
Fantasy as Epanalepsis: 'An Anticipation of Retrospection'

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I begin with a paragraph that unaccountably disappeared when something I wrote for the book *The Gothic in Children's Literature*, transferred from my computer to the publisher's computer. Somehow or other, a paragraph in my essay on the vampire novel, *Thirsty*, went missing. I like the missing paragraph. And so I resuscitate it here in an attempt to fashion an approach to Fantasy with the missing paragraph as a starting point. The paragraph comments on the rhetorical turn of the first sentence in M. T. Anderson's *Thirsty*. That first sentence reads: 'In the spring, there are vampires in the wind' (1997 p. 11). Do not these words sound similar to the subtitle of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*: 'There and Back Again'? I mean, doesn't the *shape* of the sentence that begins *Thirsty* remind us of the *meaning* of Tolkien's subtitle? The sentence begins with a prepositional phrase and ends with a prepositional phrase; in other words, it begins, with a phrase blowing in the wind and ends with the return of that wind; it begins, goes there, and then comes back, so to speak. When winter passes, a spring wind is sure to follow. If we are of a psychoanalytic cast of mind, we might say that rhetorically, the sentence enacts a return – the return of the repressed – but it does so slyly; it disguises the return of the repressed because we always have to disguise repressed content when it insists on emerging from the unconscious. Those pesky vampires insist on returning time and again; this time they come in with the wind – a sort of undead Chinook. My argument, then, is that fantasy rhetorically enacts the journey of return. When we begin a fantasy, we anticipate a return; we read retrospectively.

But what about that missing paragraph? Here it is, returned from the oblivion of editorial cutting, like a vampire rising from its grave or like a deleted scene on the DVD release of an old essay:

The implied author, most likely, is aware of the first sentence's use of epanalepsis, a repetition of words at the end that appear at the beginning of a clause. The rhetorical device here accentuates the vain struggle for existence, for ontological certainty. 'Spring' and 'wind' are both ephemeral as well as permanent, the permanence and ephemerality signaling an ongoing finality in death. An emptiness (M. T. ness) lies at the center of the opening sentence – the expletive 'there are' is an

unnecessary expression. The sentence might well read, 'In the spring, vampires are in the wind.' But the ontological affirmation of 'vampires are' is displaced by the empty statement, 'there are'. As the reader enters the book, he or she encounters the hollowness at the heart of the world this book depicts. In the context of this hollowness, Chris's struggle to understand the changes he is going through and to understand how these connect him to the larger world takes on urgency and perhaps even quiet nobility.

Epanalepsis, antimetabole, and chiasmus are all expressions of fantasy in that they are retrospective, they beg us to return, they connect ends and beginnings, they remind us what goes round comes round. They are forms of fantasy precisely because they uncannily render familiar turns of phrase unfamiliar. In the spring, a young man's fancy turns to vampires. I do not intend to discourse on vampires in this essay, but I might stop long enough to note that vampires more often than not raise an ambivalent response; they are both attractive and repulsive – like most fantasies.

We are used to formal treatments of fantasy that categorise narratives on the basis of their contents – mermaids, dwarfs, uncanny houses, weird flora and fauna, supernatural agents, diaphanous winged-creatures, magic, and so on. We are also used to psychoanalytic treatments of fantasy as the management of desire. Form manages, or situates, desire. The pitfall of the kind of reading of fantasy that I suggest is that the formal features I mention are also features of narratives we do not categorise as fantasy. The good news is that the narratives we do not categorise as fantasy are, despite our categorical descriptors, manifestations of fantasy in the psychoanalytic sense. Fantasy is reality; reality fantasy. That is all we know on earth and all we need to know. Like Beauty that is Truth, fantasy is necessary, although we wouldn't want to live in it permanently. It serves its purpose of stabilizing our sense of things. As Slavoj Žižek puts it, 'fantasy is on the side of reality' because without fantasy reality becomes, 'an "irreal" nightmarish universe with no firm ontological foundation' (1997, p.66). Fantasy is a safety valve. Freud long ago connected fantasy, play, desire, and sublimation in 'Creative Writers and Day Dreaming'. He also connected fantasy with both child and adult. In fantasies children and

adults can imagine their most secret desires. And if we believe Freud and those who come after, the most secret desires are always retrospective. That is, desire looks not only to the past, but also to influencing the past. The past I refer to is not history, but rather memory. We cannot influence what has come and gone, we cannot change the facts of history, but we can alter the records in the house of memory. Fantasy works through memory, retrospective and prospective. 'In the spring, there are vampires in the wind.' Does this sentence refer to past springs in which the truth of this assertion was established, or does it refer to springs to come, all future springs will bring vampires along with spring winds? The assertion establishes a fact – in this case a fact that is fiction. When fact and fiction are one, we have fantasy.

Before and after both manifest nostalgia. We fantasise because we are dislocated and longing for home. Nostalgia aspires to the condition of fantasy because fantasy allows us to live with dissatisfaction. In fantasy, we can go home again always and ever retrospectively. Fantasy, in other words, can deliver a productive nostalgia, a looking backward in order to look forward. One kind of nostalgia leaves us stuck inside a mobile with the blues again, whereas another kind of nostalgia allows us to mobilise for mental flight. Remember Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007), in which the discovery of the past is not only a recovery of the past but also the fashioning of Hugo's future. The story may not *be* a fantasy, but it is surely *about* fantasy. Hugo's struggle to survive between the walls of Paris leads him to unmask a long forgotten master of revels, the pioneer filmmaker, Georges Méliès. Méliès's cinema – most of us know the famous *Trip to the Moon* invoked in Seltzer's book – thrives on a nostalgic magic that invokes the past even as it employs the technological discoveries that are just beginning their development in the early twentieth century. This cinema looks back and forward at the same time; *A Trip to the Moon* has late medieval-looking scholars and wizards creating a space-rocket, and nineteenth-century gentlemen embarking on interplanetary travel. Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* also looks forward and backward at the same time; it invokes a sort of Dickensian Paris and reminds us of the invention of automata in the late eighteenth century,

even as it combines forms of textuality – photograph, film, book, drawing, and script – that point forward to a new kind of book, not illustrated book not picture book not comic book and not conventional novel. Nostalgia here is not simply a longing for a lost art, for a past magic we desire to memorialise through archival entombment, but rather an exhumation and resuscitation of former magic for continuing fantasy work.

Hugo's discovery of the disguised film director, George Méliès, is instrumental in Hugo's transformation into the magician, Professor Alcofrisbas, a character who appears in many of Georges Méliès's films. Alcofrisbas is an anagram of François Rabelais; Alcofrisbas Nasier is the pseudonymous name of the writer of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Invoking Rabelais in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* suggests the sort of magic associated with carnival. Hugo, like the book in which he appears, lives on the edge, within the walls, outside the law, and to live outside the law he must be honest. His last name suggests 'cabaret', the site of a mixture of performances. Selznick's achievement is to foreground form, but also to manipulate form in the service of carnival. Hugo/Professor Alcofrisbas continues his life of theft, the theft of the mundane. The sleight of hand of the magician, the special effects of the movies, the mechanical wonders of the automaton, and the strange evolution of the book steal our sense of the possible and keep us alive to change. The book's final chapter has the title, 'Winding it up', a phrase which captures the ambiguity of setting things going and closing things down. This final chapter then moves from verbal text to visual text, and closes with the diminishing of moonlight, until we have black pages. But these pages are not completely black. The final pages of the diegesis are black with large white letters spelling the words 'THE END'. The next pages give us the Acknowledgements and Credits. The book mimics film, and we know that, as in any film (just as in any narrative), the 'end' is never an end. The end is always just the beginning of another exploration, another trip to the pole or to the moon or to the cinema itself. The end credits signal this because they point to other texts and other forms of textuality, other forms of invention. The 'invention' of Hugo Cabret is both the discovery and fashioning of the character and, in turn, the character's

discovery and invention. Invention reminds us just how implicated culture is in rhetoric.

Invented worlds are fantasy worlds, and fantasy worlds are heuristic in that they teach us how to desire, as Žižek says. Fantasy spills into our daily world and opens a space for invention. The kids in Nesbit's Psammead trilogy know this well. They encounter strange magic and experiment with this magic in various ways. These various ways invariably allow them to return to their quotidian existence renewed and freshly attached to their domestic life. Having found ingenious and tricky means to tackle wishes or to deal with history or to order people's lives, the four children plus the Lamb successfully navigate beyond the pleasure principle. We could say something similar about the Pevensie children in the Narnia series. For most of them and their peers like Eustace and Digory, the lessons learned in fantasyland bring them the stability of a final reward – the true Narnia. Discovery is a form of recovery; we recover what we never had but always wanted and thought we had and discover we no longer need. Narnia and the true Narnia are epanaleptically beginning and ending. Fantasy is, after all, rhetoric. It sets out to persuade us of something and in this desire to persuade, rhetoric/fantasy is never empty, but always full.

Rhetoric brings me back to epanalepsis. Epanalepsis works as a bookend, but not so much a frame or container as a connective device working to persuade us of the safety of reality, or in the case of Narnia the connection of reality with a Platonic reality or the connection of empty rhetoric with full rhetoric. Take a look at the cover of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. We see a complicated image. The lower portion of the image gives us a rooftop view of Paris with a tiny Eiffel Tower in the distance. We are, in a way, looking at a miniature Paris. This view offers a panorama, a view from nearly above. Dominating the visual field is a round clock-like shape revealing its cogs and wheels and escapement; this intricate mechanism reminds us of technology. Near the bottom of this clock is a keyhole; mechanisms require winding. Suspended from below the keyhole is a shape that contains the author's name and below this is the image of crossed nib pens, the kind used ages ago or used perhaps today by artists who look to do fine work in line drawing or calligraphy. The crossed pens dip below the view of Paris

onto the framing border of the entire picture. And balancing the round clockwork is the moon hanging above the roofs on the right. The moon and the clockwork are something of an epanalepsis in that they are visual reminders of art and nature, the past and the present, magic and science, the past and the future. What are ostensibly binaries are, epanaleptically, reflections of each other. For example, at one time, people considered science and magic pretty much the same thing, a point Méliès makes in *A Trip to the Moon*, and even now we sometimes speak of the miracle of science, as if scientific invention was a form of magic or perhaps divine intervention – something supernatural. Or take art and nature, a familiar opposition. The artistic vision implied by the border of the cover gathers the night within it. Nature is inside art, or perhaps we can usefully say that art completes or at least complements nature. Art is nature dressed. Art and nature are not so much opposed, as they are completions of each other. The city of Paris is an example of art and nature complementing each other.

The clockwork itself functions as an epanalepsis. The clockwork with suspended pens and author's name reminds me of a hot air balloon, nicely picking up on the book's hailing of eighteenth-century technology in the automaton that Hugo tries to preserve. Clockwork manifests repetition; it is a network of inter-related parts acting together to move things forward and back. Both the hot air balloon and the moon are images of movement, here contained by the firm borders that frame the picture. The hot air balloon, with its banner carrying the book's title, is both inside and outside the picture, both contained by the frame and breaking the frame. In other words, the cover image offers a sleight of hand, an image of magic as preparation for entering a book about magic. It offers us the lock that will open a world of magic, but it does not offer the key to the lock. The rhetorical turn, whether verbal or visual, can tease us into thought, but it cannot do the thinking.

The fantasy here resides in the conjunction between magic moon and magic mechanism of clockwork. Both moon and circular clockwork hang suspended over a discernibly non-fantasy Paris. But Paris is itself a fantasy, city of love, city of exquisite beauty, city of art, city of roofs and spires, city reaching into the ether, and city of the mind. Paris haunts the memory even if we have never been there.

Here's looking at you kid, I love Paris in the springtime, the last time I saw Paris. And looking is relevant to our experience of the cover of *Hugo Cabret*. We look through a frame, reminding us of pictures, screens, and maybe keyholes. We peep into a scene, and we have enticing lights in upper windows to entice us farther. Who lives in those lighted rooms? And why are they up so late? And since we are asking such questions, we might also ask why the contrast between pointy shapes and round shapes? Why do the spires, chimneys, gables, and tower line up below the pressing weight of round moon and clockwork? And what do the crossed pens signify? Is the pen mightier than the sword? Fantasy always deals with desire, and the fantasy of flight always has something to do with breaking free, coming undone, and unloading; it is an admission or emission of freedom.

But perhaps those crossed pens form part of a tassel. Where, I wonder, would the tassel take us? I have a whale of a tassel to tell you boys, a whale of a tassel or two. My invocation of Jules Verne via Walt Disney reminds us of the connection between science fiction, fantasy, France, and the sexual high-jinks that may take place in hot air balloons and submarines. Notice how those pens penetrate the curlicues. Notice too how those crossed pens constitute a heraldic crest. What this book heralds is the magic of creation. The family signaled in this heraldic crest is the family of artists from Rabelais to Méliès to Cabret to Selznick. The heraldic sign is a blazon, a coat of arms. The crossed pens blazon the cover; they decorate the cover with a significant image reminding us that the important call is not to arms but to pens. The story of Hugo is the story of the family of artists, whether those artists work in clockwork or in film or in legerdemain or in writing or in drawing. The family history is the history of art itself, and art is fertile, art is potent.

Before leaving the cover, I notice the frame. At the bottom we have a double border, the upper one displaying a row of pointed arches reminding us of the Gothic splendours that await the visitor to Paris. Below this is the border proper, so to speak, the border that appears on all four sides of the image. In this border we see what appears to be a curtain opening to show the moon. This small image appears doubled in the center of the bottom border, with a

sharper moon-like shape between the two curtains – what now might appear to be two buildings. In any case, the image invokes both the curtains in a theatre and the image famously associated with George Méliès – the moon. In other words, before we enter this book, paratactic matter (in this case, the cover) gives us the framing device I associate with epanalepsis, and it does so emphatically in the framing border and quietly in the haunting replication of the moon in the similarly-shaped clockwork. Fantasy is rhetoric, that is, language, of whatever sort, artfully structured to persuade us that things are cool, that we have what we desire even if we can never have what we desire. Fantasies are a sort of Imaginary, reflecting ourselves in order that we can move on to the business of maneuvering in the Symbolic. Sometimes we hear this process called Escape; we think we escape from a dreary reality, recover the reality we escaped from now buffed and shiny, and take consolation that this reality will never deliver the fulfillment of that place we escaped to and that waits for our return. That place bookends our experience.

Epanalepsis as bookend is most obviously apparent in endpapers that effectively enclose the contents of a book between a repeated image or pattern. We can find a spectacular instance of a different kind of bookending in Terry Deary's *The Fire Thief* (2005), a book that recreates the Prometheus myth in a manner that connects ancient Greece and nineteenth-century Great Britain. Deary, in a manner and tone reminiscent of Terry Pratchett, plays with a familiar story. We know from the beginning the story's parameters. This is almost always the case in Fantasy. Before we set out on a literary fantasy, we know the beginning and ending, we know back-story, and we know the world we enter because we anticipate retrospectively. Take for example, Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*. From the beginning, people mistake Coraline's name for Caroline, a slippage of three letters that announces the epanaleptic shape of the story. The story recounts the adventures of a bored child who enters a strange counter-world in which she confronts sinister adults and converses with a smart cat. She also enters a mirror at one point. The fantasy anticipates a memory of Carroll's Alice and her Wonderland, and this memory serves to accentuate the darkness of Coraline's other world and also assures us of her successful navigation of this

other world. Even as we enter Coraline's adventure, we have the ending in the beginning because we are familiar with the rhetoric of this story, and of fantasies generally. To put this differently, we are familiar with the conventions of fantasy. Fantasies for the young invariably turn on the anticipation of return. Fairy tales are the ur-texts here. We think they begin 'once upon a time' and end with 'they lived happily ever after'. These words do not always, or maybe even not often, appear in traditional fairy tales; however, the reader knows beginnings and endings imply a familiar refrain. The same refrain, as well as the same characters and motifs return again and again.

Children's fantasy has, since at least the nineteenth century, thrived on repetition. We have countless versions/repetitions of familiar stories such as 'Little Red Riding Hood' or 'Sleeping Beauty' beginning with Edgar Taylor's translations from the Brothers Grimm (1823-1826). The rest of that century sees many retellings in many settings from the work of Ruskin to the work of writers such as George MacDonald, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, and Andrew Lang. Lewis Carroll refers to the first 'Alice' book as a fairy tale. Variations of familiar tales appear in work by the likes of Frances Browne, Lucy Lane Clifford, Augusta Webster, and Oscar Wilde. The Victorians heard the pattering of feet as a parade of kobolds, gnomes, goblins, brownies, kelpies, and other creatures made its way down the decades, some having crossed the channel from Germany and northern Europe, others being homegrown. The parade continues, as do the retellings. The old stories just won't stay put; we cannot press them in the book of history because they keep insisting on returning.

What returns in fantasy is both the repressed itself and the mechanism of repression. Fantasies begin with a loosening of that mechanism, with a release from the strictures of everyday reality. The middle bit of any fantasy takes us to places where strange and wondrous creatures roam and where uncanny surroundings grow curiuser and curiuser. Then the end returns us to the starting point – perhaps with a difference, but in the sense of 'same place, but different'. What I am calling the epanaleptic shape of fantasy contains or confines the subversive potential that Rosemary Jackson identifies as a defining feature of fantasy. Fantasies are subversive in the sense that they take us below the version

of reality the ego tries to stabilise. In fantasy, desire lets loose. All those attractive maidens and hearty knights, sleek unicorns and undulant serpents, worms, and dragons, diaphanous wings, and watery forms, sly satyrs and barrel-chested bacchuses provide an attractive chronotope. The impetus of fantasy is toward utopia, toward the world we think we want. This may explain the prevalence of pseudo-medieval settings and characters in much fantasy. Fantasy presents an atavistic vision of a past that never was.

Let's examine a picture from Jeff Smith's *Bone* (2004). *Bone* is the epic story of three cousins exiled from Boneville; they find themselves caught in a series of adventures in the Valley, a strange land with strange creatures, but none so strange as the Bones themselves. What are we to make of the name 'Bone'? Whatever dream surfaced this name, the dream and the name deserve a place in any Freudian catalogue of dreams. Anyhow, the picture I consider appears early in the story and it records a moment of relaxation as Fone Bone wanders through a Spring Fair with the one he loves, Thorn. As soon as I say, 'the one he loves' and you look at the picture, you should register bemusement. The little boy in the background behind and just to the left of Thorn obviously notices something unusual. How could this little white Caspar-cum-Pogo of a guy have a romantic relationship with the perky young female accompanying him? Well, this *is* a fantasy. And fantasies are subversive. Right? Perhaps we have a suggestion of miscegenation here or at least the possibility of miscegenation. The resolution to the plot, some thousand pages later, will put an end to this possibility. For now, what we see are the tents and stalls that denote the Fair. Merchants hawk their wares and produce on each side of the path down which Thorn and Fone meander. Thorn carries a basket of eggs for barter and Fone also carries a basket. Chickens peck the ground, a large pig appears to wander freely, people buy things and people smile. The clothing, the tents and banners, the animals, the baskets and sacks and barrels lend a suggestion of happy medievalism to what we see. The world of *Bone* is pre-industrial, rural, rustic, agrarian, and consequently simple in a nostalgic sense. This may be a world of the past, but it is a world of a past that never was.

Fantasies are retrospective. They look back at what never was. They champion a world at odds with the world you

and I inhabit in our daily urban round. The Spring Fair conjures memories of a special time, carnival, the time of reversals, time of release, time of inversion and subversion, time for the annual race between the cows and Gran'ma Ben, and time of exuberant bodily satisfaction. Fone Bone is a carnivalesque character in that he represents simplicity, desire, the body, and naked pleasure. His companion, Thorn, looks like a pixie, or like Peter Pan, the eternal child both of and not of this world. In the spirit of carnival, she represents enduring youth, and a sexy androgyny that manages to remain straight. She is innocent and fresh, with hair that doesn't need a comb to look attractive. The fair mixes species; we have humans and animals, and whatever Fone Bone is. We have males and females, young and old, father figures, mothers, and children. Everyone appears content, if not downright happy. Fantasy often conjures such a scene or at least such a vision of pastoral calm. The fantasy place is more often than not a place that allures; it tempts us because it is sexy.

Okay, what is so sexy about this picture? Fone Bone has a crush on Thorn, and she is an attractive young woman. She carries eggs in a basket. That is - *eggs in a basket*. Couple this with the matronly figure behind Thorn, and the child even farther behind her, and we have reminders of motherhood and children. The picture insists on vertical and pointy objects, the posts that support the various stands, the pointed tops of the tents and the even more pointed poles from which the banners fly. Much of what we see has to do with fecundity: eggs, chickens, sacks of meal, child, and that fat pig in the lower left hand corner standing in direct line to Thorn and Fone. Thorn walks freely with her arms spread in a gesture of openness. She remarks on the appeal to the senses that the fair offers, the smells and colours. Remember the pig. Carnival celebrates the body, especially what Bakhtin calls 'the lower bodily strata' (1984, p.20). Carnival celebrates material reality and it does so in a manner that fits fantasy. In other words, what carnival celebrates is a masking of reality.

The mask slips. First, we can return to those eggs. In the world of *Bone*, eggs are money. We see people engaged in acts of purchase from the various stands along the path Thorn and Fone walk. And balancing the pig on the lower right of the picture is a large human figure, Lucius, owner

of the Barrel Haven Inn, the country pub where locals meet to drink and socialise. Lucius is a businessman. The people tending the stalls are business people. The world of *Bone* may be idyllic in some ways, but it runs on familiar capitalistic principles. One of the main characters Phoney Bone (full name Phoncible P. Bone) is as ruthlessly capitalistic as they come. The reader is meant to laugh at Phoney's failed schemes to make capital, but at the same time the reader remains his friend. My point is that *Bone* does not, in any fundamental way, challenge the market ideology that holds sway in the world beyond the book.

Let's return to Lucius. Lucius is a father figure. He is large and often menacing-looking. He looms at the edge of the frame as a reminder of the law-of-the-father. Note the phallic stick in his left hand. *Bone* flirts with a range of Freudian narratives, not least the narrative of the family romance. Gran'ma Ben (aka Rose) and Lucius are the parent figures necessarily displaced by Thorn and Fone Bone. As in any good fairy tale, the characters find fetishes, objects that fill in for the desired object. Phoney has his lucre, Smiley finds Bartelby the baby rat creature, and Fone looks longingly at Thorn. Thorn and Gran'ma Ben are somehow psychologically the same person. Both are royalty, and they share the same name (rose/thorn). Gran'ma Ben has a sister whose name is Briar, and she completes the allusion to Briar Rose or Sleeping Beauty. But again, my point is that the subversive potential inherent in the departure from the reality we know in the here and now, is ultimately contained, safely bookended by desire's acceptance of replacements for desire. Fantasy repeats the game of *fort-da*.

And so if fantasy for children has any enduring subversive function, anything beyond the pleasurable containment of libidinous energy, then this may be simply to maintain the potential for belief in a world Enlightenment thinking refuses to acknowledge. We remember that fantasy, to some extent, emerges in reaction to Enlightenment thinking in the late eighteenth century. And we might suppose that its oppositional function remains today. I am thinking of a work like John Crowley's *Little, Big* (1981). This strange fantasy finds its lineage in nineteenth-century fairy paintings, in the Cottingley fairies, and in George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871). *Little, Big* also takes

in the entirety of the 'Alice' books; by 'entirety' I mean that *Little, Big* accepts the dream world Alice explores as an essential part of the non dream world. We can't have dreams if we don't have reality. But reality inevitably reminds us that dreams are diaphanous, ephemeral, floating and fleeting – like a golden summer afternoon on the river. Fantasies like *Little, Big* keep us on the edge of things, remind us just how reality can either swallow us and thrust us into the dark belly of melancholia, or provide us with the nourishment our imaginations seek. We can create reality or we can succumb to reality. When fantasy retreats, the world remains in its wake, 'as it is and not different' (Crowley 1981, p.538). The world was different once upon a time, and the discourse of once upon a time is the discourse of freedom.

Fantasies are safely subversive. Literature, especially literature for the young, rarely insinuates itself for the purpose of overthrowing governments or institutions. And I am not sure that we should want it to work in an incendiary fashion. But we do want it to challenge easy certainties and received opinions and false truisms. Subversion implies taking one thing and submerging it or it implies one version lurking just below another version. Or perhaps it means one reality interlacing another reality in ways that defeat over and under. The difference between a book like *Little, Big* and a book like *At the Back of the North Wind* is that the former accepts the story of the retreat of the fairies, whereas the latter leaves us with the assurance that the reality we encounter every day, the poverty and sorrow and injustice that constitute that reality, is not in any absolute sense 'real'. In other words, fantasy capitalises on desire; it offers desire the illusion of satisfaction while acknowledging the satisfaction of illusion.

Illusion, legerdemain, magic, faerie, dream, deceiving elves – these are the stuff of Fantasy. Magic casements open to worlds that leave us asking whether we are awake or asleep. And if we are asleep, do we inevitably wake to find ourselves on the cold hillside? Does Fantasy work to reconcile us to a world in which even 'the weather isn't as we remember it clearly once being' (Crowley 1981, p.538). Does Fantasy show us the inevitability of nostalgia? Nostalgia brings me close to my end, and I turn to one of my favourite writers of fantasy, William Steig.

Not long before he died in 2003, a few months prior to his 96th birthday, Steig published a memoir in the form of a picture book for kids: *When Everybody Wore a Hat* (2003). In a series of pictures and brief anecdotes of people and family, Steig reminisces about his boyhood not far off a hundred years ago. The book is a nostalgic look back, but the nostalgia is without mawkishness; it takes, surprise, an epanaleptic shape.

The book begins with a photograph of Steig in 1916 when he was eight years old. He is in a tree in the Bronx. The book ends with a photograph of Steig 'today', whenever today happens to be. We have repetition in photographs, anticipation and retrospection. Between the photographs are the anecdotes accompanied by Steig's drawings. The drawings of a family outing or of the local butcher, Barney, or of the lady who lived in the corner building are stylised, caricatures, representational, but not realistic. In other words, the drawings transform history into fantasy. For example, the picture of the 'prettiest girl on the block', Marian Mack, reverses our expectations. The woman in the window is here the young William, and outside tripping on the hop scotch squares is the young Marian. The picture gives us just the edge of the building in which William lives, and consequently it looks like the tower of a castle with William in the upper room. The pulchritudinous Marian is the light of William's life. I am, of course, suggesting that this drawing represents fantasy at work. This transformation of history into fantasy is perhaps nowhere so clearly evident than in the penultimate drawing, the one that depicts the young William having his picture taken while he sits astride a horse 'like a cowboy' (n.p.). Steig notes that, 'Everyone wanted his picture on a horse'. And so this drawing presents an actual fantasy, the boy's fantasy that he is a cowboy. The young William may think he sits a horse 'like a cowboy', but he does not have the hat or the spurs or the chaps or the other gear that would indicate that he was a real cowboy or even that he was the simulation of a cowboy. He is just a boy sitting on a horse. In his mind, however, he can be a cowboy. Fantasy offers desire the illusion of satisfaction while acknowledging the satisfaction of illusion.

The photographs that begin and end *When Everybody Wore a Hat* take us there and back again. In the winter

there are memories in the mind. Memories are the raw material of fantasy. We like to think of imagination as the key to fantasy, but imagination cannot work without memory. Without a storehouse of memories – without an architecture of past design, a house of memory – we have nothing to transform. Desire looks back in order to look forward. Every fantasy anticipates the past, anticipates retrospectively, projects the past forward, and presents analepsis proleptically. Fantasy is the *fort-da* game taken into memory, extended, developed, worked through and maybe grasped in its significance.



NOTE

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Roderick McGillis is Professor of English at the University of Calgary. His books include *For the Childlike: George MacDonald's Fantasies for Children* (1992), *The Nimble Reader: Literary Theory and Children's Literature* (1996), *A Little Princess: Empire and Gender* (1996), *Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context* (1999), and *He Was Some Kind of a Man: Masculinities in the B Western* (2009). He is also the author of numerous articles and book chapters.