see was a pair of grey eyes that staring into his own.

(Tumbleweed by Dick King-Smith)

Wall (1991) emphasises the difference between talking down and writing down (p.15). Whilst talking down entails condescension, to write down, the author must 'adjust language, concepts and tone to the understanding of the child without loss of meaning, significance, or dignity' (p.18). King-Smith's narrator uses a language that is simple enough for young readers but sufficiently formal to maintain the air of the world of knights in armour. Slightly archaic expressions are used to establish the humorous tone of the story but they are not beyond the child reader's understanding. The narrator focuses on telling the story, about the character and what is happening without self-consciously diverting the narrative to create jokes. The jokes in Tumbleweed are carefully attuned to the knowledge that the child readers are likely to have and the narrator lets them make the link. The narrator

does not use colloquial, juvenile language in order to sound friendly: he feels no need to be anything other than an adult who is enjoying telling the story, and sharing jokes with the child by inserting comments in brackets. Wall (1991) distinguishes a number of roles adults play when reading children's literature, one of which is an 'observer-listener', an adult who is 'not sharing their [the narrator and the narratee] experience but enjoying the happy partnership of teller and told' (p.19). *Tumbleweed* offers this role to adult readers rather than trying to amuse them over the head of the child audience. The brief analysis of the two texts above demonstrates how the ways in which text is structured creates different relationships between adults and children's literature, and how these differences may influence adults' evaluation of the book will be discussed in the following section.

Shadow text

Children's literature is read by adults for various reasons and, whilst there has been critical awareness that adults and children read differently, the difference has often been ascribed to the undeveloped reading skills of child readers (Chambers 1985, p.37), which implies that whether the book is *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Borrowers*, adults and children read differently according to their reading skills. A similar thought from another perspective is that there are no fundamental differences between children's literature and adult or general literature; this view was famously voiced by Townsend (1987) 'A good book for children must be a good book in its own right' (p. xi). Nodelman (2008), on the other hand, argues that children's literature produces differences not in degree but in kind: adults read the texts of

children's literature differently not only from the way in which children read them but also from the way in which they themselves read adult literature. Nodelman explains further that there is a particular quality by which a text intended for child readers can be identified: 'a sense that there is a second point of view: that of the [adult] narrator' (p.20). Wall (1991) made a similar observation in her study of the narrator's voice in children's literature: books written for children could be identified by a voice of the adult narrator talking to a child narratee.

The distinctiveness of children's literature has been variously described by other writers and critics: Hollindale (1997) describes it as based upon adult authors 'living life backwards to enable the child to live forward' (p.68), and according to Watson (2005), authors of children's literature 'find ways of making the complexity of the human experience manageable to young readers who are inexperienced both as readers and as people' (p.121). All these formulations suggest the presence of this second point of view that Nodelman (2008) senses and calls 'a shadow text' (p.8), yet none of these writers explain how in practice this doubleness is created in the text. Nodelman discusses this issue in detail: one of his points that is particularly relevant to my study is that the texts of children's literature typically tell less of the truth than writers know, and in this way, these texts 'represent a holding back, a reticence about saying too much in too much detail that might well leave its traces within the text', and in telling less than the authors know these texts 'evoke the more complex knowledge they leave unsaid' (p.143). This may become clearer if 'less of the truth than writers know' is to be understood as 'less of the truth than writers and adult readers know, and the reason

why certain things are not said is understood by adult readers'. Adult readers do not necessarily recognise this particular nature of texts of children's literature, which is why Nodelman uses the expression 'texts evoke' the knowledge or adults 'sense' the shadow text. The notion of shadow text also highlights the difference between children's literature and general literature where interpretation is concerned, as Nodelman explains: whilst texts of general literature also hide great depth by saying less, general literature:

...says less in ways that transparently invite readers to be aware that there is more and to figure out what it is: what is hidden in the metaphors of many poems and literary texts of fiction is hidden with the object of public interpretation and exposure, not the unacknowledged awareness that texts of children's literature more typically invite from readers (Nodelman 2008, p.143).

Where adult readers' response is concerned, this is the essential difference between literature for children and other general or adult literature. Along with more normal gaps which child readers (and adults) are invited to fill in (Chambers 1985, p.47), texts of children's literature contain some truths which could be understood by adult readers but which are intended by the author to be left alone in the shadow of the actual text. This is an excellent example of the principle concept of implied reader developed by Iser (1978): that 'texts must already contain certain conditions of actualisation that will allow their meaning to be assembled in the responsive mind of the recipient' (p.34). Iser explains the principle by referring to the theory of speech act and the concepts of pragmatics that, for a literary text to communicate

successfully, ‘involves an understanding [by the reader] of the text, or of what the text seeks to convey’ (p.55). This is because the interpretation of an utterance or speech event depends on the analysis by the recipient of the context of the utterance (Levinson 1983). For a simple example: a note saying ‘Back in ten minutes’ makes sense only if the context (when the note was written) is understood. Similarly, from the perspective of reading literary texts, genre theory explains that the meaning of a text can be partly determined by the reader even before the actual reading takes place. Generally speaking, the reader approaches a book with a degree of assumption that the work belongs to a certain genre (the context), which gives him/her a ‘framework acceptance’ (Dubrow 1982, p.32). Most adults have some assumptions about children’s literature and, whilst few non-specialist readers can articulate what these assumptions are beyond saying, ‘It’s a children’s book’, this in itself indicates that there may be a distinct attitude which adults adopt when they approach children’s literature. This could imply that shadow text may not entirely be a product of specific textual features but that it functions as such because there is a consensus or an expectation of its existence amongst adult readers of children’s literature. Hypothetically speaking, if a text of children’s literature were to be read by an adult with no assumptions about children’s literature, the shadow text would not function as intended by the author. For example:

...that peerless pioneer, Pa Ingalls. Like a good daughter, Laura the writer ignores the setback that the real Pa had, the long treks and the misjudgements and downright failures and leaves us with this damned

paragon who can turn up in the middle of a prairie with nothing in sight for five hundred miles, and within two pages conjure up a log cabin complete with sauna and three-car garage. And dammit, he then plays jolly violin music to his kids (Hunt 2006).

Whilst this is clearly a deliberate reading by Hunt for the purpose of an argument, which is, in Hunt's (1996) own words 'reading against the implied readership' (p.4), it could be a demonstration as to how texts of children's literature might be read if deprived of adult readers' assumption about the existence of a shadow text.

On the other hand, the reader's assumptions about children's literature by themselves do not create a shadow text when the text is not intended for children even if it has an appearance of children's literature. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon (2003) has a definite appearance of being children's book (See Chapter 5), has been reviewed as one, and even won The Guardian Children's Fiction Prize in 2003. Yet there is evidence to suggest that it is not children's literature in the sense that it is written for children. Firstly, unlike the Harry Potter series and His Dark Materials Trilogy whose adult editions were published subsequent to their children's editions, *The Curious Incident of the Dog* was published in both editions simultaneously, and the book went to the top of adult bestseller list, selling far more copies of the adult edition than the children's (Falconer 2009, p.96). Secondly, in his examination of *The Curious Incident of the Dog*, Greenwell (2004) compares it with four other books whose main characters have Asperger's syndrome, and observes that the other novels are about Asperger's

syndrome and aim to inform or to educate readers, whereas Haddon ‘has no particular interest in demystifying the syndrome’ (p.282). The four novels focus on the child characters’ experience and the way in which their autistic condition causes problems in their daily lives, whereas the narrative focus of *The Curious Incident of the Dog* is the unique perceptions of the main character who has the same autistic condition and who happens to be a child. In other words, the character being a child is not necessarily the main concern of the novel. Finally, in an interview with *The Guardian*, Haddon (2003) admits, albeit indirectly, that he did not write the book for children. While referring to the Dutch edition from which the swearing in the text has been edited out, Haddon remarks:

The swearing is important: if you read books for kids, there’s that little invisible ring of safety. You know that, if horrible things happen, the author will look after you. I don’t think the ring of safety is there in this book, and the swearing is one of the signals of that (in Armistead 2003, p.34).

Despite the evidence, Moore (2003) writes ‘Christopher’s innocence makes him vulnerable, but it protects him, too. At the end, when order is restored, we see that he is a touchstone for adult behaviour’ (p.33). Falconer (2009) also highlights the aspect of the innocence of a child and discusses the book under the title of ‘Seeing Things Big’ in her survey of crossover novels. She suggests that Christopher’s unique views are an equivalent to ‘the restricted gaze’ (p.98), which is the view of a small child looking at the world with more intensely focused gaze than that of

adults. Whilst the innocence of a child is one of the assumptions most often associated with children's literature, when the child character is fifteen, it is somewhat debatable as to how relevant the aspect of such innocence might be. One of the points Nodelman (2008) considers as a distinct quality of texts of children's literature is that 'the texts all address young readers in terms that makes their youth a matter of significance' (p.5). The text of *The Curious Incident of the Dog* does not do this, since Christopher's views do not particularly derive from his being a child but they are manifestations of his autistic condition. His many confrontations with adults are not the result of a conflict between adult's and child's perceptions: the confrontations happen because Christopher's condition prevents him from comprehending commonplace behaviours of most people. The absence of the youth 'as the matter of significance' may become more apparent if *The Curious Incident of the Dog* is compared with a book which does make youth the matter of significance. For the comparison, I have chosen *Frozen Fire* by Tom Bowler (2006) which is also about a fifteen-year old, a girl in this book, who lives with her father: Dusty's brother Josh whom she adored disappeared. Her mother had a breakdown and left, and her father lost his job. Dusty receives a phone call from a boy who seems to know about Josh and other things that only Josh and Dusty know. The first pair of excerpts are Christopher's and Dusty's exchange with their fathers: Christopher simply states what he thinks and knows, whereas Dusty defends her stand as a child against her father:

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

I said, 'I think Mr Shears probably killed Wellington.'

Father didn't say anything.

I said, 'He is my Prime Suspect. Because I think someone might have killed Wellington to make Mrs Shears sad. And a murder is usually committed by someone known...'

Father banged the table with his fist really hard so that the plates and his knife and fork jumped around and my ham jumped sideways so that it touched the broccoli so I couldn't eat the ham or the broccoli any more.

Then he shouted, 'I'll not have that man's name mentioned in my house.'

I asked, 'Why not?'

And he said, 'That man is evil.'

And I said, 'Does that mean he might have killed Wellington?'

Father put his head in his hands and said, 'Jesus wept.'

I could see that Father was angry with me, so I said, 'I know you told me not to get involved in other people's business but Mrs Shears is a friend of ours.'

And Father said, 'Well, she's not a friend anymore.'

And I asked, 'Why not?'

And Father said, 'OK, Christopher. I am going to say this for the last and final time. I will not tell you again. Look at me when I'm talking to you, for God's sake. Look at me. You are not to go asking Mrs Shears about who killed that bloody dog. You are not to go asking anyone about who killed that bloody dog. You are not to go trespassing in other people's gardens. You are to stop this ridiculous bloody detective game right now.'

I didn't say anything. (pp.63-64)

Frozen Fire

‘So what’s going on?’

‘Nothing, Dad. Honest. Nothing.’

‘What’s this thing with Kamalika?’

‘She’s just sent me a text.’

‘What about?’

Dusty took a slow breath.

‘Dad, it’s none of your business.’

‘Oh, right. It’s none of my business. It’s never my business, is it?’ Dad scowled at her. ‘You’re off on your own all the time, just like Josh. I’m starting to think you’re worse than Josh. Off on your own, off on your own. And I’m not supposed to ask questions because it’s none of my business.’

‘Dad, listen-‘

‘You disappear for hours on end. You fall out with people at school or in town. You get into scraps because you’re too feisty for your own good.’

‘I’m only going to have a coffee at Mac’s.’

‘Nothing else?’

‘No.’

‘Then why all the fuss about “Dad, it’s none of your business”?’

She shrugged.

‘I don’t know. I just...don’t like being interrogated.’

‘Christ, have I ever heard that before?’ Dad glowered over the wheel.

‘It’s like listening to Josh all over again.’

They drove on in silence for a while (pp.67-68).

An encounter with the police: here again, Christopher responds to the policeman without any added issues, whereas Dusty knows that she is a child who is confronting adult authority:

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

And then I thought that he was going to take me back to Father and that was frightening because he was a policeman and policemen are meant to be good, so I started to run away, but he grabbed me and I screamed. And then he let go.

And he said, ‘OK, let’s not get over-excited here.’ And then he said, ‘I’m going to take you back to the police station and you and me and your dad can sit down and have a little chat about who’s going where.’

And I said, ‘I’m going to live with my Mother, in London.’

And he said, ‘Not just yet, you’re not.’

And I said, ‘Have you arrested Father?’

And he said, ‘Arrested him? What for?’

And I said, ‘He killed a dog. With a garden fork. The dog was called Wellington’ (p.197).

Frozen Fire

‘Very true,’ said DI Sharp. ‘You don’t need to be wary of me unless

you've done something wrong. And even if you have, you're best coming clean. Now then, first question. Why did you run away from the square?'

'I thought I was in trouble,'

'Didn't it occur to you that running away might put you in even worse trouble?'

'I was scared of those men. I panicked.'

'You don't strike me as the sort of person who panic easily. And there were police officers around. You were hardly unprotected.'

Dusty said nothing.

'So you ran away,' DI Sharp went on. 'What made you head for the station?'

'Don't know. Just ran. Didn't really think about where I was going.'

'Were you following anyone?'

'No.'

'Or trying to lead us away from anyone?'

'No' (pp.201-202).

At the end, Christopher makes practical plans for the future but Dusty reflects on her experience and expresses her hope for new development in the relationship with her parents.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time

And then, when I've done that, I am going to go to university in another town. And it doesn't have to be in London because I don't like London

and there are universities in lots of places and not all of them are in big cities. And I can live in a flat with a garden and a proper toilet. And I can take Sandy and my books and my computer.

And I will get a First Class Honours Degree and I will become a scientist. And I know I can do this because I went to London on my own, and because I solved the mystery of who killed Wellington? And I found my mother and I was brave and I wrote a book and that means I can do anything (p.268).

Frozen Fire

She snatched the paper from him and stared at it. She recognised it at once from the creases: the paper on which she'd drawn the face. But no face was there now. The snow had washed it off. It was as blank as the police photo of the boy. She dropped in to the ground and clutched at her pocket.

'It's all right,' said Mum. 'Here.'

She held out the snow-pipe.

'It was lying next to you.'

Dusty took it from her and held it tight.

They lifted up the stretcher.

She stared up at the falling snow, then round at the faces peering down at her. Mum's and Dad's seemed so different now after all that had happened. The mystery still weighed upon her and she sensed that it always would. But perhaps...

She looked at Mum and Dad.

Perhaps she could be happy again. Dad reached out and touched her face.

‘Are you ready now, sweetheart?’ he said.

She squeezed the snow-pipe and held it close.

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘I’m ready to go home’ (p.352).

Dusty and her father are engaged in an argument and both are aware that it is about wider issues than simply a question of what Dusty is going to do in the town but it is about their relationship as a parent and a child. Whereas the exasperation of Christopher’s father is just as apparent as Dusty’s father’s, Christopher is responding only to the practical details his father mentions. Similarly, Dusty and DI Sharp are watching each other as a child and the authority, and their words are carefully calculated accordingly. In contrast, Christopher’s exchange with the policeman has none of this tension. At first glance, the ending of *The Curious Incident of the Dog* appears to be a typical conclusion found in children’s literature: home and away, then back again, and the child character looking forward to his/her life in the future. Meek and Watson (2003) describe maturation in children’s literature: ‘most of the main characters in children’s fiction are wiser at the end of their narratives than they were at the beginning’ (p.1). Christopher’s achievement is a completion of various tasks that have little implications other than to the practical plans for his future, and as such he may be more able at the end of the book but not necessarily wiser. Dusty, on the other hand, reflects and consolidates her experience and is now capable of seeing what she did not see before.

Hollindale (1997) argues that texts of children's literature are created for the readers who are still in the business of constructing their own childhood and who are 'aware of its presentness' (p.29). Creating a text in this way involves, in Nodelman's (2008, p.142) words, the author holding back some of the truth s/he knows and being reticent about saying too much in too much detail, which, in a practitioner's words, to write 'with one hand tied behind your back' (Sutcliffe in Wintle and Fisher 1974, p.184). The author holding back some of the knowledge is not unique to texts of children's literature but what is unique to the way in which texts of children's literature are created is that it lets the adult reader sense the presence of the knowledge yet does not invite him/her to acknowledge it (Nodelman 2008). This reinforces the awareness in adult readers that they are no longer children to whom the book has been written, but adults who could acknowledge the unsaid knowledge that is not meant to be for the intended readers of the book. *Frozen Fire* succeeds in reinforcing this awareness in adult readers by constantly focusing on Dusty's perceptions as a child. *The Curious Incident of the Dog* is certainly a suitable book for children to read but it cannot be said to be children's literature, since Christopher being a child has little relevance in itself to the development of the narrative.

A text that is not concerned with the presentness of childhood has no mechanism for producing a shadow text but instead, whatever is left unsaid can be the 'object of public interpretation and exposure' (Nodelman 2008, p.143). It can be speculated that one of the reasons for the book's success in the adult market, despite its

appearance of being a work of children's literature, may be due to the absence of the shadow text. Since the text does not require adult readers to be conscious of the 'unacknowledged awareness' that something is being held back, it allows adult readers' unrestricted interpretations of the story. It could also allow adult readers to read without being reminded of the loss of their childhood. *The Curious Incident of the Dog* is a rare case in that it cannot be classified by conventional definitions of children's literature. The book, however, draws attention to an important aspect with regards to evaluation of children's books by adults: a book can appear to be children's literature but if it has no shadow text, adults could be reading it as a peer text (See Chapter 4) rather than reading it on behalf of children, which may change the nature of the influence on their evaluation of the book. This issue will be discussed in detail later.

As a reverse of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, a book without a child as the main character can be regarded as children's literature: *The Lantern Bearers* by Rosemary Sutcliff and *The Ghost Downstairs* by Leon Garfield are two examples of such works. These texts give adult readers a distinct sense that they are reading a children's book, despite the absence from the text of explicit concern for children which is the most common defining feature of children's literature. How texts of children's literature create this unique sense of second viewpoint will be examined in detail in Chapter 7.

Not so hidden adult

One of the ways in which Nodelman (2008) defines children's literature is that it is

‘simple literature that communicates by means of reference to a complex repertoire of unspoken but implied adult knowledge’ (p.206). Occasionally, this unspoken adult knowledge is openly spoken, not as a minor slip but as the essence of the narrative: *Tom’s Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce (1958) and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1970) are two of the notable examples of texts in which adult knowledge is explicitly presented. Cottrell Boyce (2008) recalls his experience of reading *Tom’s Midnight Garden*; ‘When I read it as a child, I was appalled by the idea that the attractive young girl could become the old woman’. Watson (1992) reports a similar response to *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by a four-year old boy: when they reached (Watson was reading the book with the boy) the page where the caterpillar makes a cocoon and becomes a butterfly, the boy remarked, ‘That’s silly! They don’t do that’ (p.12). Yet what is implied by Tom’s meeting with Mrs. Bartholomew and the caterpillar turning into a butterfly are commonly considered by adults, both critics and non-specialists, to be the defining quality of the two books that are now widely regarded as classics. Cottrell Boyce goes on to say in the same article about *Tom’s Midnight Garden* that ‘Now I’m older I can see that the scene is full of joy.’ Townsend (1987) writes that the book has a ‘profound, mysterious sense of time’ and declares that it is ‘one of the tiny handful of masterpieces of English children’s literature’ (p.246).

The Very Hungry Caterpillar had sold 30 million copies worldwide by 2009 (Brookes 2009). Since it is a book for very young children, it can be safely said that the copies have been mostly bought by adults. Eccleshare (2010) writes of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* in her list of recommended picture books, ‘The necessary

"pop" all adults just have to make to make sure he metamorphoses into a beautiful butterfly makes this the easiest book to share with the very smallest listener'. Watson (1992) also refers to the final page of the book as '[the caterpillar] emerges as a beautiful butterfly' (p.12). The discrepancy in the views between children and adults suggests that both texts are presenting concepts that are 'beyond the ken of childlike consciousness' (Nodelman 2008, p.206). Nodelman suggests that there is a sense in which the texts exist exactly to allow adult readers to share knowledge of the shadow text, and the doubleness 'emerges from adult authors' need to speak from their adult experience' (p.210). Adult readers of these two texts are being invited to share with the authors a view of a childhood from a vantage point where they are able to perceive it in the context of the knowledge and experience of adults.

Hollindale (1997) argues that, in the last chapter of *Tom's Midnight Garden*, Tom 'has been reclaimed by the adult world of home and parents' (p.91). Hollindale is referring to Tom's meeting with Mrs Bartholomew, which is, in his view, the author's attempt to reassert adult rationality by abandoning the world of child intelligence on which the narrative has been built up to this point. This can be seen as an example of the author's desire to speak as an adult and to invite adult readers to share her view about, in Nodelman's term, 'childlikeness'. This is most apparent in the words of Aunt Gwen in the closing paragraph of the book: it is an adult's interest in 'childlikeness' and not children's concern with themselves as children.

Afterwards, Aunt Gwen tried to describe to her husband that second

parting between them. 'He ran up to her, and they hugged each other as if they had known each other for years and years, instead of having only met for the first time this morning. There was something else, too, Alan, although I know you'll say it sounds even more absurd...Of course, Mrs Bartholomew's such a shrunken little old woman, she's hardly bigger than Tom, anyway: but, you know, he put his arms right round her and hugged her good-bye as if she was a little girl (p.229).

In contrast, in *A Stitch in Time* by Penelope Lively (1976), a story similarly concerned with a link to the past, the text remains focused on the viewpoint of the child. Maria finds a sampler made by a Victorian girl of about her own age and becomes convinced that Harriet, the girl who made the sampler, died in a tragic accident. Toward the end of the book, Maria visits Mrs Shand, an old lady who owns the sampler, and discovers that it was Harriet's dog that died.

There was a pause. Maria sat in a tumultuous private silence and thought, so that is what it was, so now I know... [...] At last she said, 'It could have been Harriet. Who was killed, I mean.'

'Oh, yes,' said Mrs Shand, 'it could have been. Things always could have been otherwise. The fact of the matter is that they are not. What has been, has been. What is, is.' She stabbed the needle confidently into the brown canvas.

'I suppose so,' said Maria. 'But it's a very difficult thing to get used to.'

'One does eventually,' said Mrs Shand, 'there being no other choice.'

[...]

And [I] grow up into someone else, like Harriet, thought Maria. I'm not stuck at now any more than she was. And into her head came the idea of mysterious and interesting future Marias, larger and older, doing things one could barely picture (pp.155-6).

The author is speaking from the standpoint of her adult experience but the views are relevant primarily to children who are concerned with the ideas about their own growing-up.

The world of a child is reclaimed by adults at the end of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* in the similar way as in *Tom's Midnight Garden*. The 'metamorphoses into a beautiful butterfly' as described by Eccleshare (2010) is a view based on adults' perception. As far as the child reader is concerned, the caterpillar's story ends when the caterpillar 'ate one nice green leaf, and after that he felt much better', since, to very young children, the idea that they may turn into something completely different from what they are now is likely to be beyond comprehension. To the adult reader of the book, on the other hand, the 'metamorphosis' of the caterpillar allows him/her to interpret that the story is not simply about a caterpillar's activities but about a child who will one day metamorphose into a young person. An interpretation such as this is likely to influence the adult reader's view about the value of the book. No such adults' assertion can be found in *The Chick and the Duckling* by Mirra Ginsburg and Jose & Ariane Aruego (1973). *The Chick and the Duckling* hatch on the same day. The Chick follows and copies

everything the Duckling does and, when the Duckling goes for a swim in the pond, the Chick follows and is nearly drowned. The Duckling pulls the Chick out and when he is dry:

‘I’m going for another swim,’ said the Duckling.

‘Not me’, said the Chick.

The pictures are simply and skilfully drawn and the story is simply but imaginatively structured. The book is still in print but has hardly been discussed by critics and reviewers. Likewise, although highly praised by Stephens (1992) as a ‘marvellous tour de force’ that offers a ‘penetrating insight into the process and motives of historical fiction for children’ (p.213), *A Stitch in Time* is nowhere near as well known amongst adults as *Tom’s Midnight Garden*. A question arises from these examples: If *Tom’s Midnight Garden* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* did not have the foothold for adult readers at the end of the narratives, or as Hollindale (1997) puts it, were it not for the ‘re-imagined grown-ups closing the party’ (p.91), would the books have become such classics? It can be argued that a children’s book is more likely to become well known to adults if it contains textual elements that are particularly attractive to adults.

Discussing the binary nature of children’s literature, Nodelman (2008) observes that picture books have an ‘inherent doubleness’, as their simple texts and more complex shadows produce ‘two discrete channels of information’ (p.77) one for child readers and the other for adults. However, the channel for adults is not always

so discrete; that is to say, some picture books seem to attract adults' interest by their 'shadows' more than by their simple texts. Published in 1963, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* 'has come in for a good deal of analysis and has been read as a sublimation of Max's anger, through which he is able to become independent, relate to his mother, come to terms with his ego, and so on and so on' (Hunt 2001, p.125) or it 'touches on each reader's Oedipal experience; the desire to assume power over the father and to find reassurance and love in the mother finds powerful expression' (McGillis 1996, p.179).

Putting aside at this point the question of to whom Hunt and McGillis are referring as readers, the fact that the book allows such interpretations can be an indication that it has some elements that are more closely associated with general fiction than with children's literature: as Nodelman (2008) explains, it openly invites readers to expose what is hidden and to figure out the meanings of the metaphors. For example, Stephens (1992) interprets Max's wolf suit: 'it makes a descent from "day" and the reasonable and human to "night" and the irrational and animal' (p.135). It could be suggested then that *Where the Wild Things Are* is, if not a book for adults, a book that is more about adults' concerns than those of children. Nodelman (2008) argues that 'the most unique quality of *Wild Things* is that both the violence and monstrosity and the adult authority are Max's own' (p.121). It is debatable, however, whether the 'violence and monstrosity' are a genuine representation of children's fears and violent emotions. Tucker (1981) judges that these monsters may be fearsome to some children, implying that fears may not be such a definitive response in child readers as is often assumed by critics. Tucker

also refers to a letter Sendak apparently received from a young reader asking him how much it cost to go to where the wild things were, since this reader and his sister would like to spend summer there. As most children were exposed to a wide range of media even in the early 1960s, it is hard to believe that many children would have associated Sendak's Wild Things, which are visibly comic rather than frightening, with such ideas as violence and monstrosity. More significantly, however, the appearance of the Wild Things may easily be recognised by many children as adults in disguise, since the way in which they act and talk are almost unmistakably that of adults when they play with children: phrases such as 'let the wild rumpus start!' and 'we'll eat you up-we love you so!' are typically associated with such activities. The story is entirely told from the perspective of adults' concerns: Max 'made mischief of one kind or another' is an adult's assessment of a child's behaviour; Max's journey is told in an adult storyteller's voice ensuring, possibly to adults, that this is only a story:

and an ocean tumbled by with a private boat for Max and he sailed off
through night and day
and in and out of weeks
and almost over a year
to where the wild things are.

Max's actions with the wild things are generalised images of what a boy would do when he is 'being wild'; and when he had had enough of the game Max settles down to an orderly, safe life provided by adults.

Then all around from far away across the world
He smelled good thing to eat
So he gave up being king of where the wild things are.
[...]
and sailed back over a year
and in and out of weeks
and through a day
and into the night of his very own room
where he found his supper waiting for him
and it was still hot.

In contrast, in *In the Attic* by Satoshi Kitamura and Hiawyn Oram (1984), a picture book with a similar story structure, adults are entirely excluded. The book begins with a picture of a boy sitting in a corner with toys spread out in front of him with the text, 'I had a million toys and I was bored', which in effect dismisses any efforts adults might have made to entertain a child. The boy climbs into the attic using an extended ladder of a toy fire engine. The attic seems empty at first but he soon finds a family of mice amongst many objects, a colony of beetles amongst colourful plants, and 'a cool quiet place to rest and think'. He opens a window that opens other windows, flies out on an old engine, lands in a field and meets a friend. The friend is a tiger and their speech bubbles show yellow and black stripes for the tiger and red and black for the boy who is wearing a shirt of that colour. Having played a game 'that could go on forever because it kept changing' the boy comes

back and walks into the kitchen where his mother is:

I climbed out the attic and told my mother where I'd been all day.

'But we don't have an attic' she said.

Well, she wouldn't know, would she?

She hasn't found the ladder.

It may be possible to interpret the ladder and the windows or the tiger as representations of the boy's subconscious emotions but since the texts and pictures present the boy's perceptions in details as he encounters each experience, the book does not easily provide the adult reader with access to interpretation. The way in which texts prevent the reader from projecting arbitrary meaning will be discussed later in the study.

Nodelman (2008) argues that children's literature confirms the childlikeness of children so that adults could confirm their adulthood, although the concept of childlikeness to be confirmed tends to be based on adults' ideas about childhood. Max is a model of adults' idea of childlikeness: a boy who gets up to mischief but can be easily entertained by adults. If they let him have the power over adults as a game, then after a while he would happily settle down and be cared for by adults. In contrast, the boy in *In the Attic* dismisses adults outright by rejecting the toys, imagines and enters his own world where adults are not involved. He discovers how indifferent adults can be but accepts it as a matter of fact. McGillis (1996) speculates that the reason why adults appreciate *Where the Wild Things Are* so

much may be because the book ‘gives us the pleasure of having our fantasies taken care of’ (p.180). McGillis does not specify what these fantasies are but he could well have said that the book could let adults imagine that they are perfectly able to understand children’s subconscious emotions and know exactly how to protect them. Nodelman (2008) observes that ‘some texts are more powerful than others simply because they are perceived to be more representative than others’ (p.106). One of the reasons why *Where the Wild Things Are* has become a classic may be because it is a typical representation of adults’ desire to have their own adulthood assured. There are other characteristics in texts of children’s literature that make the communication channel to adults less discrete: some texts intentionally invite interpretations that require adult knowledge; some leave out certain subject matter or elements from the narrative which adult readers would expect to find in texts of general literature.

How these aspects may influence adults’ evaluation of books for children will be discussed in detail later.

CHAPTER 7

NARRATOR'S VOICE

In life, overhearing a conversation in the next room, we readily deduce from the kinds of information and explanations being given, that an adult is talking to a child. And even if the words are inaudible we might still make the same deduction because we recognise some almost indefinable adjustments in pitch and tone.

Wall (1991, p.3)

This chapter explores the narrator's function and the way in which texts may produce different responses in adults and children. It attempts to identify some of the textual elements that could be linked with adult responses that are distinct from children's. The chapter also examines the notion of 'dishonesty' in children's literature and discusses whether some 'dishonesty' may be considered legitimate.

Unlike in speech, these 'indefinable adjustments' in writing must leave their traces as various textual elements. Wall's book *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (1991), from which the opening quote is taken, aims to identify these adjustments. Wall (1991) explains that what marks a book written for children is 'not what is said, but the way it is said, and to whom it is said' (p.3), and develops a theory of the narrator's voice in children's literature. Wall uses the concept of the narrator and the narratee in the text as the theoretical base for the

examination. Similarly, Chambers (1985) argues that it is a particular way in which ‘an author creates a relationship with a reader in order to discover the meaning of the text’ (p.35) that distinguishes books for children. Chambers bases his argument on the concept of the implied reader formulated by Iser and suggests that ‘an author addresses someone as he writes. That someone has come to be called the implied reader’ (p.35). There are, however, two fundamental problems in using text analysis as a method of examining the issue of readership in children’s literature. Firstly, it is not possible to generalise what children can or cannot understand, or how they may feel or see things. Secondly, the notion of narrator and implied reader are aspects of a method of examining texts and are not concerned with identifying the readership of a book.

In her discussion of the way in which William Mayne’s narrator is close to children, Wall (1991) explains, by analysing the text of one of Mayne’s books *No More School* (1965), that ‘The clue, however, has been given through Ruth’s understanding that Miss Oldroyd’s talking had before this been noncommittal. The reader can see now that talk can convey feelings that are not specifically named’ (Wall 1991, p.213). Assuming that ‘the reader’ is a child, it can only be said that some child readers may see what Wall points out but there is no empirical foundation to substantiate that this is the default reading of child readers. Similarly, the way in which Chambers (1985) presents his argument underlines one of the problems inherent in writing about children’s literature: throughout the discussion, Chambers uses ‘we’ to refer to the reader. For example, while discussing *The Children of Green Knowe* by Lucy M Boston (1954), Chambers writes ‘We are left

wondering still' (p.55) or 'We are led to see things this way' (p.56). Chambers concludes that the author of *The Children of Green Knowe* 'is speaking primarily to children' (p.58), yet the use of 'we' indicates that 'the reader' in the article is Chambers himself who is an adult and a children's literature specialist. Whilst Chambers might have presumed that he was reading as a child would, an adult's reading of the text cannot be the basis of a discussion about child readers' responses.

As for the notion of the implied reader, established literary theories cannot always be usefully applied to children's literature. In this case, whilst the question 'Is this a children's book?' can be taken for granted as a valid enquiry in children's literature, who the readers of a certain book are is not necessarily regarded as a valid line of enquiry in literary criticism. Although studies of readers is one of the major fields of modern literary criticism, this is usually concerned with their responses and not with classification of the readership. As it is, the theories of the narratee and the implied reader are critical methods for explaining literary techniques and not generally concerned with the question of readership of the book. In narratology where the concept of narratee was originally developed, the question of the narratee's identity is about the structure of the narrative. For example it could be a question of how the narratee is personally or socially related to the narrator, and as such it must be distinguished from the real reader or receiver (Prince 2003). Similarly, the theory of implied reader formulated by Iser (1978) is, contrary to what the title of the theory suggests, not about readers but constitutes a method for systematically examining how a text works to produce certain literary effects: in

Iser's (1978) own words, 'the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader' (p.34). Neither concept is therefore directly applicable when the point of enquiry is whether or not the readers of a particular book are children.

One of the causes of the mis-application of the concepts in the studies of Wall and Chambers is the nature of the question itself. Whilst both studies set out to answer the question 'Is this a book for children?' the question is not the end in itself. Chambers (1985) clearly states the aim of his discussion: to find out 'how to mediate the books to their readers so that not only are individual books better appreciated by children but children are also helped to become literary readers' (p.37). At the beginning of the study, Wall's aim seems to be focused on how to identify books written for children, which in theory is a technical method for classification, yet the study develops into the question of the quality of writing. Wall (1991) compares Enid Blyton and William Mayne and comments:

...if he [Mayne] has not found such universal acceptance with young readers as has Blyton, it is partly due to the fact that the child he addresses is not Blyton's lowest-common-denominator child [...]. The reader Mayne's work demands is a reader willing to listen, to think and to learn (p.206).

The fact that this comment is found in the chapter entitled The Forming of a Reader suggests that Wall is also concerned with evaluation of books for children's

literary development. Since the theories of narratee and the implied reader relate more to studying the structure of narrative rather than literary values, the question needs to be redefined if the text is to be studied within the framework of these concepts with the aim of evaluating books for children.

Notwithstanding the problems pointed out above, the two studies are significant in drawing attention to the importance of studying the text as well as the subjects of children's fiction. The concepts of narratee and the implied reader cannot be used to identify the readers of a book but they can be effectively applied to an investigation of ways in which the traces of the 'indefinable adjustments' are left in the text by adult authors when they write for children. It is these traces that create what Nodelman (2008) calls 'shadow text' which is discussed in the previous chapters. In this chapter, the idea of shadow text will be explored by using a number of concepts from narratology and Iser's theory of the implied reader, and an attempt will be made to discover if there is a systematic way in which these adjustments can be detected. The aim of this investigation is to identify some of the textual features created as a result of the adjustments that could be used to formulate a model that will act as a useful evaluation tool for adults when mediating books for children.

These adjustments manifest themselves in many different forms: although one of the most obvious lies in the use of language, my study focuses on the elements in the text that are likely to influence adults' evaluation of children's literature when they read on behalf of children. Although Nodelman (2008) tends to focus on

negative aspects in his discussion of adult readers of children's literature, he does admit that he has to 'acknowledge that there are more positive ways of viewing these matters [discourse about childhood and children's literature] and to take those ways into account,' (p.171), and continues 'If adults write children's literature, as is routinely pointed out by more suspicious critics of the field, couldn't adult intentions be more generous (less manipulative) than we often assume?' (Kidd in Nodelman 2998, p.171). My search for the textual elements that could influence adults' response is not limited to the negative or manipulative in nature but includes those that are genuinely concerned with child readers' pleasure as well as their intellectual development. On this basis, for the purpose of the discussion, I will propose a notion of adulthood in order to refer to these elements.

Hollindale (1997) proposes the notion of 'childness' as the distinctive quality of children's literature and defines it as the awareness and acceptance that one is a child. In other words, 'childness' is the component in the text that reflects child readers' awareness of the presentness of their childhood, that it is not yet over. From a similar perspective, adulthood can be defined as adult readers' awareness and acceptance that they are adults and that their childhood is a period that has been completed and to which they can only look back. It also includes adult readers' sense of responsibility for children's intellectual development. In this chapter, adulthood will be explored in its various forms which could be regarded as its components, and as such, the term 'adulthood' is not necessarily used in each examination. The examinations will be consolidated in chapter 9 where adulthood as a concept will be summarised.

In the following sections, a number of ways in which texts of children's literature manifest the trace of a narrator's voice and how it may express adulthood will be investigated. The main theories on which the investigation is based are *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* by Genette (1980) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* by Iser (1978). As the two works are extensive and detailed, a number of relevant points are selected as a framework for this study: Genette's work is used to explain the mechanism of the narrator and the narratee as narrative elements, and Iser's work for understanding how the contents of narrative are selected and combined to produce particular literary effects.

The narratee of children's literature

The narratee is a purely textual construct and must be distinguished from the real reader. This figure must also be distinguished from another textual construct, the implied reader (Prince 2003, p57). As a narratological term, the implied reader is the audience of the text whereas the narratee is the audience of the narrator who is narrating the event in the text. On this basis, the real reader, the actual person who reads the book, must be distinguished from both the narratee and the implied reader, since the real reader's responses cannot be deduced from studying the text (Iser 1978).

Genette (1980) explains the concept of narratee:

...one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he is necessarily

located at the same diegetic level [as the narrator]: that is, he does not merge a priori with the reader (even an implied reader) any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author (p.259).

The phrase 'located at the same diegetic level', means that the narrator and the narratee exist in the same fictional world where the narrative events occur. For example, the narrator and the narratee of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) are located in the 'normal' world as the four children, thus the discovery of another world is a surprise and a wonder to both the narrator and the narratee. The narrator in *Charmed Life* by Diana Wynne Jones (1977), on the other hand, states as a matter of fact that 'Cat Chant admired his elder sister Gwendolen. She was a witch'. This indicates that the narrator is located in the world in which being a witch is no more unusual than being good at sport, and the narratee is listening to the event narrated therein. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the distinction between the narratee (the audience of the narrator) and the implied reader (the audience of the text) is not very clear but, in the case of *Charmed Life*, the two are perfectly distinguishable. Here, being the audience of the narrator and thus located in the same world, the narratee has no knowledge of the world other than that which is narrated in the text, that is to say, the world where Cat Chant lives is the 'normal' world to the narratee. By contrast, the implied reader, being the audience of the text, is aware of the duality of the world that is narrated in the text and the world in which the text exists. In addition, the text of *Charmed Life* is structured in such a way as to presuppose that its implied reader is capable of perceiving the world in the narrative as being a parallel one to our own without any explicit

explanations. To the narratee, this duality does not exist.

Prince (1980) suggests that an examination of the narratee 'can lead to a more sharply delineated reading and a deeper characterisation of the work (p.24)'. Whilst this could be suggesting that an examination as to whether the narratee of the book is a child may lead to a clearer idea of the nature of the book, i.e. whether or not it is a children's book, the question is unlikely to occur unless the book is thought to be, by adults, too 'complex, violent, existentialist, allusive, apocalyptic' (Hunt 2001, p.4) to be a book for children. It is debatable, therefore, whether an examination of the narratee in *The Children of Green Knowe* (Chambers 1985) or *Doctor Dolittle* stories (Wall 1991) can serve any purpose when the question is asked. One of the works that Wall examines for the same purpose is *The Stone Book Quartet* by Alan Garner (1976-1978), which has raised the question about the readership amongst critics and reviewers. Wall (1991) writes of the narrator's voice in the book:

Spare, direct, concrete details replace narrator comment. The coldness of clear outline and the strange exactness of North-West Mercian English replace narrator warmth [...] the narrator maintains a cool detachment and does not intervene [...] frequently, Alan Garner's narrator does not talk to children at all (pp. 230-232).

Whilst these characteristics may be rare in texts of children's literature, they cannot be said to be inherently incompatible with writing for children. Moreover,

from this observation, it is not clear whether Wall is referring to the narratee or the readers of the book. The identity of the narratee cannot be deduced from the text but it must be 'inscribed in the text' (Prince 2003, p.57). One of the well known examples of the inscribed narratee in children's literature can be found in Kipling's *Just So Stories* (1902):

Hear and attend and listen; for this befell and behappened and became and was, O my Best Beloved, when the Tame animals were wild.

(The Cat That Walked by Himself by Rudyard Kipling)

The narratee is 'my Best Beloved' who is usually assumed by the readers of the book to be a child but it is an assumption based on other elements of the narrative. One of the more commonly found signs that mark the presence of the narratee are the second-person pronoun (Prince 2003). For example in:

More *Naughty Little Sister Stories*, Dorothy Edwards (1970) writes:

Do you like having stories read to you? When I was a little girl I used to like it very much. My little sister liked it too, but she pretended that she didn't (p13).

The 'you' is often found in the opening sentence of the story as in *Stig of the Dump* by Clive King (1963):

If you went too near the edge of the chalk pit the ground would give way. Barney had been told this often enough.

Similarly, *Trillions* by Nicholas Fisk (1971) begins:

No one can tell you exactly who it was now but it was quite certainly one of the youngest children that invented the name 'Trillions'. You can imagine a group of children squatting on the ground, scraping together heaps of brightly coloured, mysterious grit that had fallen from the sky.

The Lion Tamer's Daughter by Peter Dickinson (1997):

Before all this happened I'd have told you there wasn't anything special about Melly, apart from her being a bit dopey sometimes, and maybe the business with the yellow dog, but that was a one-off.

The narratee in the last example is more clearly defined: the 'you' is an acquaintance of the narrator to whom he would have told what Melly was like had there been a chance or a need, but whether or not the narratee is a child cannot be determined.

The concept of narratee is less well understood than that of narrator and, as Prince (1980) points out, unlike with the distinction between the author and the narrator, most critics are 'scarcely concerned with the notion of the narratee and often confused it with the more or less adjacent notions of receptor (récepteur), reader, and arch-reader (archilecteur)' (p.7). One of the causes for this neglect or confusion may be the fact that 'many narrations appear to be addressed to no one in particular' (p.17) yet a narration must be addressed to someone even if the addressee is undetectable. Prince explains this apparently absent narratee by the

notion of the 'zero-degree narratee' (p.9). The zero-degree narratee understands the language in which the narrator is telling the story, and has the knowledge of the world in which the narrated events take place: the narratees of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Charmed Life* are examples of the zero-degree narratee. The important point about the concept of the zero-degree narratee is that the identity of the narratee becomes an issue only when there are deviations from its characteristics (Prince 1980). Even if the narratee is marked by 'you' or other signs such as 'My Best Beloved', unless the text indicates specific attributes, the narratee can be regarded as of zero-degree. For instance if the text of *Just So Stories* contained a phrase 'when you were a child, O My Best beloved', which indicates that the narratee is not a child, the story would then be read from an entirely different perspective: the identity of the narratee would imply that these are not amusing animal stories told to a child but possibly a collection of satires or social fables.

When children's literature is examined within the framework of narratology, it presents one aspect that is fundamentally different from general literature. One of the principle ideas about the implied reader and the narratee is that they should not be identified with the real readers. This is based on the understanding that, since it is not possible to predict or identify the readership of a novel, the text is not created for a particular audience. In contrast, authors of children's literature know who their primary readers are and consciously create the narrative for this particular audience (See Chapter 5). It could be argued then that authors of children's literature are likely to create a narrative situation that has a narratee with whom the

real reader could easily identify. The notion of identification is usually associated with the main character of the novel but where the narratee is concerned:

...the more transparent the receiving instance and the more silent its evocation in the narrative, so undoubtedly easier, or rather the more irresistible, each real reader's identification with or substitution for that implied instance will be (Genette 1980, p.206).

In other words, a seemingly absent narratee is less likely to obstruct the reader's involvement with the narrative than if it is clearly addressed to someone else. On this basis, it could be further argued that, in the case of children's literature, being a child, possibly of a similar age to the main character of the story, is another element in the constitution of the zero-degree narratee in that when a narration appears to be addressed to no one in particular, it can be understood that the narratee is a child.

One of the narrating situations Genette (1980) explains is the narrator's 'phatic function' (p.256). 'Phatic' is a term used by Roman Jakobson and refers to a function of language for establishing and maintaining contact with the receiver of the speech: in the case of a narration, this would be with the narratee. The use of 'you' in the examples presented above can be seen as the example of this function: the use of 'you' makes the point that the story is not simply stated but it is told to someone. This someone is the narratee in the text who is absent all but in theory, thus allowing the pronoun to invite the reader to take its place as an addressee. The phatic function is particularly effective in *More Naughty Little Sister Stories*: as the

book is often read to a child by an adult, the relationship between the narrator and the narratee mirrors that of the reading adult and the listening child. Although the child readers of *Stig of the Dump* and *Trillions* may not think that they are personally addressed, the 'you' invites the child readers to feel that they are part of the audience. The narratee in *The Lion Tamer's Daughter* indicates that the s/he is a particular individual yet the attributes are not detailed enough to deviate from the function of the zero-degree narratee with whom the child readers can identify easily enough.

With regard to ways in which adults read and evaluate children's literature, one of the most potent observations in Genette's (1980) discussion of narratee is found in his analysis of *A Man of Business* by Balzac, in which Genette refers to 'the noisy listener behind the partition, for whom that narrative was not intended' and quotes from the novel 'there is always someone off to the side' (p.260). Having always someone off the side is one of the most distinct conditions of texts of children's literature, since by nature children's literature has an 'off the side' audience in the form of the adult reader. It is this recognition upon which Wall (1991) bases the theory of three modes of address in children's literature: single, double and dual address. Whilst Wall suggests that adults are the audience of the narrator, they are in fact the audience of the text: the audience of the text can perceive the reading situation but the narratee being in the world of the narrative event, cannot. In the next section, some of the narrator's function will be explored in order to understand how texts of children's literature address the audience 'off to the side' while narrating to the 'legitimate' audience in the text.

Narrator, focaliser, and adult audience

The duality that is inherent in texts of children's literature derives from the unique way in which its texts are created. When creating a text for children, the author does not tell the whole truth s/he knows, and the adult reader usually knows what is left unsaid and why it is held back (see chapter 6).

In her analysis of Alan Garner's *Stone Book Quartet*, Wall (1991) comments that the book is 'ringing with potential interpretations' (p.231), which is one of the reasons why Wall does not think that the narrator of the book is talking to children, inferring that it is not a book written for children. Wall does not explain the implication of this comment but taking into account the aim of her study, it can be speculated that Wall is referring to the potential interpretations by adults. Nodelman's (2003) concept of shadow text is that the adult reader is aware of the presence of the truth or adult knowledge but the text of children's literature does not invite the adult reader to interpret. In the case of *Stone Book Quartet*, as Wall aptly describes, the adult knowledge in the texts is 'ringing' for adult audience's interpretation. It is interesting to note that *The Stone Book Quartet* has now been reissued from the adult division of Harper Collins.

As he introduces the idea of the implied reader, Iser (1978) defines a literary text: it 'represents a perspective view of the world put together by (though not necessarily typical of) the author' and it is 'the way in which this world is constructed that brings about the perspective intended by the author' (p.35). Broadly speaking, the

perspective intended by most authors of children's literature can be summarised as a perspective which celebrates childhood yet at the same time urges child readers to leave it behind. (See Chapter 3) The way in which authors construct a narrative that represents this perspective is described by Rosen (2008): all children's books have to negotiate the space between the world of children and the world of adults, and also there is a 'line between the child you once were and the children you know now. If you want to write a book for children, you will find yourself travelling to and fro along this line' (see chapter 5). Although not intended to describe texts of children's literature in particular, Genette's (1980) distinction between the narrator and the 'focaliser' seems to be a useful explanation for the duality that the narrative situation in children's literature presents. When considering the perspective of a literary text, two elements need to be distinguished: 'who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? And the very different question who is the narrator? – or more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?' (Genette 1980, p.186) (italics in the original). Genette explains the concept of focaliser by referring to *What Maisie Knew* as an example: what the child sees is told in such a way that the narrator is telling 'an adult story whose significance escapes her [Maisie]' (p.186). In contrast, in texts of children's literature where an adult narrator addresses a child narratee, the prime function of the narrator is to speak on behalf of the focaliser who is usually a child. Nodelman (2008) points out that children's literature has a tendency 'to see things from the viewpoint of innocence –as children theoretically see them (p.135)', and the 'theory' is based on the nature of childhood exclusively constructed by adults (Nodelman 2008). This implies that in practice, what is narrated may not always be

what is seen by the child character in the narrative. The following two passages may demonstrate the different positions taken by the narrators in relation to the child character: the first excerpt is from *The Children of Green Knowe* by Lucy M. Boston which is referred to earlier in the chapter and has a seven-year old boy as the main character; the second is from *A Year and a Day* by William Mayne (1976), a story about two girls who find a 'fairy child'. The ages of the girls are not specified but can be assumed to be between about seven and nine. In the first example, the narrator observes the child and speaks his/her own perceptions. In the second example, the narrator recounts what the child sees.

The Children of Green Knowe : Tolly stands in the garden of Green Knowe and watches snow falling.

Like millions of tiny white birds circling home to roost, the flakes danced in the air. They filled the sky as far up as he could imagine. At the same time all the sounds in the world ceased. The snow was piling up on the branches, on the walls, on the ground, on St Christopher's face and shoulders, without any sound at all, softer than the thin spray of fountains, or falling leaves, or butterflies against a window, or wood ash dropping, or hair when the barber cuts it. Yet when a flake landed on his cheek it was heavy. He felt the splosh but could not hear it.

He went in plastered with snow, and here tea was ready, with Mrs Oldknow sitting by the fire waiting for him. In the fire the snow drifting down the chimney was making the only noise it ever can – a sound like the

striking of fairy matches: though sometimes when the wind blows you can hear the snow like a gloved hand laid against the window. (The Children of Green Knowe pp.60-61)

Apart from St Christopher (a stone statue) and Mrs Oldknow, none of the descriptive references belong to the diegesis: that is to say that there is no information in the narrative to indicate that these images are borne out of the thoughts and experience of the focaliser (Tolly). The narrator of *What Maisie Knew* tells what the child focaliser sees but that which escapes her comprehension. The narrator of *The Children of Green Knowe* tells what s/he (the narrator) imagines that a child might think if s/he (the child) were to stand alone looking at the snow falling. As such, what is narrated is not what the focaliser sees but that which is based on the narrator's own assumptions about children's perceptions and imagination. Since what is narrated has little significance to the narratee who is in the diegesis, it suggests that the narrator is addressing 'someone off to the side', who is, in the case of children's literature, the adult audience of the text. More accurately, as the narrator cannot address the audience of the text, it is the implied author, 'the author's second self' (Prince 2003, p.42), who is addressing the adult audience of the text. Iser (1978) explains that the reader visualises the perspective view of the world intended by the author by identifying the connections between the signs presented in the text, and for this to happen, the signs 'need to be organised in such a way that the reason for their selection can be conveyed to the reader' (p.180). This successful organisation depends on gestalt groupings which bring the interrelated perspectives together but the reader can only form a

meaningful correlation if the signs are presented and organised against the background of the context (Iser 1978, p.120). For readers of a literary text, the main parameter of the context is the world of the narrative: the reader's perception of what the novel is about. For the child readers of *The Children of Green Knowe*, the context is a story about a boy visiting his great-grandmother in an old house where there seems to be ghosts of children from a long time ago. For the adult reader who is reading the book for the purpose of evaluation, the parameter of the context is not the world of the narrative but his/her awareness that s/he is reading a children's book for evaluation. In other words, for the adult reader of *The Children of Green Knowe*, the overall context is that it is a book for children, about which s/he is likely to have a number of assumptions and expectations. The knowledge that the story is about a seven-year old boy staying with his great-grandmother is one of the properties of the context. In terms of the adult reader's response, the gestalt grouping, therefore, is likely to be influenced by this particular context.

Wall (1991) observes that the syntax chosen by Boston for this text is 'a naïve syntax' (p. 222). The collection of images in these passages is likely to appear arbitrary to naïve readers but when placed in the background of experience, the naivety itself becomes the figure, thereby enabling adult readers to visualise an image of childhood innocence.

A Year and a Day: At the beginning of the book, Rebecca was lying down by the sea on a hot summer day:

Something seemed to walk across her face. She put her hand to her eyes to

push it away, and sat up. She kicked the sea, getting up so fast. The sea kissed the back of her knee, very wet. The thing that had crossed her face was only a horse and a cart and a man, not touching her at all, but dropping a shadow on her, and coming between her and the church, passing by on the road. The cart was full of white earth from the clay pits.

Then she was alone again. There was she. Behind her was the church and its high wall. There was a road in front of it, and then grass, where she sat. There was sea today, but most days the water here was river. Now it was salt, not sweet. Beyond today's sea was the land on the Locharnoch side. This side was the St Kirren.

Rebecca came out of the water. She had mud legs. She looked round for Sara, but she was not here. Rebecca shouted for her, and a seagull shouted back. Rebecca crossed the road and went through the church gate. All the day's hot sunshine was lying there, bright and baking and dry, and heavy to walk against (A Year and a Day p.8).

Wall (1991) and Hunt (2001) argue that William Mayne is closer to child readers (or Mayne's narrator to the child narratee) than almost any other author (See Chapter 6). Hunt (1994) writes that Mayne has a 'remarkable eye for reproducing childhood perceptions' without any attempt to fill 'the gap between childish logic and adult schemata' (p.146). Similarly, Wall (1991) observes that in Mayne's books, children's 'doings are narrated without comment or interpretation' (p.215),

all of which are demonstrated in the passage above. The characteristics described by Hunt and Wall are remarkably similar to those of external focalisation: a narrative type 'in which the hero performs in front of us without our ever being allowed to know his thoughts or feelings' (Genette 1980, p.190). Whilst what is presented in the passages above is not exactly all actions, it is, in Hunt's (2001) words, '[his books] are rather than about' (p.96) (*italics in the original*). It is probably the effect produced by this narrative type that prompted Chambers (1985) to comment that Mayne's narrator is a 'watcher rather than an ally' and his writing 'seems deliberately designed to alienate the reader from the event and from the people described' (p.43). According to Iser (1978), 'the world of text is bound to have degrees of unfamiliarity for its possible readers' (p.35), and the reader's role is to fit the variety of perspectives presented in the text into meaningful correlations. This process is a 'game of imagination shared between the author and the reader,' (p.108), which 'will lead not so much to the fulfilment of expectations as to their continual modification' (p.111).

However, 'there are a limits to the reader's willingness to participate and these will be exceeded if the text makes things too clear or, on the other hand, too obscure: boredom and overstrain' (Iser 1978). If, as has been suggested in the previous chapters, adults assume children's literature to be a place for adults to justify their ideas about childhood or to feel nostalgic about their own childhood, it is more likely that they expect their expectations to be fulfilled rather than having to modify them. If this is the case, many expressions found in Mayne's texts that show the 'gap between childish logic and adult schemata' could look to adult

readers too obscure or, as Wall's (1991) friend sees 'a bit too juvenile' (Wall *ibid.* p.19). Either way, they will be unwilling to participate in the shared game of imagination with the author.

Hunt (1994) also observes that Mayne's books do not have 'portable themes' (p.146) or 'themes that can be discussed in the abstract easily' (p.96). A literary text presents various perspectives in such a way that it guides the reader to identify the connection between the signs thus preventing the readers from projecting an arbitrary meaning on the text (Iser 1978). The text of *A Year and a Day* consists only of the signs specific to the diegesis and these signs are structured in such a precise way that the readers cannot but be guided by the text. In other words, the text does not allow adult readers to project their assumptions about childhood or turn the content of the text into a portable theme to be discussed in the abstract. Wall (1991) concludes her examination of Mayne's writing by commenting that to respond to Mayne, adult readers 'must assume the role of implied child reader' (p.214). This leads to a question: whose ally was Chambers (1985) implying when he commented that Mayne's narrator was not an ally, and whom does he consider that Mayne's writing alienates? Since the narrator of *A Year and a Day* addresses exclusively the child narratee about what the focaliser sees, if it is an adult reader who seeks an ally, s/he will not find one and thus will be left feeling alienated. In fact Hunt (2001) remarks, 'this closeness [of the narrator to the narratee in Mayne's books] excludes adults' (p.97). How child readers empirically respond to *A Year and a Day* is outside the scope of my study. However, it is worth noting that both Hunt (1994, 2001) and Wall (1991) emphasise that Mayne writes for child

readers who are willing to think intelligently, which must be taken into account if an adult is to assume the role of implied child reader.

Narrator's adult voice: a first person narrator

The theory of focalisation was introduced by Genette (1980) in order to clarify the distinction between 'who sees (the focaliser)' and 'who speaks (the narrator)' in the narrative. For example, in the extract from *A Year and a Day* above, Rebecca is the focaliser who sees the sea and the church but she is not the narrator; the narrator is an adult who is recounting what Rebecca perceives. The notion that who sees and who speaks must be distinguished can be usefully applied to the study of children's literature, since texts of children's literature present a child's viewpoint which is narrated by an adult. The question is then, how much of what is told is influenced by the adult narrator's knowledge and experience?

Martin (1986) explains that a focaliser 'has the option of concealing or revealing the contents of consciousness' (p.145) as well as perceiving the world and reflecting on him/herself. This implies that a text can be structured in such a way that what the character sees influences what the narrator tells. Whilst such a detailed study of focalisation is outside the concern of my study, some of the basic notions can be effectively applied to an investigation of texts of children's literature. According to Martin (1986) the focaliser is not always a character in the narrative but in many passages in a novel it is the narrator who plays the role of the focaliser and perceives the event. This implies that the narrator also has the option of concealing or revealing the contents of his/her consciousness when s/he is in the

position of the focaliser. This, in turn, suggests that the viewpoint presented in the narrative may not be entirely that of the character but it is of the narrator. Despite the fact that they are narrated by an adult, texts of children's literature are generally considered to be a representation of children's viewpoints. According to Martin's (1986) explanation, the narrator has an option of in what way and to what extent the adult's consciousness is to be revealed. Martin points out that 'in general, our sympathies are enlisted by those whose thoughts we know' (p.164). Since the narrator does not only recount the event but also reveals his/her thoughts and viewpoints, the reader is likely to come to know the narrator well. The implication is that, because the narrator is an adult, the way in which s/he reveals his/her thoughts may have a significant influence on adult readers' response.

The passage from *The Children of Green Knowe* quoted earlier in this section, describes the scene in which Tolly is standing alone in the garden and watching the snow fall. As has been suggested, the passage is the view of the narrator who is watching the scene rather than the narrator recounting the view of the child who is standing in the snow. It is an example of the narrator revealing his/her adult consciousness, which is, in this case, an image of an idea of childhood that has been triggered by the scene. If the reader's sympathies are enlisted by those whose thoughts we know, as Martin (1986) points out above, it could be argued that the more the narrator reveals his/her consciousness, the greater the sympathies of the adult reader to the narrator and his/her adult's views. It could be further argued that if it is his/her ideas about childhood that the narrator reveals, it may engender responses in the adult reader about childhood rather than about the narrative itself.

In contrast, whilst the readers, certainly adult and possibly some child readers, are well aware that the text of *A Year and a Day* is an expression of adult intelligence and imagination, the text includes no signs that could suggest the adults' own interest in childhood. As a result the narrator's adult consciousness is almost entirely concealed. In fact, Hunt (1994) refers to the 'invisibility' (p.146) of Mayne's narrator.

As the two examples above demonstrate, the adult narrator's consciousness in the text of children's literature can be visible to a different extent, and the ways in which this adults' consciousness plays its role in the text can be one of the components of 'the almost indefinable adjustments' authors make when they write for children. On this basis, a number of texts of children's literature will be examined in detail in the following sections in order to identify some of textual features that indicate the presence of adults' consciousness. For this purpose, in the first section, the texts of children's literature will be compared with a text for adults. Needless to say, in texts for adults, the narrator's option for concealing or revealing his/her consciousness is based on fundamentally different factors from what pertains in texts written for children. *Going Back* by Penelope Lively is, however, unique in this respect in that it was first published in 1975 as a children's book but republished as a book for adults in 1991.

It was published as a children's book, probably because Lively had published several children's books by then, one of which, *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe*, won the Carnegie Medal in 1973. In addition, there are no obvious reasons why *Going*

Back, linguistically or subject-wise, should not be considered as a book for children. The change could be an indication that Lively acknowledged that those indefinable adjustments had not been made in the text of *Going Back*. Almost all Lively's books for children are concerned with the concept of time and how past is connected to present: *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* is a story of a ten-year old James who is blamed for the havoc caused by the ghost of a seventeenth-century apothecary; *Fanny and the Monsters* (1976) is a story about a Victorian girl who is interested in archaeology and discovers a fossil of a dinosaur; and in *The House in Norham Gardens* (1974), a fourteen-year old Clare becomes obsessed by a tribal mask brought back by her great-grandfather. In all these books, the child protagonist acquires a new perspective about his/her position in relation to the past and becomes aware of many possibilities in the future. *Going Back* is narrated by Jane, an adult, who visits her childhood home and tells what she remembers about her life there as a child. Jane as an adult appears only at the beginning and the end where the present-day Jane talks to her husband who waits in the car while she visits the house which is now waiting to be sold. In the main part of the book Jane tells about her life as a child with her brother Edward.

[Past, present and a child's perceptions]

Discussing books written by Penelope Lively, Butler (2006) points out that when Lively is writing for children, she explores the historical past by setting the stories in the past or using a fantasy device which 'gives access to, or a perspective on, the past without requiring her to focus on the child-protagonist's personal memory' but *Going Back* is about 'the operation of memory itself' (Butler 2006, p.271) which is

likely to be outside of children's interest. Butler quotes Lively's comment on why memory in itself is not a suitable subject for a children's novel:

If a novel for adults concerns itself with memory, it will probably consider it in the context of a lifetime rather than in the context of history. If you are writing for children, you cannot deal with memory in quite the same way. A child's life has been too short for him to appreciate the part that memory plays as one grows older. With a child, you can talk about historical memory as found in stories and places. (in Butler 2006, p.271)

Butler (2006) also quotes Lively's comment that 'time in childhood is a continuous present' (p.271) which Hollindale (1997) calls the presentness of childhood. How this sense of presentness is evident or absent from the text will be the first point to be explored. The text to be compared with *Going Back* is *Carrie's War* by Nina Bawden (1973): this is the story of Carrie who was evacuated with her younger brother Nick to a village in Wales.

Going Back begins as Jane and her husband arrive at the gate of Medleycott, Jane's childhood home. Jane goes in to the garden while her husband remains in the car.

It seems smaller, going back: the garden, the house, everything. But the garden, especially. When I was a small child it was infinite: lawns, paths, high hedges, the rose garden, the long reach of the kitchen garden, the spinney with the silver birches. It was a completed world; beyond lay

nothingness. Space. Limbo.

In fact, I now see, a landscape of fields and hills and lanes, tranquil and harmless – but then it was the unpredictable, into which one did not go. We turned back at the gate. The five-barred stable gate, the white gate by the tennis lawn, the drive gates. These defended our world: the safe, controlled world of the garden (p.1).

With the opening phrase, *Going Back* places the reader at the vantage point from which the world perceived by a child can be seen against a background of adult consciousness: that of the adult Jane to whom the same world now looks small and different. The reader is aware of the parallel images of the past and present in everything Jane sees.

Carrie's War also begins when Carrie, now an adult, comes back to where she was evacuated.

Carrie had often dreamed about coming back. In her dream she was always twelve years old again; short, scratched legs in red socks and scuffed, brown sandals, walking along the narrow, dirt path at the side of the high ridge, through the Druid's Grove. The yew trees in the Grove were dark green and so old that they had grown twisted and lumpy, like arthritic fingers. And in Carrie's dream, the fingers reached out for her, plucking at her hair and her skirt as she ran. She was always running by

the end of this dream, running away from the house, uphill towards the railway (p7).

Since the dream is not placed in an adult perspective but it remains in Carrie's childhood, to the reader, Carrie's childhood is a present event. The next examples highlight the contrasting ways in which the characters' perceptions about past are presented.

Going Back continues:

Today, coming out of the other, unpredictable world, it was the garden that was somehow strange – a planned and ordered place amid the random fields and trees.

We stopped the car outside the gates.

'I won't be long,' I said.

My husband opened a newspaper. 'No need to hurry.'

I walked down the drive. The leaves were falling, lying in glowing piles at either side. And the conkers. It was a good conker year, I could see. Years ago, years and years ago, when we were five and six, Edward and I, even the drive was a daring extension of our world. We lived then in the hedge bit beyond the kitchen, where the swing was. And then as we got older we made sorties up here, for the conkers and the wild strawberries, and down to the stable, and to the ha-ha at the bottom of the big lawn, and across the field to the spinney and the stream. And then somehow we were over the

gates and out there, in that undefined world of light and shape and shadow, and there were no surprises out there any more. No lions; no dragons (pp.1-2).

The landscape, the garden and the objects which Jane sees have not changed so greatly since she was a child yet she is aware of the profound change in which she now perceives these same fields and the garden. *Going Back*, at this point of the narrative, presents a number of signs that correlate with and reproduce a child's perceptions of the world: how even the drive was once almost outside the safe world of Jane and her brother, how they gradually expanded their world over the gates, and how the world beyond the gate was undefined and filled with light and shape and shadow, but Jane's words in which she summarises her thoughts, 'there were no surprises out there anymore. No lions; no dragons' guide the reader to visualise how what Jane remembers is irreconcilable with her adult perceptions. Lively is exploring the 'part that memory plays' which she considers that children have not yet lived long enough to appreciate.

Carrie's War:

But when she did come back, with her own children, the railway line had been closed. The sleepers had been taken up and the flat, stony top of the ridge was so overgrown with blackberries and wild rose and hazelnut bushes that it was like pushing through a forgotten forest in a fairy tale. The tangled wood round Sleeping Beauty's castle. Pulling off the sticky brambles that clung to their jeans, Carrie's children said, 'No one's been

here for hundreds of years...’

‘Not hundred, thousands...’

‘A hundred, thousand years. A million, billion, trillion...’

‘Only about thirty,’ Carrie said. She spoke as if this was no time at all. ‘I was here, with Uncle Nick, thirty years ago. During the war – when England was at war with Germany. The Government sent the children out of the cities so they shouldn’t be bombed. We weren’t told where we were going. Just told to turn up at our schools with a packed lunch and a change of clothes, then we went to the station with our teachers. There were whole train loads of children sent away like that...’

‘Without their Mummies?’ the little ones said. ‘Without their Dads?’

‘Oh, quite alone.’ Carrie said. ‘I was eleven when we first came here. And Uncle Nick was going on ten.’

Uncle Nick was so old. He had been old for years and grown so fat in the stomach that he puffed when he stooped. The thought of him being ten years old made the children want to giggle but they bit their giggles back. Their mother was looking so strange: eyes closed and dreaming. They looked at her pale, dreaming face and said nothing (pp.7-8).

Carrie, on the other hand, finds that the place itself has changed. The narrator recounts the factual changes and not the changes in Carrie’s perceptions about the changes. Instead of continuing to focus on the adult Carrie’s consciousness, Bawden introduces Carrie’s children into the narrative, which shifts the narrative

perspective from the adult Carrie's memory to that of the children's interest in listening to their mother's story. The facts about evacuation being new knowledge and Carrie's brother Nick being an uncle who is old and fat, and Carrie being their mother are all perceptions of the children that are recounted by the narrator without any comments from an adult's perspective. 'Uncle Nick was so old' is a child view, since Nick is in fact barely forty which cannot seem to be very old to the adult narrator. Within this setting Carrie becomes a narrator and the story unfolds as the twelve-year old Carrie experiences it rather than as an adult remembering it.

[Narrating I and narrated I]

In his examination of characteristics of narratives with a first-person narrator, Genette (1980) draws attention to the distinction between 'the narrating I and the narrated I' (p.252). The event narrated always precedes the narrating of the event and, although the narrator and the hero are the same person, the 'narrating I' is necessarily older and more experienced than the 'narrated I'. This fact 'authorises the former to treat the latter with a sort of condescending or ironic superiority' (p.252). Texts of children's literature differ considerably in this respect in that, by definition, the narrator is older, if not actually an adult, and more experienced than the hero except when the text is narrated by a first person narrator. When the text of children's literature has a first person narrator, unlike texts for general readers, the age and the experience of the narrating I and the narrated I are theoretically the same. In her examination of the development of the narrator's voice in children's literature, Wall (1991) observes that whilst a first person narrator in children's literature was not uncommon in the nineteenth century, these narrators then were

usually looking back and telling their childhood adventures. These narrators usually retained a 'comfortable adult perspective' (p.68), whereas in modern children's literature, a first person narrator is a literary technique for the adult to address the child by assuming the personality of a child and allowing one child's mind to speak to another (Wall 1991).

For the purpose of exploring the different nature of first person narrator in texts of children's literature, *Going Back* can be compared with *Clay* by David Almond (2005). The story is narrated by Davie who reluctantly becomes friendly with Stephen Ross who comes to live with one of his neighbours, known as Crazy Mary. There are many rumours about Stephen, most of which suggest that he is in some way evil. Davie is drawn into making a clay figure with Stephen and, as Stephen predicted, the figure comes alive.

Going Back: Jane begins to tell her husband about her life in Medleycott. The narrating Jane is clearly not the same person as the narrated Jane:

People's lives tell a story, I thought once: and then, and next, and then...
But they don't. Nothing so simple. It it's a story at all, then there are two of them, running side by side. What actually happened, and what we remember. Which is more important, I wonder?

Edward was one when I was born. That year, that missing year when he was there and I was not, remained like a small ledge between us, always,

as though he stood one step higher on a ladder we were both climbing. And mother died when we were two and three. Edward used to think he could remember her: I knew I didn't. She had a straw hat, he used to say, that she wore in the garden, and it had long brown ribbons hanging down from it, and he remembered her sitting on the rose garden seat wearing this hat. But then one day we were with Betty in the attic turning out an old chest and she took out a hat and said, 'Well, look at that now – there's your mother's old garden hat. Fancy that being here still!' And it didn't have brown ribbons at all, just a kind of pink band round it.

Mother died, and I think there were people who looked after us for a while but who I do not remember, and then there was Betty. Betty had done the cooking, always, and now she took us over too, and the other, shadowy people went away and we were Betty's affair, with father intruding sometimes, but less and less. We lived in the playroom and in Betty's red-tiled, flour-smelling kitchen and in Betty's sitting room with the brown wireless crackling to itself in the mantelpiece (p.12).

Clay begins when Stephen Rose arrived in the town where Davie lives. There is no significant distance between the narrating I and the narrated I:

He came in Felling on a bright and icy February morning. Not so long ago, but it was a different age. I was with Geordie Craggs, like I always was back then. We were swaggering along like always, laughing and joking

like always. We passed a Players back and forward and blew long strings of smoke into the air. We'd just been on the altar. We were heading for Braddock's Garden. We were on Watermill Lane when a red taxi rattled past us. Black fumes belched from it. The sign at the top said it was from down at the coast.

'What's that doing up here?' said Geordie.

A bit of communion wafer was still stuck to my teeth. I poked it free with my tongue and swallowed it, then drew on the cigarette again.

'Good knows,' I said.

The taxi stopped fifty yards away, outside Crazy Mary's house. Crazy came lolloping out with her red hair flying. She had a big flappy flowery dress and tartan slippers on. The kid got out of the taxi. He pulled a battered brown suitcase after him. Crazy paid the driver then the two of them headed for her front door. She looked back at us. She tried to put her arm around the kid but the kid twisted and went inside. Crazy followed and the door slammed shut (pp.1-2).

The narrating Jane in *Going Back* is not exactly condescending towards the narrated Jane but stands at a vantage point from which she is able to observe the child's perceptions at a distance. The incident of her mother's garden hat is not included here as an episode in the narrative but is referred to as a link to the first paragraph of the book in which the narrator contemplates how memory operates. As Iser (1978) explains that 'Each new correlate, then, will answer expectations (either positively or negatively) and, at the same time, will arouse new

expectations' (p.111), the reader is reminded of the narrator's interest in memory and will be guided to understand that the ways in which the kitchen and Betty's sitting room are described is not a narrative presentation of how they were but the adult narrator's memory of these rooms.

The narrator's statement at the beginning of *Clay*, 'Not so long ago, but it was a different age' indicates that the story he is about to tell has been completed and he is older than he was in the story. The expression 'a different age' could be interpreted to mean that the narrating Davie is now grown up and looking back on his childhood but there is no other textual sign to confirm it. The event is narrated as it takes place without the narrator's comments and there is no reference to what the narrated Davie cannot see at the time of the event. This is an example of the narrator assuming the personality of a child and allowing one child's mind to speak to another without the narrator revealing his adult consciousness. Another reason for the apparent absence of the adult narrator's consciousness from this passage is the fact that it is narrated chronologically. Referring to the temporality of a narrative, Martin (1986) points out that 'the narrator's hand at work' (p.123) can be seen when the time-line of the story is organised. In *Going Back*, the passage begins with the narrator's thoughts at the time of narrating then the time in the narrative goes back to the time when Jane was born, and at the end of the paragraph, Jane and Edward were old enough to help Betty tidying up the contents of an old chest, but then the story goes back to when her mother died when she was two. The way in which the narrator arranges the sequence signals to the reader that the narrating Jane is not recounting her childhood activities but presenting her

perceptions as a child as remembered by an adult. Clay is narrated as the event takes place, without any apparent involvement of the narrator's own interest in creating particular perspectives: he is simply recounting what he saw. The combination of the uncommented description of the event and the unarranged time-line makes the narrator's adult consciousness practically invisible.

[Meeting of I the narrator and I the hero]

Another characteristic of texts with a first person narrator that Genette (1980) discusses is the way in which the narrator's knowledge differs from that of the hero: the difference is not in the quantity but in the nature. Genette explain that 'the narrator does not simply know more, empirically, than the hero; he knows in the absolute sense, he understand the Truth' (p.253) (*italics in the original*). Whilst Genette's discussion is about text itself, the notion that the difference is more than simply the question of quantity but in nature is similar to the point made by Nodelman (2008) about the way in which adults and children understand texts differently: adults and children read differently not in the degree of understanding or in empirical quantity, but in the nature of understanding. Genette (1980) goes on to explain that the hero does not approach the truth with a gradual movement toward it but the truth 'rushes in on him' (p.253). The significance of this instance to the narrative development is that, after this point 'the two voices [of the narrating I and the narrated I] can blend and merge' (p.253) as now the hero knows as much as the narrator.

In children's literature, there is usually a particular instant in the course of narrative

development when an entirely new idea occurs to the child character and it is the significant point of growing up that the author intends to communicate to the child readers. In children's literature, however, the child character may come to know some truth but his/her voice will never fully merge with the adult narrator's voice. The difference in the nature as well as in quantity of knowledge remains between the two, since the narrator, at least in theory, always withholds some of his/her adult knowledge, thus creating a 'shadow text'. This is where the technique of the first person narrator in texts of children's literature becomes problematic, since I the narrator cannot, in theory, have more knowledge than I the hero. In what way and to what extent the narrator's adult consciousness is revealed without losing the assumed child's voice depends on the author's skills and intentions. This could be one of the notable points in the narrative of children's literature where adulthood could be most clearly detected. The following passages from *Going Back* and *Clay* may demonstrate some of the differences.

Going Back: Jane and Edward run away from Medleycott the night before Edward is to go back to his boarding school. They arrive at a farm where Mark who is a conscientious objector and who taught Edward the violin is now placed. Realising that the children have run away, Mark phones Medleycott and Betty comes to take them back. Mark tells Betty and children that he has joined up. The narrating I is an adult who is able to look back on the event.

'Well!' said Betty, 'Well, fancy! I am surprised! Well, all the best. All the very best.'

He stood there, Mike, in his earthy corduroys, and his jersey with frayed ends to the sleeves.

‘You are going to be a soldier,’ said Edward, in a small, stunned voice.

‘Yes’

‘But you’re a C.O. You can’t’

‘That’s what I thought,’ said Mike. ‘But I stopped being quite so sure. People do, you know. It sounds muddled, I know. It is. Things are.’

After a moment Edward said, ‘You’d have to kill people.’

‘Yes,’ said Mike, ‘I’ve thought about that.’

‘I thought about running away,’ said Edward. ‘All night. I know it’s not the same,’ he added.

‘You would have done,’ said Mike. ‘And it is, in the end. Having to choose. Poor old son. It’s no fun, is it?’

They stood there, looking at each other. The policeman had gone into the car and started the engine, pointedly.

‘Come along,’ said Betty. ‘You’ve had half Somerset fussing about you for long enough.’

We got in the car and went away the lane. When we looked back, at the end, out of the small oval back window, Mike was standing there waving.

We went round the corner and he turned back into the farmyard.

We never saw him again. And I do not know what become of him (p.116).

Up to this point in *Going Back*, Mike has been the embodiment of what is right in

life to Jane and Edward. In this passage, where ‘the truth has rushed on them’, Jane’s child voice is no longer present. What is narrated is from the perspective of adult Jane who accepts Mike’s decision to compromise, and there are no questions or protests from the child Jane. The child’s perceptions have merged into those of adults and from the viewpoint of the adult Jane, whose interest is in her childhood and its memory, there is nothing more to tell about Medleycott and Mike. If Lively had been consciously writing for children, she would probably have included some elements in this passage to allow the reader to expect a new development in the child Jane’s perception.

In Clay, Stephen Ross told Davie that it was the clay figure they made together that killed the boy who was bullying Davie. Stephen reminded Davie that he had wished the boy to die and now the clay figure that he made came alive and killed the bully. Stephen ordered Clay to die and went away. Davie looks for Clay. In theory, the narrating Davie is not able to observe how confused the narrated Davie is:

I search for Clay. I whisper his name. I crawl on all fours through the undergrowth. I’m about to give up when I stumbled across him. I call his name, but he’s dead and gone. I try to pray for him, but what god can I pray to? What god would recognise Clay? It starts to rain as I crouch over him. The water runs across his skin, already carrying him back into the earth. I open him up and search with my fingers in the depths of him. I find the locket, take it out, and close him up again. The rain intensifies.

‘Goodbye, Clay,’ I say.

I hold my face up to the rain. I let it wash the mud and blood and tears away. Then I hurry home. It’s already turning light. Miserable steel-grey clouds hang over Felling. The rain drums down. I slip into the house. I stand for a moment on the landing. I hear my parents’ breathing as they sleep. I open their door and look in on them. I wait for them to wake and to see me there. ‘I’m here,’ I whisper, but they hardly stir. I feel like Clay – stiff, heavy, dull – like I’m something at the very edge of life. I feel that I could be washed away, that I could disappear. ‘I’m here,’ I whisper more loudly. There’s no response. Are they dreaming me as I stand there, as I close their door, as I leave them? I go to my room. I hide my clothes. I hide the locket. I look out into the endless night. Who thinks all this? Who believes all this? Who dreams all this? Then nowtness overcomes me, and I sleep. (pp.267-268)

At this point in *Clay*, Davie has been forced to realise that he could be as evil as Stephen Ross but ‘the truth’ is not presented as a comprehensible whole. Davie’s action and thoughts are all within his experience and not abstract ideas or allusions except for two sentences, ‘like I’m something at the very edge of life. I feel that I could be washed away, that I could disappear.’ This will probably allow adult readers to visualise a boy whose childhood is nearing its end and some child readers may understand the implication of the expression but what is actually said is still a voice of a boy who is yet to experience the end of his own childhood. Although the narrator indicates ‘the truth’, the hero is still some distance away

from the truth which is known to the adult who is hidden behind the persona of the child narrator.

From the examination of the two texts above, a conclusion could be drawn that one of the differences between children's literature and literature for general readers that has a child as the main character is the way in which the narrating I and the narrated I meet, which is the moment in the narrative when the child character learns the truth. In children's literature, the meeting often indicates a new starting point for the narrated I, whereas in general literature, it is more likely to imply that the narrated I, the child, has now ceased to exist.

[A child or an adult?]

A first person narrator in texts of children's literature can maintain his/her adult self and tell a story of his/her childhood. The narrator in this case naturally has more experience and knowledge than the narrated I. In contrast, when a first person narrator in children's literature assumes the personality of a child and narrates the event as his/her current experience rather than a memory, the difference in knowledge and experience between the narrating I and the narrated I does not, in theory, exist.

Narrative structure in children's literature is rarely experimental and the identity of a first person narrator and his/her relation to the story are made clear at the start of the book. Almost all Doctor Dolittle books by Hugh Lofting, are narrated by

Thomas Stubbins, who was the Doctor's assistant as a boy and now an adult, telling the stories of the adventures he had with the Doctor and the animals. For example, Doctor *Dolittle's Garden* (1927) begins:

I suppose there is no part of my life with the Doctor that I, Thomas Stubbins, look back on with more pleasure than that period when I was Assistant Manager of the Zoo (p.7).

Although Stubbins as a boy is a character in the story, Stubbins as the narrator is located outside the narrative which allows him to retain a comfortable adult perspective as described by Wall (1991). A first person narrator who narrates as an adult is less frequently employed in modern children's literature except in books for young children, i.e. those books that are read to children by an adult who can take the place of the narrator. One of the notable examples is *My Naughty Little Sister* books by Dorothy Edwards. *More Naughty Little Sister Stories* (1970) begins:

A very long time ago, when I was a little girl, I didn't have a naughty little sister at all. I was a child all on my own. I had a mother and a father of course, but I hadn't any other little brothers or sisters – I was quite alone (p.7).

The narrator in this text is a third person narrator in all but the grammatical form in that she is not a character in the narrative. This literary technique is effectively used

as part of the narrator's 'phatic' function by which the narrator establishes and maintains the contact with the narratee, in this case as a story teller to the listener.

Apart from these few exceptions, a first person narrator in texts of children's literature is usually the main character of the story and the reader is able to work out his/her identity at the start of the narrative. *The Monster Garden* by Vivien Alcock (1988) begins:

I shouldn't have done it. I didn't really mean to, but that's no excuse, of course. I should have known better with a name like mine. Frances Stein. Called Frankie for short.

The trouble was, I am a girl. My father is a high-up scientist and a low-down male chauvinist pig. You'd think with three sons he'd have been glad of a girl for a change, but he wasn't He doesn't even know how to talk to female.

[...]

It was Thursday, the eighth of July. Our teachers were on a one-day strike so David and I were at home. At least I was at home, feeling cross and resentful because I have been left out again. My father had taken David to show him round the laboratories. I'd wanted to go too, but they said I was too young (p.5).

Kit's Wilderness by David Almond (1999) has a prologue in italics at the beginning of Part One:

They thought we had disappeared, and they were wrong. They thought we were dead, and they were wrong. We stumbled together out of the ancient darkness into the shining valley. The sun glared down on us. The whole world glistened with ice and snow. We held our arms against the light and stand in wonder at each other. [...] Down there, our neighbours were digging for us in the snow. Policemen were dragging the river bed for us. The children saw us first and started running. Their voices echoed with astonishment and joy: Here they are! Oh, here they are! They clustered around us. They watched us as if we were ghosts, or creatures from some weird dream. Here they are! They whispered. Look at them. Look at the state of them!

Yes, here we were, the children who had disappeared, brought back into the world as if by magic: John Askew, the blackened boy with bone necklaces and paintings on him; Allie Keenan, the good-bad ice girl with silver skin and claws; the wild dog Jax; and me, Kit Watson with ancient stories in my head and ancient pebbles in my palm (pp.3, 4).

Millions by Frank Cottrell Boyce (2004) begins:

If our Anthony was telling this story, he'd start with the money. It always comes down to money, he says, so you might as well start there. He'd probably put, 'Once upon a time there were 229,370 little pounds sterling,' and go on till he gets to, 'and they all lived happily ever after in a

high-interest bank account.’ But he’s not telling this story. I am. Personally, I like to start with the patron saint of whatever it is. For instance, when we had to write about moving house for Literacy Hour, I put: (p.1)

[...]

It was our first day at Great Ditton Primary. The sign outside says, ‘Great Ditton Primary – Creating Excellence for a New Community’.

‘See that?’ said Dad as he left us at the gates. ‘Good isn’t good enough here. Excellence, that’s what they’re after. My instruction for the day is, “Be excellent.” The instructions for supper I’ll leave on the fridge door’ (p.3).

The first and the third (The Monster Garden and Millions) extracts contain a number of references to the narrators’ families and their schools which inform the reader that the narrators are contemporary school children telling their recent experiences. The second extract contains no time-specific reference but neither does it contain any evidence that the narrator has the knowledge that the narrated Kit Watson could not have had at the time of the event, which indicates that the event is a recent experience of the narrator and not a recollection of the narrator as an adult.

Compared with these examples, the first person narrator’s identity in *The Well* by Gene Kempe (1984) is ambiguous. It almost looks as if the adult behind the assumed child character of the narrator was intended by the author to be identified as adult by adult readers. The book was described by the reviewer in *The Signal*

Selection of Children's Books 1988 as 'a kind of junior Cider with Rosie' (p.64).

This suggests that the book has the distinctly nostalgic elements of a remembered childhood, which is a subject that has more relevance to adults than to children.

The book begins as if to emphasise Annie's childlikeness:

'There's a dragon living in the well, Annie. That's why you musn't go near it. I've told you. A hundred times.'

We walked away from the well and sat on the stile that led to the fields stretching for miles and miles out to the great wide world.

'What's the dragon like?'

'It's the biggest dragon in the world, and it's long and wriggly with gold and silver wings and green scales and sharp claws and enormous teeth, and its breath's fiery and poisonous, and that's why you musn't go near the well, Annie.'

'Why doesn't the water in the well put the fiery breath out, then, our Tom?'

'Because it's a magic dragon, stupid.'

'Can you see the dragon?'

'Of course I can or I wouldn't be able to tell you what it looked like, would I?'

'Why can't I see it then? I've looked and looked but I can't see one like you say. There was an old toad once. I stroked it. That wasn't the dragon'

(p.11).

[...]

‘You are swearing, Annie Sutton.’

‘No, I wasn’t. It was Nell swearing. Is it really nineteen thirty-five, our Tom?’

‘You know it is. April the third, nineteen thirty-five. It’ll be the holidays soon, Annie’ (p.12).

The 1988 Puffin edition of the book has a subtitle: Captivating tales of childhood.

The description on the back cover reads,

‘Living in a Midlands village in the years before the Second World War with her parents, her much-loved brother Tom and three grown-up sisters, [...]’, and ‘[...] the vivid memories which Annie Sutton (alias Gene Kemp) recalls in these hilarious and perceptive tales of childhood.’

In the text itself, however, there are no signs to indicate that the narrator is an adult who is looking back on her childhood. This lack of information about the narrator’s position seems to allow the text to ‘establish itself as a correlative in the reader’s consciousness’ (Iser 1978, p.107) that the narrator of this text is not an adult but the child within the narrative. The reader’s response is likely to be reinforced by the way in which the reference to the time of the story is presented as the character’s knowledge rather than the information provided by the narrator.

The ambiguity of the narrator’s identity in *The Well* may be highlighted if it is compared with another text with a similar setting. ‘The Grey Invader’, from a short

story collection *Dog Days and Cat Naps* also by Gene Kemp (1980), is a story about a mysterious cat that appeared in the village where the narrator lived. The text sets out to inform the reader that the narrator is an adult who is telling the event that happened when she was a child. The narrator tells about her family and their cats, parachute-spotting, Miss Telfer who was paranoid about the village being invaded, and then about a magnificent grey cat that appeared from nowhere. The story begins:

During the war, I lived in a small village in the heart of England. We had two cats, but no dogs, as my mother would not have dogs. I loved these cats dearly – John, an elderly bachelor of a cat with quiet ways and a wavy tail, and Patsy, a black cat with white paws, white whiskers and white stomach, very dainty and intelligent, one of the most intelligent animals I've known. She could steal groceries out of bicycle baskets, open pantry and cupboard doors to track down meat, scoop goldfish out of bowls, and after a hunting spree in the fields, would line up her little dormice and vole victims exactly in order of size, the longest first, in the porch, to greet whoever was coming in (p.9).

From the information provided at the beginning of the story, the reader knows that the narrator is an adult but, even without this information, the voice of the narrator is not distinctly that of a child whereas the narrator of *The Well* is: it is intended to be a voice of a child who is young enough to believe that a fire-breathing dragon is living at the bottom of a well. One of the episodes begins:

Next door to us lived a cat, a sleekitty cat called Nip, and she had about ninety kittens, though not all at once, of course. She went from sleekitty to fat and back again all the time, and was a very happy cat, not like Blackie, and very busy having kittens every year (p.21).

Wall (1991) points out that, whilst a child first person narrator is an effective technique for creating a child's voice, the child's lack of experience and writing skills may prevent the text from achieving a satisfactory literary effect. However, the text of *The Well* is constructed in such a way that the child's lack of experience and narrating skills are not a problem but an asset. Nodelman (2008) considers that one of the key identifying characteristics of children's fiction is the presence of nostalgia: a 'desire [of an adult] for and imaginary revelling in a golden, simpler time now past' (p.46) and this golden time is often embodied by a child character that is ignorant and is happy because of it (Nodelman 2008). *The Well* contains seventeen episodes, some as short as three pages, and almost every episode contains some evidence of Annie's ignorance. For example:

Annie describes the well and tells how cold the water is:

[...] a silver bubbling fountain, the coldest drink in the whole world. On a hot day you could drink it forever. That's because we've got hard water, my mother told me. How could water be cold? (p.14)

Annie looks at one of the second hand books her father had just bought:

[...] for a book had fallen open at a picture of a sad, fat lady with no clothes on but wrapped in a lot of hair, standing by a lake on a very cold day.

‘Her mother didn’t make her wear a liberty bodice,’ I said (p.18).

Annie and her father stay behind when other family members have gone out.

We sat by the fire and my Dad was reading a book by Edgar Wallace and I’d got a book off Evie’s bookshelf called *The Doll’s House*, though I hadn’t found anything about houses or dolls in it so far (p.25).

Annie’s ignorance may amuse child readers but to adult readers, it could be a means of ‘recapturing the child that he has been’ (Nodelman 2008, p.192). In his discussion of a first person narrator, Genette (1980) points out, ‘we should not confuse the information given by a focalised narrative [by the first person narrator] with the interpretation the reader is called on to give of it (or that he gives without being invited to)’, since the narrator may ‘recount without thinking anything amiss but whose meaning cannot escape the least subtle reader’ (p.197) (*italics in the original*). Adult readers are likely to interpret, without being invited, Annie’s remarks above and many more similar examples found throughout the book as the signs of childhood innocence. Moreover, many adult readers will probably realise that these remarks are included with an intention to emphasise the endearing quality of a child’s ignorance. This is where, behind the assumed child personality, the voice of the narrator who ‘possesses an adult knowledge of the value of

childlike innocence' (Nodelman 2008, p.31) can be heard by the adult reader. It is by exploiting the inexperience and the ignorance of a young child against the background of the descriptions of the countryside and the way of life of the time, carefully selected and combined, that *The Well* successfully evokes a 'golden, simple time' and effectively produces the nostalgia that adult readers tend to seek in children's literature (Carpenter 1985, Wall 1991, Hollindale 1997). The comparison with *Cider with Rosie* in the review in *The Signal Selection of Children's Books* could be seen as the evidence of this effect.

Narrator's adult voice: a third person narrator

Nodelman (2008) points out that, whilst there are many texts for children that have a first person narrator, by far the greater proportion of texts for children 'tell of the main character's response through the medium of a third person narrator' (p.210). Unlike a first person narrator in texts of children's literature who assumes the personality of the child, a third person narrator has greater freedom to speak as an adult. One of the main principles of Iser's (1978) theory of the implied reader is that 'texts must already contain certain conditions of actualisation that will allow their meaning to be assembled' (p.34). In the case of texts of children's literature, these conditions must be relevant to the child reader who is 'still in the middle of constructing his or her own childhood, and aware of its presentness – aware that it is not yet over' (Hollindale 1997, p.29). On this basis, if the text requires knowledge about childhood as a completed period in the past in order for the meaning to be visualised, the condition cannot be considered relevant to the child reader.

The freedom of a third person narrator to speak as an adult, however, occasionally overrides the principle of the implied reader, resulting in the narrator sharing his/her adult experience with the adult reader of the text rather than telling the story that is relevant to the child reader. The text of *The Children of Green Knowe*, which is discussed earlier in this chapter, can be considered as an example of such a case.

Tolly and his great-grandmother, Mrs Oldknow had spent the day decorating the house for Christmas, and as they rested, Tolly heard the sound of a rocking horse moving and a woman's voice singing in Mrs Oldknow's room. The narrator's focus is on the significance of the singing voice to Mrs Oldknow. Tolly gains no new perceptions from the event:

‘Who is it?’ he whispered.

‘It's the grandmother rocking the cradle,’ said Mrs Oldknow, and her eyes were full of tears.

‘Why are you crying, Granny? It's lovely.’

‘It is lovely, only it is such a long time ago. I don't know why that should be sad, but it sometimes seems so.’

The singing began again.

‘Granny,’ whispered Tolly again with his arm through hers, ‘whose cradle is it? Linnet is as big as I am.’

‘My darling, this voice is much older than that. I hardly know whose it is. I heard it once before at Christmas.’

It was queer to hear the baby's sleepy whimper only in the next room, now, and so long ago. 'Come, we'll sing it too,' said Mrs Oldknow, going to the spinet. She played, but it was Tolly who sang alone, while, four hundred years ago, a baby went to sleep.

They went down then for their tea, which they needed badly, for they had worked long and hard, as well as hearing strange things. Tolly was very good at lighting candles. He did not spill wax or drop red-hot matches (p.133).

Iser (1978) explains that the world of text contains some degrees of unfamiliarity for its possible readers and the text must bring about a standpoint from which the reader can 'view things that would never have come into focus as long as his habitual dispositions were determining his orientation' (p.35). The above text arguably does not contain enough elements to guide the child reader to a standpoint from where s/he may be able to view this strange event and to gain a new perception about why these phantom sounds are making Tolly's great-grand mother cry. Adult readers, on the other hand, will have few difficulties in recognising the meaning of the text to be assembled. Adults are able to do this because there is a distinct difference between child and adult where interest in history and perceptions of time are concerned. According to Tucker (1981), children do not usually develop an idea of history until about the age of eleven and younger children are 'tending to lump everything that has happened together, from their own grandfather to Robin Hood' (p.153). Also, a child does not appreciate the part that memory plays as an older person does (Lively in Butler 2006). On this basis, whilst *The Children of*

Green Knowe has been described as a celebration of contact between the young and the old, and a continuation of past and present (Reynolds 1994, p.39; Hollindale 1997, p.67; Hall 2001, p.48), it may be that these qualities that are specifically related to the value of a link to the past are identified only by the adult reader. Furthermore, the narrator leaves the incident without developing a sense of the new perception that Tolly might have gained from this event. It could be said, therefore, that this passage is an example of a third person narrator speaking as an adult and sharing his/her adult experience with the adult reader rather than giving the priority to what might be more directly relevant to the child reader's knowledge and experience.

When the narrator is concerned with the child's perception about time and past, it is more likely that the text invites 'unacknowledged awareness' (Nodelman 2008, p.143) from adult readers rather than acknowledging the author's adult perceptions: adult readers recognise what the narrator is implying but that which s/he is not actually putting into words. The following examples may demonstrate the point.

Barney in *Stig of the Dump* by Clive King (1963) is eight years old. Having made friends with a stone-age man Stig, Barney and his older sister Lou find themselves on the midsummer night, amongst a tribe of stone-age people building what looks like a circle of standing stones. The children find Stig amongst them and join the work of carrying the stones up the hill. At the end of the book, Barney and Lou are out for a picnic with their parents. The awareness of the link between past and present is narrated from the child viewpoint.

It wasn't until quite a long time later that they went with their parents for a picnic on the North Downs where the four stones stand. And as they ate their sandwiches their parents got into an argument about stone-ages and bronze-ages, and about how the stones had got there at all, until Barney said, without thinking, 'They had flint spears, and it was the heave-ho that did it.'

And everybody thought about this quite a lot, and had to admit that Barney was probably right, though they couldn't think how he knew.

And then Barney and Lou said together, 'But I wonder how the baby got there?' And that was a question nobody could answer (p156).

The narrator tells no more than what has just come into Barney's mind. Although the child reader may not recognise the significance of Barney's words, the narrator provides enough signs that Barney is remembering what he did with Stig and his people, which will guide the child reader to form a notion that something from a long time ago may be relevant in his/her own life, even if it cannot be articulated sufficiently to express in words. The adult reader is likely to be aware that the narrator is referring to the idea of continuity of time but there are no textual signs by which the adult reader can confirm his/her speculation about the narrator/author's intention

When the child character is older, the notion of time can be addressed more directly within the character's own perception. James in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* by

Penelope Lively (1973) is ten years old. He meets old Mrs Verity on the way home from school. Mrs Verity spends her time gossiping about the neighbours and, as a way of asking James, whose family has just moved into the village, how they are getting on, she tells a story about how, as a girl, she and her brother escaped Sunday school:

...and James stared back at her with a new interest. Somewhere, deep within stout, elderly Mrs Verity, with her rheumatically hands that swelled up around her wedding ring, and her bad back that bothered her in damp weather, there sheltered the memory of a little girl who had behaved outrageously in Sunday School. And that, when you stop to think about it, was a very weird thing indeed (p.73).

Lively (1977) comments that 'time in childhood is a continuous present' (in Butler 2006, p.271). The text above shows one of the moments in childhood when the child realises that time may not be a 'continuous present'. Nevertheless, in the text quoted, the narrator tells only what has occurred to James at this particular moment and not of the implication of his new perception, about which the adult reader is likely to be aware but the awareness will remain unsaid. The narrator's focus does not shift from the viewpoint of James.

As discussed above, a third person narrator in texts of children's literature has greater freedom to speak as an adult than a first person narrator. In the following section, a third person narrator in various narrative situations will be examined in

order to identify some of the ways in which authors utilise or sometimes exploit a third person narrator's function in order to reveal or conceal their adult consciousness in varying degrees, and consideration will be given to the ways in which this might influence adult readers' response when they read with an aim of evaluating the book on behalf of children.

[Into or through the mind of a child]

Martin (1986) explains that, in a narrative with a third person narrator, the term 'access to the character's consciousness' can reflect two different situations: the narrator can either 'look into a character's mind, or look through it.' In the case of the former, 'the narrator is the perceiver and the character's mind is perceived' and in the latter 'the character is the perceiver and the world is perceived' (p.143) (*italics in the original*). These two cases may be adapted for the examination of texts of children's literature: Nodelman (2008) observes that 'children's literature is about childhood and is, in fact, often sentimental and nostalgic' (p.195) but when the narrator looks into the character's mind, the narrator perceives the mind of the child character who is 'in the middle of constructing his or her own childhood' (Hollindale 1997, p.21), and, as such, what is perceived cannot be sentimental or nostalgic. When, on the other hand, the narrator is looking through the character's mind, the narrator perceives childhood through the child character: the narrator is at the vantage point from which childhood can be viewed as an entity, and what is perceived could be sentimental and nostalgic. Hollindale (1997) comments that, in *Tom's Midnight Garden*, Tom is reclaimed by the adult world at the end of the book (See Chapter 6): this can be seen as an example of the narrator looking through the

child character's mind.

On the night before he is due to go home, Tom discovers that he can no longer find the garden and cries out for Hatty. In the morning, he is summoned by Mrs Bartholomew who owns the house and lives in the top flat. When Tom arrives, Mrs Bartholomew tells him that she was Hatty, and tells Tom about her life. Tom gradually notices the likeness between Mrs Bartholomew and Hatty and finally accepts the fact that the old woman he is looking at is indeed the same person as the young girl he has been meeting in the garden:

Tom listened as she began her tale; but at first he listened less to what she was saying than to the way she was saying it, and he studied closely her appearance and her movements. Her bright black eyes were certainly like Hatty's; and now he began to notice, again and again, a gesture, a tone of the voice, a way of laughing that reminded him of the little girl in the garden.

Quite early in Mrs Bartholomew's story, Tom suddenly leaned forward and whispered: 'You were Hatty – you are Hatty! You're really Hatty!' She only interrupted what she was saying to smile at him, and nod. (p.219)

At first glance, it looks as if the narrator is looking into Tom's mind and narrating how he gradually realises that the old woman who is sitting in front of him is the same person as the young girl whom he knew. In practice, however, this cannot be Tom's perception, since recognising an old person as the child whom one used to

know is an experience exclusively reserved for adults. Whilst Tom is logically able to recognise Mrs Bartholomew as Hatty, since he knows Hatty as a young girl, it is not an experience that child readers can share, in the same way that they cannot share the sense of nostalgia. Cottrell Boyce (2008) recalls how he was appalled by the idea that a young girl could become an old woman, which is likely to be a common response amongst child readers. Interestingly, Cottrell Boyce admits that, as an adult, he can see that the scene is full of joy. Cottrell Boyce's comment indicates that Tom's experience in this scene may not be a genuine representation of a child's experience. Instead, it could be the narrator's voice expressing adults' nostalgic ideas about childhood by looking through the mind of a child.

A similar incident can be found in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe*. In the garden shed, James finds a diary dated 1856 and written by a Miss Fanny Spencer who lived in the cottage James and his family have just moved into. Miss Spencer had a nephew called Albert who came to stay with her. James finds that Albert was about the same age as he was and liked to do the same sort of things. He discovers that Albert was also troubled by the ghost of Thomas Kempe, a seventeenth-century apothecary. As he reads the diary and thinks about Albert, James begins to feel he knows Albert very well as if they were friends. Later in the book, he and his friend Simon are sent to the school's store room during the preparation of the school's centenary celebration to fetch a portrait of the benefactor. The passage is an example of the narrator looking into the child character's mind:

James scrubbed at the glass with a duster. The bewhiskered face of an

elderly man looked out at him: waterfalls of hair threatened to engulf his features, moustache, sideburns, beard, flowing down to a high cravat, stopping short of the watch-chain stretched across a substantial stomach.

‘Who is he?’ said Simon.

James peered at the gold plaque under the picture.

‘What’s the matter?’ said Simon. ‘You look all peculiar. Are you feeling sick or something?’

‘I’m all right.’

‘I said, who is he?’

‘He’s somebody called Arnold Lockett,’ said James in an odd, distant voice that made Simon look curiously at him.

‘Mr. Arnold Lockett. And then it says the picture’s by Frederick Ralston R.A. and he painted it in 1910. That’s all.’

‘Come on then. Let’s get it hung up.’

‘Just a minute,’ said James. He stared at Arnold’s picture, and Arnold looked back at him, pinned behind the glass, for all the world like a benevolent walrus. Mr Arnold Lockett. A person with a gold watch-chain, giving money and things to schools (p.139).

James’s reaction to seeing Arnold as an old man almost exactly echoes Cottrell Boyce’s response to the appearance of Hatty as an old woman. In this text, as in the text of *Stig in the Dump* discussed above, the narrator is looking into James’s mind and recounting his thoughts as they occur. There are no textual elements to suggest that the narrator is viewing the incident from an adult perspective and no signs

either by which the incident may be related to nostalgic and sentimental ideas about childhood. Also, within the narrative development as a whole, this incident occurs toward the end of the book (the book has 159 pages) and becomes the main basis upon which James is able to form a new concept about time and people. The text continues:

An important man. A serious man. James Harrison. Mr James Harrison. Arnold and James, down by the Evenlode, rabbiting and fishing and walking under trees through sunlight. Mrs Verity, plumped like a cushion into the chair on her front doorstep: a little girl locking the Vicar's sister into the church hall, whooping and shrieking in the churchyard.

'Come on,' said Simon. 'What is the matter?'

'Nothing. I was just thinking.'

'What about then?'

'People', said James, 'People having layers, like onions'

'You are daft,' said Simon. 'Plain daft. Mind out, you're going to drop your end if you don't watch it' (p. 139).

If recognising an old person as a child whom one once knew is an experience exclusive to adults, imagining oneself as an adult is an experience exclusive to children: it is an experience that adults can understand or remember but that which they are no longer able to share. James's encounter with the portrait of Arnold is one of those moments in texts of children's literature when an idea occurs to the child character that time in his/her life may not be 'a continuous present', and it

occurs to James that, like Mrs Verity and Arnold, he will change and become an adult. Whilst most adult readers will recognise the implication of this incident, the narrator's focus is entirely on the thoughts and feelings of James and no signs are offered to specifically enable adult readers to view the implication from an adult's perspective.

Tom's meeting with Mrs Bartholomew also occurs toward the end of the book (page 219 of 229), but what follows is almost entirely Mrs Bartholomew recalling her childhood:

‘ Do you remember the tall fir-tree, Tom? – with ivy all the way up? I’ve stood under it many a time, as a child, when there was high wind, and felt the earth heaving under my feet, as if the roots were pulling like muscles. That Midsummer Eve, when the storm was at its worst, and I was watching it, a great wind caught the fir and – oh, Tom, it was terrible to see! – the lightning struck it, and it fell.’

There was a deep silence, and Tom remembered the silence he heard after the falling of the tree, and the cry from the upper window that he had heard in it.

‘And then I knew, Tom, that the garden was changing all the time, because nothing stands still, except in our memory.’

‘And what happened next? asked Tom (p.219).

By way of criticism, Hollindale (1997) suggests that this meeting is the author's

attempt to reassert adult intelligence and to ratify the lack of rationality in the story by bringing in the 'factuality' (p.91). Similarly, Inglis (1981) comments that Pearce's metaphors of time lack consistency and that she 'pulls back into the inadequate dream-explanation' (p.263). Both comments suggest that Tom's meeting with Mrs Bartholomew is a manifestation of the author's adult consciousness but more importantly, from the standpoint of the discussion of this section, the narrator's focus is not on what is relevant to Tom. Other than being provided with the information by which his experience in the garden can be put into factual perspective, Tom gains no more new perceptions about time and the past other than those he already had. It is almost symbolic that the narrator states explicitly in Mrs Bartholomew's adult voice that time changes and nothing stays the same, and Tom does not even make a comment. By contrast, James, in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe*, comes to his own conclusion about how time works at the end of the book as he walks through the church yard, having successfully sent Thomas Kempe back into his own time:

He walked on, with Arnold somewhere not far away, and old leaves fell silently around him and piled up under his feet and above them the branches held up the new ones, furred and secret, waiting for the spring. Time reaches away behind and ahead: back to the crusading knights, and Thomas Kempe, and Aunt Fanny, and Arnold: forward to other people who would leave their names in this place, look with different eyes on the same streets, rooftops, trees. And somewhere in the middle there was James, walking home for tea, his head full of confused but agreeable

thoughts, hungry and a little tired, but content (pp.158-9).

Whilst the adult reader may be able to sense the narrator's views as an adult, these views are hidden behind the textual elements that are specific to James's thoughts at this particular moment. There are no signs that the author is reasserting adult intelligence.

Nodelman (2008) points out that adults often write about childhood in an effort to regain the child hidden in themselves. Hollindale (1997) similarly argues that many adults read children's books because they want to 'refresh the links with their own childhood' (p.31). Both comments suggest that some children's books do offer adults the opportunity to refresh the links with their own childhood. In these books, one of the most obvious elements that function as the link is the child protagonist: Tolly in *The Children of Green Knowe* and Tom in *Tom's Midnight Garden* are two of the examples of such elements. Tolly's presence allows Mrs Oldknow to establish contact with the past; similarly, Tom's presence allows Mrs Bartholomew to relive her own childhood. The narrators in these texts offer the adult reader the link by looking through the mind of the child character. James, in *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe*, on the other hand does not function as the link, since the narrator's focus is on James's perceptions about how time moves forward.

Nodelman (2008) argues that a third person narrator in texts of children's literature possesses adult perceptions about the child characters and, although the characters do not necessarily move past their innocence toward the narrator's more

knowledgeable perception of themselves, the narrator often ‘encourages some version of that movement in the [child] reader’s self-perceptions’ (p.31). The narrator of *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* provides enough textual signs for the child reader to follow James’s thoughts while he listens to Mrs Verity or while he looks at the portrait of Arnold but without summarising or generalising his thoughts from an adult perspective. Whereas the narrator of *Tom’s Midnight Garden*, in the passage quoted above, recounts Tom’s verbal responses to Mrs Bartholomew’s story, the text contains few textual signs through which the child reader can access Tom’s mind. Inglis (1981) points out that whilst *Tom’s Midnight Garden* is beautifully written, Tom is never at risk, since ‘his stable self remains what it always has been in spite of the breaking of the constant of time’ and ‘Hatty simply grows up into a natural womanhood’ (p.263). This suggests that the narrator of *Tom’s Midnight Garden* is, at least at this point, not concerned with encouraging the child reader to move toward his/her self-perception. The narrative focus is not on Tom as the child but as a representation of a childhood to which adults may find a link to their own childhood. In other words, the narrator is looking at an idea of childhood through what Tom perceives.

[The voice of shadow text]

Genette (1980) explains that focalisation is not necessarily committed to one character throughout the narrative. In other words, the point of view from which the narrative events are perceived is not that of one character throughout the story. For example, *The Sheep-Pig* by Dick King-Smith (1983) is told alternately from the point of views of Babe (the sheep-pig), Farmer Hogget and Fly, Farmer

Hogget's sheepdog, and occasionally from that of Mrs Hogget. The views of all the characters are focused on events directly concerned with Babe. In *Journey to the River Sea* by Eva Ibbotson (2001), the narrator tells the story mostly from Maia's perspective but focalisation shifts to the perspective of Maia's governess, Miss Minton, when Maia disappears, and to that of Maia's friend, a boy actor Clovis, when the narrative event moves to England. These are examples of a 'perfectly defensible narrative course,' (Genette 1980, p.194) in that the change of focalisation is congruent with the course of the narrative and in that the change has no added significance in itself. This is not the same with an 'odd intervention of the narrator, making a brief interruption in temporal continuity and in consciousness', which 'has meaning that might transform everything else the story says' (Martin 1986, p.167). Genette (1980) describes these changes as 'isolated infractions' and terms them as alternations of which there are two types: 'giving less information than is necessary in principle' or 'giving more information than is authorised in principle in the code of focalisation governing the whole' (p.195)', in other words 'giving the information that should be left aside' (Genette *ibid.* p.195). It is the second type of alternation that is relevant to the discussion of this section.

In theory, a third person narrator in texts of children's literature holds back his/her adult knowledge (Nodelman 2008) but in practice, this principle is breached from time to time and the narrator gives information that might provide the adult reader with a different perspective to the narrative event about which the reader might otherwise have remained unaware. Iser (1978) explains that 'the switch of viewpoints brings about a spotlighting of the textual perspectives' (p.116).

Northern Lights by Philip Pullman (1995) is told from Lyra's view point when she is present in the narrative. The book begins as Lyra walks around the Hall where the tables have been laid ready for a banquet:

Lyra and her daemon moved through the darkening Hall, taking care to keep to one side, out of sight of the kitchen. The three great tables that ran the length of the Hall were laid already, the silver and the glass catching what little light there was, and the long benches were pulled out ready for the guest. Portraits of former Masters hung up in the gloom along the walls. Lyra reached the dais and looked back at the open kitchen door and, seeing no one, stepped up beside the high table. The places here were laid with gold, not silver, and the fourteen seats were not oak benches but mahogany chairs with velvet cushions.

Lyra stopped beside the Master's chair and flicked the biggest glass gently with a fingernail. The sound rang clearly through the Hall. (p. 3)

The viewpoint in this passage is that of Lyra; that is to say that the narrator in this passage functions as Lyra's eye and mind, and the reader follows Lyra with the narrator. The narrator goes on to describe Lyra's life in Jordan College and how she and her friends 'were engaged in deadly warfare (p.36)' with adults and other children. Whilst the narrator refers to the politics of the College of which Lyra is not aware, it is a 'perfectly defensible narrative course' (Genette 1980, p.194) in that, despite the fact that this is not exactly Lyra's view, it is relevant to the narrative event at this point in the story. The following passage, however, presents a

viewpoint that is different in nature from the ‘perfectly defensible’ shift of viewpoint:

That was Lyra’s world and her delight. She was a coarse and greedy little savage, for the most part. But she always had a dim sense that it wasn’t her whole world; that part of her also belonged in the grandeur and ritual of Jordan college; and that somewhere in her life there was a connection with the high world of politics represented by Lord Asriel. All she did with that knowledge was to give herself airs and lord it over the other urchins. It had never occurred to her to find out more.

So she had passed her childhood, like a half-wild cat. The only variation in her days came on those irregular occasions when Lord Asriel visited the College (p.37).

The narrator has stopped telling the story at this point. Instead, s/he is now viewing Lyra. Yet, the information about what Lyra is like has already been presented, for example: she is seen in the Hall where she is not supposed to be; she likes clambering over the College roof, or she and her peers are seen to be engaged in deadly warfare against other group of children. Lyra has some ideas about what is going on in the College but she is not particularly interested in the exact nature of the College’s business. With these details provided, it is unlikely that the absence of this passage will prevent the reader from comprehending the story. In fact, the expressions such as ‘a coarse and greedy little savage’ or ‘like a half-wild cat’ seem to be drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that Lyra is a certain type of child,

rather than presenting more specific information about her character as an individual which may have significance as to how Lyra may respond to the event that follows.

These points may be more clearly demonstrated if comparison is made with another passage in which the narrator switches the viewpoint and describes the child character. This passage also appears near the beginning of the book. The following is a passage from *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones (1985). Polly was getting ready to go back to university when she remembers herself as a nine-year old girl:

In those days, people who did not know Polly might have thought she chose Nina as a friend to set herself off by comparison. Nina was a big, fat girl with short, fizzy hair, glasses, and a loud giggle. Polly, on the other hand, was an extremely pretty girl, and probably the prettiest thing about her was her mass of long fine, fair hair. In fact, Polly admired and envied Nina desperately, both Nina's looks and her bold, madcap disposition. Polly at that time, was trying to eat a packet of biscuits every day in order to get fat like Nina. And she spent diligent hours squashing and pressing at her eyes in hopes either of making herself need glasses too, or at least of giving her eye the fat, pink, staring look that Nina's had when Nina took off her glasses. She cried when Mum refused to cut her hair short like Nina's. She hated her hair. The first morning they were at Granny's, she took pleasure in forgetting to brush it. (p.7).

Despite the indication by the opening phrase that this is a memory of the older Polly, the viewpoint switches to that of a nine-year old Polly. What is presented here is not an observation by a now almost grown up Polly but it is the thoughts and feelings of a young girl. Structurally, this passage is the beginning of the main part of the narrative in which Polly, as a nine-year old child, meets Mr Tom and becomes involved with a complex event that crosses between reality and supernatural. The changing viewpoint in this case is not an odd intervention by the narrator but it is an essential process in the development of the narrative. The passage from Northern Lights, on the other hand, could be omitted without preventing the reader from following the story since, as has been considered above, the actual information found in the passage is, in effect, a duplicate of that which has already been told. This suggests that the passage from Northern Lights is included where it is for a reason other than to drive the narrative forward, and the reason could be to give information that ‘has meaning that might transform everything else the story says’ (Martin 1986, p.167). More significantly, the phrase ‘so she passed her childhood’ indicates that what is presented here is an adult’s view, which suggests that the information is offered primarily to the adult reader. The reason why this particular information is offered to the adult reader at this point will be considered later in this section.

Up to this point in Northern Lights, the story is told mainly from Lyra’s viewpoint and the quoted passage appears to be one of the ‘odd interventions of the narrator, making a brief interruption in temporal continuity and in consciousness’ (Martin

1986, p.167.), but, in terms of narratology, it cannot be the narrator who is telling about Lyra here. The narrator is inscribed in the text (Prince 2003), i.e. s/he has no knowledge of the characters outside the world of the narrative s/he is recounting. The comment 'So she had passed her childhood' can only be made by someone who is situated at the point where Lyra's childhood has been or is almost completed. It could be argued that the narrator of *Northern Lights* is telling the story by looking back on the entire event but there are no signs in the text to indicate that the narrator is in a different diegesis (fictional world) from the events s/he is narrating.

As for a way of examining the shift of viewpoint in texts of children's literature, Hunt (1980) introduces a notion of 'three-way narrative contract' (p.229): the is a contract between author, protagonist, and reader. The contract is that the author will tell the story about the child protagonist to the child reader. On this basis, when the story is put aside and the narrative moves away from the child protagonist's viewpoint or from the viewpoints directly relevant to the protagonist, it can be said that the contract is broken and the author addresses the reader with a certain aim. Hunt argues that this contract is reflected in the surface language and the breaking of it introduces the 'language designed for a specific audience' (p.232). The quoted passage from *Northern Lights* could be seen as an example of the text in which this three-way contract is broken: the story about the protagonist is put aside and the voice of the author who is not inscribed in the text takes over. With this shift of narrative approach, the surface language introduces a number of elements that are more likely to resonate with the adult reader than they may do with the child

reader.

Most adults have some assumptions about children's literature and adopt a distinct attitude when they approach its texts (See Chapter 6). This inevitably influences their response when they read on behalf of children. Of those assumptions, one of the most prominent is the idea that children's literature is about childhood innocence. Nodelman (2008) argues that adults' desire to keep children innocent is central to understanding children's literature. One of the underlying effects of this approach to texts of children's literature is that, if a child begins to gain knowledge, to adult readers s/he would 'cease to be interesting or charming or delightful' (Nodelman 2008, p.49). The narrator/author in the passage quoted from *Northern Lights* tells, 'That was Lyra's world and her delight', 'It had never occurred to her to find out more' and 'So she had passed her childhood.' These descriptions confirm adults' assumptions that they will find in children's literature a child who is delighted by what she is doing, thus she is delightful, and ignorant about herself and therefore innocent: this is an assumed image of childhood. The descriptions that Lyra was 'a coarse and greedy little savage' or 'like a half-wild cat' also evoke one of the ideas that are traditionally associated with childhood innocence, that 'children are equated with primitives' (Hunt and Lenz 2001, p.6), thus unaffected by the civilised world of adults experience.

In addition to the images of childhood delights and innocence, the passage also seems to emphasise one particular aspect in Lyra's character. She is described as 'a coarse and greedy little savage' and 'like a half-wild cat'. She is also seen to 'lord

over the other urchins': all these characteristics are traditionally either not associated with or are disapproved of in girls. By selecting these elements, the text seems to imply that Lyra is unconventional. Polly in the passage quoted from *Fire and Hemlock* is preoccupied with her appearance, which is regarded as a typically girlish trait. Compared with Polly, Lyra certainly appears to be unconventional. Nevertheless, as Polly wants to be fat and ugly instead of being extremely pretty, she could also be considered unconventional. The difference between the two cases is that the narrator of *Fire and Hemlock* tells Polly's thoughts about herself. Lyra's unconventionality on the other hand, is an adult's view based on gender specific ideas. It is gender based because being like a greedy little savage or a half-wild cat would not be considered to be particularly distinct if the hero were a boy.

Discussing gender issues in children's literature, Hunt (2001) observes that girls in children's fiction are traditionally kept in 'their subservient position and inculcating passive and domestic roles' (p.279) and, although the balance has been shifting in recent years, distinctive and assertive female heroes are still exceptions. In regard to these unconventional female heroes, Nodelman argues that when children's literature is at its most characteristic, it represents a subversive attack on conventional adult wisdom. This is because its adult writers wish to be free from and to attack the conventions of other adults 'under the banner of childhood' (Nodelman 2008, p. 182). On this basis, since adult writers also wish to share their adult knowledge with adult readers of children's literature, this passage could be seen as the author inviting the adult reader to share the sense of freedom from the world of adult conventions, and possibly to attack conceptually other adults for

being conventional.

As Hunt (2001) notes, distinct and assertive female heroes can be found in recent children's literature, but other than family stories, such female heroes are mostly found in novels that are characterised by strong psychological elements: *Marianne Dreams* by Catherine Storr (1958), *Charlotte Sometimes* by Penelope Farmer (1969), *Fire and Hemlock* (as above), and *Frozen Fire* by Tim Bowler (2006) are some examples. When the narrative is primarily based on the child's actions, female heroes are still relatively rare. Tyke in *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* by Gene Kemp (1977) is shown on the cover picture of a paperback edition sitting on the roof of the school building, an act that is typically associated with boys, but it is revealed at the end of the book that Tyke is in fact a girl. This suggests that there was still a strong gender specific assumption in children's literature that a girl would not make an interesting enough hero. This convention that, to be distinctive, femininity needs to be spurned, is epitomised by Anthony Browne's picture book, *Piggybook* (1988). Having made her husband and sons realise that she is not there just to cook and clean for them, the mother is seen on the last page, covered in oil, holding spanners, standing by a car with its bonnet open and smiling happily. The message is clearly presented: for a female character to be valued as an individual, she needs to belong to the domain traditionally associated with the male. In this regard, Lucy and Susan in *The Chronicle of Narnia* by C.S.Lewis appear to be exceptions in that they are heroes on their own account and not the hero's companions, a role more usually assigned to girls. Ultimately, however, Lewis rejects femininity: Susan is not allowed to enter the land of Aslan at the end of *The*

Last Battle because she is now interested in lipsticks and invitations. Susan was only allowed to be a hero while she showed no sign of being distinctly female. Similarly, Lyra can be a hero because she is characterised by the attributes that are conventionally not associated with girls.

In addition to the conventional characterisation of the main child character as seen above, *Northern Lights* as a novel is unusually traditional amongst modern children's literature in that Lyra tends not to question adults' authority (see Chapter 5). Hunt (2001) observes that one of the reasons why some children's books have remained popular is because 'they are 'safe' for adults' concepts of childhood' (p.279). *His Dark Materials*, of which *Northern Lights* is the first volume, has been exceptionally popular with adult readers. It can be argued that in the passage quoted, the narrator steps out of the shadow, as it were, by putting the story aside and speaks as the author who invites the adult reader to share the sense of freedom from adult conventions yet at the same time, reassures the reader that the story is in fact safely conventional. The author's invitation is by no means exclusive to the adults but, to the child reader, it may not appear so significant.

The author of children's literature may break the three-way contract between the author, the protagonist, and the child reader because s/he has a specific reason for voicing his/her thoughts. Adult readers need to be aware that when this happens, it is likely that the author is presenting adult perceptions that are not necessarily concerned with the child protagonist. It is likely that the adult reader could respond more easily to this voice than to the narrator's voice and that the response may

influence his/her evaluation of the book which s/he is reading on behalf of a child.

Haddon's Ring

[*Haddon's ring and Happy ending*]

Talking about his book *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* in an interview in *The Guardian Review*, Haddon (in Armistead 2003) comments 'if you read books for kids, there's that little invisible ring of safety. You know that, if horrible things happen, the author will look after you. I don't think the ring of safety is there in this book, and the swearing is one of the signals of that'.

Broadly speaking, Haddon is implying that children's books do not usually contain hopeless situations, and stories usually have a happy ending, or at least, the reader is given some sense of hope for the future. In *Going Back* by Penelope Lively, which was first published as a children's book but re-published for adult readership (discussed earlier on this chapter), the fact that the trust Jane and Edward had in Mike was betrayed when Mike told them that he had given up being a conscientious objector and had signed up, is simply stated without the narrator making any comments, and Jane's story ends when she was told that Edward had been killed in the Korean War. Neither episode suggests any signs of hope that Jane might have drawn from the situation. In comparison, although Davie in *Cray* was betrayed by Stephen Rose (see (iii) of this chapter), the incident led to a new friendship with the boys who had been his enemies and his affectionate friendship with Maria develops. Also, Davie's father found what was left of *Cray* and brought it back to the garden, which reassured Davie that *Cray* did exist and that its story

was now completed. The book ends with Davie's words, which shows that he has grown 'wiser, braver and more generous.' (Meek and Watson 2003, p.1)

So now I've written it down, all of it. I don't care if there's craziness in it. I've learned that crazy things can be the true things of all. You don't believe me? Doesn't matter. Tell yourself it's just a story, nothing more (p.296).

The 'horrible thing' does not always disappear but children's novels usually provide the reader with a sense of hope at the end of the story. Gavin's Grandad in *Gift Boat* by Peter Dickinson (2004) has a massive stroke, and, when there are no signs of his recovery, Gavin decides to ask the selkies, the sea people, for help by giving up his most precious possession: a model boat that Grandad made him for his birthday. Gavin places the boat Selkie on the sea where he and Grandad once saw a seal, and lets the sea take it. When Grandad moves his hand for the first time, although he knows Grandad may still die or will never recover, Gavin goes to the sea to thank the selkies for showing him that Grandad is still there. The book ends:

Now, from this slightly higher viewpoint, though it had hardly begun to get dark, he could see the pale moon-path across the ripples. There was something there, right in the middle of it. The selkie after all? No, that wasn't how seals moved, and it was too far out of the water.

Next moment he knew what it was.

He turned and walked a few paces further up the shore to a dry rock,

where he sat down and took off his shoes and socks. He went back and waded into the water.

The breeze brought Selkie smoothly to him, sailing like a dream (p.138).

Even for child readers who have not yet developed skills in reading literature, the ending is likely to convey a clear sense of hope. Also by Dickinson, AK (1990), a story of Paul Kagimi, a boy soldier in an imaginary African country, Nagala, has alternative endings: in *Twenty Years On, Perhaps: A*, Paul is now the Deputy Prime Minister of a peaceful and prosperous Nagala and the story ends with Paul's thought on his old AK 47 that he buried when the war ended. Paul wonders if one day someone might dig it up and use it again:

Not much chance of that. Lie in peace, old friend. Don't need you any more (p.227) (italics in the original).

In *Twenty Years On, Perhaps: B*, Nagala is still war-torn and Paul is killed, shot by a boy who carries an Automatic Kalashnikov. The story ends with the boy wondering if he will be able to keep the gun:

I hope Nanda will let me keep it, thought the child, *It's time* I had a gun of my own (p.231) (italics in the original).

Dickinson explains on his website why the book concludes with alternative endings:

The alternative endings are no kind of literary trick. Again, they are a response to what has been happening in Africa over the past thirty years. There is more than enough to despair about, but there has to be room for hope (Dickinson).

Even the hero's death is given a sense of hope and continuity. *Sun Horse, Moon Horse* by Rosemary Sutcliff (1977) is a story about an imaginary account of the creation of the White Horse of Uffington. Having completed the creation of the horse, Lubrin is to be sacrificed so that his people can go free. He asks Cradoc, the chief of the people who conquered his own land but whom Lubrin has come to trust, to kill him. The book ends:

‘Are you ready?’ Cradoc asked, kneeling beside him.

Lubrin smiled up into the narrowed blue eyes in the wind-burnt face. ‘I am ready.’

He knew the high wind-stripped sky above him, and the warm steadfastness of the ground beneath. He knew the harebell growing in the tawny grass, tossing on its thread-slender stem as the wind came by. From somewhere far away in time and place, he knew the weary joy of his people's homecoming to their herding runs between northern mountains and the sea.

‘Brother, go free,’ said Cradoc.

He saw the sun-flash on the descending blade (p.111-2).

The White Horse can still be seen today and with the description of the sky and the plants that are also unchanged, the death of the hero seems to symbolise the continuity of time.

Ptolemy's Gate, the last of The Bartimaeus Trilogy by Jonathan Stroud (2005) ends with Nathaniel's death:

Then Nouda was upon us. Mouths opened, tentacles slashing down. Nathaniel finished the Dismissal. I went. The Staff broke.

A typical master. Right to the end, he didn't give me a chance to get a word in edgeways. Which is a pity, because at that last moment I'd have liked to tell him what I thought of him. Mind you, since in that split second we were, to all intents and purpose, one and the same, I rather think he knew anyway (p.515).

The reader is reminded of the story Bartimaeus tells earlier in the book about the ancient Egyptian boy, prince Ptolemy, who had, in an almost identical way, dismissed Bartimaeus. Ptolemy was the only human for whom the djinni had lasting affection before he and Nathaniel finally establish mutual trust. The ending suggests that Nathaniel will live on in the mind of Bartimaeus as his other master still does.

Whilst these endings may not necessarily be seen as the 'obligatory happy ending'

which is a 'happy reunion of the protagonist and his object of quest' (Nikolajeva 2005, p.103), they certainly 'turn a story ultimately toward hope rather than resignation' (Babbitt in Nodelman 2008, p.216). These endings can be seen as an example of 'that little invisible ring of safety' in Haddon's words, in which the narrator looks after the reader when horrible things happen. An extensive study of structural or psychological significance of happy ending in texts of children's literature is outside the concern of my study but comments made by two established authors of children's literature may explain why 'Haddon's ring' exists in children's literature and what it does. Aiken (1984) writes '...it's a kind of denial of the end, a denial of death and old age, very natural.' (p.147). It could be inferred from Aiken's comment that the idea of an absolute finality is irrelevant if not incomprehensible to child readers. Similarly Ursula Le Guin writes that it could overwhelm the child reader with 'a load he's not strong enough yet to carry' (in Hunt 2004, p.3). Le Guin is arguing that, despite the fact that fantasy appears to be less 'real' than 'realistic' stories, it provides authors with a way of writing about a difficult subject without evading the truth to be communicated to child readers.

In his discussion of happy endings in children's literature, Nodelman (2008) points out that one of the most notable assessments of happy endings in children's literature is the fact that many of the critics praise its hopefulness but at the same time acknowledge its dishonesty. Moreover the dishonesty is viewed as beneficial to children on the basis that it protects children from adult knowledge that may unduly affect their innocence. Nodelman (2008) goes even further and suggests that this could be seen as adult writers lying to children: they use hopefulness and

optimism ‘for the adults’ own good’, since these elements are ‘the means of protecting adults from children’s knowledge of the actual truth’ (p.217). In other words, hopefulness and happy endings in children’s literature help to maintain adults’ belief in the ‘myth of childhood as utopian in itself’ (Nodelman 2008, p.218). However, if hopefulness and optimistic happy endings are intrinsic characteristics of children’s literature, as Aiken and Le Guin point out, texts are bound to contain some degrees of ‘dishonesty’. Therefore, it is important for adult readers to be aware in what way the narrative employs ‘dishonesty’. As noted in Chapter 1, the term ‘dishonesty’ is used in this study in order to maintain the discussion’s conceptual link with Nodelman’s argument. In practice, however, authors’ act of lying to child readers can be regarded as largely a matter of convention and not necessarily a deliberate decision made by the author.

[Haddon’s ring in the narrative]

Nodelman (2008) argues that the texts of children’s literature typically tell less of the truth than writers know. It is when authors exploit this principle, even unintentionally, that the hopefulness and optimism can become ‘dishonest’. By telling less of the truth, the author may be creating a narrative that is ‘a romantic yearning [...] for an alternative world where motivations, actions, needs and gratifications are simpler and more direct than in the desperately complex and subtle real world’ (Hunt and Lenz 2001, p.4). ‘Dishonesty’ is not necessarily an issue to all novels written for children but it is a critical aspect when books are recommended to child readers as a literary book.

Texts of children's literature could become 'dishonest' when authors do not tell what is needed to be told if the integrity of the story is to be maintained or when they manipulate the elements to construct the plot. As discussed in Chapter 3, the stories of *Wolf* by Gillian Cross (1990) and *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson (1999), both critically highly acclaimed books, depend on settings and plots that are likely to be regarded as too convenient had the books been written for general readership, in order to construct appropriate narratives around extremely immature mothers. *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo (2000), a Carnegie Medal winner, also exploits the principle of 'telling less than the author knows': a refugee child Sade finds the solution to her problem by being on the television. Sade and her brother waited at the door of a national television studio and caught a well known news reader when he came out of the door. The newsreader was so moved by the children's story that he immediately included their story in the next news. Thus Sade went on the news, the bullying at school stopped and the children were safely reunited with their father. Whilst it is not impossible, being picked up by a well known television presenter while waiting at the studio entrance and appearing on the television is an extremely remote chance. It is unlikely that the author believes otherwise. The plight of refugee children is a topical subject and most children are probably able to relate the story of Sade to a real case that they have heard on the media if not to the real people they know in their lives. Since appearing on television is probably one of the most common daydreams held by young children, a plot in which the child character appears on television, becomes famous, and all the troubles are solved is bordering on a wish-fulfilment fantasy. Presenting such a solution to the problem that the child reader may see as 'real' has

to be said to be ‘dishonest’.

Another example of the author not telling all he knows because including the particular knowledge would have jeopardised the setting of the novel is *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman (2010), also a Carnegie Medal winner. It tells the story of Bod who was adopted by a group of ghosts in a graveyard when his parents were murdered. Whilst it is praised as ‘every page is crowded with invention’ in *The Guardian Review* (25 October 2008), how a two-year old infant can physically survive in a disused church under the care of ghosts who have no physical bodies is never explained other than through occasional references to prepared food brought in by Bod’s guardian ghost who is not quite dead and could leave the graveyard. It could be argued that, since *The Graveyard Book* is fantasy, these practical details should not matter. However, if adults wish to offer the child readers fantasy that is not a ‘simplistic daydream but a literary experience’ (Philip 1989, p.82), it requires ‘unceasing vigilance on the part of the author to petty detail’ and ‘what happens in the story must have ‘organic connection’ and ‘precise relation to the characters and their everyday life and to humanity’ (Philip 1989, pp.86-87). *The Graveyard Book* can be seen as an example of how children’s literature can be ‘dishonest’ by constructing a narrative on the setting that does not fulfil the requirements for the book that is to give child readers a literary experience.

The Other Side of the Truth and *The Graveyard Book* can be regarded as examples in which Haddon’s ring operates in texts of children’s literature. The ring is applied to keep out the details that could not be conveniently incorporated into the narrative

so that the daydream or the wish-fulfilment elements can be maintained.

Referring to the way in which the concept of time is used in *Tom's Midnight Garden*, Inglis (1981) offers the critique that the author 'has not thought herself far enough into the metaphor of time: she pulls back into the inadequate dream-explanation'. Inglis contemplates, as the novel is 'so beautifully plotted and every detail [...] so safely gathered in', if 'asking for more is to muddle things' (p.263). Inglis believes that it is not enough for a novel for children to be written beautifully and points out that the absence of the explanation as to how, for example, Tom and Hatty can skate on the same pair of skating boots side by side is 'a fudge at the very heart of the novel' and argues that if such a question is left 'not so much unanswered as unanswerable, then the book begins to look like a spoof' (Inglis 1981, p.260). Making a similar point, Hollindale (1997) asks 'Would Pearce have written like this for an adult readership?' (p.91). The same question can be asked about the four examples referred to above.

[*Haddon's ring and the subject of the narrative*]

Inglis and Hollindale are mostly concerned with the author's treatment of particular narrative elements but in some cases, similar criticism could be applied to the ways in which the subject of the book is treated. Eccleshare (2008), the editor of children's books at The Guardian, asks in her article 'Should children's authors explore child death?' and reports that, in the Bologna Children's Book Fair in spring 2007, 'two of the biggest and most hotly fought over titles were narrated by children who spoke about what they felt about dying and, in particular, what they

needed to do before they died' (Eccleshare 2008). Eccleshare does not mention the titles of the books but one of the two is likely to be *Before I Die* by Jenny Downham (2007) which will be discussed later in the chapter. The popularity of these books is such that Eccleshare wonders if this trend may be a sign that the last taboo in children's literature is beginning to lift.

Death as the subject of the story in modern children's literature is rare but not entirely absent although when it occurs, it is often what might be regarded as a legitimate subject: the death of a grandparent. *River Boy* by Tim Bowler (1997) tells a story of Jess whose grandfather is dying. Grandpa dies at the end of the book but Jess has achieved what Grandpa wanted. She grieves but is confident that she will be happy again. When the death is unexpected, it is often used as a background rather than the subject of the narrative. *Joe's Cat* by Gene Kemp (1980) is a short story about Joe whose father was killed in a farm accident. It tells how unhappy Joe was in his new school in the town, until he found that the cat he had looked after when he lived in the farm cottage had followed him and, from then on, Joe made friends and began to feel that he could be happy again. Whilst it could be argued that the death of a parent should not be treated so lightly, the narrative of *Joe's Cat* is entirely focused on Joe's loneliness in a new place and does not attempt to tell his thoughts about his father. On this basis, the story's happy ending can be considered to be honest to its readers. *Vicky Angel* by Jacqueline Wilson (2000) tells a story of Jade whose best friend Vicky was hit by a car and killed. The narrative focuses on how Jade's mind was dominated by Vicky, who appeared to her as a ghost, and by Jade's doubt that the accident might have been her fault. At

the end of the book, Jade had overcome her grief and her doubt was cleared. She was ready to move on. The book is 160 pages long, the text uses extensively the colloquial expressions that will be familiar to children in a younger age group, and is accompanied by cartoon-style illustrations. Considering how extremely complex the effects can be on a young child who witnessed a friend killed by a car accident, a question arises as to whether the author is being honest to present such a subject in the way in which Vicky Angel does. It could be argued, on the other hand, that a book such as Vicky Angel could help children understand something about death and give them an opportunity to think about the subject. Whether a book's usefulness could be discussed within the framework of children's literature will be examined later in this chapter.

Death as a subject in children's literature will inevitably be a narrative about the sense of loss felt by the child character. If, as Eccleshare (2008) points out, death, especially an unexpected death, has been regarded as a taboo subject, it is probably because authors feel that the subject is too grave to explore in the way in which the narrative can be meaningful to child readers. In this respect, the books about a death of a young person to which Eccleshare refers, differ from this traditional model. These stories are narrated by the young person who dies. In other words, the narrative is not about the sense of loss but about the process of dying from the viewpoint of the person who is dying. Whilst welcoming such books as a moving contrast to the usual teenage novels about falling in love or parental difficulties, Eccleshare (2008) points out that however well the sense of death is portrayed, these narratives tell only a small part of the whole. The great deal of pain caused by

death is left untold but instead, the narrative is ‘imbued with a kind of heroism [...] we are almost fearful that not liking it will reveal us to be unfeeling’, and concludes her article by posing a question as to whether it is ‘our responses to the idea of dying rather than inherent qualities of the stories themselves that make these books so captivating.’

Assuming that by ‘our responses’ Eccleshare (2008) is referring to adults’ response, the question as to whether it is the idea rather than the quality of the story to which adults are responding can be asked about a number of books. Looking for JJ by Anne Cassidy (2004) is a story about Jennifer Jones who, as a ten-year old child, killed a girl of her own age. Jennifer, now sixteen and released from the prison with a new identity is living a ‘normal’ life under the protection of a social worker and a carer. Jennifer, now Alice, feels she has no identity. The narrative ends when Jennifer, now Kate, puts away a letter addressed to Alice Tully. The last line reads ‘But there was no such person as Alice Tully any more’ (p.299). This seems to indicate that the main theme of the novel is a young person’s quest for her personal identity. When the child character’s identity as ‘the self’ is the theme in children’s literature, the narrative usually focuses on the process of how the child recognises his/her own identity as an individual but, in the case of Alice, there is no such identity to be recognised. There is little information that might aid the reader to visualise Jennifer as a young person underneath her artificial identity as Alice.

As a child, Jennifer was neglected and abused by her mother. She lost her temper one day and attacked her friend violently, resulting in the girl’s death. This part of

the narrative follows Jennifer's perceptions and the reader is able to visualise a child in this particular situation. The narrative about Alice, however, provides no significant links between Alice and Jennifer as if the six years in which a child who killed a friend has grown up and become a young person did not exist. The main concern of the narrative seems to be how Alice's real identity is prevented from being exposed. As the reviewer in *Books for Keeps* writes, 'it is totally gripping' (Atwood 2004), the part of the narrative about Alice could almost be read as a thriller in which, with the help of an efficient social worker, a child murderer narrowly escapes from being exposed by the media. It could be argued that how a child grows up with the knowledge that she killed another child is too horrific to explore in a novel for young people. If that is the case, the author's reason for selecting such a subject becomes questionable. The book was shortlisted for the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Book Award yet *Looking for JJ* poses the same question as that which Eccleshare (2008) asks: is it 'our responses to the idea of dying rather than inherent qualities of the stories themselves that make these books so captivating?' In the case of *Looking for JJ*, it may be our idea of a child murderer that makes the book so captivating. In the same article, Eccleshare also points out that the great deal of pain caused by a young person's death is left untold from these stories. Similarly, many profound questions that are likely to arise about a child murderer are left unexplored. These issues are left out most likely on the basis that these are children's books. It could be said that the success of these books demonstrates how effective the use of Haddon's ring can be in texts of children's literature.

Whilst it is no longer regarded as a new social phenomenon, teenage pregnancy is still relatively rare as the subject of novels even for older teenagers. *Dear Nobody* by Berlie Doherty (1991) is a story about eighteen-year old Helen who becomes pregnant while she was preparing to go to college. Half way through the book, Chris, Helen's fellow student and the father of the child, talked to his father:

‘So what are you planning to do about it? Are you telling me you two want to get wed, at the age of eighteen?’

Marriage, and a flat somewhere. A mortgage stretching into middle age, till I was older than my dad. The idea scared the wits out of me. Think about re-incarnation. Get it right next round

‘So what do you want then? What about your degree? What about Newcastle?’

I closed my eyes. I wished he'd stop (p.76).

Although these practical questions are asked, at the end of the book Chris starts university as he has planned, and Helen gives birth to a daughter, having abandoned the abortion that Helen's mother arranged. The book ends with a letter to Chris from Helen who now has a baby and is surrounded by her family:

Dear Chris

I think I'm exactly where I want to be, at this moment of my life. I think of you, with love, and I hope you're happy, too.

[...]

...Mum came over and took her [the baby] from me. She just kissed her, the way she does, and then she walked back across the room and put her in Nan's arms.

It was as though Amy was a fine thread being drawn through a garment, mending tears (p.152).

The tears in a garment refer partly to the fact that Helen's mother is an illegitimate child, which has been the cause of a tension between Helen's mother and grandmother although Helen only found out about it when she herself had conceived an illegitimate child. In her discussion of happy endings in children's literature, Nikolajeva (2005) explains that there are two types of closure: structural closure which is a 'satisfactory roundup of the plot' and psychological closure which brings 'the protagonist's personal conflicts into balance' (p.102). Nikolajeva points out that happy endings in children's literature are usually a combination of these two closures. *Dear Nobody* appears to have this combined closure: the family conflict is about to be resolved and Helen is at peace with herself. The book's ending also follows one of the common patterns of narrative structure in children's literature that is closely linked with the happy ending in which the child character leaves home, has experience from which s/he gains new awareness and returns home.

In traditional children's literature, the child character often physically leaves home to gain new experience but, in modern children's literature, leaving home tends to be a metaphor of an unusual event. Nonetheless, returning home often coincides with

the child character actually going home, as in *Frozen Fire* by Tom Bowler (see Chapter 6). Another example is *A Dog So Small* by Philippa Pearce (1962); Ben becomes so obsessed with an image of a small dog he created that he alienates himself from his family as if he had gone away from home. At the end of the book, however, Ben realises that he would rather lose his dream-dog than a real dog:

Suddenly knowing what he had lost – whom he had lost, Ben shouted, ‘Brown!’

He heard the dog’s answering barks, even before he could see him. The dog was galloping towards him out of the dusk, but Ben went on calling: ‘Brown- BrownBrownBrown!’

Brown dashed up to him, barking so shrilly that Ben had to crouch down and, with the dog’s tongue slapping all over his face, put his arms round him and said steadily, ‘it’s all right, Brown! Quiet, quiet! I’m here!’

Then Ben stood up again, and Brown remained by his side, leaning against his leg, panting, loving him; and lovingly Ben said, ‘It’s late, Brown. Let’s go home’ (p.156) (*italics in the original*).

Nodelman (2008) points out that by going away from home, the child character is forced to become aware and to acknowledge a need for protection provided by the secure enclosure of home. Although Nodelman is implying the possibly constricting nature of home, it is undeniable that home in children’s literature represents a place where childhood can be safely accommodated. This is where *Dear Nobody* diverts from the happy ending in children’s literature, despite its

structurally similar appearance of coming home: when Helen returns home, she is no longer a child but a parent. Returning home represents a happy ending in children's literature because the character is still in his/her childhood to which home provides secure space but, if the character's childhood has ended, the significance of returning home is no longer the same. As Nodelman argues, children's literature tells less of the truth than writers know but, as the term 'less' implies, the holding back of the truth in most texts of children's literature is in degree and not in nature. In the case of *Dear Nobody*, however, it is the truth itself that is held back: the truth that, as Helen is now a parent, her life will inevitably and profoundly change, irrespective of the practical safety that her home may provide. Nodelman (2008) refers to the opinion expressed by some critics that a happy ending in children's literature is dishonest. Whilst holding back by the author of some of the truth is not necessarily dishonest, using the narrative pattern in children's literature to suggest a happy ending when the author knows that the character's childhood has irretrievably gone can be considered as 'dishonest'.

Whilst pregnancy is not the subject of *A Swift Pure Cry* by Siobhan Down (2006), it is one of the major elements in the narrative development. The story is set in a small Irish community where Shell became pregnant by a local boy. She gave birth with help from her younger brother who had some experience with farm animals but his knowledge was not enough and the baby died. Although the narrative includes an inquest and rumours in the community that Shell had to face, there is almost no trace in the narrative that indicates Shell's reflection about the fact that she had given birth and then let the child die. The book ends with Shell riding a big

wheel at a fairground with her brother and sister:

They peaked and swooped the blue. Trix's hair and hers streamed together like tangled kite tails. Trix, Jimmy and she, a silent row going up the back field, picking up the stones. Together always. Free. And Mam's perpetual light shining on them. And their lives ahead of them, around them, spilling from them as they screamed Whoooooo like the three demented owls. What joy it was to be, what joy (p. 310) (*italics in the original*).

In traditional children's literature, parents and other adults are usually removed from the narrative setting before the story begins so that the child character is able to go on an adventure untroubled by any practical obstacles. It can be argued that A Swift Pure Cry is a reverse of this traditional narrative structure: the result of Shell's 'adventure' is conveniently removed by the end of the story so that she is able to resume her childhood without being hindered by the responsibility that would have occurred had the result remained. Teenage pregnancy is a serious issue not because of its physical condition but because of the fact that few teenagers are capable of taking full responsibility for being a parent both practically and psychologically. A novel about pregnancy that gives the reader few insights about its consequence yet somehow suggests that it is a literary work that could encourage the child reader to move toward maturity, although this may not necessarily be the author's intention, has to be said to be 'dishonest'.

Another reason why teenage pregnancy is a subject still rarely found in children's

literature is possibly because, unlike most fictional adventures, pregnancy has a definite consequence: parenthood. Parenthood is the state that is mutually exclusive with childhood and as such, to create a meaningful narrative about the subject within children's literature poses the author a great deal of difficulty.

Frankie's Hat by Jan Mark (1986) is a short story about a seventeen-year old mother, Frankie, but the story is narrated from the perspective of her younger sister Sonia. The focus of the narrative is Sonia's thoughts about how her sister has changed. Sonia was visiting Frankie's flat to celebrate her birthday:

After breakfast Sonia offered to bath Simon. Frankie declined.

'Oh, go on. I'll be ever so careful.'

'It's not a treat, you know.'

'It would be for me,'

'It'd be more of a treat for me if you'd wash up.' Frankie said. She looked tired already, at only half past eight (p.27).

Frankie's sister-in-law offered to babysit and the sisters went out. They came across a group of boys playing football and Frankie joined the game:

Sonia was left clutching it [the hat that Frankie had bought] as Frankie dived off, dribbling the ball. She had forgotten how fast Frankie was on her feet, how Frankie had once spent all her evenings out on the waste ground behind the house, playing football, how Frankie had once made the

front page of the local paper because she had wanted to play in the school eleven and the top brass had said no (p.38).

In terms of parenthood, *Frankie's Hat* offers only a limited view. Whilst the author must have been aware of a great deal of difficulties that teenage mothers face, the narrative is structured as a perception of a fourteen-year old Sonia. Since Sonia has only a limited view on the matter of parenthood, what is left out has little relevance to Sonia's experience. *Frankie's Hat* can be considered as an example of a text of children's literature in which Haddon's ring is legitimately applied.

Dear Nobody and Swift Pure Cry are, on the other hand, narrated from the point of view of Helen and Shell, yet both stories leave out almost entirely the implications of the consequence of their experiences. In the case of these books and that of *Looking for JJ*, it can be argued that the authors have taken advantage of Haddon's ring and left out the 'horrible things' in order to write stories which are otherwise, in Le Guin's words, 'a load the readers are not strong enough yet to carry' (in Hunt 2004 p.3). *Dear Nobody* won a Carnegie Medal, while *Swift Pure Cry* was shortlisted for the same award. These books raise the same question as the books about dying teenagers and a child murderer: is it the subject rather than inherent qualities of the stories themselves that make these books so captivating to adult readers? In other words, if the subject of the book is exceptionally interesting, do adult readers tend to be less critical about what the text actually presents?

[*Haddon's ring and young adult fiction*]

Looking for JJ, Dear Nobody and Swift Pure Cry are often classified as young adult fiction. These are novels that are written for readers who are at the last stage of childhood before they assume full responsibility as adults in society. Falconer (2009) observes that in recent years, adult readers have ‘flocked to children’s fiction in unprecedented numbers,’ and that this seems to coincide with the growing trend in publication of young adult novels that contain ‘violent, gruesome, horrifying deaths’ which ‘induce in the reader a feeling of abjection’ (p.113). Falconer considers possible reasons for this phenomenon by referring to a definition of adolescence as ‘an open psychic structure’ which is a ‘state of incompleteness’ (Kristeva in Falconer *ibid*, pp, 117-8). Adolescence is also seen as ‘capable of breaching and challenging boundaries’ (Coats in Falconer *ibid*, p.118). Falconer argues that young adult novels offer the ‘doubled sense of horror in which psychic identity is both threatened and reaffirmed’ (p.118). However, this does not explain the current unprecedented popularity of young adult fiction amongst adult readers, since novels in which a young person experiences violence or witnesses horrifying deaths are by no means unique to recent young adult fiction. Having considered various theories, Falconer concludes that adolescent fiction is the place where adults can almost always find ‘a new theatre of abjection’ (p.118). This comment suggests that recent young adult novels may be ‘staged’, as it were, in a specific way that is uniquely appealing to adult readers.

At one point in her discussion of *White Darkness* by Geraldine McCaughrean (2005) which she regards as one of the outstanding young adult novels in recent publication, Falconer (2009) remarks, ‘Happily for Sym [the heroine of the novel]

and the novel's readers, one can stand at the edge of non-being and still return safely from the experience' (p.123). The 'non-being' refers mostly to fourteen-year old Sym's experience during the excursion to the Antarctic. She witnesses a fellow traveller left to die because Uncle Victor refused to rescue him and then Victor himself dies. After these incidents, Sym has to navigate through the Antarctic singlehandedly. Moreover, Sym discovered that her father's death and her partial deafness were caused by drugs given to them by Uncle Victor, the one person Sym had trusted unconditionally, as part of his plan to discover a legendary Antarctic underworld. Despite these experiences, the book ends as if Sym were going home from a holiday. She is talking to one of the co-travellers, Mike, on the ship on her homebound journey:

...'I suppose you wouldn't like to... you know- I mean, say if you wouldn't, but just if you might like to ... meet up. Do something. Go out. Somewhere. Something. Make a trip?'

[...]

'I'm fourteen,' I say.

Mike is mortified. 'Oh God! I'm sorry! Fourteen? I thought you must be much older. The way you handled yourself, I mean.

[...]

Blushing, embarrassed by his mistake, Mike is gathering up his belongings, offering to leave me in peace. He hastily re-covered my feet. But that's all right, because the dassie [a small mammal with which Sym has once identified herself] is well and truly awake now. Mike trips over a leg of the

chair and heads off in full retreat.

‘Oh, Mike!’ I call after him, so that he turns in the companionway and bangs his head on a lifeboat. ‘Keep in touch, won’t you?’ I say. ‘I’m planning on being older in a year or two.’ (p. 258)

Despite the fact that she has witnessed two deaths and discovered the truth about Uncle Victor, Sym returns not only to physical safety but also to a carefree state of childhood, seemingly unaffected by her experience, in a similar way to how Shell is shown to be free at the end of *Swift Pure Cry*. Since no other prospects are implied in *Dear Nobody*, the end of the book suggests that the similar safe state is to resume for Helen.

Whilst dying is not exactly a return to safety, *Before I Die* by Jenny Downham (2007) is so ‘imbued with a kind of heroism’ (Eccleshare 2008) that when the death finally arrives, it almost gives a sense of achievement: a completion of an adventure and returning home. As the narrative does not focus on the loss that is felt by those who are left, the reader can, in a sense, also return to safety at the end of the book. On this basis, it could be suggested that recent young adult works of fiction are ‘staged’ in the way in which, despite the seriousness or the extremity of his/her experience, the character returns to safety at the end of the book just as most child characters do in children’s literature.

In her study of the narrator’s voice in children’s literature, Wall (1991) expresses her concern about the prevailing opinion that exists amongst reviewers and critics

of children's literature that the book must measure up to adult standards to be considered as a good book. In her discussion of William Mayne's works, Wall observes that, no matter how well the text is crafted, children's literature does not always sustain adult readers' interest, since the narrative focuses exclusively on actions and perceptions of young children. In this respect, young adult fiction can sustain adults' interest much more easily since its subjects can be just as relevant to adults as to the primarily intended readership. Yet, at the same time, young adult novels are usually reviewed in the children's section in newspapers, critical studies are undertaken mostly by scholars in the field of children's literature and bookshops usually keep them on the shelves next to the main body of children's books. Inevitably, despite the subjects, young adult fiction is considered by adult readers to belong to the domain of children's literature. Adult readers usually approach children's literature with number of assumptions (See Chapter 6), one of which is the existence of Haddon's ring: an assumption that certain things do not happen in children's literature. As a result, young adult fiction can offer adult readers an opportunity to experience 'a theatre of abjection' with the comfort of knowing that the character is going to be safe in the end. This distinct characteristic of young adult fiction is possibly one of the main reasons why it can be so attractive to adult readers.

Haddon's ring assures readers that certain things do not happen in children's literature but there is another kind of safety net that exists in children's literature. Writing about critical studies of children's literature, Hunt (1991) lists some of the prevalent assumptions about children's literature found in the field of literary

criticism: that children's literature will necessarily be simple; that it is inferior to other kinds of literature; and that most of its texts are trivial. In short, children's literature is not serious. If this is the perception held by critics and reviewers, it is most likely that the same can be true with adult readers in general. This assumption creates a different type of Haddon's ring from that which is discussed above: whatever happens in the text of children's literature, the reader is safe because it is not serious.

In her discussion of abjection and young adult fiction, Falconer (2009) refers to two 'best-selling' books: *Across the Nightingale Floor* by Lian Hearn (2002) and *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff (2004) in which 'sadistic violence features prominently' (p.114). These two books highlight the effect of the second kind of Haddon's ring. The narrative settings of both texts are ambiguous. Although Falconer refers to *Across the Nightingale Floor* as medieval Japanese fantasy, no historical details are given. Instead, it relies on popular images created mostly by Japanese films. As such, the characters' actions and their relationships have little bearing on the culture to which the text indirectly refers. This imprecise but sufficiently exotic setting allows the author to include violence and sex in the narrative without any cultural constraints. *How I Live Now* appears to be set in contemporary Britain but the invading army seems to be more akin to that of the Second World War than of modern warfare. The text does not present any political or historical context of the war and although there are ample descriptions of human suffering, there is no underlying narrative about profound human conflicts that may have been caused by the war. Instead, the story follows how Daisy and her young

cousin survive through a series of events of appalling violence.

Both *Across the Nightingale Floor* and *How I Live Now* prominently feature texts in which ‘scenes of torture and brutality are depicted with minute attention to detail, while the impact of such scenes on young protagonists is meticulously recorded.’ (Falconer 2009, p.113). Books containing such scenes would be unlikely to have gained critical acclaim in traditional children’s literature criticism. Had they been published as literary works for adult readership, it is likely that higher fidelity to historical and cultural background would have been demanded. Yet both books have been highly praised: the reviewer in *Books for Keeps* describes *Across the Nightingale Floor* as a ‘real work of literature’ (Barnes 2002), and *How I Live Now* won the Guardian Children’s Fiction Prize. It could be argued that the fact that the two books are classified as young adult fiction, which is a branch of children’s literature, activates the second type of Haddon’s ring and provides adult readers with a sense of safety in which they can be spectators of a ‘theatre of abjection’.

It is needless to say that taking advantage of Haddon’s ring, as discussed above, is not the general characteristic of young adult fiction. There are many novels written for this age group in which the author uses Haddon’s ring effectively in order to create a text that is relevant and meaningful to young adult readers without compromising the authenticity of the narrative elements or the integrity of the narrative structure: *The Cup of the World* by John Dickinson (2004) and *Tamar* by Mal Peet (2005) are two examples that have similar settings to the two books discussed above. *The Cup of the World* has a medieval setting with supernatural

elements, and the main part of *Tamar* tells a story of young people living through a war. *The Cup of the World* is set in an imaginary medieval kingdom of feuding lords. Phaedra escapes from her father's castle in order to avoid the inevitable marriage she does not want, and marries a man she has only seen in her dream. There are hardly any characters of Phaedra's own age and she even has a child half way through the narrative. The setting of the story seems to have little relevance to children yet the adult reader will probably find that *The Cup of the World* still gives the distinct impression of being children's literature. The most likely reason for this is Phaedra's perspectives upon her world and her growing understanding of the complexity of humanity that drives the narrative forward rather than the narrator's observation of a young woman in a complex human relationship. As suggested in the previous chapter, this is one of the distinct characteristics in texts of children's literature: adult authors' views are held back and the narrator's voice is the eye and the mind of the young protagonist. In addition to this structural feature, Phaedra is often guided by Elanor Massey, an older woman who has been accused of being a witch. As a wise woman, Elanor represents adult wisdom in the narrative, which is another narrative feature frequently found in texts of children's literature. At the end of the book, Phaedra symbolically, and appropriate to the young adult reader, sets sail to her new home and a new challenge as a mature and independent person.

The main part of *Tamar* tells the story of two young men trained as Special Operations Executive, codenamed Tamar and Dart, who were working in occupied Holland towards the end of the Second World War. This part of the narrative ends with Tamar being led into a trap and killed. The trap was set by Dart who had

mistaken a young Dutch resistance activist Marijke's friendly affection for love but discovered that it was Tamar whom she loved and she was pregnant with Tamar's child. There is nothing to mark the text in this part of the narrative as children's literature, since the characters are all independent adults and their concerns have no particular relevance to being a developing child. What makes Tamar children's literature is the presence of the accompanying narrative in which the present-day Tamar, a fifteen-year old granddaughter of 'Tamar' and Marijke who came to live in England, tries to uncover the history of her family which has caused her father to leave his family and her grandfather to commit suicide. The present-day Tamar makes a journey along the river Tamar, following the map her grandfather left. At the end of the journey she finds her father who tells her that the man who lived as his father and her grandfather was in fact Dart- the man who had caused the death of his real father out of jealousy. The book ends with an epilogue: 'Amsterdam, 2005': Tamar is married to Yoyo who accompanied her journey along the river Tamar. Tamar is expecting a baby and is determined not to let the past destroy her life as it had done her father's. Having read the war episode, the adult reader may find it somewhat unsatisfactory that the effects of the event on Marijke and Dart after the war are left unexplored but this may be beyond the interest of the child reader. Whilst the text in which the war episode is narrated can be considered to be for general readers, by using the narrative of present-day Tamar as Haddon's ring, the novel as a whole is kept within the parameter of children's literature and conveys the sense of an irrevocable personal tragedy to the child reader without resorting to explicit descriptions of suffering.

It can be argued that the existence of Haddon's ring is more easily detectable in texts of young adult fiction than in those for younger children. As young adult fiction often has subject matter that can easily be found in general fiction, the existence of Haddon's ring is one of the decisive elements that distinguish it from fiction for adults as examined above. Whilst its effects may not be so pronounced in texts for younger children, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, the 'safety net' is one of the narrative techniques that authors consciously use to create texts for children; adults need to be aware of the technique's existence and how it is used.

One of the texts for younger children that make a particularly effective use of Haddon's ring is *The Tulip Touch* by Anne Fine (1996). The book is written at the time of the trial of two ten-year old boys on the charge of murdering two-year old James Bulger. The book asks the question whether a child can be born evil, and as such it is not a novel for very young children but neither is it exclusively for young adults, as the text is recommended for key stage 3 (ages eleven to fourteen). In a similar way to *Frankie's Hat* in which a younger child observes a teenage mother, *The Tulip Touch* is narrated from the perspective of Natalie who makes friends with Tulip, thereby containing the narrative within the perception of a 'normal' child. However, the crucial point in the narrative structure in regard to Haddon's ring is the author's decision to make Natalie's father a hotel manager and that the family should live where he works. The narrative culminates in Tulip setting fire to the hotel which is Natalie's current 'home'. The fact that it is a hotel that is burnt down allows the text to express the seriousness of Tulip's act but saves Natalie and

therefore the child reader from the sense of despair that would have been felt had it been Natalie's own home that was destroyed.

On the basis of the discussion above, it can be suggested that Haddon's ring is a technical aspect of shadow text: the author uses the ring to keep out of sight 'an unspoken and much more complex repertoire' (Nodelman 2008, p.8). When reading a book on behalf of a child, an adult reader needs to be aware of its existence and how response can be influenced by the effect of the ways in which Haddon's ring is used.

[Haddon's ring and picture books]

In his discussion of picture books, Nodelman (2008) comments that the 'details of visual information they [the pictures] provide have implications that go well beyond the simple story implied by the text' (p.11). Nodelman is referring to *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, one of the six texts he selected to examine in detail for his study of adult readers of children's literature. The text tells a story of Peter who wakes up and finds that it snowed during the night. He goes out to play alone in the snow but, at the end of the book, finds a friend to play with. The picture shows that Peter is an African American but this information is not included in the text. Nodelman also finds a picture of the two boys being shown from behind and 'facing into a shape that looked a lot like an outline map of the continent of Africa' (p.11) and comments that, considering the fact that the book was published in 1962, this was notably significant. Nodelman argues that the fact that the text does not

mention these details is even more significant, since the very absence of the information makes the simple text a 'source of great complexity, fraught with a political and cultural import it would not have had if it had simply named what its picture showed' (p.11). Similarly Hunt (2001) argues that 'reading a picture book is an extremely sophisticated act' and that some of the picture books published today 'can be seen as at the cutting edge of metafictional innovation' (p.289), and lists some of the ways in which pictures are used in recent picture books, for example: they add the ambiguity to the words; fix a specific image which has not been fixed by the words; contradict the words; or act as an indicator of significance.

Hunt (2001) remarks that all these possibilities have attracted large numbers of skilful, experimental author-artists. On the other hand, it could be argued that, because of these possibilities, the distinction between experiment and exploitation has become somewhat blurred, and some picture books could be seen in terms of the author exploring his/her own interest at the expense of child readers. One work that can be regarded as an example of such work is *Outside Over There* by Maurice Sendak (1981). Hunt (2001) describes the book as having complex symbolism with highly allusive illustration, and lists some of the comments that have been made about the book: that it is 'about violation, loss, transfiguration, the id, responsibility and nightmare' (p.125). Carpenter and Prichard (1984) praise the book as 'Sendak's exploration of the realms of the unconscious in *Where the Wild Things Are* and its successors [*In the Night Kitchen* (1970) and *Outside Over There*] lift his work beyond the confines of the children's picture book, and place it among major art of the 20th century' (p.477). Hardly any of the issues above can be associated with the

matters that might be of interest to child readers themselves and the comment made by Carpenter and Prichard implies that the book's value lies in its not being a mere picture book for children.

Rose Blanche by Roberto Innocenti and English text by Ian McEwan (1985), could be regarded as another example of a picture book in which the author's wish to explore his own interest overrides the interest of child readers. As a result, the book raises a number of questions about adults' response to books that are written for children. The author's words are printed on the back of the book:

In this book I wanted to illustrate how a child experiences war without really understanding it...I was a little child when the war passed in front of my door...My father did not want to answer my questions, but I knew that something terrible was happening.

The book begins on the day when the war began and the people in a German town were cheering at the soldiers who were going to fight for the country. The story tells how *Rose Blanche* saw a boy run out of a lorry to be put back; she followed the lorry, and found a place where 'dozens of motionless children stared at her from behind a barbed wire fence.' After that, *Rose Blanche* carried food to the children every day but on the day when the people in the town decided to leave, she did not come back.

The text provides no information about the place *Rose Blanche* found other than

what she could see, and the pictures add little information other than detailed visualisation of the content of the text. It could be speculated that the author considered the yellow stars that were worn by the children inside the fence would be sufficient to explain what the place was, but the stars are significant only if the child reader already has the relevant knowledge. Referring to Rose Blanche in her discussion of the holocaust in children's literature, Kokkola (2003) argues that the child reader will want to know where the boy is being taken and once s/he sees the camp, s/he will want to know further: what is this place, why the children are here or why it is secret? Kokkola goes on to argue that 'texts that withhold information, but simultaneously encourage child readers to ask questions, and even guide children as to what is appropriate to ask may, in the end, result in a more meaningful, not to say more ethical, form of communicating with young children about the Holocaust' (p.46). This argument has a fundamental problem: it is based on Kokkola's assumption that the child reader will want to know and will ask questions; moreover s/he will ask the right questions.

Texts that withhold information do not automatically encourage the child reader to ask questions. Iser (1978) explains that reading is a game of imagination that the author and the reader share, but there is a limit to the reader's willingness to participate and this will be exceeded if the text is too obscure. The lack of information in the text of Rose Blanche may overstrain the child reader's willingness to participate, resulting in his/her loss of interest. As for the questions that the child reader may ask, Nodelman (2008) points out that young children tend to look at the pictures indiscriminately, giving equal attention to all parts of

the pictures and often find interesting or unexpected details that more experienced readers miss completely. On this basis, there are a number of details in the text that may catch the child reader's attention and prompt him/her to ask questions when reading *Rose Blanche*: did nobody notice that somebody was taking food from the cellar every day? Did her mother not tell her to eat her food up? And how did she keep the food off her plate (*Rose Blanche* was taking 'extra food to school, jam and apples from the cellar' and 'saving her food off her own plate')? She lived in the town and the camp was in the wood. If she went there after school in winter, did it not get dark before she could get back? Did nobody notice that she disappeared every day? Were there no guards on the way to or at the camp? Did the people in the camp not fight over the food if they were starving and she only brought the food in her school bag? And when the last time she went there, she had a flower in her hand. Where did she find a flower in winter?

Kokkola is, however, discussing the book within the context of communicating with young children about the Holocaust, which implies that the book is presented to the child reader for that particular purpose. In fact *Rose Blanche* is one of the books that are recommended for teaching history of the Second World War at stage two (seven to eleven-year olds). Children will be reading the book along with various other materials about the Second World War and are encouraged to consider *Rose Blanche*'s act as an expression of kindness and courage (for example(http://www.history.org.uk/resources/secondary_resource_1140,1149_11.htm)). Reading the book as part of a classroom activity, children are unlikely to ask questions listed above, since the reading is directed by an experienced reader and

most pupils will be aware of the focus of the discussion in which they are engaged. The child reader may be able to place Rose Blanche's act in the context when the book is read along with other materials that give him/her some additional information. The book itself, however, provides no signs by which the reader may be able to perceive Rose Blanche's act as heroic in nature, since she encounters no dangers on her daily journey to the camp or in everyday life. Also, whilst the text states at one point that Rose Blanche was getting thin, there are no textural or visual signs that indicate the extent of hunger she was experiencing.

Although it is not a picture book nor is it fiction, a young child's experience of the war is found in *War Boy: A County Childhood* by Michael Foreman (1989). The book begins as a bomb came through the roof into the bedroom where Michael and his mother were sleeping:

Mother grabbed me from the bed. The night sky was filled with lights. Searchlights, anti-aircraft fire, stars and a bombers' moon. The sky bounced as my mother ran. Just as we reached our dug-out across the street, the sky flared as the church exploded (p.10).

The way in which a young boy accepted the constant presence of danger and fear as part of everyday life is described in the following episode:

One afternoon we children were mucking about with a football on the recreation ground, or 'Rec' as we called it. Jack the oldest of the Botwright

brothers, shouted 'Fokkers!' We ran like rabbits for the slit trenches under the trees. Twelve Fokker Wulfes swooped out of the sky without warning and flew the whole length of the town spraying cannon shells. They dropped their bombs at the north end. The back of our house was riddled with cannon fire (p.56).

As for the sense of hunger, one of the most convincing descriptions of a child overcoming her own hunger in order to be kind to other is found in a classic children's story, *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (1905). Sara Crewe, who had once been the princess of Miss Minchin's boarding school, was now little more than a scullery maid after her father died, leaving Sara penniless. On one wet day in winter when she had been given hardly any food to eat, Sara found a four pence coin on the pavement and bought four hot buns. The baker gave her two extra. Sara had seen a beggar child sitting outside the baker's shop before she went in. As she came out, Sara gave a bun to the beggar child; then she gave her four more:

Sara took out three more buns and put them down [in the beggar child's lap].

The sound in the hoarse, ravenous voice was awful.

'She is hungrier than I am,' she said to herself. 'She's starving.' But her hand trembled when she put down the fourth bun. 'I'm not starving,' she said – and she put down the fifth.

[...]

Sara found some comfort in her remaining bun. At all events, it was very hot, and it was better than nothing. As she walked along she broke off small pieces and ate them slowly to make them last longer (pp.148, 149).

Writing about war in children's literature, Hunt (2004) wonders if the horror he feels when reading fiction about war is not horror in response to the novel but it is a 'response to the reality behind the fiction – a reality that is masked by the fiction, rather than revealed by it' (p.3) (italics in the original). As a narrative, *Rose Blanche* does not tell the child reader the fears or hunger a child in the war must have experienced, nor does it tell the horrendous reality of the Holocaust. If pupils in a classroom discussion respond to the story of *Rose Blanche*, it is to the reality behind the fiction, in the form of additional information, that they are likely to be responding, since there is little significant information in the book itself to which to respond. This suggests that, if the book is to be understood by children, *Rose Blanche* requires 'mediation, introduction, or policing by adults' (Hunt 2004, p.3), which leads to a question of whether the book can be considered as children's literature. On the other hand, as the title of the book suggests (it was the name of a resistance group of young Germans in the Second World War), *Rose Blanche* could be regarded as a symbolic tale or a fable of heroism and hope: the last page of the book seems to confirm this idea.

Birds took up their positions and sang their simple message.

Spring had triumphed.

It can be argued that the book could alert the child reader to the historical facts about the holocaust. If this is the case, even if the child is not entirely responding to the book itself, the book must be inherently valuable. Similar comment can be made for a number of other books discussed earlier in this chapter: for example Vicky Angel might encourage children to think about death and grief or *The Other Side of the Truth* about refugee issues. When adults are evaluating a book for children, it seems appropriate to value books that may encourage children to think about the subjects of which they may not otherwise be aware. Nevertheless, the question that adults must ask themselves is for what purpose they are evaluating the book and what the appropriate criteria are for the purpose.

Referring to the increasing number of 'issue books' in children's literature publication, including a large number of books dealing with racial issues, Townsend (2007) points out that 'the urge to instruct the young is deeply build into human nature' and adults' idea of 'what the child ought to have is apt to be something that fits in the image of our society as serious, well-meaning, conscientious people feel it ought to be' (p.17). Townsend goes on to argue that this urge that he calls 'didacticism in modern dress' (the title of the article) will lead to 'evaluation of books by the wrong standards' and [these books] are discussed not on their literary merits but only as representations of racial problems, which is a 'dangerous step from literature-as-morality to literature-as-propaganda' (p.19). Townsend's view may be somewhat extreme but the point he makes about books being discussed on merits other than their literary quality is relevant to the discussion in this section of my study. Similarly, in his discussion of the value of

children's literature, Hunt (1980) draws attention to the fact the 'the discussion between usefulness, quality, and value has become hopelessly blurred' (p.234) and warns that it is

inherently dangerous, as it suggests that what is said is a great deal more important than how it is said. [...] Worse, this approach can engender an uncritical acceptance of works clearly well stocked with ideas, however poorly formulated or ill written (Hunt 1980, p234) (*italics in the original*).

Rose Blanche is certainly well stocked with ideas that can be used productively in classroom discussions yet the main part of the narrative has to be considered as being 'poorly formed', in that it contains a number of elements that cannot be answered satisfactory if the child reader questions.

The importance of how the story is presented can be explained in the context of fantasy fiction, since, in many respects, fantasy highlights one of the essential issues of fiction, namely the 'suspension of disbelief'. In fantasy the reader is 'persuaded to play the new system of "facts", which he has wilfully and speculatively accepted against the established facts.' (Irvin 1974, p.67) For fantasy to be successful, the author, on his/her part, must maintain the new system into which s/he has persuaded the reader to enter.

Narrative structure of fantasy in general literature can be complex, and the discussion of it is out of the scope of this study, but in children's literature, fantasy

fiction generally sets out the 'new system of facts' at the beginning of the narrative and the events are coherent within the system. For example, *The Story of the Dancing Frog* by Quentin Blake (1984) and *Out of the Oven* by Jan Mark with pictures by Antony Maitland (1986) are both picture books aimed at the similar age group as to *Rose Blanche* in that the child characters are all in their middle years (i.e. not infant or young adult). Both stories depart from 'consensus reality' (Hunt 2001, p.271), or physical laws at the start of the narrative by introducing a frog that dances and a devil that has come out of the oven and looks like a cat. George the frog goes on the stage and turns out to be a great success, and the devil lives as a cat and becomes a regular church goer because he likes the warm grating inside the church building. Both stories provide sufficient practical details for the narrative to develop but do not make use of the 'non-reality' element in order to tell anything outside the new system of facts into which the reader has entered. For example, *The Story of the Dancing Frog* could have referred to the significance of George's existence in the life of Gertrude who found him on the day when she received a letter informing her that her husband had died. *Out of the Oven* could have created some disturbances in the belief system of the people in the neighbourhood that the presence of the devil might have caused. These narrative elements are not included in the two stories because the authors have set Haddon's ring in order to tell the stories about the frog and the devil and not the implications of their existence. If the surface stories are to include such complex human factors, the new system of facts needs to be set out accordingly. In this regard, *Rose Blanche* invites the reader to enter a narrative world that is based on the consensus reality but it departs from it or more accurately, ignores it when the narrative development requires the

character to take certain actions that cannot be supported by the system that the reader has accepted. In this case, Haddon's ring is utilised in order to ensure the adult reader, probably some child readers too, that this is only a children's book and it does not need to be so rigorously assessed as if the book were for general readership.

It may still be argued that if a book can be productively used for children's education the book must be approved by those who are concerned with children's reading even if some aspects of the book do not fulfil literary criteria, that is to say, if the text is poorly formulated. In their discussion of war in children's fiction, Agnew and Fox (2001) argue:

...young readers are inevitably urged to examine the nature of violence and suffering, persecution and endurance, hatred and loyalty, selfishness and sacrifice. They are asked to share the writer's condemnation of war and the repugnant beliefs which lead to conflict, and to feel compassion for the anguish imposed upon the innocent many by the powerful few (p.53).

As discussed above, in the case of *Rose Blanche*, it is not the narrative in the text that urges the child reader to examine these aspects of the holocaust but more likely the adult who presents the book to the child that directs him/her to read in this way. *Rose Blanche* may have the potential of creating the responses described by Agnew and Fox but the surface story is not formulated in the way in which these effects

may be produced unaided. Hunt (2004) points out that ‘the fact that the subject-matter being war does not automatically imbue the texts with virtue’ (p.6), and that ‘to say an honest interaction between surface and depth’ is not critical to children’s literature is ‘merely to suggest that the second-rate is appropriate to children’ (Hunt 1981, p.240). In his view ‘a valuable book does not necessarily require that it be read in a certain way; it merely allows one to read according to one’s capacities’ (Hunt *ibid*, p.226). It can be argued, then, that there are two sets of criteria when adults evaluate books for children: one is for usefulness and the other for value. In this respect, a comment made by Philip (1982) is worth noting: referring to William Mayne, Philip remarks that ‘children do not read him not because he is unreadable but because teachers teach them to read in a way which excludes him’ (in Alderson 2006). It can be speculated that Philip is referring to the characteristic of Mayne’s writing, which is described by Hunt (2001) as ‘[his books] are rather than *about*’ (p.96) (*italics in the original*), and do not usually have ‘portable themes’ (Hunt 1991, p146), implying that Mayne’s books do not easily lend themselves to constructive classroom discussions. As it is, Philip’s remark can be a warning that the use of unsuitable evaluation criteria could deprive children of reading ‘valuable’ books.

Rose Blanche draws attention to the distinction between usefulness and value of children’s literature. The book also demonstrates how adults and children respond differently to the same text because adults cannot unlearn their knowledge about the subject matter of the book. This is a reminder that, when reading a book on behalf of a child, the adult reader needs to be aware that his/her own response to

the book is not necessarily relevant to the child reader. It also implies that the evaluation needs to be within a framework that takes into account the relevance to the child reader. For this purpose, the notions of Haddon's ring and Hunt's three-way contract between the author, the child protagonist, and the child reader can be useful tools. Haddon's ring can be used to consider if what is included in and excluded from the text are selected for legitimate or appropriate reasons. Hunt's three-way contract is particularly effective in alerting the adult reader when the author voices his/her adult experience by shifting the narrative viewpoint. The author's voice could influence the adult reader's evaluation of the book in a way that is not necessarily relevant to the child reader. In the next chapter, these tools will be put into practice in analysis of a novel in order to find out if adult's voice in the text can be systematically detected.

CHAPTER 8

TEXT ANALYSIS

In order to answer the question ‘When we read children’s literature, how do we take into account the fact that we are adults?’ this study has explored a range of aspects concerning adults’ relationship to children’s literature. This chapter carries out a specific textual analysis by testing out the findings from the earlier investigation and, by the end of the analysis, it is hoped that a pattern may emerge from which a critical model will be developed. It is hoped that this model will act as a useful evaluation tool for adults to use when mediating books for children. The book selected for initial analysis is *The Tears of the Salamander* by Peter Dickinson (2003). It is recommended for ages ‘from ten to fourteen’ by Books for Keeps (No. 142 September 2003).

[the story]

Alfredo lived in a cathedral town with his parents and an older brother. When he was seven, he received a gift from Uncle Giorgio of whom his parents seemed to disapprove for reasons Alfredo did not at the time understand. Soon after he received the gift, a figure of a salamander on a gold chain, it was discovered that Alfredo had a singing voice. He joined the cathedral choir: he sang and learned and was very happy until one day when Alfredo was twelve, his father’s bakery exploded, killing his parents and his brother. Alfredo had been asked if he would be willing to be castrated so that he could remain in the choir but his father had refused to consent. Now that singing was all that was left to him, Alfredo agreed to

undergo the operation. During the meeting in which the matter was explained to Alfredo and forms were prepared to be signed, Uncle Giorgio arrived and offering a large sum of money, took Alfredo away from the cathedral.

Alfredo travelled with Uncle Giorgio to the ancestral estate of the di Sala family, high up on Mount Edna. On the way to the estate, from the hillside where the view opened to the sea, Alfredo witnessed the ship in which they had travelled bursting into flame. When they arrived at Casa di Sala, Uncle Giorgio took Alfredo to a room where there was a furnace that contained fire that burnt without heat but emanated intense light. Uncle Giorgio ordered Alfred to sing and, as he sang, the salamander that was kept in the furnace joined him and wept. Uncle Giorgio caught the tears and drank. The furnace had made him ill and the tears of the salamander were what kept him alive.

There were only two other people living in the house: Annetta, a dumb peasant woman and her idiot son Toni. Alfredo was to sing to the salamander so that Uncle Giorgio could harvest its tears. He was also ordered to learn a chant in an ancient language and in music that was unfamiliar to Alfredo. Gradually, he began to understand that his uncle had the power to control the Mountain but was feared and hated by the people in the town, and that Alfredo's father had denounced his heritage because he did not agree with his brother. Alfredo discovered that he could become part of the mountain by lying on the lava in the garden and would be able to talk to the salamanders that lived in the fire at the heart of the mountain. He also discovered that he had the power to call the Angels of Fire by his singing, and that

Toni had a real gift of music and that the Angels of Fire regarded him as the true Master. Alfredo began to suspect that his uncle had not brought him here to care for an orphaned nephew but had an ulterior motive. In the meantime, the knowledge that the salamanders gave him confirmed Alfredo's suspicion that it was Uncle Giorgio who had destroyed his father's bakery and burned the ship, the Bonaventure. He also learned that Toni was in fact Uncle Giorgio's son. When he finally understood that Uncle Giorgio's plan was to transfer his mind into Alfredo's body in his bid for immortality, he became determined to destroy his uncle. Alfredo also knew that, in order to defeat the Master of the Mountain, he must return the captured salamander to its home that was in the fire of the Mountain.

With careful planning and help from Annetta and Toni, Alfredo accomplished his plan. Toni's brain ailment had been cured by the tears of the salamander, and now the Mountain accepted him as the new Master. The townspeople too rejoiced at having a new, kind guardian. Alfredo looked forward to his future: one day, he would like to visit great cities like Vienna where there was said to be wonderful music. He may even travel as far as to London.

[the text]

In the following section, the text will be examined by testing out the findings in the previous chapters in order to detect the elements that are the signs of adult's presence in texts of children's literature. It is these elements that are likely to influence the adult reader's response in the way that is not necessarily relevant to the child reader. The presence of an adult in texts of children's literature is,

however, not necessarily always manipulative. Most authors of modern children's literature are aware of their responsibility for children's education in a broad sense and genuinely wish to help their readers' intellectual and emotional development. These wishes are bound to leave a trace in texts which they create, to which adult readers may respond in various ways. The purpose of this analysis is not to independently evaluate the book but to identify some of the features in the text to which the adult reader may respond differently to the child reader.

All italics in the quoted texts are original.

For the purpose of avoiding the use of dual personal pronouns (s/he, him/her etc.), the narrator in the text is assumed to be male in this discussion. Since the reader refers to a living person rather than a textual construct, and also to avoid confusion with the narrator, the adult reader will be referred to as s/he, his/her etc. in the following analysis.

The book begins by introducing Alfredo as a seven-year old at home with his family.

The gift arrived for Alfredo's seventh name-day. It wasn't like his other gifts – the basket of candied cherries, the hobby horse, the toy drum – not a gift for a child at all. He opened the little leather pouch and pulled out a fine yellow chain, like the one his big brother Giorgio had been given to wear round his neck for his First Communion, but instead of a cross on the end this one had a funny little animal, made of the same yellow stuff as the

chain.

He stared at it. The body was like that of one of the little brown lizards that lived in the cracks in the brickwork of the bakehouse, except that it had a long tail that curled under its belly, right round behind and over, with the end hanging down beside its front leg and hooking round at the tip. And the spread toes had small hooked claws, and not the sucker pads of the bakehouse lizards (p. 1).

The expression 'not a gift for a child at all' is a voice of an adult, since the term 'a child' in this context is a concept. A young child would be more likely to use 'children' meaning 'I and others like me'. This indicates that the narrator is observing the event from the point of view of an adult who has some assumptions about what usually pleases a child. The description of the gift is an objective observation of its external details and it contains no reference to Alfredo's knowledge or experience apart from the lizard but even this is an impersonal observation of the animal, all of which indicate that the narrator is observing the event as an adult and not representing Alfredo's thoughts. However, the author's awareness that he is addressing a child audience can be recognised by his use of what could be an adult's idea about a child's perceptions, for example 'yellow stuff', 'a funny little animal', and 'big brother'. Although these are childlike expressions, adult readers are unlikely to feel they need to shift their perception to accommodate these expressions. The reference to the lizard guides the child reader to visualise the gift that Alfredo was looking at, but at the same time, it can evoke

in the adult reader a vision of a boy sitting in the sun, intently observing a small creature that lives in the brick wall of his father's bakery: a vision of a childhood simple pleasure. On the whole, the opening passage of the book, albeit covertly, sufficiently accommodates the adult reader's interest.

The author of children's literature can use cultural reference in order to take advantage of the adult reader's knowledge and present a perspective that is unlikely to be available to child readers from the text itself. On the other hand, the author may choose not to provide the adult reader with obvious access to interpretations that are based on the knowledge that potentially excludes the child reader. The following is an example in which the author does not use cultural reference to the adult reader's advantage.

Soon after he received the gift, Alfredo was found to have a singing voice. After a service at the cathedral, while he was waiting for his family, Alfredo sang what he had heard at the service. A priest heard him and ordered his mother to bring him to the cathedral.

Father came striding across, his face stiff with anger.

'No!' he said. 'Absolutely not! My son is a man, and must remain a man, and beget sons of his own!'

'The decision is not taken at this age,' said the priest calmly. 'The voice may not develop. The Prince Cardinal is both humane and generous. He does not go against the wishes of the parents, but richly rewards those who

consent. Meanwhile your son will go to school, learn to read and write, both Latin and the common tongue. These are gifts not to be despised. You are a baker, I see from your dress. The patronage of the Prince-Cardinal is not to be despised, whereas his disfavour... But you are a sensible man, sir. I do not need to tell you that. Come too, with the boy, if your oven can spare you, and you will be able to discuss matters with the Precentor...'

(p.7)

As long as the child reader has some knowledge about social history of pre-industrial Europe, s/he will be able to understand the power relationship between a baker and a priest, and will be able to perceive the situation in which Alfredo's father found himself. The adult reader may have more detailed knowledge about the society of the time but the extra knowledge is unlikely to provide any alternative perspectives other than those that the text is offering to the child reader. The reader will be perplexed by Alfredo's father's anger if s/he does not have the knowledge of the practice of castration that existed in the time of this story but the information of the practice itself is equally available to children and adults, in that whether or not the reader has the knowledge is a matter of individual difference and not a question of whether the reader is an adult or a child. The child reader of this book is likely to be old enough to be able to connect the biological implication of the practice to the reason why Alfredo's father refused the offer if s/he has the relevant knowledge. The text leaves out the explanation at this point because Alfredo did not yet have the knowledge when this incident occurred. This becomes clear and the matter explained soon afterward; therefore having the

relevant knowledge at this point does not give the reader a great deal of advantage.

Castration can be an awkward subject in a text of children's literature and the author needs to decide how it may be presented. The following passage suggests that the author has decided to explain the subject matter to the child reader despite the fact that it may affect the flow of the narrative.

Alfredo loved being a chorister. He enjoyed singing and practice. He did not mind school work either. He wanted to spend the rest of his life singing in the cathedral and it was this thought that made him understand why Father reacted to the priest's offer as he did:

He understood now what Father had been talking about when he had objected so strongly to Alfredo even being auditioned for the choir. Four of the adult choristers were castrati. That's to say they'd had their testicles removed when they were boys, in the same way that farmers gelded young male sheep and cattle, so that they never became normal rams and bulls and could never sire young; it kept them docile and improved the flavour of their meat. But in the case of the choristers it meant that their voices had never broken, and they now sang alto or counter-tenor, instead of tenor or bass. They, too, could never become fathers (p.8).

There are no textual elements to indicate that Alfredo had any knowledge of farmers' concerns about their cattle or production of meat, and also the practice

would probably have been known to children in less technical terms than ‘removing ‘testicle’. The implication is that the explanation does not belong to the world of this narrative, which indicates that what is presented in the text is not the narrator addressing the narratee but the author explaining to the reader what castration is and what the implication is for singing. If the author had chosen to let the narrator tell the narratee about the subject, the text may not have provided enough factual information to the child reader. The author’s decision to explain the matter in this way suggests that he was aware of his position as adult providing information to child readers and felt obliged to present what he assumed to be an appropriate explanation of the subject for children.

Generally speaking, adult characters in modern children’s literature are portrayed as children might see them in real life rather than as wise and dependable or as a kind of a villain often found in traditional children’s fiction. The following passage could produce response that is more specific to the adult reader.

When Alfredo was twelve, his father’s bakery was burnt down, killing his parents and his brother. The choirmaster who had been hoping to keep Alfredo in the choir, talked to him:

They didn’t punish him for missing the evensong. He wouldn’t have cared if they had – in fact he would have barely noticed. But the choirmaster, though strict, was a kindly man, and the boy’s whole family had perished in the blaze. Beside, he had plans now for Alfredo.

‘This is a terrible thing that had happened to you, my son,’ he said. ‘I truly grieve for you, as do all your friends here. You have no other relatives?’

‘Only my uncle, sir. I don’t know where he lives. He came to my christening, but I don’t remember, of course. That’s the only time I’ve seen him.’

The choirmaster nodded. It didn’t sound as if this uncaring relative would be much of a problem. Very likely he would be glad to have the boy taken off his hands.

‘You need not sing if you do not feel up to it.’

‘Oh sir, please,’ said Alfredo, weeping. ‘I must sing. It’s the only thing left.’

‘That’s a good boy,’ said the choirmaster, remembering minor turbulence in his own life, during which he had taken refuge in music, and believing he understood something of what Alfredo felt. ‘Soon you shall sing a solo for His Eminence’ (pp.16-17).

There are a number of textual elements by which the choirmaster’s attitude and intentions can be perceived by the reader. For example: ‘Beside, he had plans now for Alfredo’, ‘It didn’t sound as if this uncaring relative would be much of a problem’, ‘remembering minor turbulence in his own life’, and ‘believing he understood something of what Alfredo felt’. From the first two descriptions, the reader will be able to visualise the choirmaster as calculating rather than caring, and from the other two the reader will see him being patronising and complacent. If the reader is able to perceive the significance of the choirmaster’s attitude in the

situation in which this dialogue is taking place, s/he will be able to assemble the meaning that is intended by the text: adults can be calculating and complacent as this choirmaster is when dealing with a child. Whilst this view is equally accessible to the child reader and the adult reader, to the adult reader, the text may convey the author's disapproving views about adults' assumption that novels for children always have kind and understanding adult characters. It could even be a subversive comment on the images that adults tend to have of themselves: they are always kind and understanding toward children. The text could be perceived by the adult reader either as an invitation to join the criticism or as a challenge to his/her own view about adults and adult characters in children's literature.

In the hands of the best writers, children's literature tells how children mature, not as the theme of the narrative but in an understated way (Meek and Watson 2003). The narrator guides the child character to move toward a knowledge of his/her self perception (Nodelman 2008), which is often represented by the moment in the narrative when an entirely new thought occurs to the child character, usually as a result of a specific narrative event.

Uncle Giorgio explained to Alfred that he was the Master of the Mountain and the Mountain burned the Bonaventura in revenge for bringing back its Master. Uncle Giorgio also told Alfredo that he was to become the Master when his time came.

So Alfredo sat at his window while the night wheeled on, trying to think about the salamander, and the mountain and his uncle. Master of the

Mountain! Yes, of course! That was what Father had been saying on the evening of his name-day, 'The mountain must have its Master.' It had been a relief to have even that little explained, though nothing compared to the relief of understanding the terrible thing that had happened to Bonaventura, however strange the explanation.

And it didn't even feel all that strange to Alfredo. In fact it felt somewhat familiar – part of some larger thing that he still didn't fully know, but all his life had been waiting to learn. Underlying all his fears and griefs he could feel a deep, thrilling excitement at what future knowledge might lie ahead (p.55).

The narrator in the first paragraph looks into Alfredo's mind and recounts how Alfredo put together the fragments of knowledge he had accumulated. Since Alfredo's knowledge comes from the details of actual events that have been presented in the text, the reader is able to identify the connections between each element and to follow the process of the way in which Alfredo's understanding was forming. However, since Alfredo was assembling knowledge that had been provided by adults, his understanding is still well within the range of adult authority. In the second paragraph, the narrator appears to be continuing to recount Alfredo's thoughts, yet there are no textual elements that can be directly linked to Alfredo's experience or the knowledge he had at the time. This indicates that the narrator's focus has shifted from Alfredo's thoughts to Alfredo as a child, and is now presenting an image of a child who has just become aware of a new perception

about himself. This can be viewed by the child reader as his/her own experience articulated for him/her by the narrator, and it could be of interest to the adult reader as a reminder of those moments that s/he experienced as a child.

One of the assumptions that adults have when they approach children's literature is that certain things are left unsaid. This in itself is not different from general literature but, unlike general literature, adult readers of children's literature tend to agree with the author's decision to hold back some knowledge and accept what the text presents as it is without attempting to 'fill the gap'. Nevertheless, texts of children's literature occasionally appear to invite adult readers to interpret, irrespective of the relevance to the child reader's interest.

Uncle Giorgio took Alfredo to the summit of the mountain. Alfredo looked into the crater of the volcano.

Alfredo stood enthralled.

Something was happening to him. He didn't understand it. He felt... bigger. Hugely bigger. Not bigger inside himself. He was still only a fleck of living matter on the enormous mountain. Bigger, somehow outside himself. Sometimes he used to play with Father's burning glass, fascinated by the way he could use its lens to focus the sunlight into an intense dot that in a few seconds could make a twist of dried grass leap into flame and shrivel into ash. Standing here on the summit of Etna, he had become that

burning dot, filled with the pure fire of the sun. The mountain itself was the lens.

‘You feel it?’ said Uncle Giorgio.

‘I could do anything!’ whispered Alfredo.

‘Yes,’ answered Uncle Giorgio just as quietly, drawing the syllable out to become a sigh of satisfaction, exulting in the knowledge of power. He knew what Alfredo was talking about. (p.67-68)

In literary texts, the reader assembles the meaning intended by the text by identifying the connection between the elements selected by the author. For this process to be possible, the elements need to be organised in such a way that the reason for their selection can be conveyed to the reader. In the passage above, the reader is likely to note that some phrases have been selected for a particular purpose in this episode: these are the mountain, a burning glass and the sun’s heat concentrated by a lens. These elements are placed in between two descriptions: Alfredo’s awareness of himself in relation to the mountain, and his awareness of new possibility in himself. These selected textual elements are also presented against the background of Alfredo’s knowledge that, one day, he was to become the Master of the Mountain. This will guide the child reader to identify the mountain and the heat of the sun as representations of power and knowledge, and will allow him/her to perceive a new sense of power that Alfredo is experiencing at this moment. Since there are no other details that can be connected to matters in a wider context, the child reader’s perception is likely to be of Alfredo’s experience of this specific moment: that Alfredo became aware that he was in some way

linked to the mountain and that he may possess a power of which he had not been aware.

The text may, however, convey a different image to the adult reader. The critical difference between the adult and the child as the reader of *The Tears of the Salamander* is that, to the child reader, it is a novel s/he happens to be reading but, to the adult reader, it is a book written for children. This notion that the book is written for children provides the adult reader with an additional context to the text: the expectation that the book is likely to be concerned with childhood and that the story is about a child who is growing up. In this context, the selected elements being largely abstract and the lack of details specific to Alfredo allows the adult reader to depart from Alfredo's perception and to interpret the text within his/her own views about childhood. The adult reader is also more likely to be able to apply his/her knowledge gained by reading literary texts and interpret the power of a volcanic mountain and of the concentrated heat of the sun as a sense of the power that a boy may anticipate to possess as he stands at the point of transformation from a young child to an adolescent and then to an adult. It is possible that the metaphors can be identified by the child reader but s/he is more likely to share the sense of anticipation with Alfredo than to be observing him from outside. Furthermore, the text could even allow the adult reader to visualise a boy becoming aware of his sexuality. Uncle Giorgio's words could be perceived as a representation of an adult acknowledging Alfredo's readiness to enter adulthood.

Children's literature celebrates childhood yet, at the same time, urges child readers

to leave it behind. The following two passages are examples of the way in which this duality is expressed in the text.

Example 1: Having discovered that Toni had natural ability to play the recorder, Alfredo talked to Annetta and found that she was willing to share the secret with Alfredo and not to tell what had happened to Uncle Giorgio:

He put the recorder back in its rack and went up to his room. As he climbed the stairs he realised that he had found the exchange comforting. It meant several things: chiefly that he now didn't need to make up his mind whether to tell Uncle Giorgio what had happened: but also that Uncle Giorgio's powers were limited – he wasn't instantly aware of everything that happened in and around his house, even when it was somehow involved magic, as Toni's almost magical gift for music must have been (pp.98-99).

The narrator recounts Alfredo's thought about his conversation with Annetta, which allows the reader to visualise Alfredo being happy to be passing some of the responsibility to an adult and to remain a carefree, dependent child. But the text also communicates to the reader Alfredo's excitement in his discovery that he was not entirely under the control of an adult, which indicates his desire to be independent and equal to an adult. The adult reader's response to this passage is likely to be similar to that of the child reader, since the narrator's focus does not shift away from Alfredo's thoughts about this particular narrative event. As it is, the

‘shadow text’ in this passage is unlikely to make its presence felt to the adult reader as distinctly as it might have done if there were elements that could evoke the inevitable loss of childhood.

Example 2: Alfredo attended a service at the church in the town with Uncle Giorgio and discovered that, inside the church, he was free from the power of the mountain of which he had not been conscious until now. Alfredo also discovered that, irrespective of his own feelings toward Uncle Giorgio, to the people of the town, he was a member of the di Salas family

It was as if in that shared understanding Alfredo had been allowed on the other side of a barrier, into Uncle Giorgio’s aloneness, into a place where words meant something different from what they seemed to mean, and he understood those meanings. Then in a few paces, the moment was over. It was Alfredo himself who ended it, shrinking back out of that aloneness, as if knowing by instinct that he would never be able to breathe its pure and joyless air (p.106).

The text suggests that Alfredo had a desire to enter into Uncle Giorgio’s world or at least he was interested in the world. This is indicated by the expression ‘allowed on the other side of the barrier’ and in ‘that shared understanding’ that he was a member of the di Sala family. On the other hand, from ‘aloneness’ and ‘joyless air’ in the world of Uncle Giorgio, the reader could infer that his uncle’s world is not an attractive place to Alfredo. The text will guide the child reader to visualise two

contrasting worlds and to perceive Alfredo's reluctance to join the world that he had just glimpsed. For the adult reader, the phrase 'and he understood those meanings' could evoke a vision of a child reluctantly acknowledging the inevitability that he will be leaving the joyful world of childhood and entering into the world, despite the fact that he recoiled from it on his first encounter. Whilst the child reader and the adult reader may not assemble an identical meaning, the text presents Alfredo's interest to the two worlds which are equally available to the child reader and the adult reader.

Whilst child characters in modern children's literature do not live in a separate world from that of adults, there are still many aspects in adults' lives that are beyond the child character's interest or comprehension: the sexual relationship of adults is one of the examples. If such a relationship is to be included in the narrative, the author needs to select carefully what to exclude without being dishonest to the child reader. The following passage demonstrates the way in which the author manages to include such subject matter without losing the integrity of the narrative.

Having realised that Toni was in fact Uncle Giorgio's son, Alfredo began to understand why Uncle Giorgio needed him.

Another pulse of understanding. Yes again, this woman to live in his house, to bear his children – of course Uncle Giorgio would want to her dumb, another barrier round his aloneness, his secrets. Perhaps some of those

children would inherit the defect – what of it? One son who could speak, and sing to the salamander, would be enough. Nothing else mattered.

Only there was also a defect in the father's seed. His own seed. He could sire child after child on whatever woman would let him, and he would finish up with a household of idiots – horrible! A punishment, a judgement, for what he had done and become? No wonder he had spoken of it [about Toni] with such anger and contempt (p128).

Whilst Alfredo's understanding of the reason why Uncle Giorgio chose Annetta is perfectly legitimate as the basis of the narrative element, the author's reason may lie somewhere else. Considering the social conventions in the time of the story, Uncle Giorgio could easily have prevented Annetta from speaking to him or betraying his secret. It is more likely that the author decided to make Annetta dumb in order to avoid the situation from occurring in the narrative in which she would need to speak to Alfredo. If Annetta could speak, the narrative would have to include dialogues between her and Alfredo, which would be bound to touch on her relationship with Uncle Giorgio. If Annetta revealed her thoughts honestly, it is likely that the content would be beyond the child reader's interest or it could even be inappropriate for child readers. If, on the other hand, Annetta responded to Alfredo as if to humour him in the way an adult might do in real life when a child asks an awkward question, the narrative would become dishonest to the child reader. By creating a narrative setting in which an adult woman's experience does not need to be expressed, the author is able to present an explanation of the

situation in an impersonal, factual way that Alfredo understands it. This enables the author to introduce adults' relationship into the narrative and to presents an adequate and appropriate explanation for the purpose of the narrative development without being dishonest to the child reader. This may seem somewhat unsatisfactory to the adult reader if s/he regards Annetta as a character whose significance in the narrative is based around her relationship to Uncle Giorgio. However, Annetta's function in the narrative is that of an adult companion to the child hero in an adventure story: she is resourceful, able and loyal to the hero, an aid without whom the hero's mission will not be accomplished but her personal experience is not of major relevance to the narrative. This structure would have been difficult to achieve if Annetta had been able to express her thoughts on her situation. This can be considered as an example of effective use of Haddon's ring.

Texts of children's literature make their readers' youth a matter of significance. Authors of children's literature put this idea into practice by taking their readers' concerns seriously and by creating texts with a hope that, at the end of their works, their readers will have some ideas and attitudes that they did not have when they began reading the book. The texts created in this way tend not to present matters that are exclusively of interest to adult readers, as in the following passage in which the narrative focus remains on Alfredo.

As Alfredo sang to the salamander, he wondered how it came to be a prisoner in Uncle Giorgio's furnace. The salamander answered while it sang, and told him how it was caught when it was young and brought here, away from its home, thirty

years ago:

It was an account of cruelty and horror and loss. The salamander wept, but Alfredo did not weep with it or for it. Deliberately he used his thoughts of vengeance as a kind of harness to hold his tears and his voice in check, to stay dry-eyed, to sing the notes clearly and truly. So, as he watched Uncle Giorgio coolly harvesting the tears of his prisoner, his resolve seemed to harden. That his uncle should treat the wonderful creature so! And Toni, too, and Annetta. And probably, all too probably, Alfredo himself.

Yet, still it was not quite enough. Some final, definite proof must be found, and then he would have vengeance on his uncle, and part of that vengeance would be somehow to free the salamander, take it back up to the mountain, and release it into the fiery torrents that were its home (p. 150).

Up to this point Alfredo often wept with the salamander when they sang together. This knowledge will correlate with 'but Alfredo did not weep with it or for it' and brings about a perspective that Alfredo did not weep this time and that he has acquired a new attitude. The phrase 'as a kind of harness' suggests that the narrator is recounting Alfredo's thought process rather than his (the narrator's) observation of Alfredo, in which case he would be more likely to have used a metaphor 'harnessed' as he does elsewhere in the narrative. Uncle Giorgio 'coolly harvesting the tear of his prisoner' is Alfredo's view based on the knowledge which he had just

gained from the salamander. The narrator's focus remains on Alfredo's thoughts and actions at this moment in the narrative instead of viewing him in a wider context of childhood. The second passage could be the narrator's voice offering his adult wisdom but the idea of releasing the salamander as part of the vengeance is Alfredo's resolution, which has no logical explanation to satisfy the adult reader as to why this matters. By articulating Alfredo's thoughts without shifting the focus away from him, the text presents a number of new perspectives that are Alfredo's own. Alfredo's newly gained perspectives may also be new to the child reader and from which s/he may learn something that s/he would not have done had s/he not read this book. In contrast, to the adult reader, the way in which the text concentrates on Alfredo's thoughts offers little allowance for interpreting the text in a wider context of childhood and children in general.

In general, authors of modern children's literature consciously focus on what is relevant to their child characters and child readers but occasionally what might be described as a 'slip' can occur. When this happens, the text could provide the adult reader with a perspective of which s/he might otherwise have remained unaware.

Having succeeded in returning the salamander to the fire in the centre of the mountain, Alfredo and Toni, with the help of the salamanders, battled against Uncle Giorgio who was now in his true shape of a powerful sorcerer. With his music, Toni created a rope of fire that finally pulled the sorcerer in to the chasm of the volcano.

They stood gasping, stunned, staring dazedly at the huge outflow of lava

welling from the rent and flooding down the mountain. Alfredo felt utterly empty, spent. Already exhausted from the climb, he'd now poured out inner strengths, strengths he'd never known were there, in the struggle against the Master. Toni, too was haggard with the effort, stoop-shouldered and trembling. His face was grey and trenched with deep lines. The likeness was very clear. He was Uncle Giorgio's son. He had just killed his own father (p.213).

The passage is perfectly comprehensible without the last sentence. Up to this point, the narrative does not refer to Toni's personal or emotional relationship with his father, and there are no elements by which the reader is able to perceive Toni's thoughts about Uncle Giorgio as his father. If the matter were referred to in the narrative before this point, this last sentence would gain certain significance but since there is no relevant information to which the sentence can be meaningfully linked, the sentence does no more than state the fact that hardly needs stating. However, if the adult reader is familiar with reviews and criticism of children's literature, the sentence provides a direct link to discussions about Oedipal experience of the character and the reader's response to this psychoanalytical notion. Whilst there are no narrative elements that indicate Toni's desire to assume power over Uncle Giorgio, inclusion of this sentence offers the opportunity for the adult to read the story from a perspective that is unlikely to be available to the child reader. The author's intention is not discernible from the text.

The Tears of the Salamander has a happy ending that is typically found in

children's literature: the plot is satisfactory rounded up and the protagonist's quest accomplished. It leaves the reader with a sense of hope and optimism yet a happy ending could be where what is held back by the author is most conspicuously communicated to the adult reader.

The ailment of his brain, cured by the tears of the salamander, Toni was accepted by the townspeople as the rightful heir of the di Sala family and the Master of the Mountain, and well regarded for his own sake. Toni, Annetta and Alfredo now lived in a farmhouse outside the town while a new house for them was being built. Alfredo had invited a new choirmaster for the town's church and was satisfied as to how the choir was improving. One day, Toni would marry a sensible girl and so would, in time, Alfredo, too:

One day, presumably, he too might marry and have children – not just to ensure that the mountain would always have a di Sala to be its Master – but it was still hard for him to imagine it. Rather less vaguely he hoped to travel, and listen to the great choir of Rome and Venice, and further afield – there was said to be wonderful music in Vienna, and even in far-off London. But however far he went and for however many years, one thing was certain – he would, in the end, come back. He had given himself to the mountain, and the mountain had saved him. The fields and vineyards and olive groves, these woods, this single, harsh, barren peak with the undying fire beneath it, this was where he belonged, and nowhere else (p.233).

In traditional children's literature, the child character often went away from home, had an adventure, returned home and found that s/he had changed but home was the same. In more recent works, 'going away from home' is usually a metaphor of an unusual event rather than the child character actually leaving home. Returning home is, on the other hand, often represented by the child character actually coming home. The prime reason for the child character to go away from home in children's literature is to gain new experience but this pattern is also used to create a narrative in which the child character is forced to become aware of the protection that home provides and, in such a narrative, home is a secure enclosure, maintained by adults where childhood innocence can be preserved. Although the 'home' to which Alfredo returned was a new place, the handing over of the responsibility of being the Master of the Mountain to Toni, who is twenty one, an adult, represents his coming home to his childhood.

His thoughts about his own marriage indicate that Alfredo was aware of the life beyond childhood but the vagueness of the thoughts reassures the reader that adulthood is still far from reality to him. His wish to travel appears to be a plan for adulthood but since these travels would hardly incur any serious responsibility, they can be still regarded as part of a childhood dream. The sentence 'He had given himself to the mountain, and the mountain had saved him' is somewhat abstract but as it is placed close enough to the event on the mountain, the sentence will correlates with the episode in which Alfredo, with the last strength left in him, saved the salamander by throwing it back into the chasm that had opened up on the

mountain. This will allow the child reader to perceive Alfredo's reflection on the event and his sense of the completion of his quest. To the adult reader who is aware that s/he is reading the conclusion of a novel written for children, the sentence may evoke an image of a child returning to where he is safe and gladly accepting the protection provided by adults.

Whilst Alfredo's thoughts on his future have been presented, the closing sentence guides the reader to visualise Alfredo being happy in his present state. He is perfectly confident that life will continue as it is and that all will be fine. The closing sentence will probably remind the adult reader that s/he too once had such confidence in life. Although this might produce a sense of nostalgia, as the narrator's focus remains on Alfredo's thoughts, the reader's interest is more likely to stay on the presentness of Alfredo's life rather than shifting on to a more general image of childhood. Moreover, the way the story ends can be perceived by the adult reader as the author's wish to offer the child reader a vision of a happy and exciting future to which the adult reader may respond with empathy.

[Identifying potential 'dishonesty' in the text]

Happy endings in children's literature are sometimes criticised as being dishonest but at the same time, few would argue that child readers need to be protected from certain adult knowledge. There is also a critical opinion that 'dishonesty' in texts of children's literature takes a part in maintaining adults' belief in childhood innocence and in their own power to protect that innocence. In this respect, as it is discussed in Chapter 7, 'dishonesty' in texts of children's literature can be

legitimate or manipulative.

It needs to be noted however, that 'dishonesty' in this context does not necessarily amount to the author actually telling something that is untrue. Since texts of children's literature do not, by nature, tell the whole truth that the author knows, it can be regarded as a consequence of the author's decision as to which aspects of the truth can be left out. In practice, there are a number of ways in which 'dishonesty' can become manipulative: for example, when the author includes narrative elements knowing them to be improbable or incongruous to the setting of the narrative that s/he has set out to explain. There are a number of textual elements that are potentially manipulative in the text of *The Tears of the Salamander*.

One of the ways in which a narrative could become 'dishonest' is when the setting of the story is not defined. The absence of the precise information about the time and the place of the story may mean that the author is not committing to making a contract with the reader about the setting of the narrative. This gives the author the freedom to manipulate the narrative construction to suit his/her end if s/he chooses to do so. The reader of *The Tears of the Salamander* is likely to be able to identify that the story is set in Italy in the pre-industrial period from the characters' names and the expressions such as 'name-day' or 'bakehoude'. Whilst the text provides no more precise information about the time, since the narrative hardly draws on time-specific cultural conventions, the lack of definition of the time of the story does not make the text immediately dishonest as it might have done if social interactions of the characters had been a significant part of the narrative. One

narrative element that is incongruous in the time when church choirs had castrati is Uncle Giorgio's furnace which is a nuclear reactor. The narrative would have become dishonest if the furnace had been used by Uncle Giorgio as the means to control others. Since the furnace has no such part in the development of the narrative, inclusion of the furnace could be considered legitimate. Moreover, it could be viewed as a symbol of Uncle Giorgio's desire for power and knowledge.

The Angels of Fire appear on two occasions to aid Alfredo and Toni: first to break the lock to Uncle's furnace chamber and then to remove the furnace that had begun to overheat and explode after Toni killed Uncle Giorgio. These acts of the Angels could be regarded as convenient solutions to the problems that the author selected in order to manipulate the narrative development. The Angels are, however, included from the early stage of the narrative and the text has presented them as the link to the power that Alfredo did not yet understand. In the episode in which one of the Angels appeared and burnt the lock to the furnace chamber so that Alfredo and Toni could rescue the salamander while Uncle Giorgio was away, Alfredo summoned the Angel by singing the old chant that Uncle Giorgio had ordered him to learn. This could indicate that the text intends the reader to perceive the appearance of the Angel as Alfredo's achievement rather than convenient help that arrived simply because Alfredo needed it. On the second occasion, Toni summoned an army of the Angels and ordered them to remove Uncle Giorgio's furnace that had gone out of control after the salamander had been taken out. Acknowledging Toni's order, the Angels carried it towards the sun. This episode occurred after Toni had defeated Uncle Giorgio with his own power, which makes the removing of the

furnace a self contained episode. In other words, the Angels act did not alter the nature of Toni's victory, which it would have done if the Angels had actually aided Toni in the fight against Uncle Giorgio. On this basis, the two occasions in which the Angels appeared can be viewed as legitimate in the narrative development. Moreover, it is one of the distinct features in texts of children's literature that the child character is helped by the power that is outside his/her own. It can be said that the two episodes that involve the Angels of Fire can be regarded as an example of the way in which Haddon's ring is legitimately used by the author.

Toni's ailment in the brain being cured by tears of the salamander is potentially 'dishonest'. While they were trying to rescue the salamander, Alfredo remembered the phrase he had read in one of the Latin books he found in Uncle Giorgio's library that the tears of the salamander is sovereign against all ills of the flesh. He also remembered one of the priests in the cathedral where he had been a choirboy telling the choristers that the mind was spirit, but the brain was flesh, therefore an idiot had an ailment of the flesh. On an impulse, Alfredo gave the salamander's tears to Toni and told him to drink, which Toni did. After this episode, the text refers to the way in which Toni now seemed to know everything that was happening, and with great relief, Alfredo accepted Toni's leadership. However, Toni's fight against Uncle Giorgio was entirely accomplished by the power of his music which he had always possessed. As the townspeople's knowledge and opinions about Toni before he was cured are not presented in the narrative, the changes that had occurred to him do not allow the text to create any dramatic effects amongst the people in the town in response to the new Toni. Moreover, since

there are no textual elements by which the reader can view Toni's perceptions before or after he was cured, his/her views about his character are unlikely to change in any significant way. In other words, since Toni being cured by the tears of the salamander is hardly an effective strategy to manipulate the course of the narrative, the use of this element can be considered legitimate. However, as the story could not have the happy ending without Toni being cured, some adult readers may regard it to be too convenient and thus dishonest. On the other hand, even if the cure by the tears of the salamander appears to be for the author's convenience, as it is used in the way that does not alter the nature of Alfredo and Toni's achievement, it can be regarded as legitimate if children's literature is ultimately to offer hopes to the child reader.

One of the most distinctive features in the text of *The Tears of the Salamander* is the extensive use of reference to music. Music being an abstract subject, the author could arguably exploit it to communicate with adult readers at the expense of the child reader, for example by musical allusions or analogies. The reference to music is found throughout *The Tears of the Salamander* and a number of significant narrative events are not merely expressed in musical terms but occur as musical events. That is to say that on such occasions, the text presents what and how Alfredo and Toni are actually playing or singing, rather than just describing the event by using musical terms as a figure of speech. Following are some of the examples.

Example 1. Soon after he received the gift from Uncle Giorgio, Alfredo was

discovered to have a singing voice:

As he waited, Alfredo was trying to recreate something he had just been listening to, the Nunc Dimittis at the end of the service, with the high voice of a single choirboy floating like a gliding gull above the waves of sound from the rest of the choir, and then soaring on alone (p.5).

Example 2. Alfredo discovered that Toni had a natural gift of music when he handed a recorder to Toni:

His fingers seemed to find their way on to the stops of their own accord. He blew, fluttering them up and down. Notes of a sort emerged. Quite deliberately he started to experiment, discovering one by one what the individual finger movements achieved. Then, astonishingly, he arranged them into a scale. And then, even more astonishingly, he was playing, note perfect, the tune Alfredo had been playing twenty minutes before. When he reached the end he started again, ornamenting the simple tune with pleasing variations (p.97).

Example 3. Alfredo played to Toni the music of the chant which he had not yet quite mastered. Toni looked puzzled at first but soon took it up on his recorder. As he played, one of the Angels of Fire appeared and acknowledged that Toni was the true Master.

All at once his face cleared, and before the last note faded away he had his recorder to his lips. He played the chant easily, without any mistakes. Under the touch of his fingers the music began to make sense. Before he reached the first repetition the air beside him shimmered, and one of the Angels was standing at his shoulder, visible in the glare of mid-afternoon as a kind of solidifying of the strong sunlight, an immense presence, and elemental power (p.125).

Example 4. Alfredo and Toni fight against Uncle Giorgio with their music on the slope of the volcanic mountain:

From the top of the crag, strong and true above the immense rumbling of the mountain, came the sound of Toni's recorder. It was hard to believe he could draw such sounds, so piercingly fierce and loud, from a simple wooden pipe. What he was playing was no longer the music of the psalm, it was something Alfredo had never heard before, something that seemed to come into Toni's mouth and fingers in the very moment of playing, but this time not out of the air. He was drawing it from the mountain, the music of anger and of fire, and breathing it out through his recorder so that it filled the whole hillside (p.211-212).

Example 5. Toni finally defeated the sorcerer that was Uncle Giorgio:

Toni's music changed and became a rapid pattern of intricate shrill notes.

A twisting rope of fire coiled itself out of the gulf, floated down towards the sorcerer, and began to curl around him. At the moment it completed the circle he lost his magical shape and became Uncle Giorgio. Released from his hold the mountain rent itself open all the way down to the trees. The chasm forked, its two arms passing either side of Uncle Giorgio. The rope tightened and snatched him into the flaming gulf (p212-213).

The first three examples are the narrator's observations of what Alfredo and Toni were doing at this particular moment in the narrative. The textual elements are all precisely connected to each musical activity and the text does not allow the reader to shift his/her focus from the event in the narrative. Toni's discovery of his musical gift may evoke in the adult reader an image of a boy who has realised what he is capable of doing but the text does not present direct access to such an interpretation. A sudden discovery of Toni's gift may appear to be dishonest to the adult reader but music is usually an innate ability and its discovery could be almost as dramatic as in the case of Toni. If Toni's gift were a power that allowed him to manipulate and control people and events, then, it might be considered dishonest.

The fourth example included descriptions about nature of the music that Toni was playing, and the text becomes more abstract than when Toni's action is described. Nevertheless, apart from 'the music of anger and of fire', the text is still largely a description of the sound of the music Toni was creating and not what it might imply. The last example, however, departs from the setting of the narrative that the reader has accepted up to this point. The music in the narrative until this point signifies

actual music but, in this passage, music is used to perform a physical task with a consequence. For music to be capable of creating a rope that could pull a man into the chasm of the volcano, the narrative world needs to be created in the first place with an appropriate system that can offer an explanation of the event by its own logic. There are no narrative elements in the text of *The Tears of the Salamander* to indicate that this is a world in which an occurrence of this nature is not logically out of place. On this basis, it can be said that the abstract nature of music is used to manipulate the narrative to suit the author's purpose. Nevertheless, as the power that Toni used was not provided from outside but from within him, this episode could be considered a legitimate use of imagery, although such interpretation is likely to be more readily available to the adult reader, with more extensive experience of reading literature than to the child reader.

Such extensive use of musical reference as this is likely to raise a question of accessibility of the work. Although the text is comprehensible to those who have little relevant knowledge, the meaning intended by the text may not be successfully conveyed to these readers. In this respect, the musical reference could be regarded as an obstacle to accessibility. However, since the possession of musical knowledge is by no means exclusive to adults, the issue is not directly relevant to the question of adult-specific response to children's literature. Moreover, as the examples above demonstrate, the musical reference is an essential element of the narrative: it does not present a channel of information that could be exclusively available to the adult reader.

The text includes the term *Nunc Dimittis* in page five without any explanation as to what it refers to, which suggests that the implied reader of this text has the knowledge of music in general and church music from this period in particular, or s/he is at least interested enough to persevere. As the author's intention is expressed at this early stage of the narrative, this could be considered as part of the contract he makes with the reader and the reader will be able to decide whether or not to read the book.

Adults evaluate children's literature for various purposes. This study is concerned with evaluation when an adult is mediating a book to a child for his/her private reading, that is to say, when the reading is not part of a constructed activity such as a classroom discussion or a project. In other words, the study is focused on the way in which an adult might evaluate a book on behalf of a child when 'it does not necessarily require that it be read in a certain way; it merely allows one to read according to one's capacities' (Hunt 1981, p.226).

In the next chapter, the possibility of constructing a model for evaluation specific to this purpose will be discussed on the basis of the textual analysis carried out in this chapter.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

Children's literature and adults

Despite the title of the thesis, the term 'adulthood' has hardly been mentioned so far. This is because there are three groups of adults whose roles in and relationship with children's literature needed to be examined separately before the idea of 'adulthood' could be formulated as the basis of a model that can be used as an evaluation tool. The three groups are: the author, the narrator, and the reader 'Adulthood' in texts of children's literature refers to the elements that are embedded in the text which are likely to produce a stronger response in adults than in children. The three groups of adults contribute in various ways and degrees to produce the effects of adulthood: the author possesses adult knowledge and experience; the narrator presents the knowledge in certain ways that may or may not draw the attention of the adult reader; and the adult reader approaches the text with a set of assumptions about and expectations of children's literature. The role of each group in producing 'adulthood' in texts of children's literature is summarised in the next section.

The author

Rose (1984) argues that children's literature is a place where adult authors express their desire, sexual desire in particular, for children. Her work was seminal in opening a new perspective in literary criticism that children's literature was not entirely about childhood innocence, as it had been commonly assumed up to this point by those who were concerned with children's reading. However, as Rose's

argument is largely based on her study of J.M. Barrie's life and his friendship with the five Llewelyn Davis boys, which resulted in the creation of Peter Pan (Carpenter 1984, Wall 1991), its relevance to discussion of modern children's literature is somewhat debatable. Most authors of modern children's literature are aware of the influence their works may have on child readers. Their works are consciously crafted and rarely a direct expression of their personal desires in the way that is suggested by Rose (see chapter 5). Nodelman (2008) also considers children's literature to be a place where adults exercise their power over children but his argument is mainly concerned, not with adults' sexual desire toward children, but with their desire to preserve their own ideas about childhood innocence by imposing a 'vision of childhood innocence and incapacity on children to suit the needs and desire of adults' (p45).

Generally speaking, most authors of modern children's literature are well aware of the public nature of their position and the responsibility for children's education in a wider sense. They are also aware that the traditional images of idyllic childhood are of little relevance to today's child readers, and that even their own memories of childhood may not be of interest to their readers. Most authors of modern children's literature wish to help their child readers to gain new perceptions and to move forward toward maturity by reading their books (see chapter 5). With this aim in mind, they are more likely to write about what matters and is relevant to child readers than about adults' perceptions of children and childhood. In practice, when creating a text for child readers, the author holds back part of the truth s/he knows, thereby creating an effect of evoking in adult readers the knowledge that is

left unsaid (Nodelman 2008). This in itself is by no means unique to children's literature but in the texts of general literature, what is left unsaid is 'the object of public interpretation and exposure' (Nodelman 2008, p.143). Authors of children's literature, in contrast, create texts in the way in which what is not said could be interpreted by the adult reader but the interpretation is most likely to be of little relevance to the child reader for whom the text is primarily intended (see chapter 6).

For example, *Frankie's Hat* is structured within the perception of a fourteen-year old girl (see Chapter 7). However, there are a number of elements in the text that could draw the adult reader's attention and remind him/her of a great deal of difficulties that would be experienced by a teenage mother: for example, Frankie replies to Sonia, when Sonia offers to give the baby a bath, that she'd rather if Sonia washed up if she wants to help. *Frankie's Hat* may make the adult reader aware that there is more to the subject of the narrative than the text actually presents but s/he may also sense that exposing what is only indirectly expressed by the author will not produce any interpretation that could be meaningful to the child reader whose perceptions are likely to be aligned with those of Sonia. In some cases, however, an author may create a text in such a way that it includes elements which openly invite the adult reader's interpretations. Moreover, these texts almost require such interpretation in order for the preceding narrative to gain full significance. For example, the last chapter of *Tom's Midnight Garden* almost entirely focuses on an old woman's reminiscence, and the story ends with Tom's aunt expressing her thoughts on how Tom had said good-bye to Mrs Bartholomew.

Another example is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* which ends with the small caterpillar turning into a butterfly. What is implied by these two endings is likely to be far more significant to the adult reader than to the child reader (see Chapter 6). The significance of the two endings in relation to adulthood will be discussed later in this chapter. At this point, it could be suggested that these endings express the authors' wish to communicate with the adult reader and share their views as adults (see chapter 6).

The narrator

Where general literature is concerned, it is one of the primary principles in narratology that the narrator must be distinguished from the author. This is based on the understanding that the narrator addresses the narratee who exists in the same narrative world as the narrator and shares the knowledge of that particular world, whereas the author cannot know who his audience is (Prince 2003). In children's literature, however, the narrator can be considered almost identical with the author, since their position in regard to the audience is the same: the narrator in texts of children's literature is an adult addressing a child narratee, and the author of the book is an adult writing for child readers. There is one point, however, where the narrator differs from the author in children's literature. Since the narrator in children's literature represents the child character's perception within the world in which the narrative event is taking place, s/he is, in theory, not able to view the child character's childhood as a completed period, whereas this condition does not apply to the author who is able to view the world of the narrative from outside.

This condition that is imposed on the narrator can be considered as one of the defining characteristics of texts of children's literature on the basis that it does not apply to the narrator of general literature when the narrative has a child as the main character. Broadly speaking, there are two narrative settings in general literature in which a child is the main character. In one of the settings, the child is placed in the world of adults' concerns and the narrator observes how the child perceives the world with the main focus on what escapes the child's comprehension: *The Go-Between* by L.P. Hartley and *The Basement Room* by Graham Greene are two of the examples. In the other setting, the narrator tells a childhood event of an adult from an adult's perspective. This setting often takes the form of a first person narrator recounting his/her childhood event: *Going Back* is as an example of this narrative setting. In both cases, the narrator observes the child, and describes the event from the viewpoint of an adult who is able to perceive childhood as a complete period in life (see chapter 7).

In contrast, the narrator in texts of children's literature represents the child character's views. In the case of a third person narrator, the adult narrator articulates the child character's thoughts but does not comment from an adult's viewpoint. Whilst a majority of narratives in children's literature are told in the past tense, the temporal distance between the narrative event and the narrating of the event does not, as a rule, exceed the period of the character's childhood, that is to say that the narrating of the event is taking place while the character is still a child. Consequently, the narrator does not gain the vantage position that is accorded to the narrator in general literature. In the case of a first person narrator, whilst it can be

an effective way to communicate with child readers, it can be restricting as a narrative strategy. A first person narrator in children's literature is necessarily a child, and, whilst the narrator is an adult assuming a child persona, what can be legitimately narrated has to be contained within a child's comprehension of the world. This could be an obstacle if the author wishes to encourage the child reader to gain new perceptions and move forward. The narrative setting in which an adult narrator recounts his/her childhood event is relatively rare in children's literature, mainly because the setting makes it difficult for the narrator to exclude his/her adult views on the event s/he is recounting.

Theoretically speaking, the narrator of children's literature represents the child character's viewpoint. In practice, however, since the narrator is an adult and in many respects identical to the author, the views presented are inevitably influenced by the author's adult knowledge and experience, and the influence will leave a trace in the text in a number of ways as signs of adulthood. Broadly speaking, there are three groups of narrative features by which adulthood in texts of children's literature may be identified: firstly, the narrator summarising or commenting upon the child's views and actions from an adult perspective; secondly, the narrator introducing textual elements that have no apparent links to the child character's knowledge or experience; and thirdly, the narrator presenting information that could provide the adult reader access to a perspective of which s/he may otherwise have remained unaware. An example of the first feature can be found in *Northern Lights* when the narrator seems to step off from the flow of the narrative, as it were, and describe what kind of a child Lyra is (see chapter 7). As for the second feature,

a passage from *The Children of Green Knowe* may be seen as an example: the narrator describes a scene, in which Tolly stands in the garden while snow falls, and lists images which have no link to Tolly's experience within the narrative, but which evoke an image of childhood innocence (see chapter 7). An example of the third feature is found in *The Tears of the Salamander*, where the narrator comments that Toni has just killed his own father. The comment does not present new information but, if the adult reader has the relevant knowledge, it could offer him/her access to a psychoanalytical interpretation that is likely to exclude the child reader (see chapter 8, also later in this chapter).

The reader

Generally speaking, adults approach children's literature with a number of assumptions. These assumptions broadly fall into three categories: it is useful for children's education; it is about childhood; and it is simple literature and therefore may well be inferior to other type of literature.

The assumption that children's literature is useful is largely based on the widely held belief amongst adults that reading literature has positive effects on children's intellectual and emotional development. This assumption often results in adults praising a book that is able to sustain adult readers' interest with less consideration to how it might be relevant to the interest of child readers. It has been pointed out that many children's books that have become classics contain elements that have a stronger appeal to adults than to children (see chapter 4). Similarly, books that are now generally regarded as 'modern classics', such as *Where the Wild Things Are*,

Tom's Midnight Garden, or *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, all contain elements that could appeal to adults' interest (see chapter 6).

From a more practical standpoint, children's literature is often considered useful, because it provides subject matter that can be effectively used as part of teaching material at school, and for drawing children's attention to a particular issue. In recent years, many books that won or were shortlisted in some of the most prestigious awards in children's literature have subject matter that could be suitable for these purposes: *The Illustrated Mum*, *The Other Side of Truth*, and *Dear Nobody* are some of the examples (see chapter 7). Such usefulness is a valuable property of children's literature and books can be evaluated accordingly. However, when the book is to be read by a child for his/her personal pleasure, in other words, when the child will be reading the book without any pre-set educational context in which s/he is required to read it in a certain way, the evaluation criteria may need to be adjusted. A comment made by Philip (in Alderson 2006) may highlight this point: referring to William Mayne, whose works do not usually have 'portable themes' (Hunt 1991, p146), Philip remarks that the way in which children are introduced to Mayne's books at school has discouraged children from reading his books (see chapter 7). Philip's comment suggests that children could read a book in a way that is different from that which is often expected of them within an educational context.

There are two ways in which adult readers may perceive childhood in relation to children's literature. On the one hand, the adult reader may see childhood as a

representation of innocence, involving memories of their own childhood as a valuable component of their adult-self. Children's literature helps to refresh the link to the sense of childhood innocence. Adults' desire to keep the link to their own childhood is often accompanied by a wish to reassure their adulthood status and to confirm to themselves that they are capable of protecting children and childhood innocence (see chapter 4). When the adult reader approaches children's literature with these assumptions and expectations, it is likely that s/he will respond strongly to textual elements that evoke the images of a child who is unaware of or unconcerned about the world of adults yet content to be under adult's protection. On the other hand, the adult reader may see childhood as part of life that is being constructed by the child who will be reading the book. In this case, the adult reader may have an expectation that children's literature can help him/her to understand the way in which children are growing up in today's society. If the adult reader's approach is from this direction, s/he may respond more readily to the textual elements that are relevant to the child reader of the book than to those that evoke traditional images of childhood. If the adult reader approaches children's literature with this assumption, it is likely that s/he will respond to the adulthood that indicates the author's wish to help the child reader to gain new perceptions and move toward maturity.

Adults' assumption that children's literature is a simple type of literature is in one sense not an assumption but a fact: texts of children's literature are typically written in simpler vocabulary and simpler sentence structures than in general literature. It is also simple in that the human relationship and social or cultural issues in the

narrative are less complex than those that are found in general literature. In addition, it almost never includes hopeless situations and almost always has a happy ending. These are in practice, necessary conditions for creating texts that are appropriate for child readers. Adult readers are likely to realise that some information is left out from the narrative but they do not necessarily attempt to find out what is left unsaid, since they tend to assume that children's literature is a simple type of literature in that its narrative structure may not be so credible and its subject matter may not necessarily be explored to any depth. This assumption could be exploited by authors if they wish to construct the narrative to suit their own end. The assumption could be one of the reasons why adult readers often seem to allow for a greater degree of inconsistency or improbability in narratives of children's literature than they would in general literature. For example, *Tom's Midnight Garden* has been criticised for including a number of narrative elements which the author would not have included had it been a novel for general readership (see chapter 7), yet the book has been praised as 'one of the tiny handful of masterpieces of English children's literature' (Townsend 1987, p.246).

Adulthood in texts of children's literature

Adulthood in texts of children's literature can be understood as related to a combination of adults' concerns about and their interest in children that the three groups of adults have, and as such, texts of children's literature could be seen, in theory, as nothing but an expression of adulthood throughout. In practice, however, there are a number of distinct textual elements that can be identified as signs of adulthood when the effect of the combination is particularly prominent and to which

adult readers are likely to respond more readily than they do to the rest of the text. The text analysis in chapter 8 demonstrates various ways in which these elements can be identified and the ways in which they may communicate with the adult reader.

Based on the findings from the text analysis in chapter 8 and the review of the roles that the three groups of adults play in relation to children's literature, adulthood can be divided into three types, or more precisely, there are two types of adulthood and a strategy for detecting adulthood in texts of children's literature. They are:

- direct adulthood
- indirect adulthood
- *Haddon's ring*

Direct adulthood takes the form of elements in the text that may produce in adult readers a response that is largely based on their own interest in what children's literature may offer to them. It is likely to be identified in relation to textual elements that evoke images of and ideas about childhood. It may also be identified in relation to elements that could reassure adults in their authority over children. In addition, it may manifest itself in relation to textual elements that could be effectively used in an educational context. Indirect adulthood, on the other hand, can be detected in relation to textual elements that present perceptions that are distinctly those of the child character. These elements are characterised by being part of the child character's knowledge and experience within the narrative, and are

necessarily focused on a child's perception of being a child, rather than adults' views about childhood and children. This form is indirect in that the adult reader's response to the text is based on what s/he perceives to be relevant to the child readers' interest. As such, some adult readers may feel that the text is categorically excluding them, or they may even conclude that the text offers little interest. *Haddon's ring* is so called, on the basis of a remark made by Mark Haddon, the author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, and seems to summarise what adulthood is. Haddon commented that there is an invisible safety ring in children's literature through which the author looks after the readers by keeping out 'really horrible things' from the story (see chapter 6). The safety ring is the trace of adjustments made by an adult author in order to create a text that s/he believes to be appropriate for child readers. On this basis, *Haddon's ring* could be described as a type of textual features that function as the safety ring, which can also function as a detector of adulthood. It can also be used to assess the effect of the adulthood once it is detected. In addition, *Haddon's ring* is also linked to the notion that children's literature is essentially optimistic to the point of being 'dishonest' (see chapter 7). When creating a text, the author decides which elements to leave out from the narrative, and the notion of *Haddon's ring* could help the adult reader to consider whether or not the selection made by the author is legitimate within the context of the narrative.

Direct adulthood

Direct adulthood takes the form of elements in the text that may produce in adult readers a response that is largely based on their interest in what children's literature

may offer them. One of the assumptions that adults have when they approach children's literature is that it is about childhood. Theoretically speaking, the concept of childhood is only available to adults who are able to view it as a complete period in life, and as such, images and ideas that are associated with childhood in children's literature are creations of adults. Since texts of children's literature are created by adults, it is inevitable that adults' perceptions about childhood are expressed in varying degrees throughout the narrative but occasionally, the adult's views of childhood become the figure of the narrative rather than being its background. When this happens, the adult reader is likely to sense the presence of direct adulthood. One of the signs of direct adulthood is the way in which the narrator's focus departs from the child character: the narrator expresses his views on the event and on the child character, from his adult viewpoint, by often referring to information that has no obvious links to the child character's knowledge and experience in the narrative.

One of the examples of the sign of direct adulthood in *The Tears of Salamander* is the way in which the narrator tells how, having understood what it meant to be Master of the Mountain, Alfredo contemplates further about the matter. The text of this passage contains a number of elements that are not specific to Alfredo: for example, 'felt somewhat familiar', 'his life has been waiting to learn', or 'deep thrilling excitement.' These expressions could almost be used to describe any event in which a child is excited by a discovery of his/her own ability. A similar example can be found when Alfredo was taken by Uncle Giorgio to the summit of Mount Etna where Alfredo became aware of the power that he had not known he

possessed. Whilst the subject of the narrative is Alfredo, the narrator's language becomes abstract: for example 'Not bigger inside himself [...] Bigger, somehow outside himself.' This is accompanied by a reference to Alfredo's father's burning glass that was capable of setting fire to dry grass. This can offer the reader a specific image but is followed by 'he had become that burning dot, filled with the pure fire of the sun. The mountain itself was the lens'. This is largely abstract and the link to how Alfredo was actually feeling is not specific.

It can be argued however, that since these episodes are about something that has not yet happened, i.e. an anticipation that was felt by Alfredo, the language of the text is necessarily abstract. It can also be argued that if the child reader has enough experience in reading literature, s/he is more than likely to be able to make the connection between the fire and the mountain with the sense of power that Alfredo was sensing. Furthermore, the child reader may respond to the text as his/her own self-perception articulated by the narrator. Nevertheless, the child reader's interpretation is likely to be that of his/her present state of mind, whereas the text could allow the adult reader to interpret the scene as the narrator's observation of a child who is encountering the matters which he does not yet understand.

Direct adulthood may also be identified in relation to elements that could reassure adult readers about their authority over children. Whilst, for the last few decades, many authors of children's literature have been writing stories that question the traditionally accepted adults' wisdom and authority over children (see chapter 5), adults' desire to be in control over children can manifest itself in a number of ways.

For example, *Where the Wild Things Are*, probably one of the most popular and widely discussed picture books in modern children's literature, has been described as a book that expresses a child's anger, ego, oedipal experience, and other subconscious desires. On this basis, McGillis (1996) speculates that the book's popularity could be based on the way in which the book seems to satisfy adult readers' desire to reassure themselves that they are capable of understanding children's subconscious emotions which children do not comprehend themselves, and thus they are in control of children (see chapter 6).

In *The Tears of Salamander*, the sentence that is placed after Toni defeated Uncle Giorgio, 'He has just killed his own father' may be seen as an example of direct adulthood. The sentence does not provide any additional information in that its absence will not prevent the reader from comprehending the narrative, but it could offer the adult reader access to an interpretation about the complex relationship between father and son that is based on psychoanalytical notions. The child reader may also be interested in some issues about the relationship between father and son, but taking into consideration that the book is recommended for the age group of ten to fourteen-year olds, it is unlikely that an interpretation based on such psychological studies is readily available to the child reader.

On the whole, *The Tears of Salamander* does not seem to present many obvious signs of direct adulthood, which could mean that the book may not offer a great deal to the adult reader whose approach to children's literature is based on an interest in adults' ideas of childhood, or in reassuring their authority over children.

The speculation that the presence of direct adulthood has significant influence on adults' evaluation of children's literature could be supported by the observation that books that have become modern classics of children's literature tend to contain narrative features that could be signs of direct adulthood: two of the most representative examples are *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Tom's Midnight Garden*. *Where the Wild Things Are*, which has already been discussed in this section, is another example.

To the young child reader who has identified with the caterpillar up to the point when it eats a fresh green leaf and feels better, the caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly is unlikely to have a great deal of significance in the context of the story. To the adult reader, on the other hand, whilst the caterpillar's story is enjoyable as s/he acts as the narrator surrogate who shares the viewpoint with the child reader/listener, the conclusion of the story offers the adult an opportunity to apply his/her adult knowledge and to interpret it as a metaphor of the child's transformation into an adult. To a young child, the idea of becoming something completely different from what s/he is now may not be so easily comprehensible, or may even be of little interest. In a similar way to the caterpillar's story, Tom's story in *Tom's Midnight Garden* ends when he discovers that he is no longer able to find the garden. Tom's meeting with Mrs Bartholomew is almost entirely told from Mrs Bartholomew's viewpoint which is in effect an old person's reminiscence. The story ends with Tom's aunt telling her husband about the way in which Tom had hugged Mrs Bartholomew at the last moment before he left as if she had been a little girl. The narrator ceases to recount Tom's view and concludes the narrative by

presenting Tom as an endearing child. Hollindale (1997) comments on the way in which the story is concluded as ‘re-imagined grown-ups closing the party’ (p.91). It could be speculated that, had the books ended where Tom’s and the caterpillar’s views end, these two books may not have gained the status they have now (see chapter 6).

The Tears of the Salamander does not present immediately identifiable textual elements that could be effectively used in an educational context. In other words, the narrative contains few social and personal issues that could be discussed in the classroom independent of the novel. The apparent lack of this aspect of direct adulthood could influence the adult reader’s evaluation of the book to some degrees if s/he is interested in children’s literature as a useful basis for children’s education.

Indirect adulthood

Adulthood is indirect when the adult reader’s response to the text is based on what s/he perceives to be relevant to the child readers’ interest, rather than on his/her own interest in children’s literature. Indirect adulthood can be recognised in relation to perceptions that are distinctly those of the child character, and which can be linked to his/her knowledge and experience within the narrative. In some cases, the direct links may not be found in the narrative but the reader will be able to make the connection. For example, Barney in *Stig of the Dump* walks into a disused chalk pit and thinks about ‘all the sticks of chalk they must have made, and all the blackboard in all schools they must have written on’ (p.8). The story does not contain any episodes at school but the reader will be able to trace Barney’s thought

process (he is eight years old) as to how these images have come into his mind. Whereas in the case of Tolly in *The Children of Green Knowe*, his thought process is not available to the reader when he sits by the fire with his great grandmother, and hears the sound of snowflakes falling into the chimney: the sound is like ‘the striking of fairy matches [...] a gloved hand laid against the window’ (p.61). Whilst the images may convey to the reader the sound that is intended by the text, but this will not necessarily be what Tolly is actually thinking on this occasion, as the reader cannot find any links between the images and Tolly’s knowledge. This poses a question as to whose perception it is that the text is presenting (see chapter 7). The two examples demonstrate one of the main differences between indirect adulthood and direct adulthood.

Texts of children’s literature are essentially the child character’s views represented by the narrator but when the child character encounters an incident from which s/he gains a new perception, the narrator’s focus on the mind of the child character often becomes more detailed. And if the narrator follows the child’s thought development by referring almost exclusively to the textual elements that can be linked to the child character’s knowledge and experience, and without commenting on the child’s thoughts from an adult’s viewpoint, the adult reader is likely to detect the presence of indirect adulthood. There are a number of signs of indirect adulthood in *The Tears of the Salamander*.

Having talked to Uncle Giorgio, Alfredo began to understand what it meant to be the Master of the Mountain. The narrator recounts Alfredo’s thoughts by using

Alfredo's own knowledge: what the salamander told him; the fragments of his parents' conversation which he overheard on the day he received the golden salamander on a chain; and what Uncle Giorgio had been telling him. The same narrative strategy can be observed when Alfredo discovered that Toni was Uncle Giorgio's son and Annetta was a trustworthy ally. He also realised how glad he was now that he could depend on an adult. The narrator leads the reader to follow Alfredo's thinking to a new understanding that even Uncle Giorgio's powers are limited. The narrator recounts these incidents without departing from Alfredo's thoughts or adding information from outside his presumed knowledge. Another example of a sign of indirect adulthood can be found when Alfredo discovered how the salamander was captured and had been imprisoned in Uncle Giorgio's furnace for thirty years. The narrator tells how Alfredo gained a new attitude and became determined to destroy Uncle Giorgio. The narrator recounts this without adding any comments from his adult's viewpoint. These examples may not offer the adult reader a great deal of interest if his/her expectation is to find idyllic images of childhood and views about children from adults' standpoint, or to reassure his/her own authority over the child. On the other hand, if the adult reader's interest is 'indirect', i.e. s/he is interested in what s/he considers to be of interest to the child reader, s/he is likely to note the way in which the narrator focuses on Alfredo's own perceptions.

One of the narrative elements by which the presence of adulthood could be detected is through adult characters, especially the parents. It is, to a certain extent, logical that authors use adult characters as a vehicle for more explicitly expressing their

thoughts as adults. The way in which adult characters are presented in children's literature has changed greatly since the 1950s, and in today's children's literature, it is rare to find parents who are always wise and dependable as they used to be. Instead, adult characters in children's literature since the early 1970s are presented as how child readers may see them in real life. Adults in *The Borrowers* and *A Dog So Small*, published in 1952 and 1962 respectively, reflect the image of the dependable parents in a stable family that were considered the norm in society at that time. In most books published up to the end of the 1960s, parents were mainly there to advise and help the child character when the situation required it. The parents in *Thunder and Lightning*, published in 1974, however, are shown to have their own interests, and the mother's advice is not so much socially accepted wisdom as the idea of an individual person. Parents in today's children's literature are often on equal terms with the child, unless there are specific reasons for the parents to be wiser or in control (see chapter 3).

In children's literature published up to the late-1960s, direct adulthood is clearly more prominent where adult characters are concerned, in that adult characters in the text could reassure the adult reader about his/her wisdom and authority over children. The nature of adulthood in more recent children's literature is somewhat ambiguous. Reading today's children's literature, adult readers are likely to 'find themselves facing some home truths [about family and parents]' (Tucker and Gamble 2001, p.50). The comment by Tucker and Gamble implies that the way in which recent children's literature portrays parents is bound to produce a response in adult readers, and that the response is based on their own interest, as the 'home

truths' are about themselves. This seems to suggest that adult readers are responding to direct adulthood. However, the 'home truths' to which Tucker and Gamble refer to are usually the child character's perceptions about his/her parents, and not a representation of adults' own concerns. In addition, the text is most likely to be intended by the author primarily for the interest of child readers. On this basis, it can be argued that when adult readers find themselves facing 'some home truths' in texts of children's literature, they are, in fact, responding to indirect adulthood. How the adult reader evaluates the text containing these elements could depend on the way in which s/he approaches children's literature: s/he may find that the text offers little that is of interest to adults, or s/he may find it interesting as a way of gaining some new insight into the mind of children who are still constructing their own childhood.

Haddon's ring

Haddon's ring refers to the notion that one of the defining characteristics of children's literature is the existence of a 'safety ring' in the text. It also refers to the safety ring itself, *Haddon's ring*, as a narrative feature in texts of children's literature. *Haddon's ring* could be used by adult readers to detect adulthood in texts of children's literature: when reading children's literature, if the adult reader keeps *Haddon's ring* turned on, so to speak, s/he is more likely to detect the presence of adulthood in the text than if s/he reads it unaided. *Haddon's ring*, as the safety ring in the text, is the trace of adjustments that the author makes in order to create a text which s/he considers to be safe (i.e. appropriate or suitable) for child readers. In this respect, *Haddon's ring* is closely associated with the idea that children's

literature is essentially optimistic: children's books do not usually contain hopeless situations, and stories usually have a happy ending. Whilst it has been suggested that such optimism could be dishonest, it has also been pointed out that, to a large extent, some 'dishonesty' in texts of children's literature is a necessary quality in order to create texts that are meaningful to child readers. From this viewpoint, 'dishonesty' in texts of children's literature could be considered essentially legitimate. Nevertheless, authors could take advantage of this notion and manipulate the text, in the name of child readers' safety, in order to suit their own end (see chapter 7).

'Dishonesty' in texts of children's literature is not limited to the way in which the author leaves out the 'really terrible thing' from the narrative. Texts of children's literature do not, by nature, tell the whole truth about the subject matter that the author knows (Nodelman 2008) and many practical details may be left out for various reasons. In some cases, however, the author's decision about what to leave out may be regarded as exceeding the legitimacy of 'dishonesty' within the context of the narrative. When the adult reader becomes aware that something has been left out from the narrative, s/he could ask a question, 'Is the use of *Haddon's ring* legitimate in this particular narrative context?' When asking this question, it is important to note that, the question of 'dishonesty', or dishonest use of *Haddon's ring*, is not necessarily limited to what has been left out, but it is related to the way in which the author compensates for what is left out when s/he constructs the narrative.

One of the examples of ‘legitimate’ use of *Haddon’s ring* in *The Tears of the Salamander* is the author’s decision to make Annetta dumb. In order to explain Toni’s existence and his condition, the narrative needs to include a woman who had a sexual relationship with Uncle Giorgio and most certainly not by her own choice. By setting the narrative in a position in which the woman concerned can be included without having to express her thoughts and experience, the text overcomes the absence of the reference to the complexity of an adult relationship such as this without compromising the integrity of the narrative. A similar example can be found in *The Tulip Touch* by Anne Fine. By making Natalie’s father a hotel manager and that the family should live where he works, the author is able to construct the narrative that culminates in Tulip burning down Natalie’s ‘home’ without reducing the seriousness of the incident and yet also without exposing Natalie and the child reader to the distress they would have felt if Natalie’s own home had been burnt down (see chapter 7). Whilst the adult reader may not immediately realise that something has been left out from these texts, s/he is likely to become aware of the distinct sense that s/he is reading a book written for children. Nodelman (2008) explains that it is the presence of ‘shadow text’ that produces this distinct sense in adults when they read children’s literature. It could be added that the author’s use of *Haddon’s ring* is one of the factors that contribute to the presence of shadow text.

Even when adult readers become aware of the presence of shadow text or *Haddon’s ring*, they may not attach a particular significance to their own awareness, since adult readers usually take it for granted that children’s literature is a simple type of

literature, and tend to accept a greater degree of inconsistency or improbability in narratives than they would in general literature (chapter 7). This tendency is especially evident when the text includes fantasy elements or social and personal issues that have been traditionally regarded as too serious for children's literature.

Fantasy elements refer to the narrative elements that depart from 'consensus reality' (Hunt 2001, p.271). Authors employ these elements to express something which 'could not be expressed in that way [realistic form] within the comprehension of a child audience' (Philip 1981, p.83). In this sense, fantasy elements could be considered as a result of the adjustment that authors make by leaving out certain realistic details when they create a narrative. Most adjustments in *The Tears of the Salamander* can be regarded as legitimate. Whilst Toni being cured by the salamander's tears and Uncle Giorgio being killed by a ring of fire that was made of music could be regarded as dishonest use of *Haddon's ring*, since these elements are not used to manipulate the narrative structure, it can be defended as legitimate (chapter 8). In contrast, in the case of *The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman, how an orphaned two-year old human infant can survive and grow up in a disused graveyard under the care of a group of ghosts that have no physical bodies is never explained in the way that is congruent with the setting of the story (chapter 7). This can be seen as an example of adjustment that does not compensate fully for what has been left out, and since this is the element upon which the entire narrative is built, the adjustment made by the author could be seen as example of exploitation of *Haddon's ring*. The author has left out some of the inconvenient practicalities from the setting of the narrative but has not compensated with

necessary details that would have explained the nature of the world of this particular narrative. The fact that the book has been highly praised (it won the Carnegie Medal in 2010) can also be seen as an example of the way in which adult readers could uncritically accept adjustment in texts of children's literature that exploit the existence of *Haddon's ring*.

Much subject matter that was once considered to be too serious for children's literature is now widely found even in novels and picture books for young readers. Some of the examples of such subjects are: poverty, violence in the family, teenage pregnancy, death of the child character, and war, including the holocaust. One of the reasons for the increase in books that deal with these subjects is the change in social perception that children do not live in a separate world from adults and that they are more capable than they were once assumed to be of understanding social and personal issues that concern them. It could also be speculated that, with changing concepts and practices in education, these subjects are now seen to be a valuable component of children's literature. Despite these changing views, there seems to be a fundamental problem in creating a narrative in children's literature that deals with such subject matter when it is examined in relation to the notion of *Haddon's ring*. In order to create a narrative that is accessible and relevant to child readers, the author needs to leave out some aspects of these subject matters, but often the elements that are left out are the essential issue of the subject matter. In a more traditional way, authors customarily used a form of fantasy in order to compensate for what has been left out, thereby presenting the subject matter indirectly. In the recent trend however, these novels are mostly established in

realistic settings in which the subject is explicitly presented, yet in many of these narratives, what has been left out is often substituted by elements that are convenient for the narrative development or left out altogether as if the issue did not exist (see chapter 7).

It has been pointed out that, adults have shown unprecedented interest in children's literature in recent years: the trend being especially prominent in young adult fiction (Falconer 2009) in which violence and deaths are often described in extensive detail. Such popularity could be an indication that these novels contain strong elements of adulthood in their texts, and if adult readers' interest is based on their belief that these hitherto unexplored subjects are relevant and of interest to the intended readership (the oldest age group in Books for Keeps is '14 + Secondary'), then the adult readers are said to be responding to indirect adulthood in these books. On the other hand, Falconer (2009) suggests that recent young adult fiction offers adult readers 'a new theatre of abjection' (p.118), which indicates that adult readers' response to these books may be the result of their own interest. If this is the case, they are said to be responding to direct adulthood in the text. Direct adulthood has been characterised as the adult reader's response to narrative elements that represent or evoke images of childhood, adults' views of children, or that which could be useful in an educational context, yet the texts of recent young adult fiction hardly contain such features. On this basis, it could be argued that young adult fiction has created a new type of direct adulthood.

Young adult fiction has often been associated with subjects such as falling in love

or parental difficulties (Eccleshare 2008, see chapter 7). In contrast to these ‘teen novels’, recent young adult fiction is characterised by its subject matter that is more commonly found in general literature than in children’s literature. Nevertheless, despite the likelihood of the subject matter being directly relevant to adult readers’ interest, since young adult fiction is classified as children’s literature, the subject is ‘staged’ within the safety of *Haddon’s ring* (see chapter 7). In this way, the new direct adultness that young adult fiction seems to have created allows adult readers to be part of the audience of a ‘theatre of abjection’ with a sense of safety that is not usually found in general literature.

Because of the nature of the subject matter, the potential for *Haddon’s ring* being exploited in young adult fiction can be greater than it is in fiction for younger children (see chapter 7). It is important, therefore, that adult readers are even more aware of the existence of adultness, in particular *Haddon’s ring*, in the text than when they evaluate books written for younger children.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

I began this study in an attempt to answer the question that I had asked myself for many years as an adult reader of children's literature: why do some books involve me as a reader while other books interest me primarily as 'good books' to recommend to my daughter? I also considered myself to be in a unique position to explore the 'doubleness' of children's literature, the concept about which I have developed my discussion. Having settled in the UK as an adult and then becoming a parent, I did not return to (British) children's literature but learned from it in almost the same way as a child would, yet at the same time I was able to hear the voice of 'shadow text' albeit unconsciously. In this study, I have sought to identify a pattern in texts of children's literature that may explain the nature of my response as an adult reader. Considering the fact that children's literature criticism is almost entirely based on adults' response, it is hoped that a model by which adults' response may be systematically described could be of general interest in the field of children's literature studies.

Adult-specific response may not necessarily be an issue in all instances when adults read children's literature. My research question was consequently set as follows: 'when adults read and evaluate children's literature with the aim of mediating the book to children, how do we take into account the fact that we are

adults?’ For the purpose of this discussion, I have proposed the notion of adulthood to refer to textual elements that seem to be closely linked with adults’ response to children’s literature.

Recalling that I had often valued books that present adult characters, especially parents, with whom I could empathise, I began my study by exploring the way in which adult characters were presented in the narrative. My hypothesis was that this would be the place in the text where adulthood would be most recognisable. This method, however, soon proved to be unworkable, since many children’s books did not contain parents as characters whose roles were significant enough to be examined. Nevertheless, this process led to the discovery that it was not necessarily the parents in the narrative that would produce empathy in adult readers, but it was often the narrator and the way in which s/he told about the child character that could be detected as a form of adulthood.

One book in particular caught my attention in this respect. *The Children of Green Knowe* by Lucy M. Boston has been widely praised as a story that explores the link between past and present, and how the child gains the sense of being part of the continuity of time. Yet despite the fact that the narrative contains extensive descriptions of what Tolly sees and does, there are hardly any references to his knowledge and experiences as a seven-year old child. At this point, I asked a question: ‘what is it in this book that has attracted the attention of critics and reviewers despite the fact that the narrative contains hardly any information about the child protagonist?’

This led to another question, ‘can adults’ response be influenced by how the narrative is structured?’ For example, had *Tom’s Midnight Garden* ended when Tom found that he could no longer find the garden but had been given a chance to think about his experience in his own way, or if *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* sat happily in the sun at the end of the book now that it feels better, would the adult reader’s response to the books have been the same? Similarly, had Max had his own adventure when he went away, as the boy in *In the Attic* does, would *Where Wild Things Are* have become the classic that it is?

Having examined examples from a wide range of texts, largely drawing on narratology and in particular the theories of the narrator’s functions, the study has argued that the narrator of children’s literature can either represent the child’s views or present his/her views about childhood while s/he observes the child character, and the difference can be identified by certain textual elements and the way in which they are organised in the narrative. A provisional model of adulthood in texts of children’s literature emerged at this point: adulthood could be related to either the adult reader’s interest in their own ideas about childhood, which was to become direct adulthood, or to their interest in the child reader(s) to whom s/he may recommend the book, which was to become indirect adulthood. I have attempted to demonstrate the distinction between the two types of adulthood through detailed textual analysis with the main focus on the narrator’s function.

Adulthood can be considered as a textual manifestation of the concept of shadow

text proposed by Nodelman (2008): authors of children's literature tell less truth than they know, which creates in adult readers a sense of holding back as a 'shadow'. This in itself is not so different from the case of general literature but this study has illustrated that, in children's literature, what is held back and why it is held back are likely to be known to the adult reader in the sense that shadow text is the sign of mutual understanding between the author and the adult reader. This is why the holding back in children's literature does not, as a rule, invite the adult reader's interpretation: the truth is already known to him/her. Nevertheless, from time to time, the author invites the adult reader not so much to interpret but to share his/her views about childhood. When this happens, the text is likely to present direct adultness. This study has argued that the books referred to above are typical examples of how direct adultness manifests itself in the text. Indirect adultness could be identified as the author's thoughts about the child character as a developing young person. However, whether or not this can be recognised depends largely on the way in which the adult reader approaches children's literature: indirect adultness is less likely to be recognised unless the adult reader appreciates the fact that the text is created for child readers and that what is relevant to them does not necessary coincide with adults' interest.

In the process of discussing the nature of direct and indirect adultness, another question emerged: how do adults respond to the way in which the narrative is kept safe for child readers? For the purpose of the discussion of this issue, the study has introduced a notion of *Haddon's ring*, a safety ring used by the author to keep the narrative safe. It also refers to the textual features that function as the safety ring,

and, as such, can be regarded as another type of adulthood. The study has found that *Haddon's ring* can be used effectively without losing the integrity of the narrative to introduce a subject matter or narrative elements that would have been too complex or serious for the child reader to comprehend. Other examples suggest however, that the function of *Haddon's ring* can be exploited by authors to manipulate the narrative. The research has pointed out that the latter trend is particularly prevalent in young adult fiction. In the examination of this issue, one of the questions I have asked is: if at the end of *Dear Nobody* and *A Swift Pure Cry*, Helen and Shell sat with their babies in their arms, realising that their childhood is over, which adult readers would know to be the truth, would their responses to the books have been the same?

The study has pointed out that when the subject matter of the narrative is more closely associated with general literature than with conventional children's literature, adults often show a tendency of being less critical of the way in which *Haddon's ring* is used. Based on this observation, the study has suggested that when a 'difficult subject' is presented as children's literature, as is the case with current young adult fiction, the text creates a new type of direct adulthood. The study has argued that this new type of direct adulthood that has been created by the combination of the type of subject matter and adults' assumption that children's literature is safe could be one explanation for the exceptional level of adult interest that recent young adult fiction has attracted.

This study has explored the possibility of systematically explaining adults'

response to children's literature through close examination of textual examples, and has identified three patterns of adults' response which have been formulated into a model of adultness: direct and indirect adultness, and *Haddon's ring*. The model may be used by adult readers in order to examine their own response as part of a critical study or an evaluation before mediating the book to child readers.

Since this study has focused exclusively on literary books, further investigation into whether the model of adultness can be applied to popular fiction for children and, if it is to be applied, what modifications are required, may prove fruitful. Another possible development is in relation to the field of literary education. This study has argued that when reading is guided, children respond differently. Since children's literature is an essential part of literary education, investigating the way in which the model could be adapted for a teaching context may also prove useful. As for the model itself, whether direct and indirect adultness are mutually exclusive, or whether the distinction is context dependent needs to be explored further. Since the model is intended for studying texts, it is uncertain at this point whether it can be developed to apply to the real readers.

Whilst the model is little more than provisional at this stage, it could be an effective reminder that adults cannot read children's literature as children do: therefore we should take into account that what adults appreciate is not necessarily of interest or relevant to child readers.

[End]

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