

ON THE MYTHS OF CHILDHOOD

Innocent and Naughty Children in 19th Century and Contemporary Children's Stories

ON THE MYTHS OF CHILDHOOD: INNOCENT AND NAUGHTY CHILDREN IN 19TH
CENTURY AND CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Literature for children does more than simply entertain, or create fantastical spaces for children to occupy—children’s literature is instructive. I argue that didacticism in literary tales for children works according to the two main ideologies of childhood, which Marina Warner refers to as “myths” in her essay *Little Angles, Little Monsters: Keeping Childhood Innocent* (1995). This study analyses the two main nineteenth-century attitudes regarding childhood and their presence in literary tales—childhood innocence and inherent naughtiness. I argue that these ideologies reveal the struggle to accurately and collectively define childhood. In particular, I discuss naughty children in selections from Heinrich Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter* (1845), and innocent/good children in Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales, including *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (1837), *The Snow Queen* (1844), *Dance, Dolly, Dance* (1871), etc... In addition, I argue that these attitudes from the Victorian era are still present in today’s discourse surrounding childhood and in the literature of today, which I demonstrate through Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* (2008) and Alvin Schwartz’ *In a Dark, Dark Room and Other Scary Stories* (1984).

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

I, Taylor Melinda Charendoff, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own original content, and all other works are properly quoted and cited both in the text of my project and in the bibliography. I have completed this thesis project as per requirement for the completion of the M.A. in English at McMaster University, under the supervision of Dr. Jeffery Donaldson. I declare that this thesis project has not been submitted to any other institution for any award, degree, diploma or for any other reason.

Place: McMaster University

Date: July 18, 2016

Signature:

Introduction:

The Good and The Bad in Victorian Concepts of Childhood

This project is concerned with different ideologies of childhood, where they come from, and how stories are then shaped by an author's definition of childhood. Since the material children read is most likely handed to them by an adult, whether that be a parent or a teacher, it is important to consider how the adult world shapes childhood, and how the literature chosen for children to read may shape their behaviour. For the purposes of this project, I focus solely on texts which promote, rather than challenge, popular beliefs about childhood. There are two dominant ideologies when it comes to childhood that authors tend to subscribe to: innocence and naughtiness. Childhood innocence is the idea that children are born inherently good, are curious and imaginative. Others believe, however, that children are born into Original Sin, or that children are born inherently prone towards naughtiness. Both good and bad children receive guidance in literature, albeit in different ways, and both children are required to learn lessons or morals. The types of lessons, however, that such literature produces varies depending on the author's beliefs.

In chapter one, I discuss a collection of fairy tales and stories by Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen's stories suggest that children are inherently good, pure and virtuous. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, there are two definitions of the word "innocent": "The quality or fact of being innocent" and "Freedom from sin, guilt, or moral wrong in general; the state of being untainted with, or unacquainted with evil; moral purity". The first definition implies that one is innocent of a crime or an action. The second implies a deeper meaning, that those who are innocent are morally pure. Children are often considered innocent because they haven't yet

suffered experience. Experience is thought to corrupt, so children are viewed as pre-social because they have yet to be tainted by experience. The idea that this pre-social status includes an innate sense of morality comes from the Romantic vision of children as virtuous and connected to God.

Chapter two discusses Heinrich Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter* (1845), which takes a different approach to childhood. Rather than portraying children as morally pure, in *Struwwelpeter* their lack of experience and of societal rules influences poor behaviour. Didacticism, or the intent to instruct and teach morals in literature, is often used by authors in order to impose social norms and conventions on children, which they are then expected to conform to. Literature which follows this ideology of childhood also imposes on children the idea that they are uncivilized beings, and that adults are the rightful authority figures. In chapter three, I discuss contemporary literature which reveals how both of these ideologies and methods of educating children survive in the present world. Children are still viewed as pre-social, and therefore people either believe that children are inherently good or inherently bad. The nature of childhood is determined by numerous factors in the modern world, such as a child's social class, race, gender, religious background and so on... so the idea that children are pre-social and reflect pre-society is an adult ideology based on adult wishes and desires.

The first two chapters of this project discuss works from the nineteenth-century, although the seeds of these concepts predate this era. The nineteenth century, however, saw multiple literary authors concerned with the proper education of children. In this era, literature had a specific didactic purpose, although depending on which model of childhood one ascribed to, the moral of the story would change. Those who viewed children as pure and innocent felt that children should be left alone, as they were seen as already pure and oblivious to the evils of the

world, and only in need of gentle guidance from adults. Those who viewed children as inherently naughty, however, felt that weak parental authority was to blame, and stressed the importance of civilizing naughty or savage children into successfully integrated citizens.

Marina Warner begins her chapter *Little Angels Little Monsters* by discussing the case of Casper Hauser, a feral child/adolescent found in 1828 in Nuremberg. Warner explains that Hauser could not speak, and had been the subject of physical abuse and isolation for the duration of his life. Similarly, Murray K. Simpson discusses a case twenty-eight years previous to the discovery of Casper Hauser, that of “Victor” in Aveyron, France. Cases like Victor’s and Hauser’s produced an array of questions, such as: could these children be taught language, could they be successfully integrated into society, and what could one discern about the inherent nature of childhood and by extension, man? Warner claims that:

[Hauser] seemed a symbolic child, a stranger to society, a *tabula rasa* in whom ignorance and innocence perfectly coincided. In his wild state, Casper Hauser offered his new minders and teachers a blueprint of human nature—untouched. And in his case, his character fulfilled the most idealistic image of original innocence. (43)

Cases like Casper and Victor provided society with a supposed insider view into the development of humans, and gave them the opportunity to speculate and conduct research on the nature of childhood. According to Simpson, however, “attitudes towards the innate goodness of the savage were sharply divided between those like Rousseau (1973) who regarded the nobility of man in his natural state, and those who saw their existence in a more negative light, marked by cannibalism and depredation, such as was the Jesuit view” (564). On the one hand, Hauser seemed to provide

evidence that children enter the world as blank slates, uncorrupted by society and therefore inherently good. On the other hand, however, children like Victor seemed to prove that children were in fact born uncivilized, as Simpson mentions that “the boy’s natural selfish interests and instinctual behaviour are described in terms remarkably similar to attitudes towards savage tribes as well as Rousseau’s eponymous pupil, Emile. He was amoral and lacking in any notion of property, and therefore theft” (566). The example of the feral child reveals the complicated nature of childhood, and the cultural struggle to define this stage of life. The historical and social context is important in this study, as childhood is a social construct which changes and evolves over time. The literature produced for children throughout history contains insights into how society viewed childhood at different points in time, and one can trace the evolution of our current understanding of childhood through literature as well.

In the past, as well as in the present, deciding whether or not children were good or bad was not only important for children and discerning their proper education, but for defining humanity as a whole. Warner claims that those who believe in childhood innocence also believe that “the child and the soul are somehow interchangeable, and that consequently children are the keepers and the guarantors of humanity’s reputation” (46). An investment in the existence of childhood innocence suggests that children are important to the survival of humankind, that they represent all that is good in the world, and for this reason their innocence should be treated as sacred and guarded from corruption. On the other hand, Alison Lurie claims in *Don’t Tell the Grown Ups*, “Just as the stages of the human embryo repeat the stages of human evolution... the social development of the individual child repeats that of the human species” (194). In other words, some adults hold the belief that children represent primitiveness, and this pre-social status equips children with a proneness to rule breaking and naughtiness. In addition, she claims that “this

creature is a savage whose principle interest is survival. Socially his or her world is very small...he/she cannot speak but communicates in sign language or with articulate cries” (194). So the way one defines childhood determines the way in which humanity is defined, or represented. It should follow, then, that if children are the souls of humanity then adults have little to offer; and if children are primitive, like early humans, then adults have everything to offer.

Since people were conflicted on the nature of childhood, it follows that there would be much debate about how one should educate children. Alan Richardson explains in *The Politics of Childhood: Wordsworth, Blake and the Catechistic Method* that “as education broadened in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, its methods and function shifted significantly” (853). Richardson explains that while the Renaissance focused on teaching the dialectical method, “Catechism replaced dialectic as the exemplary mode of a process which Michel Foucault describes as the ‘disciplining’ of society, as the school became a ‘machine for learning’ analogous in its functions of regulating and observation to the prison and the factory” (853). In addition, literature also became a popular method by which to teach children about the rules and expectations of their society. They were also taught lessons about obedience and morality. The education of children—middle and lower-class children in particular—focused on catechism, or the teaching of Christian Sacraments (853). For upper class children, or the elite, “eighteenth-century grammar schools...emphasized ‘formal training by drill and repetition,’ and the oral examinations at Oxford University had degenerated into a routinized exchange of set questions and answers” (853). Richardson points out how Foucault highlights the education system’s emphasis on instruction, teaching children how to become members of their society and how to behave. Didactic literature picked up on this pedagogical style, and was the preferred type of literature for children at the time.

Not every thinker, however, agreed with these methods; minds like Rousseau and Pestalozzi began to write about their own views on how the young should be educated. *Pestalozzi*, in his 1801 text entitled *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, advocated for the child as self-educator: "...all educative instruction must be drawn out of the children themselves, and be born within them" (17). Pestalozzi claimed the best way to educate a being who is already inherently good is to let him or her be. Literature for children that followed this belief of inherent goodness focused less on teaching catechism or reprimanding naughty behaviour and focused more on what qualities children were believed to already possess, such as imagination and purity. Warner claims that "[children's] observable, active fantasy life, their fluid make-believe play seem to give them access to the world of wisdom, and this in turn brings them close to the myth and fairy tale" (49). In Chapter 3 we will look at how the belief in childhood innocence has been passed down to contemporary culture. First, I focus on childhood innocence itself in Chapter One, via my discussion of Hans Christian Andersen, whose literature ascribes to Pestalozzi's view on childhood education. Hans Christian Andersen's most famous stories are of the fairy tale genre, which, as Warner highlights, is seen as suitable for children because of their imaginative nature. Andersen's stories focus on the bad in the world, but represent children as beings who are born outside of this corruption and badness. The morals, if there are any, center on believing in oneself, and realizing one's full potential, rather than on discipline and correcting one's faults.

Romantic authors such as Wordsworth, Blake and Coleridge, who wrote in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, influenced Andersen and tale writers like him. Romanticism featured a focus inward, where the inner person and emotions became the subject of literary importance, and it was believed that children, because of their "innocence" were seen as closer to nature, and by extension closer to God. In his *Ode to Immortality*, Wordsworth, presents

an idealized notion of childhood (861), stressing that “Both the boy (who is five) and the girl (who is eight) are presented as naturals, primitives...These noble savages are naturally resistant to the adults’ attempt to form (or deform) them; their mentalities are rooted in a transcendental nature rather than culturally produced” (Richardson, 861). Wordsworth wrote numerous poems about children who are simple, primitive-like beings, but as Richardson points out, they are portrayed as noble, perhaps even superior, to adults. While adults attempt to “form” them, they are in fact “deforming” them, as they, in their natural state, are closer to God because of their simple purity. They are uncorrupted by the world, and this is evident especially in *We Are Seven*: “A simple child, dear brother Jim,/ That lightly draws its breath,/ And feels its life in every limb,/ What should it know of death?” (1-4). Wordsworth begins his poem by explaining that, as children are beginning their lives and are so full of life, they are unknowledgeable about death. He continues:

‘Sisters and brothers, little maid,

How many may you be?’

‘How many? seven in all,’ she said,

And wondering looked at me.

‘And where are they, I pray you tell?’

She answered, ‘Seven are we,

And two of us at Conway dwell,

And two are gone to sea.

Two of us in the church-yard lie,

My sister and my brother,
And in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.' (13-24).

In this passage, Wordsworth reveals the innocence of the child, who considers her family complete, despite the fact that many of her siblings have died. Wordsworth, or the narrator, attempts to reason with the child, but this does not go as planned:

The first that died was little Jane;
In bed she moaning lay.
Till God released her of her pain,
And then she went away.

So in the church-yard she was laid,
And all the summer dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.'

‘How many are you then,’ said I,
‘If they two are in Heaven?’
The little Maiden did reply,
‘O Master! we are seven.’ (50-64)

Despite the fact that two of her siblings have passed away, the child still does not consider her family to be a family of five. The child refuses to rationalize death, and to speak of their siblings in the past tense, as the adult continuously attempts to have the child do. The adult is more cynical than the child, who in their oblivion is able to see the world in a light and optimistic manner.

For Wordsworth, and for Blake, childhood was something lost in adulthood, or something to mourn. William Blake, in his introduction in *Songs of Innocence*, describes a pastoral image of childhood: “Piping down the valleys wild/ Piping songs of pleasant glee/ On a cloud I saw a child./ And he laughing said to me./ Pipe a song about a Lamb:/ So I piped with merry cheer,/ Piper pipe that song again—/ So I piped, he wept to hear” (1-8). Adulthood is characterized by thought, by mediated experience, where on the contrary, childhood is immediate. One does not appreciate childhood when one is a child, and so Blake is attempting to recapture childhood through his writing. The lamb is the innocent child, and the song the piper must pipe “again” is the experience of childhood. This is highly idealistic, assuming children are without the ability to reflect, and therefore assuming they are in a state of ignorant bliss. In addition, this thinking views adulthood and childhood as a binary. As I will discuss in Chapter One, however, this belief reveals more about adults than it does about the actual nature and experience of childhood.

Nonetheless, this is the type of thinking that influenced the writers of children’s literature in the nineteenth-century. Jeanette Sky explains that “What the Romantics bequeathed to the later

nineteenth century was an image of the child as innocence incarnated; it was a child written into a most prestigious religious dimension that it had not earlier belonged to—that of Paradise” (366). Prior to the Romantic ideal of childhood, children were very much viewed as little adults, but the Romantics reimagined childhood as a Utopia, or a state of purity. Childhood became a distinct and separate life stage than adulthood and the emergence of children’s culture and literature soon followed in the eighteenth century. This did not mean that children were perfect, but that they were special beings who needed protection and guidance. Of course, not all viewed childhood in this light, and in the nineteenth century, the belief in the inherently naughty child was prominent as well.

Rousseau, like Pestalozzi, challenged the traditional schooling of children, and urged parents to take complete responsibility for the education of their children in *Émile* (1762). Also like Pestalozzi, Rousseau “raises his imaginary student, Emile, ‘according to nature,’ so that he will possess something of the wholeness or self-sufficiency that natural man lost when he entered civil society” (Nichols, 535). Rousseau was opposed to traditional education, but unlike Pestalozzi, he did not suggest children be left alone. Instead, Rousseau stated: “No one wishes to be a half-developed being; and in the present condition of things, a man left to himself among others from his birth would be the most deformed among them all” (12). In this passage, Rousseau demonstrated the importance of educators in a child’s life, suggesting that without adults to raise and teach children, they would be half-developed, much like the feral children discussed earlier. In addition, he added that “we are born stupid, we need judgement. All that we have not at our birth, and that we need when grown up, is given us by education” (12). But rather than be educated traditionally, in school or by a tutor, Rousseau believed in parental guidance and authority. He claimed “...Let mothers only vouchsafe to nourish their children and our manners will reform

themselves...when women are once more true mothers, men will become true fathers and husbands” (18). He placed the blame solely on mothers for their children’s poor behaviour and lack of morality, but placed the responsibility of education into the hands of fathers: “As the mother is the true nurse, the father is the true teacher” (22). This same type of thinking is found in Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter*, in which naughty children are punished for not following the guidance and wisdom of their parents, and unlike the Romantic child, do not contain an inherent moral compass or goodness. I will come back to a discussion of Hoffmann’s text in chapter two.

In the contemporary world, these ideologies are still present. People still tend to view children as either innocent or naughty, without even realizing where these ideas come from, or how their society has shaped their views. The purpose of this project is to inform those who study childhood about the history of these ideologies in literature, and to demonstrate how they function today. While today there is an overwhelming amount of research conducted on constructions of gender, race and social class, the general public tends to be less concerned with constructions of childhood. Unpacking the construction of childhood is important in order for people to understand where their beliefs originate. In the Western world, however, much of contemporary culture relies on the “truth” that children are innocent, or pre-social, without taking into account that children are not simply products of their environment. What makes a child who they are is determined by a variety of factors, but the attitude of their society will likely influence their lives, especially when it comes to the material they read. No matter what the true nature of childhood is, if there is a true and definitive nature, literature reflects an author’s and society’s beliefs and demonstrates how the concept of childhood is shaped and moulded by authority. The literature that is produced according to these beliefs further propels these beliefs into the minds of the members of Western society.

This study will demonstrate how literature promotes these beliefs, and suggests ways in which we, as a society, might move forward and away from traditional or outdated beliefs.

Chapter One:

Andersen and the “Innocent” Child

Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales are perhaps one of the best examples of stories which reveal childhood in an idealistic light. His work resists traditional didacticism or the intent to “instruct” through story. While there are certainly lessons to be found in Andersen’s stories, these lessons teach about individual growth and the importance of childhood, rather than traditional social morality. Some of Andersen’s stories reflect his own feelings about life, his own experiences and rejections from those around him. The stories which I will be discussing in this chapter, however, reveal a specific attitude or ideology about childhood which is still prevalent today. While Andersen’s stories are subversive at times of social roles and class structures, he does adhere to a specific ideology when it comes to childhood. The idea of childhood innocence originated with the English Romantics and was passed down to those in the nineteenth-century. As Andersen’s stories are still rather popular today, it is important to understand where his vision of childhood comes from, and what types of lessons are to be found in stories which subscribe to the ideology of childhood innocence.

Andersen was born on April 2, 1805 in Odense, Denmark (Spink, 9). Despite his tendency to embellish on his family’s history, he was the son of a shoemaker and an illiterate housewife. His mother worked as a washer-woman in her later years (Spink, 7,8). Anderson’s mother, whose influence can be seen in some of his stories, was affectionate, but she was also highly superstitious and anxious, making it difficult for her to fully understand her unique son (Lederer, 12). He was not born into wealth, and he only received a formal education toward the end of his

childhood, thanks to the sponsorship of a friend, Jonas Collin (Spink, 28). Andersen had attended school prior to this at a younger age, but he had only gained “basic reading and writing skills” (Conroy and Rossel, 3). With the help of his friend, Andersen, at seventeen, was “the oldest boy in his form, the others being all aged twelve and thirteen” (Spink, 28, 31). He never did quite master the art of spelling, however, even after becoming a successful author (Conroy and Rossel, 3). After passing his university entrance examination, Andersen quickly experienced “critical and financial success” (Spink, 33). His first work to gain international success, a novel entitled *The Improvisatore* (1835), made its way to England in 1845 (Spink, 50). Andersen’s works had significance in Victorian England, as well as in Denmark, and so this chapter will deal with Victorian concepts of childhood as well, where necessary. The same year that *The Improvisatore* was published was also the year Andersen published his first small collection of fairy-tales.

But as Andersen ventured into the world of fairy-tale writing, his first collection was unsuccessful: “In the opinion of one influential critic, while such tales might do very well for adults, they were quite unsuitable for children. It was true that children might find them amusing but where was the instruction?” (Spink, 53). Early critics found Andersen’s stories puzzling because they lack what was considered vital to stories aimed at child audiences: didacticism. What is considered appropriate for children today differs vastly from what was deemed suitable reading material for Victorian or nineteenth-century children: “Indeed, the instinct to teach, to improve, to warn and rebuke is one of the most striking features of a great many books for Victorian children” (Roe, 91). Such didactic literature often included illustrations which featured “[a] ‘horror’ side. But this was not reckoned unsuitable for children, any more than was the almost cruel playfulness of the cautionary rhymes, with their terribly crude illustrations, in Dr. Heinrich Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter*” (Roe, 91). Andersen’s stories, however, do not

demonstrate children's tendency towards naughtiness, as these didactic stories do, but suggests a completely different idea altogether: that children are inherently good.

This is not to say that Andersen's stories do not contain lessons, but that they are of a different kind than what was the norm at the time. Andersen's lessons are about personal growth and about the importance of childhood innocence. Andersen does not teach children how to properly behave in society, at home, or at school, nor does he preach to children the importance of obedience and of submission to authority. Instead, Andersen's stories suggest that children are sacred, that they are superior to adults, and that they have a special connection with God because of their inherent goodness. Childhood is idealized, and because of this supposed connection with God, they are also inherently wise when it comes to morality and virtue. The power dynamic between adult and child is inverted, indicating that adults have much to learn from children.

In *The Ugly Duckling* (1843), Andersen reaches out to the child who does not fit in, or who has unfortunate circumstances in life, and teaches them that they have what it takes to succeed in life. The ugly duckling does not seem to fit in even before his birth: "'Let me look at the egg,' said the old duck. 'Ah! Take my word for it, that's a turkey's egg'" (85). He takes longer than the other ducks to hatch, and his egg is larger. When he is born, his mother's reaction is to question his authenticity as a duck: "That's a terribly big duckling...Can he be a turkey chick after all?" (86). As soon as he enters the water, however, and begins to swim, his mother begins to accept him as one of her own: "No, that's no turkey... Look how well he uses his legs, and how straight he holds himself" (87). While the ugly duckling receives nothing but abuse from the other animals, his mother is nurturing and loving to her son at first. Andersen likely took inspiration from his own upbringing when writing this story, as his own mother was an "affectionate mother, determined to see that her son got a better start in life than she had had" (Spink, 7).

Despite Andersen's many rejections from lovers and friends in his life, he remembered his mother with fondness. The other ducks say: "What an odd-looking duckling that one is! We certainly don't want *him*!' And a duck flew at the grey one and pecked him in the neck" (88). His mother's response is defensive: "Leave him alone...he's not doing any harm...he isn't handsome, but he has a nice disposition, and he swims quite as prettily as any of the others" (88). The ugly duckling does not have a friend in his mother for long, however:

How wretched he felt to be so ugly! He was chased by everyone. The ducks snapped at him; the hens too; and the girl who came to feed them shoved him with her foot. Even his brothers and sisters were against him, and kept saying: 'You ugly thing! We hope the cat will get you!' His mother, too, would murmur, 'I wish you were far away.' (89)

That the duckling has no true ally, not even his mother, makes him a deeply sympathetic character. Any child who has felt ostracized would likely identify with the duckling's sadness, but Andersen does not give this story a sad ending.

The ugly duckling does not remain ugly. After approaching a group of beautiful swans, he expects them to reject him as well:

They saw him, and came speeding towards him, ruffling their plumage. 'Yes, kill me,' said the poor creature...Yet what did he see reflected below? He beheld his own likeness – but he was no longer an awkward ugly dark grey bird. He was like the proud white birds about him; he was a swan. (97)

The swans do not reject him after-all, because he is, like them, a swan. And here Andersen, much in the style of Charles Perrault, only subtler, gives the moral to his story: “It doesn’t matter if you are born in a duckyard, so long as you come from a swan’s egg” (97). In other words, it doesn’t matter if you come from a low/working class family; anyone can succeed if they have the talent or skill. This, of course, is only true if one is given the opportunity in which to succeed, as Andersen was given by the Collin family. This morality differs greatly from the kind that can be found in Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter*, or in other works of literature aimed at teaching lessons to children. Andersen’s stories are for the innocent child, who does not deserve the bad things that happen to him or her.

This is not the story’s sole moral, however. When the duckling is staying with the old woman, the cat and the hen, the duckling has an argument with the hen. The duckling expresses how he longs to be back in the water, to which the hen responds:

You must be out of your mind! Ask the cat – he’s the cleverest person I know – if *he* likes floating on the water, or diving to the bottom. Never mind my opinion: ask our mistress, the old woman; there’s no one wiser in the whole world. Do you imagine that *she* wants to float or put her head under water? (93)

The hen assumes that everyone must enjoy the same things in life, and if the duckling enjoys something different, then there must be something wrong with him. He replies: “‘You don’t understand,’ ... ‘Well, if we don’t understand you, nobody will’” (93). The ugly duckling is told

that his desires are wrong, and that the rest of the world is against him. Andersen himself struggled with pressure from family and friends to learn a trade, like his father, rather than to act or write (Spink, 28). Like Andersen, the ugly duckling rejects the hen's advice, and goes back to the pond as he wishes. There he meets the swans, and discovers himself to be a swan as well. The lesson here is that others may not always understand one's ambitions, but this does not mean that one should not follow them. Andersen followed his dreams, despite numerous setbacks throughout his life, and defied the odds.

The types of children to be found in Andersen's stories are rather idealistic. Lurie claims, of Andersen's disposition, that "...in a sense he remained a child all his life, with a child's egotism and a child's intense and volatile emotions" (2). Lurie is not the only scholar to point this out about Andersen, for Spink also claims that "A war of nerves was always going on in Hans Christian Andersen, between the thrust of ambition and determination to succeed whatever the cost on the one hand, and, on the other, his extreme timidity and hypersensitiveness" (60). It is common for scholars to associate Andersen with childlikeness, and perhaps this has to do with adult nostalgia, or the longing to relive childhood. Marina Warner claims that childhood innocence is a myth, and that adult desire has led to the social construct of childhood innocence. She claims that: "the difference of the child from the adult has become a dominant theme in contemporary mythology... the child and the soul are somehow interchangeable, and that consequently children are the keepers and the guarantors of humanity's reputation" (45, 46). Adults who view childhood as superior to adulthood often look back and view childhood as a happy, simple time with little responsibility and consequences. It is important to understand, however, that childhood innocence is an ideology, one which the Romantics passed down to the Victorians, and which stood in opposition to those who believed in didactic instruction.

Innocence is not a truth of childhood, but a specific attitude that emerged at a time in history and still exists today.

In the nineteenth century, both lower and upper class parents were known to be rather distant from their children (Frost, 20, 21). Lower class parents were busy—fathers with work, and mothers with house work and caring for the youngest children. Upper class parents often had nannies to spend time with their children, and “both mothers and fathers became close to them only after they were grown” (Frost, 22). The middle-class, however, set the example for the other classes, and had the most idealistic image of the family. In other words: “the middle-class family matched most closely the domestic ideal for Victorians – the loving, hardworking father; the nurturing, angelic mother; glowing of mutual affection” (22). Children, then, given so much love and attention from both parents, were seen as innocent and goodhearted in nature.

Middle-class children in most cases received an education. They did not go off to work and were not grappled with responsibilities like their lower class counterparts. Essentially, childhood lasted longer in the middle-class and was held as sacred. This idea is present in Andersen’s tales, such as *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (1837), which, borrowing a phrase from Warner, reveals: “...the depth of adult investment in a utopian childhood state” (45). The idea that children are innocent is different from the idea that children are inherently bad or naughty because in this case childhood is superior to adulthood. Children, being so naturally good and pure, have much to teach adults, and it is the adult world which eventually corrupts and spoils the innocence of children.

This idea can be exemplified by *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, which begins with a description of the Emperor: “He was so passionately fond of fine new clothes that he spent all his money and time on dressing up. He cared nothing for his army, nor for going to the theatre, nor

for driving out in his carriage among the people” (21). Already, the story sets up the ridiculousness of authority. Unlike Hoffmann’s stories, or stories which teach the importance of obedience, Andersen undermines authority often and critiques the adult social world. The ruler of the land is obsessed with his own vanity, and is not concerned with matters that a monarch should: “...and at times when you’d be told of other monarchs, ‘He’s holding a council,’ in *his* case the answer would be, ‘The Emperor is in his dressing-room’” (21). Not only is the Emperor vain, but he is easily fooled; the two “weavers” who come to sell their magic cloth to the Emperor are, in fact, not weaving anything at all: “So the rascally pair set up two looms and behaved as if they were working hard; but actually there was nothing on the machines at all” (22). These weavers are clever, because they not only continue to steal from the Emperor by “demanding the finest silk and golden thread” (22), but they create the perfect scenario with which to get away with their scheme: “[...]the cloth they wove (so they said) wasn’t only exceptionally beautiful but had magical properties; even when made into clothes it was invisible to anyone who was either unfit for his job or particularly stupid” (21). The only way the weavers can get caught is if someone admits they cannot see the cloth, but this would also reveal that they are either stupid or unfit for their work, and of course no one, especially not the Emperor, wants to do that. That the Emperor is blinded by vanity and is so easily manipulated further subverts the hierarchy and the supposed superiority of authority figures.

The scheme is successfully drawn out and the Emperor is convinced to wear his new outfit at the procession:

So the emperor walked in stately procession under the splendid canopy; and everyone in the streets or at the windows exclaimed, ‘Doesn’t the Emperor look magnificent! Those

new clothes – aren't they marvelous! Just look at the train! The elegance of it!' For nobody dared to admit that he couldn't see any clothes; this would have meant that he was a fool or no good at his job. (29)

The entire town is unwilling to admit that they cannot see the cloth, and the adult world appears to have gone mad. The weavers' scheme is revealed, and the truth about the cloth exposed, when a child, untainted by adult social pressures, speaks out about what he or she sees:

Then a child's puzzled voice was clearly heard. 'He's got nothing on!' 'These innocents! What ridiculous things they say!' said the child's father. But the whisper passed through the crowd: 'That child says that the Emperor has nothing on; the Emperor has nothing on!' And presently, everyone there was repeating, 'He's got nothing on!' (29)

A child admitting that he or she does not see any clothing on the Emperor's body brings everyone to their senses, because children are seen as pre-social beings. The child is unaware of the pretensions of the court and has a certain outsider authority, having not yet been corrupted by society's warped view of right and wrong. Warner claims, about children, that:

Their observable, active fantasy life, their fluid make-believe play seem to give them access to a world of wisdom, and this in turn brings them close to myth and fairy tale. These ideas were grown in the ground of Romanticism: for Wordsworth, heaven lay about us in our infancy and the child was father to the man. (49)

That child is the father of man rings true in this story, as it is the child who is able to speak the truth and enlighten those around him or her. Because children do not have jobs, unless their family's misfortune requires it, and children are not "stupid" but simply inexperienced, the adults are able to see that the child must be speaking the truth. Only now are they safe to admit that they too do not see any clothing themselves, for the child has nothing to lose by admitting that the Emperor has nothing on. The child is the father to the man in the sense that children teach adults about morality.

This idea, that children are pure, untainted by the chaos of the adult world, and so have an inherent wisdom, is present as well in *The Snow Queen*. This story also features the idea of childhood innocence and a utopian childhood state, especially within the character Gerda. Gender distinctions are especially present within this story, and how the way girls are viewed differs from how boys are viewed. Lederer has an interesting explanation for the Snow Queen's role in the story and in young Kay's life. Kay becomes affected by the Devil's mirror from the beginning of the story: "Oh! Something pricked me in my heart! Oh! Now I've got something in my eye!'...It was one of those tiny splinters from the demon's looking-glass... He had got another piece right in his heart, which would soon be like a lump of ice" (105). Lederer speculates that: "He behaves, in short, like the typical adolescent...The effect of the splinters, therefore, appears to be that they bring about the onset of a perfectly normal, if disagreeable, adolescent phase" (27). If Kay's heart freezing over has to do with adolescence, and becoming an adult, then this is to say that children have warmer, more accepting hearts. This supports Warner's claim, that children are viewed as "the keepers and the guarantors of humanity's reputation" (45, 46). Lederer also points out that: "Kay becomes intolerant of sentimentality and

‘childish’ stories; he has a sudden horror of misty-eyed, idealizing romanticism and piety. Instead he develops a highly obnoxious attitude of cynical contempt” (26). This sounds very much like an adult who has lost their innocence, which is viewed by those who subscribe to Romanticism as a loss one should mourn.

In Wordsworth’s *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1807), the feeling of having lost one’s childhood innocence is described:

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore; –
Turn wheresoe’er I may,/ By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more. (1-9)

Childhood is described as dreamlike, filled with descriptions of nature and things which are lost to him now, as an adult. He continues:

Now, while the Birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor’s sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:

A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong [...]
Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel – I feel it all. (19-24, 36-41)

Wordsworth reveals numerous things in this passage. First, he reveals the belief that children are closer to nature, and thus closer to God or the heavens. Secondly, he reveals his own desire to maintain some of his childlike sensibilities in adulthood. Perhaps Andersen, too, felt this desire, and perhaps he was able to recreate the feeling of childhood through his writing. But it is important to note that this is an adult feeling of nostalgia. Reflection into one's own past does not necessarily grant one the insight into the nature of childhood. Memories are often flawed and unreliable, and so these reflections are not necessarily based on scientific or biological truths.

Returning to Andersen's story, Kay's transition into adolescence is marked by many things other than just his loss of innocence. In order to make this transition into adolescence, Lederer points out that Kay must "first of all peel himself out of from the world of women in which, so far, he has grown up; and he must try to find some activities, generally recognized to be male, that would help to consolidate his identity as a man" (27). These steps are typically found in boyhood adventure stories, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*. In both of these texts, Jim and Peter break free from the influence of their

mothers and embark on journeys with adult men, who teach them to fight and to survive out in the world, without the help of overbearing women. Kay, similarly, loses interest in his friend Gerda and his grandmother. He says, of his grandmother's picture book, that "it was baby-stuff" (105). He starts playing with boys, rather than girls: "'They're letting me go tobogganing in the town square where the others are playing!' And away he went. Out in the square the boldest boys could often tie their sledges to farmers' carts, and so be pulled along for quite a ride" (106). He is now at the stage of his development where he is expected, socially, to escape the domestic sphere and enter the domain of manhood, from which females are excluded.

The Snow Queen's role in the story is ambiguous. Lederer's theory is that the Snow Queen is comparable to another character from a later work of Andersen's, *The Ice Maiden*. Lederer claims that "The Ice Maiden, of course, is Death; and that she is identical with the Snow Queen is suggested by the common elements of the frosted window at which they appear, by their frigid nature, and by the kisses of death they bestow" (29). That the Snow Queen might represent death is an interesting notion that should be explored in more depth. The first time Kay sees the Snow Queen, she appears at his window:

In the evening, when little Kay was back at home and half undressed, he climbed on to the chair by the window and looked out through the little hole. A few snowflakes were drifting outside; then one of these, much larger than the rest, settled on the edge of the window-box outside. This snow-flake grew and grew until it seemed to take the shape of a lady dressed in the finest white gauze, which was in fact made up of millions of tiny starlike flakes. She was so beautiful, wonderfully delicate and grand; but she was of ice all through, dazzling,

glittering ice – yet she was alive. Her eyes blazed out like two bright stars, but there was no peace or rest in them.” (103, 104)

This first imagery does not necessarily indicate anything having to do with death, except that Kay seems to be maturing sexually. This description of their first encounter is highly erotic; Kay is half undressed when he sees her, and she is described as being beautiful and delicate with hypnotizing eyes. Yet her eyes have no peace or rest in them, indicating that she is likely a temptress; she draws Kay in with her dazzling attractiveness, but she is cold and dangerous. She takes Kay away from his friend Gerda, from their innocent childhood friendship, and chooses him as her companion. And her kisses are fatal: “Her kiss was colder than ice; it went straight to his heart, which was already half way to being a lump of ice. He felt as if he were dying, but only for a moment. Then he felt perfectly well, and no longer noticed the cold” (108). The fact that her kisses slowly freeze his heart might represent an unhappy marriage, or the slow but inevitable march towards death which all adults face. In addition: “The Snow Queen kissed Kay once again, and after that he had no memory of Gerda and grandmother, nor anyone at home” (108). This sounds very much like Kay has entered into the adult world and has left his childhood behind.

Gerda’s quest to save him is also a quest to save his childhood as well, or to protect the sanctity of childhood. Gerda is the epitome of innocence, having the ability to speak to animals, and to warm the hearts of all who meet her so that she enlists their help effortlessly. That the female in this tale is the most innocent of the two children is not random. Traditionally, girls were considered to be more innocent than boys in the Victorian era: “Families spent far more on sons’ educations and even on their rooms than they did on their daughters, preparing the girls to

be self-sacrificing and to perpetuate the cycle into the next generation” (Frost, 29). This was, of course, only true in the cases of middle and upper-class families, for lower-class girls often had to work outside of the home, or take on a wealth of laborious tasks within the home. For middle and upper-class families, however:

Girls stayed at home as ‘children’ of the house until they married, which could be into their twenties or even longer. Rather than enter a profession, older girls helped their mothers run the house and took part in social rounds. Only if the family lost money did sisters take jobs or learn trades. (31)

So not only did childhood last longer for these families, but “most parents assumed that girls were superior morally” (29). Women were supposed to be the moral centers of their families, so girls were raised to become angels of the house in order to raise morally equipped children in their futures.

Gerda’s innocence reflects middle-class ideals, for not only is she still a playful child who likes grandmother’s stories, while Kay is presumably experiencing puberty, but she has an inherent goodness which draws people towards her. Gerda, without explanation, can speak to animals. Whether or not she shares this talent with the other children in the story is uncertain. Kay never reveals any ability to speak to animals, but in the fourth part of the story, the princess may also be able to understand the ravens who help Gerda: “Would you like to fly away free?” the princess asked. ‘Or would you like a permanent place as Court Ravens, with all the odds and ends you want from the kitchens?’” (126). Whether or not the ravens speak back in words she can understand is unclear: “Both the ravens bowed, and prudently chose the permanent place, for

they had to think of their old age” (126). The little robber girl in the fifth part of the story might also have this ability, but it is unclear if she can speak to her pets before meeting Gerda:

‘They’re mine – all of them,’ said the little robber girl. She seized one of the nearest, took it by the legs, and shook it until it flapped its wings. ‘Kiss it!’ she cried, waving it in Gerda’s face... ‘...And here’s my special sweetheart Bae.’ She pulled a reindeer forward by the horn; it was tethered to the wall, with a shiny copper ring round its neck... The poor creature struggled and kicked, but the robber girl laughed.... (129, 130)

Perhaps because of the little robber girl’s naughtiness and cruelty, she is unable to speak with her animals, or they are unwilling to speak to her. Their reactions are non-verbal physical objections to their cruel mistreatment, but when Gerda begins to speak to the reindeer, only then is the little robber girl able to speak to him as well, perhaps because she is willing to help:

The robber girl went over to the reindeer. ‘I’d love to go on teasing you a few more times with that sharp knife of mine because you always look so funny when I do – but never mind, I’m going to set you free so that you can run to Lapland. But you must put your best foot foremost and take this little girl for me to the Snow Queen’s palace where her playmate is.’ (132)

But even if the other characters can speak to animals at certain times in the story, Gerda has the closest connection to nature.

Not only does she speak to animals, and animals speak to her, but she also speaks to nature: “‘Kay is dead and gone,’ said little Gerda. ‘I don’t believe it,’ said the sunshine. ‘He is dead and gone,’ she said to the swallows. ‘I don’t believe it,’ declared each of the swallows” (109, 110). Gera also speaks to flowers: “‘Do you think he is dead and gone?’ ‘No, he is not dead,’ said the roses. ‘We have been in the earth where the dead are, but Kay was not there” (114). This closeness to nature is a power of hers that she possesses because of her innocence. Gerda reflects perfectly the childhood that Wordsworth describes in his *Ode*. The Finmark woman says to the reindeer:

I cannot give her greater power than she has already. Don’t you see how great that is? How men and beasts all feel that they must serve her? How far she has come in the wide world on her own bare feet? She must not learn of her power; it comes from her own heart, from her being a dear and innocent child. (136)

Her innocence serves as a power, but if she were to discover this power, her innocence would be lost. The implication is that obliviousness is good for children in order to keep them innocent, for innocence is seen as good. But what is the significance of this connection to nature? The Romantics passed on the idea that if one is close to nature, then one is also close to God, and this idea is present in the passage quoted above from Wordsworth’s *Ode*. Innocence, then, is not only powerful because it is an attractive quality to Gerda’s peers, but is seen as a positive characteristic because of the implied closeness to God and the heavens.

When Gerda is on her way to rescue Kay in the bitter cold, religion begins to play a role in the story in a straightforward manner:

Then little Gerda began to say the Lord's Prayer, and the cold was so intense that she could see her own breath; it rose from her mouth like a cloud. The cloud became thicker and thicker, and took the form of little bright angels who grew in size the moment they touched the ground. On their heads were helmets; in their hands were spears and shields. By the time Gerda had finished her prayer, she was encircled by a whole legion of these spirits. They struck out at the dreadful snow-things, shattering them into hundreds of pieces, and Gerda was able to go on her way without fear or danger. The angels patted her feet and hands so that she hardly felt the biting cold, and she hurried on towards the Snow Queen's palace. (137)

So Gerda is the perfect child not only for her innocence and purity, but because she is virtuous. In the nineteenth-century, "Parents also relied on religious training and repentance to impress on children the need for virtue" (Frost, 26). Gerda has clearly paid attention during her lessons, for she is able to recite the Lord's Prayer fully and successfully. Andersen is also suggesting to his readers that religious virtues are important, and that proper faith will guide children down the right path. But where are Gerda's parents? All we learn of Gerda and Kay's parental authority is that there is a grandmother, but whose grandmother she is we never learn. Lederer points out that:

Not only are there no parent figures in the story- with the possible exception of the Old Robber Woman...but both Gerda and Kay demonstrate neither need nor concern for their

parents at any time. It is rather striking that they do not once ask themselves how their parents may be feeling about their long absence. (69)

Parental authority is missing from this story, which stands in direct opposition to Hoffmann's stories, which center around its importance. What is reflected here are two opposing views on the educating of children. On the one hand is the Rousseauian idea that strong parental authority is essential in a child's upbringing, and on the other is Pestalozzi's idea that children should be left to educate themselves, given that childhood is "superior" to adulthood. Gerda, because of her innocence, does not need parental authority because she has the tools to survive all on her own. All around her, there are those that are willing to help her for the sole reason that she is an innocent child.

Lederer also offers another perspective: "But if we consider their entire journey a psychological voyage, the phenomenon is a familiar one. During adolescence young people go through a phase when they become strangers, when they do not live *with* their parents but only *next to them*, and when the parents feel overlooked and forgotten" (70). If Gerda and Kay are, indeed, experiencing the transition into adolescence, then the absence of their parents suggests that they must now learn to enter the world alone and be able to fend for themselves. But the entire story indicates, however, that Gerda is still very much a little girl. She is, however, a unique little girl, who is capable of much more than is expected of her.

When Gerda finds Kay, her tears heal him: "Then Gerda began to weep hot tears; they fell on his breast and reached right through to his heart...and she sang the verse that they used to sing together...Then tears came into Kay's eyes too. And, as he cried, the splinter of glass was washed away" (140). Although Andersen does promote certain traditional gender roles, he also

suggests that girls are capable of heroism. The hero of this story is, without question, Gerda.

While everyone at home is content with believing that Kay is dead, Gerda decides to find out the truth. She embarks on a difficult and dangerous quest to find her friend, and she is the one that saves him from the Snow Queen's grasp. Of course, her feminine and childlike innocence helps her along the way, but nonetheless she is brave enough to embark on this journey alone and with determination. But if it is indeed Gerda's innocence which saves herself and Kay in the end, then what is one to make of the ending? The ending to the story, then, seems to contradict the overall message:

And they entered the town, and went up the stairs of the grandmother's house, and into the room near the roof, where everything stood just where it was before, and the clock still said 'Tick tock', and the hands still marked the hours. But as they went through the door they noticed that they themselves had grown; they were not young children. (143)

If children are the protectors of humanity, then why would Andersen end his story with his children magically transforming into adults? Lederer claims that: "Only one form of eternity comes from the embrace of a boy and a girl – the sexual eternity, or immortality, of the race. And at that, the boy and girl must not be too 'little'" (69). Of course, all children eventually grow up; Kay has already begun his transition into adolescence, and perhaps now, after all her trials, Gerda too must be ready to enter into the sphere of womanhood. But unlike Kay, Gerda is not at the same risk of losing her innocence. As mentioned earlier, girls were expected to maintain their innocence and to become "angels of the house." They were to become mothers themselves who were moral and virtuous enough to raise moral and virtuous children. When Kay and Gerda

embrace, it would not do to have them remain children, given the sexual implications. So perhaps Andersen is claiming that children who are good will grow up to be virtuous and happy adults, like Gerda and Kay, who "...sat together, the same children still at heart" (144).

Even as adults, a childlike nature, or being able to approach situations in a light and childlike manner is considered to be a good thing. In Andersen's *Dance, Dolly, Dance*, Amalie's three-year-old knowledge is held sacred by her tutor, but is underappreciated by her elderly Aunt Malle. Aunt Malle's opening words to the story describe her opinion about the titular song: "Oh, it's just a silly little song for very small children" (168). Amalie, only three years old, is a very small child, but not only does she "[see] plenty of sense in it" (168) but she "knew how to play with dolls, and she was bringing hers up to be as clever as Aunt Malle" (168). This information implies that Amalie, despite her young age, is perhaps cleverer than her aunt, or contains knowledge that her aunt is not privy to. That she also sees sense in the song, which Aunt Malle does not, implies she has a special sort of knowledge. Andersen narrates: "A student came regularly to the house; he helped the brothers with their homework and he talked a great deal with little Amalie and her dolls" (168). This character arguably represents Andersen himself, who respects the playful nature of childhood and plays along: "Aunt Malle insisted that he didn't know how to treat children at all; their heads couldn't possibly take in all his ridiculous nonsense. But little Amalie's could; in fact, she learnt the whole of the student's ditty by heart and sang it to her three dolls" (168). Andersen appears to be making a critique of traditional instruction, which suggests that fantasy and the imagination are unsuitable for a child's education. This passage also critiques those early critics of Andersen's first collection of fairy tales, which deemed them unsuccessful because of their lack of didacticism.

In Andersen's story, however, fantasy and the child win: "Well, the dolls understood the song; little Amalie understood it; the student understood it too...Only Aunt Malle did not understand it – but then, she had climbed out of the country of childhood such a long time ago" (170). The tutor understands the song because he is young and playful; even the dolls understand, as they represent the sphere of fantasy and the imagination. Aunt Malle, because of her old age, is so separated from her own childhood, like Wordsworth, that she cannot appreciate the song or the imagination of childhood. This is positioned as a loss, a disposition and a flaw of Aunt Malle's, that she is so distanced from her own childhood that she cannot appreciate the innocence of her niece. Once again, childhood is positioned as a utopian state, an ideal.

But childhood innocence is an ideology, and not a truth of childhood. Jeanette Sky claims that: "Peasants, women and children were thought to be closer to nature. As they did not share the same position in culture, they were thought less civilized than the middle- and upper-class male" (365). Because of the belief in women's inferiority, and of the child's as well, these groups were considered to be closer to nature. The idea of the "noble savage" emerged because of the belief that certain peoples were naturally less civilized than others – an idea we now know to be scientifically false. Sky adds:

What the Romantics proposed in return was a literature that turned its back on reality and engaged in a religious and quasi-mythological sacralisation of child and imagination...As the *idea* of the child was more important for the Romantics than the real child itself the so-called liberation of children's literature should more precisely be understood as an aesthetic and religious *idealisation* of fantasy and imagination. What the Romantics bequeathed to the later nineteenth century was an image of the child as innocence

incarnated; it was a child written into a most prestigious religious dimension that it had not earlier belonged to – that of Paradise. (366)

Andersen, along with numerous other authors, subscribed to an ideology—not a truth of childhood. Warner claims that: “Children are perceived as innocent because they’re outside society, pre-historical, pre-social, instinctual, creatures of unreason, primitive, kin to unspoiled nature” (57). I would add that children are not really primitive, or outside of society, but that this, too, is an adult perception. Children are raised not only by their parents, but by their societies, by literature and the media. The idea that children are noble savages, pure and untainted by the corrupt adult world is one that adults subscribe to for a variety of reasons, the most prevalent being nostalgia. The literature, then, that is written for children under these ideological assumptions is aimed at prolonging and protecting “innocence,” despite the fact that innocence might not really exist. Are children truly as imaginative, oblivious and morally pure as Andersen’s characters are? That is, perhaps, a question for another study. What can be deduced, however, is that there is no definitive definition of childhood, and that will become clearer in the next chapter.

Chapter Two:

Hoffmann and The “Naughty” Child

Heinrich Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter* was originally published in Germany in 1845. Marina Warner describes it as “...one of the nastiest texts ever used to scare the naughtiness out of naughty children” (56). Numerous sources claim that Hoffmann wrote the collection of grotesquely humorous stories for his son Carl as a Christmas gift in 1844 (Zipes, 150, Sauer, 218). According to these sources, Hoffmann went looking for a book for his son, but was unsuccessful in finding one which taught the types of lessons he wanted to teach his son; he decided to write his own (Zipes, 150, Sauer, 220). The Afterword to the 1995 Dover Publications edition also discusses Hoffmann’s medical practice, and how he would tell stories to his child patients and “sketch pictures to go along with them” (33). Unlike Andersen’s first collection of fairy tales, Hoffmann’s collection enjoyed immediate success: “The first edition of fifteen hundred copies was sold out within four weeks” (Zipes, 151). Considering Andersen’s first collection of fairy tales were unpopular for their lack of didacticism, it is unsurprising that Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter* was an instant hit. By today’s standards, *Struwwelpeter* might come across as unnecessarily cruel, but in its own time, the stories and images were deemed appropriate and even comical. Zipes describes *Struwwelpeter* as “a funny manual of good sense” (152). He adds that: “Without pretension it tells children, especially middle-class children, in graphic detail exactly what will happen to them if they do not do as they are told” (152). *Struwwelpeter* is instructional, and the morality embedded into each story is rather clear and simple, but the tragic outcome which accompanies each story is meant both to shock and instill laughter: “More likely they will and did evoke smiles” (Zipes, 153).

Zipes highlights one of the problems with Hoffmann's text, however: "...it reveals a deadly process of dampening instinctual drives in the name of bourgeois civilization" (153). The lessons taught in many of Hoffmann's stories simply reinforce and promote normative social practices and gender roles, and establish a power relationship between parent and child where the parent is always right and the child is always wrong. Hoffmann's text is not unique in its approach to childhood; in fact, as highlighted in the previous chapter, the majority of educators and authors of children's literature agreed that didacticism was a vital aspect to the books intended for child audiences/readers. The idea that children were inherently naughty was not necessarily founded on idealization or Romantic ideals, like childhood innocence, but was embedded into European culture in a number of ways.

Heinrich Hoffmann himself had a rather different upbringing from Hans Christian Andersen, which might account for their different approaches to childhood and literature. He was born on June 13, 1809 in Frankfurt am Main (Zipes, 148), and: "his father, Philipp Jacob Hoffmann, was an architect and urban engineer who helped build the first modern sewage system in Frankfurt" (Zipes, 149). Hoffmann was raised in a middle-class family, mainly by his father; his mother passed away when he was only one-year-old (Zipes, 149). Andersen had a loving and nurturing mother, poor but supportive parents, and received a late education in comparison to other children. Hoffmann, on the other hand, was raised in a middle-class family, received a good education, and was taught bourgeois principles: "Typical in a well-to-do middle-class family were rules and regulations, and every minute of every day was planned. The young Hoffmann, though not a rebel, had difficulty complying with his father's directives, and he was not an especially good student" (Zipes, 149). This all changed, however, as the years went on, "and by 1829, when he was ready to attend the university in Heidelberg, he had become a

diligent student and a prudent aspiring member of bourgeois society” (Zipes, 149). Hoffmann’s father was successful in ironing out the devious behaviour in his son and instilling in him the bourgeois morality that he would pass on to his own son, and other children, through his stories.

For working and lower-class families, it was important for children to learn their roles. Responsibilities around the house were often gendered, but: “...any older child had to mind the younger ones at some point, and boys changed diapers and fed babies as well as watched toddlers” (Frost, 18). Because of the likelihood that working/lower class families had a great number of children to look after, the older children were expected to help out. As a result: “the oldest children of any family had the shortest childhood; not only did they act as babysitters, but they also went to work as quickly as possible to bring in more income” (Frost, 18). This did not mean that the younger children were able to indulge in the carelessness and imagination of Romantic childhood: “...all children had chores around the house as soon as they were able, fetching water, running errands, or helping do laundry” (Frost, 18). As children in these classes were expected to handle tasking responsibilities, more emphasis was placed in literature on promoting obedience rather than on entertainment.

Another reason why didacticism was considered important was the Christian view that children were born with Original Sin: “Original Sin holds up the spectre of innate human wickedness: whatever glosses theologians put on it, Christian children have been raised to believe that without divine help the species is bound for hell” (Warner, 56). In contrast with the Romantic belief that children are innately pure, the Christian theology holds that children are born bad, and need to be civilized. Because of this belief: “Parents also relied on religious training and repentance to impress on children the need for virtue” (Frost, 26). Parents assumed that children were naturally lacking morality, having been born sinners, and this is the type of

attitude that traditional didactic literature demonstrates. This did not only apply to the working/lower classes, but to the middle-class as well, for: “Well-off children did not face hunger or poverty, but many parents believed they should learn to deal with hardships without demur...Victorian parents believed they were teaching their children self-reliance and strength of character” (Frost, 26, 27). So in order for middle-class parents to teach their children morality, suffering had to be imposed on them in order to impress on them the virtues they were thought naturally to lack. Zipes adds that: “In the nineteenth century a general consensus had been reached, and the publication of books, texts, pictures, and other artifacts for children reflected a deep, enlightened belief that human beings could be molded, improved, and civilized” (155). Didactic literature was considered appropriate for children because it aimed to teach children traditional Christian morality, as well as the principles needed to equip children to take on traditional social and gendered roles in their societies.

Hoffmann begins his collection by telling a story which promotes the ostracization of those who do not follow bourgeois principles. One of these principles is keeping oneself clean and kempt, and making an effort to keep one’s appearance pleasing to the eye. In the opening story of the collection, entitled “Shock-Headed Peter”, the titular character is unruly:

Just look at him! There he stands,
With his nasty hair and hands.
See! his nails are never cut;
They are grim’d as black as soot;
And the sloven, I declare,
Never once has comb’d his hair;

Any thing to me is sweeter
Than to see Shock-headed Peter. (4).

Immediately, children are being taught a lesson, not only through the words, but through the imagery which accompanies the story.



Figure 1. Shock-Headed Peter's unruly appearance; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

The image of Shock-Headed Peter shows his unruly, large hair and unnaturally long finger nails, which are unattractive and suggest poor hygiene (see figure 1). Hoffmann's first story teaches children that boys and girls who do not conform to social norms become marginalized by their society.

Many of Hoffmann's stories are cautionary, warning children of the consequences of poor behaviour, or of deviance from societal conventions. In "The Story of Johnny Head-In-

Air”, Hoffmann teaches children to be aware of their surroundings and to pay attention to where they are headed—a simple and practical lesson which he does not sugar-coat. The story begins as follows:

As he trudg’d along to school,
It was always Johnny’s rule
To be looking at the sky
And the clouds that floated by;
But what just before him lay, In his way,
Jonny never thought about;
So that every one cried out—
“Look at little Johnny there,
Little Johnny Head-In-Air!” (23).

Hoffmann is trying to teach children about the importance of mental awareness, and how dreadful it can be if one does not look where one is going. This oblivion and foolishness gets Johnny into deep trouble:

Once, head as high as ever,
Johnny walk’d beside the river.
Johnny watch’d the swallows trying
Which was cleverest at flying[...]
So he strode on, only think!

To the river's very brink,
Where the bank was high and steep,
And the water very deep;
And the fishes, in a row,
Stared to see him coming so.
One step more! Oh! sad to tell!
Headlong in poor Johnny fell. (24)

Because Johnny is not looking where he was going, he falls in the river and almost drowns.

Luckily: "Two strong men had heard him cry;/ And, with sticks, these two strong men/ Hook'd poor Johnny out again" (25).

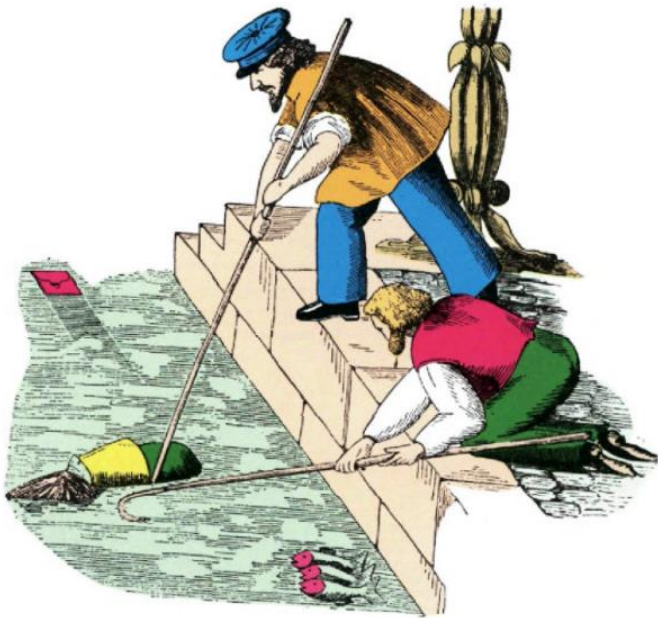


Figure 2. Two men fishing Johnny out of the water; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

The accompanying illustration, however, shows in detail the horrifying reality of drowning.

Johnny is face down in the water, floating on the surface, and this is an accurate representation of what it might look like if a child were really to drown (see figure 2). Johnny, while he does not die, learns a valuable lesson: “Wet all over, everywhere,/ Clothes, and arms, and face, and hair, Johnny never will forget/ What it is to be so wet” (25). While the consequences of this particular story are not as severe as some of the others in *Struwwelpeter*, there are still repercussions to his actions that Johnny must face. The message of this story, along with the majority of Hoffmann’s collection, is didactic; assuming that children need moral guidance, these stories aim to teach children, through allegory, proper life skills and the ability to tell right behaviour from wrong behaviour. Johnny allegorically represents the child reader, who is taught that, should they act as mindlessly as Johnny, they could also end up like him, or worse should they not be as lucky.

Another story which teaches similar social expectations is “The Story of Fidgety Phillip”. In this story, Hoffmann attempts to instruct children, particularly boys, about proper dinner-table behaviour. He begins by posing the question: “Let me see if Phillip can/ Be a little gentleman;/ Let me see, if he is able/ To sit still for once at table[...]

 (20). Not only is he unable to sit still, but his fidgeting is in direct defiance of his parent’s wishes: “Thus Papa bade Phil behave;/ And Mamma look’d very grave./ But fidgety Phil,/ He won’t sit still;/ He wriggles/ And giggles/ And then, I declare,/ Swings backwards and forwards/ And tilts up his chair,/ Just like any rocking horse;—” (20). Phillip, Hoffmann implies, is fidgety on purpose, as he even laughs as he fidgets and tilts his chair back. He is a disobedient child, and so he must learn his lesson:

See the naughty restless child

Growing still more rude and wild.

Till his chair falls over quite.
Phillip screams with all his might.
Catches at the cloth, but then
That makes matters worse again.
Down upon the ground they fall.
Glasses, plates, knives, forks and all.
How Mamma did fret and frown.
When she saw them tumbling down!
And Papa made such a face!
Philip is in sad disgrace. (21)

His actions not only affect himself, but his parents as well: “Table all so bare, and ah!/ Poor
Papa, and poor Mamma/ Look quite cross, and wonder how/ They shall make their dinner now”
(22).



Figure 3. Philip falls back in his chair and takes the dinner-table contents with him; Hoffmann, Heinrich.

Struwwelpeter. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

The illustration shows Philip covered by the table contents, and his parents looking frazzled and upset (see figure 3). The story ends without revealing how his parents punish him for his misbehaviour, but one clear way in which Philip will suffer is that he will not have any dinner.

Another story in the collection, “The Story of Cruel Frederick”, results in a similar outcome of a child going without its dinner. In this particular story, children are taught the consequences of being unkind to others. Frederick is a boy who is needlessly cruel to animals, but also to “his Mary” (5). He decides next to pick-on the dog, but this does not go as planned. Fred gets a taste of his own medicine, when the dog, Tray, retaliates and defends himself:

The trough was full, and faithful Tray
 Came out to drink one sultry day;
 He wagg’d his tail, and wet his lip,

When cruel Fred snatch'd up a whip,
And whipp'd poor Tray till he was sore,
And kick'd and whipp'd him more and more:
At this, good Tray grew very red,
And growl'd and bit him till he bled;
Then you should only have been by,
To see how Fred did scream and cry! (6)

The consequences are near dire: “So Frederick had to go to bed;/ His leg was very sore and red!/
The Doctor came and shook his head,/ And made a very great to-do,/ And gave him nasty physic
too” (7).

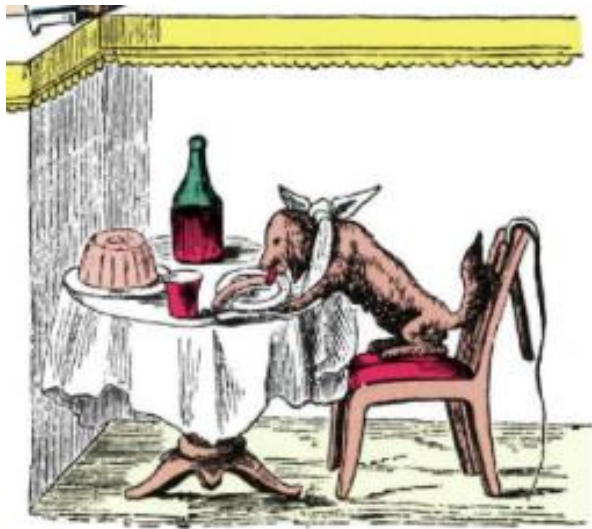


Figure 4. Dog happily eats the ill Frederick's dinner; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

Frederick is lucky to not have lost his life, as many children in this collection do, but he does lose something of importance: “But good dog Tray is happy now;/ He has no time to say ‘bow-

wow!'/ He seats himself in Frederick's chair/ And laughs to see the nice things there:/ The soup he swallows, sup by sup,—/ And eats the pies and puddings up." (7). The punishment for his poor behaviour is that he loses his dinner, and the dog happily eats his food instead (see figure 4).

Many of Hoffmann's stories center around food, which is not surprising considering how integral food consumption is to the growth and development of a child. Hunger was not a large concern for middle and upper-class families at the time, but for working class families it could prove difficult to keep their children well-nourished. According to Frost:

Breast milk was by far the most economic food, so mothers nursed children for at least six months and sometimes for two years... Mothers had the unenviable task of keeping the home and children clean, housed, and fed, on whatever portion of the husband's earnings he gave her. This was usually an immense struggle, involving hard work and much sacrifice; even at the end of the century, poor women in London had to keep their children fed and housed on around a pound a week, the barest subsistence for a large family (14).

It is unsurprising, then, how many of Hoffmann's stories not only center around food and eating, but on the consequences of disobeying mother's rules, since working-class mothers were tasked with keeping their children nourished and properly looked after. It is ironic, however, that the stories which feature disobedient children result in death, but the story about Frederick's savage cruelty to other beings simply results in the loss of his dinner. One should not overlook the importance of dinner, however, as is demonstrated in "The Story of Augustus Who Would Not Have Any Soup".

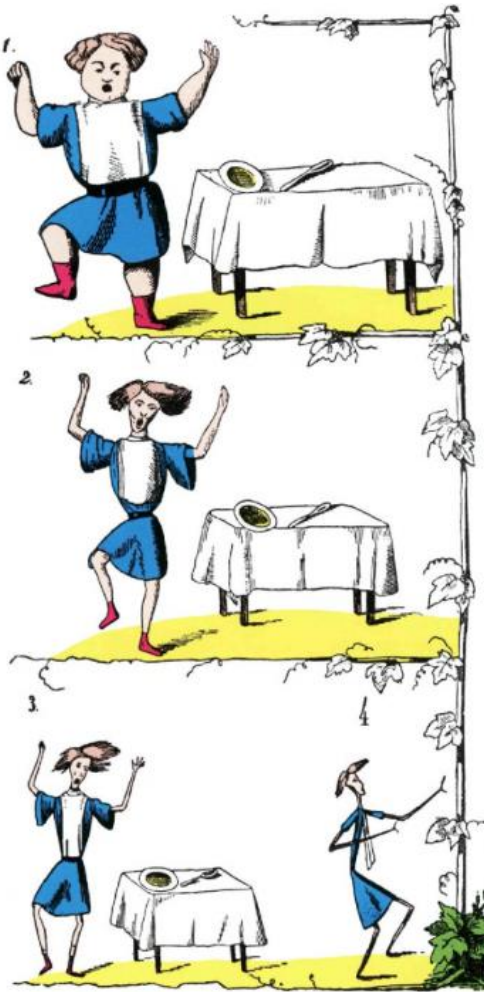


Figure 5. Augustus Gloop grows thinner and thinner as he refuses to eat his soup, like a good boy; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

In this story, Hoffmann reveals what happens to children who are stubborn and do not eat their meals. At the beginning of the story, Augustus is chubby and overweight, but his stubbornness quickly leads him down a disastrous path. At first, Augustus is obedient: “He ate and drank as he was told,/ And never let his soup get cold./ But one day, one cold winter’s day,/ He scream’d out – ‘Take the soup away!/ O take the nasty soup away!/ I won’t have any soup to-day.’” (19). Seemingly at random, Augustus decides to be disobedient and not eat his soup, as he is told. The story progresses: “Next day, now look, the picture shows/ How lank and lean

Augustus grows! Yet, though he feels so weak and ill, The naughty fellow cries out still—‘Not any soup for me, I say: O take the nasty soup away; I won’t have any soup to-day.’” (19) The accompanying illustrations show Augustus growing thinner and thinner, until there is no more of him (see figure 5). What is left is a grave, with a cross stone and a pot which reads “supper” (19, see figure 6), perhaps as a reminder of how he landed himself in the ground. The story reads:

“Look at him, now the fourth day’s come! He scarcely weighs a sugar-plum; He’s like a little bit of thread, And on the fifth day, he was—dead!” (19). The lesson this story teaches, therefore, is that if children are disobedient, there will be a consequence, and sometimes this consequence might be as severe as death. This is especially true in the case of the lower class, for a mother would be naturally anxious about feeding her children enough, since food was likely scarce.



Figure 6. Augustus’ grave, cross stone, and a reminder of how he died; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

Some modern readers might find the death in Hoffmann’s text controversial, gory or inappropriate for children. In the nineteenth-century, however, child mortality was rather common, despite the class in which the child came from. For the working-class, in Victorian England: “In poor districts of towns, 20 percent of babies died before the age of one, and 25 percent of children were gone by five years old. If a child survived past five, life expectancy

increased, and rural children were slightly better off in this regard” (Frost, 12). In Germany, infant and child mortality was also high, although this varied between regions (Fuchs, 45). So by suggesting to children that they do as they are told, and revealing the dreary possibilities if they should disobey, Hoffmann’s work may have helped prolong the lives of some readers. Of course, the lower-classes had a higher rate of hunger and poverty, but even middle and upper class children were at risk of death should they become ill: “When children fell ill, death was a real possibility, but most children were too young to be afraid. Instead, many rather enjoyed being sick, because they could lie in bed and get all their mothers’ attention” (Frost, 17). This was especially true for the lower/working class children, for only then did they receive their mothers’ undivided attention, for she was usually too busy to pay her children individual attention (Frost, 17). So perhaps didactic literature was the preferred type of literature for children because of the anxiety around child mortality and starvation.

Another story which teaches about the consequences of a disobedient action is “The Story of Little Suck-A-Thumb”. While this story does not result in death, there are certainly gory consequences to Conrad’s actions. While Augustus Gloop’s disobedience is implied, Conrad’s is plain, as he out-right goes against his mother’s wishes:

One day, Mamma said: ‘Conrad dear,
I must go out and leave you here.
But mind now, Conrad, what I say,
Don’t suck your thumb while I’m away.
The great tall tailor always comes
To little boys that suck their thumbs,

And ere they dream what he's about,
He takes his great sharp scissors out
And cuts their thumbs clean off,—and then,
You know, they never grow again (17).

Her instructions are clear, and not only does she flat-out forbid him from sucking his thumbs, but she warns him of the consequences in advance. This is the first story of the collection where a child is aware of the possible outcome to their disobedience, and in which they decide to misbehave anyway. Conrad wastes no time either, and as soon as his mother leaves he defies her: “Mamma had scarcely turn'd her back/ The thumb was in. Alack! Alack!” (17).

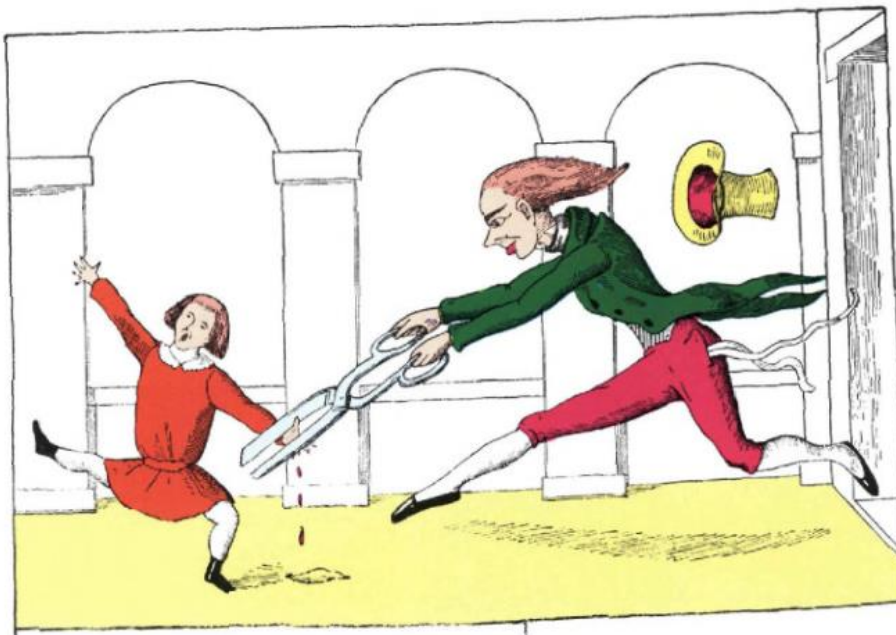


Figure 7. The great tall tailor rushes through door and cuts off the disobedient Conrad's thumb; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

Just as mother warned, the tailor comes and cuts off Conrad's thumbs: "The door flew open, in he ran,/ The great, long, red-legg'd scissor-man./ Oh! children, see! the tailor's come/ And caught out little Suck-a-Thumb" (18). Hoffmann's punishment seems rather arbitrary, since sucking one's thumb is not likely to have such a dramatic outcome. When it comes to consequences, Hoffmann's ideological orientation differs from that of Andersen's. Andersen is more passive, for the consequences in his story occur naturally, rather than being imposed on children by authority figures. Hoffmann, however, under the guise of drama and comedy, attempts to instill in children the fear that their misdeeds will result in punishment. The accompanying illustration does not sugar-coat the grotesqueness of this operation, as one can see drops of red blood dripping from Conrad's hand (see figure 7). The final illustration shows a melancholy Conrad standing straight, with his thumb-less hands placed in front of him (see figure 8). In the end, Conrad has lost not only his thumbs, but he has also lost his identity: "Mamma comes home; there Conrad stands./ And looks quite sad, and shows his hands,—/ 'Ah! said Mamma 'I knew he'd come/ To naughty little Suck-a-Thumb.'" (18). Not only is she not surprised that Conrad has disobeyed her, and stands before her thumb-less, but she now refers to him as "Suck-a-Thumb", a clear reminder of his transgression.

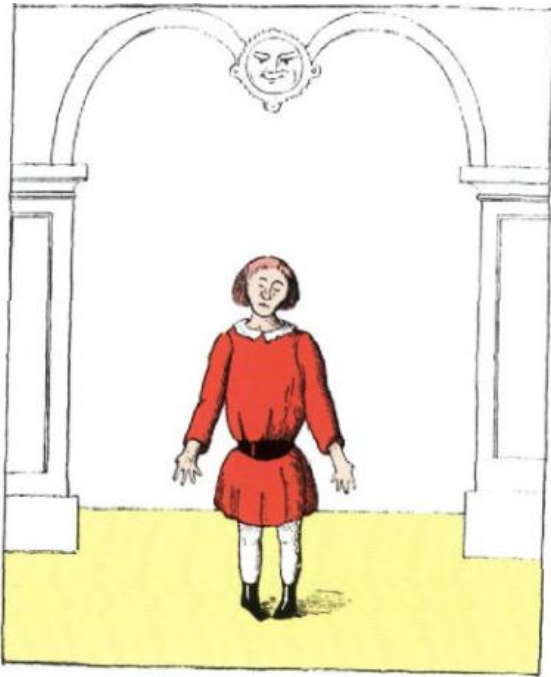


Figure 8. A thumb-less Conrad, looking discontent; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

The only story in *Struwwelpeter* about a girl, rather than a boy, also demonstrates the dire consequences of disobeying one's mother. In "The Dreadful Story About Harriet And The Matches", there are some important gendered characteristics to the story. As Zipes suggests: "Implicit in the book is that boys are much more unruly than girls. Typically, Pauline's frightful tale is a domestic tragedy. The girl burns herself to ashes in the house" (152). Zipes refers to Harriet as Pauline in this instance, as she is called in the original German text. Harriet's struggle is a domestic struggle, but it is also a struggle between adult and child. Just like Conrad, Harriet decides to disobey her mother's rules:

It almost makes me cry to tell

What foolish Harriet befell.

Mamma and Nurse went out one day
And left her all alone at play; Now, on the table close at hand,
A box of matches chanc'd to stand;
And kind Mamma and Nurse had told her,
That, if she touch'd them, they should scold her.
But Harriet said: 'O, what a Pity!
For, when they burn, it is so pretty;
They crackle so, and spit, and flame;
Mamma, too, often does the same.' (8).

Harriet cannot resist the urge to play with matches, despite her mother's warning. At the same time, however, Harriet's reasoning behind wanting to light matches is fairly innocent: she wants to imitate her mother. As a female, Harriet must attempt to emulate her mother, as girls in this society are taught that their place, like their mother's, is in the home. In a way, by doing as her mother does, Harriet is conforming to gender roles and is obeying societal rules.

On the other hand, Harriet is still a child, and children are supposed to do as they are told, according to the rules of society. Like many of the children in the book, Harriet has animal friends who attempt to help her: "The pussy-cats heard this,/ And they began to hiss,/ And stretch their claws/ And raise their paws;/ 'Me-ow,' they said, 'me-ow, me-o,/ You'll burn to death, if you do so.'" (8). Harriet does not heed their advice, however: "But Harriet would not take advice,/ She lit a match, it was so nice!/ It crackled so, it burn'd so clear,—/ Exactly like the picture here. She jump'd for joy and ran about/ And was too pleas'd to put it out" (8). Harriet has

now made numerous transgressions: she has disobeyed her mother, she has ignored the good advice of her animal friends, and she continues to lack good sense by not putting the match out. For her disobedience, Harriet is punished in the most gruesome of ways: “Aha see! Oh! What a dreadful thing!/ The fire has caught her apron-string; Her apron burns, her arms, her hair; She burns all over, everywhere” (9). The accompanying illustration shows Harriet, caught on fire, while her cat-friends look-on, frightened and shocked (see figure 9).



Figure 9. Harriet, on fire; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

Harriet is burned alive, a rather grotesque outcome to her curiosity: “So she was burnt, with all her clothes, And arms, and hands, and eyes, and nose;/ Till she had nothing more to lose/ Except her little scarlet shoes;/ And nothing else but these was found/ Among her ashes on the ground”

(9). Harriet is a curious child, and her disobedience differs in kind from the boys in the collection. Harriet is punished for her curiosity, and her desire to see a burning flame. The motive behind her actions is rather innocent, which reinforces the ideological belief that girls are more virtuous than boys. Ironically, her death is rather graphic in comparison to the other deaths in the story, as can be seen in the illustration (see figure 10).



Figure 10. Harriet, burnt to ashes, surrounded by the cats' tears. Only her red shoes remain; Hoffmann, Heinrich. *Struwwelpeter*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995. Ebook.

Reinforcing the notion that boys are naughtier than girls is “The Story Of The Inky Boys”, which reveals “racist overtones and yet seeks a creative way to curb racist attitudes” (Zipes, 162). To the modern reader, the way in which Hoffmann describes the young black boy likely seems overtly racist and morally wrong. It is important to read this text in its historical context, however, and to acknowledge how this story discourages bullying. Hoffmann begins: “As he had often done before,/ The woolly-headed black-a-moor/ One nice fine summer’s day went out/ To see the shops and walk about[...]

 (10). Clearly, there are tones of racism at work, and this type

of discriminatory description would not pass today as appropriate. Nonetheless, what is clear is that the black child is innocent, minding his own business and going about his day in peace. The white children are in the wrong when they begin to pick on him, solely because of the colour of his skin:

And as he found it hot, poor fellow,
He took with him his green umbrella.
Then Edward, little noisy wag,
Ran out and laugh'd, and wav'd his flag;
And William came in jacket trim
And brought his wooden hoop with him;
And Arthur, too, snatch'd up his toys
And join'd the other naughty boys;
So, one and all set up a roar
And laugh'd and hooted more and more,
And kept on singing,—only think!—
“Oh! Blacky, you're as black as ink.” (10).

These boys not only bully this child because he is black; they also disobey the warning of an adult:

Now tall Agrippa lived close by,—
So tall, he almost touch'd the sky;

He had a mighty inkstand too,
In which a great goose-feather grew;
He call'd out in an angry tone:
“Boys, leave the black-a-moor alone!
For if he tries with all his might,
He cannot change from black to white.”
But ah! They did not mind a bit
What great Agrippa said of it;
But went on laughing, as before,
And hooting at the black-a-moor.” (11)

Agrippa attempts to scorn the boys for their cruelty, but they do not listen and continue to bully the nameless black boy. Agrippa, while he has good intentions, also subscribes, however, to a racist mentality by suggesting that white skin is superior to black skin. By telling the boys that the black boy cannot help being black, he is reinforcing the problem in his society of white superiority and privilege. Nonetheless, Agrippa is the bringer of justice in this scenario:

Then great Agrippa foams with rage,
Look at him on this very page!
He seizes Arthur, seizes Ned,
Takes William by his little head;
And they may scream and kick and call.
Into the ink he dips them all;

Into the inkstand, one, two, three,
Till they are black, as black can be[...] (12).

Punishment for their poor behaviour is being turned “black” themselves, which in the modern context is still controversial. Suggesting that being black is a punishment, and is something to detest and be ashamed of is problematic. At the same time, however, the boys are stripped of their white privilege, and their ability to make fun of others for their differences is taken from them, if not permanently then at least temporarily. Hoffmann suggests to children through this story that bullying others, even those who are considered “inferior” because they look different, is wrong, and that bourgeois society does not condone this type of behaviour.

Like childhood innocence, inherent naughtiness in children is an ideology. The idea that children are inherently naughty or uncivilized simply suggests that bourgeois principles must be taught and learned. In other words, social norms, gender roles, and hierarchies based on gender and race are social constructions, and depending on the society these norms and standards might change. Even in today’s Western society, while gender stereotypes and racism still exist, there has been a lot of progress in recent years towards a more inclusive and equitable society. The types of literature aimed at the child reader take racial diversity, gender fluidity and economic differences into consideration. What has not completely changed or evolved, however, is the way childhood is perceived. There are still authors who prescribe to the notion of childhood innocence, or authors who believe children must be taught morality or a specific set of virtues. In the next chapter, I will address contemporary literature which adheres to these ideologies.

Chapter Three:

Myths of Childhood in the Contemporary Western World

In this chapter, I discuss two contemporary texts which engage with the concepts of childhood innocence and inherent naughtiness. Both ideologies are dominant in today's society, although in the Western world, childhood innocence is held as the ideal. The fear of keeping children innocent is still alive, as can be evidenced in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2008) and Alvin Schwartz' *In A Dark, Dark Room and Other Scary Stories* (1984). Children are assumed to be naturally innocent, or good at heart, and any deviance from this is the result of a healthy curiosity or understandable frustration. Marina Warner claims that: "In the very midst of consecrating innocence, the modern mythology of childhood ascribes to children a specially rampant natural appetite for all kinds of transgressive pleasures, including above all the sadomasochistic thrills of fear" (52). As modern literature for children depicts the different circumstances children might find themselves in, the literature of today attempts to reflect the psychological process of growing up. Naughty children are also treated as "innocent" at heart, suggesting their bad behaviour is a result of poor circumstances and psychological trauma, rather than an inherent tendency towards naughtiness.

Both texts establish the idea that children enjoy the grotesque. Schwartz' text contains pictures and imagery, like Hoffmann's work, involving death, ghosts and graveyards, but does not teach a clear didactic lesson or moral. Rather, both Gaiman's and Schwartz' texts use the grotesque to teach children about death in a way that differs from Andersen and Hoffmann's works. As childhood mortality is much less common, death is taught as a distant reality, and not necessarily as a consequence. The line between the naughty and innocent child is blurred, as

individual children often exhibit both traits in contemporary literature. Lurie claims that “Children... often like books that anxious adults would consider scary or immoral or both—books in which creepy things happen and there is often no poetic or any other justice” (xii). That children like reading material of a “transgressive” nature once again suggests that innocence is an idea enforced by adults, since some children naturally enjoy subject matter that they are not “supposed to”. As Warner puts it, “[...]it is also difficult to grasp how innocence would show itself without adults to influence it” (49). Texts like Gaiman’s and Schwartz’ combine the otherwise forbidden pleasures of the grotesque with the adult approved life lessons which are so often a part of children’s literature.

Didacticism is not as relevant today or as cherished in children’s literature, but this is not to say that today’s literature does not contain morals or lessons. Rather, children’s literature focuses on teaching basic human morality, rather than religious virtues, and aims to build a child’s sense of self-worth. As all young children are granted the opportunity to attend school in the Western world, literature is a vital tool in which children learn reading skills, as well as the norms of their society. Although social expectations, gender distinctions and class differences have evolved and changed over time, there are still old fashioned ideas about childhood being generated in contemporary literature.

Alvin Schwartz’ *In A Dark, Dark Room and Other Scary Stories* is a picture book, which, according to Nodelman, implies that the text “is intended for the least experienced of audiences” (128). Given that the book is intended for very young children, it might seem inappropriate that many of the stories deal with death, ghosts and fear inducing experiences. The stories themselves might not scare on their own, but paired with the much more suggestive pictures, the book can

indeed produce fear for the purpose of fun, rather than instruction. The Foreword to Schwartz' text reads as follows:

Most of us like scary stories
because we *like* feeling scared.
When there is no real danger,
feeling scared is fun.
The best times for these stories is at night—
in front of a fire or in the dark.
Tell them s-l-o-w-l-y
and quietly,
and everyone will have a good time. (9)

Children are not shamed for their interest in scary stories, nor are they judged to be naughty or bad for this morbid interest. On the contrary, an interest in spooky content is an innocent pleasure, as long as there is no real danger at hand. This is a drastic difference to the opening of Hoffmann's collection of stories, which tells children of bourgeois social expectations. Schwartz does not intend to scare children or to warn them of the dreary consequences of poor behaviour, and unlike Hoffmann, his work is not didactic. In fact, the only story in the collection which has any indication of a possible repercussion is the first story, entitled "The Teeth". The story reads as follows:

I was hurrying home in the dark
when I saw a man
walking toward me.
“Do you know what time it is”
I asked.

The man lit a match
to look at his watch.

“It is eight o’clock,” he said.

Then he grinned at me.

His teeth were three inches long!

When I saw them, I ran. (11,12)

The boy encounters two more mysterious men who enquire as to why he is running, and each man reveals longer, more terrifying teeth than the last. The story closes with boy’s narration: “I took one look, and I ran all the way home” (12, 17). If there is a moral to this story, it would be that a child walking alone out in the world can be scary. The adults in the story seemingly pose no real threat, however, for they do not actually harm the boy. As the danger is all in the boy’s mind, the possibility of this story teaching a lesson is weakened. The boy’s already present fear of long teeth appears to be the cause for his fright, since the men do not threaten or run after him.

The story itself suggests that the boy has a fearful experience, but the pictures are what might induce fear in potential readers. Nodelman claims that:

The implication is that children themselves, not having yet learned the supposedly counterproductive sophistication that leads adults to view pictures only in terms of their potential to convey information, are automatically in possession of innocent eyes, automatically capable of taking spontaneous delight in the colours and textures of pictures” (130).

Nodelman suggests that children view with innocent eyes, and the fact that Schwartz’ stories do not contain didacticism implies that the pictures, as well as the stories, are meant for pleasure and entertainment. To take this idea one step further, Schwartz’ text implies that children are innocent, and therefore there is no need to teach lessons about poor behaviour. There is no cause for parents to worry about this material influencing rebelliousness in young readers, since the readers in this case are assumed to be innocent, and untarnished by adult corruptness.

Like Andersen’s stories, Schwartz’ stories teach practical lessons about life, rather than morals or social expectations. In “In the Graveyard”, Schwartz introduces the subject of death, not as a consequence, but as something which happens to everyone in their due time:

A woman in a graveyard sat.

Ooooh!

Very short and very fat.

Ooooh!

She saw three corpses carried in.

Ooooh!

Very tall and very thin.

Ooooh!

To the corpses, the woman said,

“Will I be like you

when I am dead?

Ooooh!

To the woman, the corpses said,

“You will be like us

when you are dead.”

Ooooh!

To the corpses, the woman said,

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!” (18-23)

The woman is frightened by the thought of dying, but as the corpses inform her, she will inevitably die one day and be as they are. There is no warning, nor is there a lesson. The only messages are that death is part of life, death looks the same in everyone, and that it is normal to fear death. Death is also sugar-coated in this story, since the corpses are animated and able to talk. Death in literature for children rarely truly resembles death in real life, as is also the case in Gaiman's text.

Many of the stories in Schwartz' collection contain ghosts, including the ghosts of dead children, as in "The Night It Rained". While on the one hand, this collection does not sugar-coat the reality that children sometimes die, Schwartz does not make death look frightening or permanent. This story is narrated from the perspective of the adult, who sees the young boy on the street: "It was late at night./ I was driving past the cemetery when I saw a boy/ standing in the rain./ 'Do you want a ride home?' I asked. 'Yes, please,' he said." (43). The man is a helpful adult ally, who also offers the boy his sweater to keep warm:

"It is cold tonight," I said,

"and you are wet.

You had better put this on."

After that, we did not talk.

When we stopped at his house,

I said,

"Keep the sweater.

I will get it tomorrow.

What is your name?"

“Jim,” he said.

“Thanks for the ride.” (44, 45).

Realistically, children are most likely discouraged from taking rides from seemingly helpful and concerned strangers, but in the context of this story, there is no danger to fear. When he returns the next day, as promised, he discovers that something is not right:

“Is Jim at home?” I asked.

“I have come
to pick up my sweater.”

She looked at me
in a strange way.

“It must have been another boy,”
she said.

“Jim is our son.

But he has been dead for almost a year.

He is buried in the cemetery.” (47).

The man realizes that the boy from the night before, Jim, is not alive. For a ghost, Jim is rather harmless, and the frightening aspect to his story comes from knowing that the man does not know he is in the presence of a dead boy. In children’s literature, the ghosts of children tend to be innocent, and this is reinforced by Jim’s final action: “The next morning/ I went to the cemetery./ I wanted to see Jim’s grave./ Lying across the grave/ was my sweater.” (48) Jim did a

good deed by returning the man's sweater, indicating that this ghost is not harmful or threatening.

In Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, the protagonist of the novel is a young boy who is raised with the dead, and therefore does not fear death at all. Lurie points out that "Today, what many authorities in the field seem to prefer are stories in which children are helped by and learn from grown-ups" (xi). As the literature distributed to children is controlled by adults, it follows logically that adult/child power dynamics are a major topic in the field of children's literature. Although Bod is a smart and resourceful boy, he relies heavily on adults to teach him, to care for him, and to protect him. Bod's dependence on adult care reinforces his "innocence", since without knowledgeable adults, he could and does land himself in danger. His ignorance of the outside world is due to the fact that his family's murderer is still out there, looking for him. Ironically, he is raised to feel comfortable with death, yet his authority figures shelter him from the knowledge of his birth family's death. Bod is a curious boy, however, and Gaiman reveals the frustration some children must feel when adults refrain from sharing knowledge:

He was, for the most part, obedient. He learned how to talk, and once he had learned, he would pester the graveyard folk with questions. 'Why amn't I allowed out of the graveyard?' he would ask...The adults would do their best to answer his questions, but their answers were often vague, or confusing, or contradictory... (36, 37).

The adults in the graveyard likely do not tell Bod why he cannot leave the graveyard because his killer is out in the world, and attempting to shelter Bod from this harsh truth seems like the right

thing to do. His authority figures sugar-coat the reality of his situation, and even Silas, who does answer Bod's questions, evades the full truth:

His guardian could always be counted upon to explain matters clearly and lucidly and as simply as Bod needed in order to understand. "You aren't allowed out of the graveyard...because it's only in the graveyard that we can keep you safe" (37).

Bod is told what he already knows: that he must stay in the graveyard because he is safe there. He is not told why he is unsafe, however, in the outside world, and does not learn this until he is much older. On the subject of childhood innocence, Warner claims that "Grown-ups want [children] to stay like that for their sakes, not the children's, and they want children to be simple enough to believe in fairies too, again, for humanity's sake on the whole..." (54). In other words, because adults expect children to represent humankind's humanity, as touched upon in Chapter One, they, in retrospect, prolong and reinforce children's innocence by keeping them in the dark.

Innocence is complicated, however, in postmodern literature. While Bod is "innocent" in the sense that he is ignorant about the world, he is also "naughty" because his curiosity leads him to disobey his parents. In today's literature, children are taught to listen to and obey authority, but those children who disobey are not always punished for their transgressions. On the contrary, if a child is lead by an innocent curiosity, then their transgressions are often forgiven. In Gaiman's text, the moments in which Bod disobeys the rules imposed by his authority figures are driven by his desire to know more about the world, his past and his own identity. Much like the Romantic movement of the eighteenth-century, children's literature in the modern Western world focuses inward, and much emphasis is placed on finding one's sense of self. Time is spent on a

child's psychological and emotional development, and real life problems, such as divorce, a death in the family, racial issues etc... are included in today's literature in order to greater represent real children's lives.

Although children in today's literature are often aided by a host of helpful adults, parents are often absent. Bod has his adoptive parents, but his birth parents are murdered at the beginning of the novel, rendering him an orphan. He is the only living boy in the graveyard, and although he is cared for by the Owens', Bod is still very much on his own. Warner points out that:

Bettelheim affirmed the therapeutic value of struggle and horror for the growing child, arguing that as a small, vulnerable creature suffering from adults' tyranny, it was very helpful to read about other small vulnerable creatures, like Cinderella or Tom Thumb, who survived—or better still, won through against all adversity (51).

Warner claims that children in literature are independent and strong, and especially with the help of adult allies, these children defeat their obstacles. Bod is taught to defend himself. He is taught to haunt, to "fade" and all the other gifts that are granted to the dead, and not the living. But Bod is curious, and he is unsatisfied with the vagueness of the answers the adults give him. Because he does not understand the danger of leaving the graveyard, he breaks this rule for the first time for a very innocent reason: to help a friend.

Before Bod meets Liza, he is told not to enter unconsecrated ground:

“They say there’s a witch in uncons—unconsecrated ground,” he said. “Yes, dear. But you don’t want to go over there.” “Why not?” Miss Borrowes smiled the guileless smile of the dead. “They aren’t our sort of people,” she said. “But it *is* the graveyard, isn’t it? I mean, I’m allowed to go there if I want to?” “That,” said Miss Borrowes, “would not be advisable.” (106)

Bod decides to go there anyway, because, as Gaiman narrates: “Bod was obedient, but curious, so, when lessons were done for the night, he walked past Harrison Westwood, Baker, and family’s memorial[...] and looked down at the Potter’s Field below him[...]” (106, 107). When Bod meets the “witch,” she is not as expected. At first, he expects her to be a “traditional” witch, or to possess the image of witchery that dominates the media: “He wondered whether the witch would be old and iron-toothed and travel in a house on chicken legs, or whether she would be thin and sharp-nosed and carry a broomstick” (107). Instead, he finds a girl: “She was older than him, but not a grown-up, and she looked neither friendly nor unfriendly. Wary, mostly. She had a face that was intelligent and not even a little bit beautiful” (109). When he learns of her misfortune, and the unfair execution she endured, he begins to feel sorry that she does not even have a tombstone with her name on it, and so he embarks on his first venture out of the graveyard in order to get her one.

Bod leaves the graveyard without thinking of the rule he is breaking: “He was eight years old, and the world beyond the graveyard held no terrors for him...His heart pounding, Bod walked out into the world...I need something for a friend of mine,’ said the boy. ‘And I thought maybe you could buy something I’ve got.’” (119-121). The first half of the passage indicates that Bod, because of his young age, has a naïve sense of bravery, for he does not know of the dangers

he is about to encounter. Abanazer Bolger, the store owner, locks Bod in the storeroom and questions him about the origin of the mysterious item he attempts to pawn. (122, 123). His intentions are pure and kind, but he lands himself in grave danger, despite his innocent goal:

Bod realized that he was trapped when he heard the lock turn in the door. He pulled on the door, but it held fast. He felt stupid for having been lured inside, foolish for not trusting his first impulses, to get as far away from the sourfaced man as possible. He had broken all the rules of the graveyard, and everything had gone wrong. What would Silas say? Or the Owensens? (125).

Bod realizes that perhaps the rules of the graveyard are in place for a reason, and through this lesson the idea that adults know best is reinforced and strengthened. He is a disobedient child, but this does not make him an inherently bad child. Bod does escape however, with the help of his ghost friend Liza, and the consequences for his actions are as follows:

Mr. and Mrs. Owens had died several hundred years before it had been decided that beating children was wrong and Mr. Owens had, regretfully, that night, done what he saw as his duty, and Bod's bottom stung like anything. Still, the look of worry on Mrs. Owen's face had hurt Bod worse than any beating could have done. (141).

Like Hoffmann, Gaiman does not stray from inflicting physical violence as punishment on his child characters. What is interesting, however, is that the disappointment his mother feels is a deeper punishment in Bod's eyes. Bod knows that his mother expects better behaviour from him,

perhaps because she expects Bod to behave innocently. But childhood innocence, as already established earlier in this thesis, is a social construct, and Mrs. Owen's happiness is dependent on how well Bod is able to conform to her idea of the perfect child. At times, he finds conformity rather difficult.

Another time Bod misbehaves, he does so in order to teach a pair of school bullies a lesson. Once again, his motives are rather pure, further complicating the line between innocence and naughtiness. Bod believes he has a better sense of right and wrong than his two schoolmates, and uses his supernatural abilities to scare them into submission. This sounds familiar, and eerily like Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*. After Bod teaches his classmates to stand up to the two bullies, Mo and Nick, they confront him: "'You got to the seventh formers.' 'So we're going to teach you a lesson,'" said Nick Farthing, and he smiled without humour... 'You're missing the point, I'm afraid. You two need to stop this. Stop behaving like other people don't matter. Stop hurting people.'" (187). He tries to reason with the bullies, but this does not work: "Mo grinned a sharp grin. 'For heaven's sake, she said to Nick. 'Hit him.' 'I gave you a chance,' said Bod. Nick swung a vicious fist at Bod, who was no longer there, and Nick's fist slammed into the side of the gravestone" (188). As Bod lures them into the graveyard, where his powers have the most effect, he is able to fade away, leaving the two bullies stranded and frightened. Bod's attempt to prevent them from bullying the other children is unsuccessful, however, and so he resorts to haunting their dreams, or "Dreamwalking" (190).

Amabella Persson, a ghost in the graveyard, suggests the idea of Dreamwalking to Bod (190). Before he goes ahead with it, however, he once again breaks the rule of leaving the graveyard alone:

He wondered if he had made a mistake, getting involved. He had made a mis-step in judgement, that was for certain. Mo and Nick had begun to talk about him, probably the year sevens had as well. Other kids were looking at him, pointing him out to each other. He was becoming a presence, rather than an absence, and that made him uncomfortable. Silas had warned him to keep a low profile, told him to go through school partly Faded, but everything was changing. (192, 193).

Bod has not done as his guardian has instructed, and so Silas is disappointed: “I cannot believe[...]that you could have been so...so stupid. Everything I told you about remaining just this side of invisibility. And now you’ve become the talk of the school?” (193). Silas’ punishment is Bod’s withdrawal from school. Bod is now at the age, however, where he is beginning to challenge his authority figures. As an adolescent, he is beginning to gain a sense of independence, and no longer unquestioningly allows his guardian to tell him what to do:

“You will do as you are told, boy,” said Silas, a knot of velvet anger in the darkness. “Or what?” said Bod, his cheeks burning. “What would you do to keep me here? *Kill* me?” And he turned on his heel and began to walk down the path that led to the gates out of the graveyard. (194)

Bod is now beginning to challenge the power dynamic between himself and the adults in his life. In contemporary society, there is now a middle-ground, or a stage of life in between childhood and adulthood, which both combines aspects of both age groups and further divides them:

adolescence. Not quite a child, but not quite an adult yet either, Bod struggles for the power to make his own decisions. And once again, his defiance gets him into trouble.

After he Dreamwalks in Nick's dream, Mo sees Bod and calls her uncle, the policeman: "Mo Quilling got out of the car, and looked at Bod, and smiled. 'That's him,' she said. 'He was in our back garden breaking things. And then he ran way[...]" (199). Silas has to then save Bod from his own mistake: "Silas was sprawled on his back, on the ground, where the car had knocked him. He was deathly still. Bod's eyes prickled. He said, 'Dad?' Then he said, 'You killed him!' He wasn't lying, he told himself—not really" (203). This passage sends a mixed message to potential readers; on the one hand, Silas and Bod are being dishonest, but on the other hand, they are being authentic. Robert T. Tally Jr. suggests in his article *Nobody's Home* that "In the existentialist lexicon, *authenticity* names the attitude in which you act in accordance with your own self, rather than in accordance with what others similarly situated might do" (176). He goes on to suggest that "By being someone whom nobody owns, by taking ownership of his own being, Bod demonstrates his fully realized sense of self, with the freedom and self-determination that Sartre had insisted were the hallmarks of his philosophy" (180). By following his own inner moral compass, and by absolving himself of any guilt, he is asserting his sense of self. He remains an innocent, despite his transgressions, because he believes himself to be acting morally. In addition, that Silas ends up rescuing Bod in the end from the consequences of his own behaviour, reinforces the idea that adolescents still need an authoritative presence to protect them.

That children often act out against the chaos of the adult world in literature reinforces the idea of childhood innocence. The realm of childhood is superior, more authentic and moral than the adult world, and so the rules imposed by adults sometimes need to be broken. As Wade

Newhouse suggests, stories are presented from the child's point of view, rather than from the adult perspective:

[...]stories of growing up and stories of hauntings focus on how the protagonist confronts a system of rules and social norms. The 'self' that both genres hope to reveal at the end is visible, in fact, almost entirely through the main character's troubled relationship with what *other* people expect of them and how they react to those constraints. (114)

As Bod constantly disobeys authority and leaves the graveyard on numerous occasions, he reveals his frustration with the lack of control he has over his own life. This is something child reader's might be able to identify with, since the story is told from the perspective of the child rather than the author. Bod constantly disappoints his parents and guardian by putting himself in danger, but his motives are pure. He hopes to achieve positive results with his transgressions, by making those around him better people. So at the same time that he misbehaves, he functions rather innocently. On the other hand, he does land himself in dangerous situations, and he is constantly being saved by Silas.

Bod is not completely innocent, or the most innocent character in the text, however. Since his upbringing is unique, and he is surrounded by death, he is not one to shy away from danger. When he runs into his old friend Scarlett, she proves incapable of handling the darkness of Bod's life and situation with the man Jack, his family's murderer. Bod defeats the man Jack and his accomplices with bravery, but Scarlett is unable to handle the danger: "She was scared: scared of nice Mr. Frost and his scarier friends; scared of this room and its memories; even, if she were honest, a little afraid of Bod[...]" (276). This description of

Scarlett's thought process is rather childish for a fifteen-year-old girl, as she longs for her mother. Her inability to understand Bod's actions suggests that she is much more sheltered about the world than he is:

“So you knew. That the Sleer would take him. Was *that* why you hid me down here? Was it? What was I, then, *bait*?”[...] “Look, it's okay. I dealt with them.” Scarlett took a step away from him. She said, “You aren't a person. People don't behave like you. You're as bad as he was. You're a monster.” (286)

Gaiman seems to be working under a former ideology which dictates that women are more innocent than men. Just like Gerda in Andersen's *The Snow Queen* is the true innocent child in the story, Scarlett is unable to handle violence and murder like Bod is. Even the thought of acting in self-defence proves too much for her to handle. The only way to help her, according to Silas, is to wipe her memory clean of the entire night's events, and to remove her memory of Bod and the graveyard as well:

“I am afraid you do Bod an injustice. But you will undoubtedly be happier if you remember none of this. So let us walk together, you and I, and discuss what has happened to you over the last few days, and what it might be wise for you to remember, and what it might be better for you to forget” (287).

Scarlett and her mother end up moving back to Glasgow, and Bod never hears from her again (288).

This is not the only time in the book where women are presented as being more innocent and fragile than men. During the text's "interlude" entitled "The Convocation", the meeting of the Jack of all Trades is described as such: "Truthfully, if you were to look at the inhabitants of the Washington Room that night, you would have no clearer idea of what was happening, although a rapid glance would tell you that there were no women in there" (166). Women are excluded from things having to do with violence and danger, as evidenced by the lack of women involved in the Jack's meeting and by Scarlett's lack of courage. Women are portrayed as the nurturers, the frail and the domestic. The only female character who bends gender roles is Miss Lupescu, the werewolf woman who helps care for Bod.

Traditionally, werewolves are thought to allegorically represent the experience of undergoing male puberty. That Miss Lupescu is an adult female who is also a werewolf subverts the traditional female roles embraced by the other women in the text, but the domestic model of femininity nonetheless dominates. Bod's ghost mother is depicted as purely domestic, as an "angel of the house", who is a natural mother, even to a baby who is not her child: "'Protect my son!' said the ghost, and Mrs. Owens thought it was a woman. Of course, the babe's mother". (15). Bod's birth mother reaches out to Mrs. Owens, asking her to care for her son. This reinforces the mother's bond with her children, since Bod's mother does not reach out to Mr. Owens, but calls on a fellow woman. When Mrs. Owens is challenged about her wish to raise a living child, Mr. Owens reiterates that: "She sees it as doing her duty" (21). Women striving in domestic roles can be seen many times in Gaiman's text. Even Miss Lupescu prepares food for Bod, which he is fussy about: "'You eat one more piece.' 'I can't.' 'You eat one more piece now, or you stay here until you have eaten it all'" (69). She is responsible for feeding and disciplining him when Silas is gone, and yet her methods are much more parental and mothering than his

own. She provides him with home-cooked meals, and grows warm towards him: “She had even taken him to a football match, as Silas had promised that she would, but she had gone back to the place she called ‘The Old Country’ after squeezing Bod’s cheeks and calling him *Nimeni*, which had become her pet name for him” (211). Silas, his true guardian, is much more distant with Bod than this. Women are presented as the natural nurturers of children in Gaiman’s text, which reinforces the idea that the concepts of innocence, childhood, and womanhood are interconnected.

As is common in traditional boyhood adventure stories, Bod is expected to outgrow his childhood innocence as quickly as possible, once he reaches adolescence. Like Mowgli in Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* (1894), Bod is expected to leave the comfort of his home and embark on his own adventure, as a young man. McStotts claims that: “Both Mowgli and Bod are orphaned by attackers, one a tiger, the other an otherworldly assassin. Both are adopted by dedicated parents, educated by devoted tutors, and destined to return to their original worlds” (68). When Bod returns to his original world, he is only fifteen years old, one year younger than Scarlett is when she returns to Glasgow with her mother. Bod’s time in the graveyard comes to a close because he is no longer in danger. After Bod defeats the Jacks, and Bod’s ability to see the ghosts in the graveyard begins to disappear, Silas informs him it is time for him to leave:

“This is for you. Take it.” Bod took the wallet, but did not open it. “It contains money.

Enough to give you a start in the world, but nothing more[...] You have a passport in the inner pocket of your suitcase. It’s made out in the name of Nobody Owens. And it was not easy to obtain.” (303, 304).

Not only is Bod expected to leave home permanently at such a young age, but unlike Scarlett, he is trusted to manage on his own. Bod, at first, is apprehensive about leaving his home: “‘If I change my mind can I come back here?’ And then he answered his own question. ‘If I come back, it will be a place, but it won’t be home any longer.’” (304). Bod’s freedom of the graveyard is revoked, since he is no longer in mortal danger. His family cannot be his family anymore either, since they are part of the graveyard, and he is reminded once and for all that he is alone in the world of the living. Being alone no longer frightens him, however, since his experience with the Jacks has transformed him from a scared child into a confident young man.

Before Bod leaves, he encounters his mother. As Scarlett yearned for her mother, Bod attempts to embrace his: “He tried to put his arms around his mother then, as he had when he was a child, although he might as well have been trying to hold mist, for he was alone on the path” (307). His mother cannot join him on his adventure out into the world, because as a young man he is expected to leave the domestic realm behind. That this happens to Bod when he is still rather young is not unusual when compared to nineteenth century boy’s adventure novels such as Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) and J.M. Barrie’s *Peter in Kensington Gardens* (1906). The similarity of *The Graveyard Book* to other male adventure stories reveals that gender distinctions still exist when it comes to the concept of childhood innocence in today’s society.

Childhood, as can be evidenced from analyzing the literature of today, is difficult to define. The two common ideologies appear to be binaries: either children are good or they are bad. In the contemporary world, however, these concepts are not so clearly divided. Children are thought to be pure and innocent, but they have the tendency to disobey authority. Unlike in previous years, however, a child who breaks the rules does not necessarily deserve severe

punishment, nor are they completely “naughty” either. The subject matter to which children are exposed involves death, ghosts, and things of the kind that would normally be censored. Today, however, it is part of the cult of innocence to assume that children enjoy transgressive material, but that this material will not simultaneously corrupt the child’s mind. On the other hand, however, that children do enjoy transgressive subject matter indicates once and for all that innocence is an ideology and not necessarily an innate truth, since the opposite approach of censorship and secretiveness can be frustrating and lead to rebellion. Rebellious children are not necessarily inherently bad, but might be struggling with their psychological development, power struggles with adults, or curiosity about a world they are sheltered from. The question which I will further address in the Conclusion is whether or not the concepts of childhood innocence and naughtiness are good for society, or if they hinder or inhibit society and the children of the Western world.

Conclusion

In 2015, the Toronto District School Board revised their health and physical education curriculum for grades one through eight (Jones, 2015). This new lesson plan aimed at providing children with a more honest and informed education about sex and the human body. For example:

The re-introduced sex ed curriculum will teach kids about homosexuality and same-sex marriages in Grade 3, encourage discussions about puberty, including masturbation, in Grade 6, and talk about preventing sexually transmitted diseases in Grade 7, which could include information on oral and anal sex. (Jones, 2015).

Many were outraged by the new curriculum's aim to educate younger children about sex, sexual orientation, and the human body. The reasoning behind this outrage was that many were afraid this new information would corrupt children or take away their innocence. The Canadian Press claimed that "Many parents object to the updated curriculum based on religious grounds. Opponents argue that the new program, which will teach students about concepts including gender identity, sexual orientation and masturbation, does not mesh with their values and is inappropriate for school-age children" (2015). Parents also rebelled against the new curriculum at first; for example, on May 5, 2015, "The Toronto District School Board, Ontario's largest, said elementary school absences increased by 144 per cent yesterday compared to Monday of the previous week. And at least one elementary school in midtown Toronto, Thorncliffe Park Public, had an absentee rate of more than 90 per cent" (The Canadian Press, 2015). Many thought it was

dangerous to teach children the details about sex at such a young age, and fought to keep their children innocent, claiming that it was best to “let kids be kids”.

This is a recent example of how society holds childhood sacred and valuable, and how the didactic mentality and innocent mentality conflict with one another. There are numerous other ways in which adults differ on how to raise and educate children; every year, when the holidays come around, adults of the Western world experience widespread anxiety over the thought of someone revealing to their children that Santa Claus does not really exist. But by keeping children in the dark about the realities of the world, adults are helping to shape their children as innocent. It is difficult to know whether children are inherently innocent, or if they are innocent because parents insist on keeping them in a state of ignorance for their benefit. Arguably, as Gaiman’s text suggests, by keeping children in the dark, adults make it easier for children to become naughty and rebellious, since their curiosity will lead them to discover what their parents attempt to hide from them, for the sake of their “innocence”. The Toronto District School Board’s aim with their new curriculum was to equip children with important information that could help prevent numerous individual and societal problems. Unfortunately, parents and educators sometimes clash over how children should be viewed and educated.

Where do these ideologies come from, however? I have already discussed the historical context in depth throughout this project, but what causes adults to invest in such ideas to begin with? Marina Warner claims that:

Adults applaud their loyalty to the world of pretend and children follow. The statement of faith in fairies signals collusion with Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up—it affirms the

connection of the adult with that childhood Eden in which the Lost Boys are still living; it defies the death of the child within” (54).

In other words, adults fear death, rightfully so since they are much closer to the end of their lives than children. For this reason, adults likely want children to be innocent because they think of children as their polar opposites. In addition, the fear of death can inspire nostalgia in some adults, who then look at childhood as a happier, simpler time in their lives that they long to relive.

But as Warner also points out, “Children are perceived as innocent because they’re outside society, pre-historical, pre-social, instinctual, creatures of unreason, primitive, kin to unspoiled nature. Whether this is seen as good or evil often reflects the self-image of the society” (57). The idea that children are inherently naughty is a social construction as well, and many view childhood as a savage, uncivilized state. The media relies heavily on the idea of children as noble savages:

Stephen Jay Gould, the biologist, has pointed out that kids don’t have an innate kinship with dinosaurs, but that it has been fostered by intensive marketing; the relationship seems based on some idea of primitiveness[...] Lots of toys appeal to the idea of children’s savagery: from huge furry clawed slippers for tiny tots to wear to bed to warn off any other beasts in the night, to dinosaur lunchboxes and watches. (Warner, 52)

Just like childhood innocence, inherent naughtiness, or monstrosity and savagery are qualities which children possess because adults help to shape them that way. The idea that children are

little monsters is an ideology as well, one in which adults subscribe to because they believe adults are superior, and are responsible for civilizing children. This mentality, however, assumes children lack morality, a sense of right and wrong, and that without adults present children would continue to be savage, like the feral children. It is now clear that both ideologies are constructed in order to fulfill adult desires, and children might end up reflecting these ideas because of how the adult world shapes childhood. The literature that is handed down to children is a tool which adults can pass on, promote and use to reinforce their ideology of childhood.

Adults not only physically control which books are read by children, but they also have a hand in censoring material they deem inappropriate. Books which seem too sexual, too violent, too subversive, whether it be because children are too innocent or too impressionable, will be censored from libraries, schools and children's homes, because adults have all the control. Childhood is completely in the hands of adults; both how to define childhood, and how to raise children, is decided upon by adults and adults alone. Children have little to no say in how they are socialized and how they are educated in their own societies. So how can adults hope to learn the true nature of childhood if children are not even involved in the defining process? Perhaps it is impossible to know what childhood is truly like because it is impossible for an adult to study childhood without bias. As Warner puts it, "[...]it is also difficult to grasp how innocence would show itself without adults to influence it" (49), and the same can be said for naughtiness. With the emergence of Childhood Studies, Western society will hopefully become more aware of the stereotypes and misconceptions that exist around the subject of childhood, and studying literature is one way in which to do so.

Literary criticism paves the way for a more informed future, as close reading and analysis of literature leads to a deeper understanding of the issues in our society. The close reading of

passages from Andersen, Hoffmann, Gaiman and Schwartz has allowed me to highlight the ways in which their respective societies both view childhood and educate children through their stories. By providing children with works of literature which subvert traditional ideologies, and which represent children's lives in a more realistic light, adults may help to provide children with more relatable and positive reading material in the future. As a result, this may also help to shape the future of Western society as a more inclusive and informed society when it comes to the subject of childhood and education. As Warner puts it, "[children] cannot live innocent lives on behalf of adults[...] Nor can individuals who happen to be young act as the living embodiments of adults' inner goodness, however much adults may wish it" (62). By insisting that children are either innocent or naughty inherently, adults are helping to promote dangerous ideologies which can hinder children's lives. By keeping important information away from children, by sugar coating their reading material and censoring the world for them, society is helping to keep children "pre-social". But are these ideologies good for children and their development? I have argued that no, these ideologies are reinforced for adult society's betterment, disguised behind a concern for children's lives. By keeping children in the dark, in the name of "innocence", adults are helping to keep children ignorant from potential information that could help them in their futures. Authors who truly want to help teach children important lessons about the world shouldn't try to sugar coat the harsh realities of life, or punish children for a supposed tendency towards misbehaviour, but should attempt to help equip children with the knowledge they need in order to survive and strive in their individual lives.

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