New Frontiers of Educational Research

Yan Wu
Kerry Mallan
Roderick McGillis *Editors*

(Re)imagining the World

Children's Literature's Response to Changing Times

Springer

New Frontiers of Educational Research

For further volumes:
http://www.springer.com/series/10795

Yan Wu · Kerry Mallan · Roderick McGillis
Editors

(Re)imagining the World

Children's Literature's Response to Changing Times

Springer

Editors
Yan Wu
College of Education Administration
Beijing Normal University
Beijing
People's Republic of China

Roderick McGillis
Nakusp
Canada

Kerry Mallan
Queensland University of Technology
Kelvin Grove
QLD
Australia

ISSN 2195-3473 ISSN 2195-349X (electronic)
ISBN 978-3-642-36759-5 ISBN 978-3-642-36760-1 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-36760-1
Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013938752

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

Contents

Authors' Biographies

Cherie Allan is a Research Assistant at Queensland University of Technology on two major Australian Research Council funded projects: *Asian-Australian Children's Literature and Publishing* and *Children's Literature Digital Resources*. She also has taught children's literature at QUT and was awarded her Ph.D. in 2010. Cherie is the author of *Playing with Picturebooks: Postmodernism and the Postmodernesque* (2012). She is affiliated with the Children and Youth Research Centre at QUT.

Lijun Bi lectures at School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics of Monash University, Australia. Her publications are primarily on the role of moral-political education in Chinese children's books and its link to the nationalist sentiment.

Clare Bradford is Professor of Literary Studies at Deakin University in Melbourne. She has published more than 70 essays and book chapters on children's and other literature. Her books include *Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children's Literature* (2001), which won both the Children's Literature Association Book Award and the International Research Society for Children's Literature Award; *Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature* (2007); *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature: Utopian Transformations* (2009) (with Mallan, Stephens and McCallum); and the collection *Contemporary Children's Literature and Film* (2011) (with Mallan). In 2009 she was awarded the first International Trudeau Fellowship. She was President of the International Research Society for Children's Literature from 2007 to 2011. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities.

Alice Curry read English at Oxford University before completing a Masters and Doctorate in Children's Literature at Macquarie University in Sydney, the latter of which is to be published in the 'Critical Approaches to Children's Literature' series by Palgrave Macmillan. Her research interests lie in feminism, topography and the environment in young adult fiction, with a particular focus on postcolonial literatures for children. She is currently an Honorary Associate of Macquarie University and the Children's Literature Advisor to the Commonwealth Education Trust, for whom she has compiled and edited *A River of Stories: Tales and Poems from Across the Commonwealth* (2011), illustrated by Jan Pieńkowski.

Xiangshu Fang is a Senior Lecturer in International and Political Studies at School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Deakin University, Australia. He has published books and articles on traditional Chinese education, ancient Chinese civilization, revival of Confucianism in China and the Cultural Revolution.

Erica Hateley is a member of the Children and Youth Research Centre and a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. She is currently funded by the Australian Research Council to undertake research into Australian children's book awards.

Ingrid Johnston is a Professor of English Education in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta, Canada. Her research and teaching interests focus on postcolonial literary theories and pedagogies, young adult literature, picture books, Canadian literature, and teacher education for diversity. She has published three books, with a fourth in press, and numerous articles in international journals.

Roderick McGillis is Emeritus Professor of English, the University of Calgary. He has written numerous books and articles in children's literature including: the award-winning *The Nimble Reader* (1996), *A Little Princess: Gender and Empire* (1996), and an edited collection, *George MacDonald: Literary Heritage and Heirs* (2007). He has collaborated with Kerry Mallan on two journal essays, and he was Visiting Professor at Queensland University of Technology in 2002.

Margaret Mackey is a Professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta in Canada. She teaches and researches in the area of young people, their literacies (old and new), and their literature. Her most recent book is *Narrative Pleasures in Young Adult Novels, Films, and Video Games* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Currently she is developing a 360-degree study of childhood literacy by investigating a very broad set of all the materials in print and other media with which she became literate herself in the 1950s in Eastern Canada. A series of articles based on this study appears in recent issues of *Children's Literature in Education*.

Kerry Mallan is a Professor and Director of the Children and Youth Research Centre at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. She has published widely in children's literature. Her books include *Gender Dilemmas in Children's Fiction* (2009), *New World Orders in Contemporary Children's Literature*: *Utopian Transformations* (2008, with Bradford, Stephens, and McCallum); and an edited collection *Contemporary Children's Literature and Film*: *Engaging with Theory* (2011, with Bradford).

Perry Nodelman is the author of *Words About Pictures: the Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books* (which celebrates twenty-five years in print in 2013), *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (third edition in collaboration with Mavis

Reimer), and *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2008). He has also published about 125 essays on various aspects of children's literature in academic journals and books, the first published in 1977, the latest forthcoming in 2012. As a writer for young people, he has published four novels on his own and seven in collaboration with Carol Matas.

Jean Webb is Professor of International Children's Literature and Director of the International Forum for Research in Children's Literature at the University of Worcester, UK. Her publications include: Webb, Jean (ed.) *Text Culture and National Identity in Children's Literature* (NORDINFO: 2000); Cogan Thacker, Deborah and Webb, Jean *Introducing Children's Literature: Romanticism to Postmodernism* (Routledge, 2002); Webb, Jean (ed.) "*A Noble Unrest*": *Contemporary Essays on the Work of George MacDonald* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007); Levene, Alysa and Webb, Jean: "Nothing Wrong With Us Brits! the repression of mental health problems in English texts post WW2: an interdisciplinary approach" in *INIS*, *The (Irish) Children's Books Magazine*, Autumn (2011); Webb, Jean A. A. Milne's poetic world of childhood in *When We Were Very Young* and *Now We Are Six*, Morag Styles & Louise Joy (eds.) *Poetry and Childhood* (Trentham Press, 2010).

Yan Wu is a Science Fiction Author and a Professor and Director of the Science Fiction and Creative Industry at Faculty of Education of Beijing Normal University, People's Republic of China. Yan's books include *Adventure in the Deep Soul* (Novel, 1996), *Life and Death On the Day Sixth* (Novel, 1996), *Introductory of Science Fiction* (2006), *Essentials of Science Fiction* (2011); *How to Read Science Fiction* (2012) and numerous edited series of works and critical works related to science fiction. Currently, he is the President of World Chinese Science Fiction Association, and Vice Chair of Science Literature Branch of China's Science Writers' Association.

Xu Xu is a doctoral candidate at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, USA. She specializes in children's literature and gender theory. She is now working on her dissertation on the construction of childhood in modern China.

Introduction

The world is never too much with us

Yan Wu, Kerry Mallan, and Roderick McGillis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

References

Anderson MT (2002) Feed. Candlewick Press, Cambridge
Brontë C (1847) Jane eyre. Penguin, London
Burnett FH (1911) The secret garden. Penguin, London
Carroll L (1865) Alice's adventures in wonderland. International Pocket Library, Boston
Carroll L (1871) Through the looking-glass. Macmillan, London
Kermode F (1979) The genesis of secrecy: On the interpretation of narrative. Harvard University Press, Cambridge
Konigsburg EL (1967) From the mixed-up files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. Macmillan, London
MacDonald G (1872) At the back of the north wind. Strahan, London

Mark J (2004) Useful idiots. David Fickling Books, Oxford
Montgomery LM (1908) Anne of green gables. Grosset & Dunlap, New York
Nel P, Paul L (eds) (2011) Keywords for children's literature. New York University Press, New York
Park R (1974) Callie's castle. Angus & Robertson, Sydney
Richter MV (2011) Creating the national mosaic: Multiculturalism in Canadian children's literature from 1950 to 1994. Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam
Salinger JD (1951) The catcher in the rye. Hamish Hamilton, London
Williams R (1976) Keywords. Blackwell, Malden
Yolen J, Bruce C (1998) Armageddon summer. Harcourt, Brace & Co, New York

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

Erica Hateley

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

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

E. Hateley (✉)
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia
e-mail: erica.hateley@qut.edu.au

Y. Wu et al. (eds.), *(Re)imagining the World*, New Frontiers of Educational Research,
DOI: 10.1007/978-3-642-36760-1_1, © Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2013