'Child's Play' - Performing Childhood in Victorian and Early Twentieth Century Children's Literature

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Preface

I first became interested in children's literature while an undergraduate. In a way it began as an imaginative escape from final year exams for me and a friend, as we spoke of how interesting it would be to have a course on children's fiction; a sort of 'let's pretend' distraction. From there it became more serious as something to focus on as a PhD thesis proposal. The question became how far the genre offered an escape from the real world and secondly why the adult writer would seek to offer it. What developed from it is the reality of the following chapters.

This thesis is not an attempt to provide a history of children's literature, but focuses on a selection of "classic" books which demonstrate my argument concerning the construction of childhood innocence. It is inevitable that many tales have not been included in this study: for example, I have chosen not to discuss Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). Apart from the obvious need to limit the size of the thesis, Kipling's work seemed less applicable to my argument, which does not focus on animals, but the representation of the child. For that reason, too, I avoided sustained discussion of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). The

texts which I do include are significant in their portrayal of an Edenic childhood, where nature is part of the ingredients of innocence. In examining the myth of the child, I employ some elements of literary theory. This I combine with a close reading of selected literary texts, so that the cultural emphasis is closely related to the primary works, rather than merely offering an abstract theoretical discussion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my parents and family for their support; all my friends, especially Linda, Kim, James, Catriona, Antonia, Monica, Susie and Kath - thanks for the tea and sympathy! Thanks to Shaun for the initial distraction. I am also indebted to Allan Stewart and C.K. Marr Educational Trust, without whose unfailing financial support this thesis would not exist. Special thanks to Brian Nellist for stepping into the breach and providing supervision at such a crucial point, and for restoring my confidence and belief.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The period I have chosen for my discussion marks a time in the history of children's literature when the influences of Rousseauism and the Romantic age emit their most powerful impact upon the genre. It is a time when a "child-centred"[1] form of fiction evolves, as the construction of childhood innocence reaches its peak, in an era considered to be a golden age of children's literature[2]. Therefore, the earliest text to be focused upon will be R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, published in 1858 and the latest will be Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, published in 1911. It is child-centred because the overtly moralistic tone of earlier children's literature, such as Maria Edgeworth's *Early Lessons* (1801), where Rosamond learns valuable lessons from her mother, changes to stories that are seen to be more entertaining and for the pleasure of the child.

In one of the *Early Lessons* Rosamond desires a purple jar and chooses it rather than the practical necessity of shoes, as her mother leaves her to decide between them. On purchasing the jar, it turns out to be plain white, as it was the liquid inside which made it look so appealing. So she is left with a useless object

and forced to endure a whole month with worn shoes, thus accepting the error of her choice of aesthetic pleasure over necessary items. The moral is clear as Rosamond laments: 'how I wish, that I had chosen the shoes - they would have been of so much more use to me than that jar: however, I am sure ... I shall be wiser another time'[3]. By the Victorian period this heavily didactic tone shifts, so that the child becomes more the hero of the text, rather than the recipient of adult knowledge. What also changes is the focus of the child as site of innocence: Rosamond is subject to adult instruction, whereas the later books of the period display children in Edenic freedom, where the adult voice is less obvious. However, I hope to question how much this pleasure or play is indeed for the child; there is still plenty of overt moralising around in the voice of the adult narrator, in, for example *The Water-Babies* or *The Coral Island*.

I would like to begin by questioning the child-centredness of this golden period by asking why is the child centred and who is holding it firmly in this position? To answer this we must first consider the concept of childhood innocence and all the ideological implications that accompany such terminology. For to have a definition of innocence, surely there must exist its opposite. That opposite is experience, or more accurately, in juxtaposition to childhood innocence, its

binary opposite becomes adult experience[4]. Like most binary opposites this is hierarchical and so must ultimately reflect a privileged position for the positive sign over the negative, as in man/woman, straight/gay or white/black. From the dichotomy of innocent child/experienced adult, one could deduce that childhood is the privileged state of being. But this may be a mistaken assumption, for, as Peter Hunt says:

> In privileging childhood as this sort of 'other', we misrepresent and belittle what we are; more significantly, we belittle childhood and allow ourselves to ignore our actual knowledge of real children. For while all that we see as 'other' may appear to be privileged, it is so only at the expense of becoming inhuman, marginalized, actually insignificant.[5]

We do not privilege the child, but create a construction conforming to society's ideological desire, which all but erases any sense of a real child. The real child is replaced by the ideal child of innocence. The result is less to diminish, 'belittle' the importance of the adult than, rather, to create a space or safe-haven, where adult fantasies can be carried out at the expense of effacing the child. Like the construction of woman, as the shelter for men to return to after a tough day in the capitalist rat-race, the child too becomes part of that adult need to find a temple or asylum from society and its ills[6]. It is a spacious vessel to be filled with adult desire, an innocence where the grown-up can return

in times of trouble, an Eden in a fallen world. As Adam Bresnick notices: 'for the past two centuries, the child has been the vehicle of our psychic transport to somewhere similar to Eden'[7].

Historically, the moment when childhood is regarded as innocent coincides with a rise in importance of the family unit, as it becomes a buffer to a rapidly expanding industrialised capitalist society. Children, through a series of Parliamentary Acts were removed from the workplace, their "natural" place becoming the home and school: 'if adults were burdened with responsibilities, children should be carefree. If adults worked, children should not work ... children were entitled to contact with nature'[8]. Family size also decreases by the twentieth century for the middle classes, as the threat of child mortality lessens, aided by improved sanitation and medicine, thus allowing the child to become a focus of family life[9]. It is this child-centredness that is prevalent in the children's literature of the period, as innocence acquires its most desired hold on the child. It is an innocence, in studying children's "classic" texts, it must be stressed, which is also socially privileged, for it belongs to the idealised middle-class child in its Victorian nursery, protected from the other side of the coin, the working-class other.

Jacqueline Rose in *The Case of Peter Pan* discusses

this need for childhood innocence as being intertwined with a desire in children's literature to return language to a state of innocence. She applies the arguments of Rousseau and Locke, that language should be reduced to its most transparent state, so that the child can have a clear relation to the world and its objects. Children's literature, she argues, takes on this model of realism, denying any metaphoric language which would corrupt a position of transparent description of story. This attaches itself to the belief in a pure point of origin located in the child itself corresponding to a pure point of origin in language, so that the critic can discover the text's true meaning, and the adult can be restored to a point of purity through the child. Thus innocence of the child and of the word reinforce and reflect each other within children's literature, as a medium for producing this form of a pure language, striving towards its prelapsarian mode[10].

It is an adult desire, an adult necessity, for, as James Kincaid states: 'innocence is a faculty needed not at all by the child but very badly by the adult who put it there in the first place'[11]. Innocence, then, is not a natural disposition peculiar to childhood; it is a social construction imposed or 'put there', so that the child will recognise that Althusserian hail or interpellation[12], and thus step into a subject position created by language, by "innocence". It is, in a strict sense,

paedophilic because it is a relationship to innocence built on adult strength and authority, of putting it there forcefully, onto the comparatively weaker child, so fulfilling adult society's need and desire. Innocence is, therefore, not a character trait of childhood, but a construction which is forcibly 'put there' in a bid to feed the wish fulfilment of adult society. Suddenly our idyllic view of the carefree innocent child clearly becomes tainted and sinister as Kincaid's words to 'put' it 'there' echo and resound in our minds, forcing us to question the ideology behind the construction. What that echo seems to ask is that we re-sound the words 'innocent child' and question again how appropriate they really are.

In turning to Rousseau's own words (or at least those in translation), we can identify Rose's argument for the adult belief in a point of origin, reached through the child and its language:

> All our languages are works of art. Whether there was a language natural and common to all men has long been a subject of research. Doubtless there is such a language, and it is the one children speak before knowing how to speak. This language is not articulate, but it is accented, sonorous, intelligible. The habit of our languages has made us neglect that language to the point of forgetting it completely. Let

> us study children, and we shall soon
> relearn it with them.[13]

In what seems a possible precursor to the work of Lacan, or Kristeva in her recognition of a pre-Oedipal or semiotic language within the symbolic order, Rousseau here calls for the recognition of a prelapsarian language. Unlike Kristeva[14], however, he does not see its dominance within the language system as a descent into madness, but considers it essential in returning the adult to a purity of form. He also does not see this language as the poetic, fluidic entity within literature which Kristeva cites, but as a transparent window on the world of representation, where any attention to the word is reduced to its absolute minimum.

Rose argues that it is Rousseau's influence which has shaped literature for children right up to the present day; problems of shifts and gaps within language are ignored in a perpetual drive towards creating the transparently innocent text for the innocent child. I certainly agree that this is the intention for the period which I will be discussing, but I am not convinced that J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, as a story first written for adults in *The Little White Bird*, and seen by Rose as a metafictional commentary on children's literature, is necessarily the one which best examines difficulties of language within that genre[15]. I do see it as an important text, but to say that its language is

problematic because it is looking at and commenting on the history of children's literature from the position of an adult text, is surely to refute the importance of specific children's texts, which themselves adequately highlight the eroticism of innocence and difficulties of language. Besides, one could just as easily reverse the process and question the adult text within much children's literature, considering that it is widely accepted to have a dual audience, not to mention its being penned by an adult. But surely that is the point of children's literature; that it is serving an adult need to construct an ideal, where the investment of innocence manifests itself in what I will term textual paedophilia. Moreover, often the books which I will discuss tend unconsciously to deconstruct the very social ideal which they strive to reflect. Instead they linguistically problematise a superficial innocence through a textual lens which distorts the image being represented, so highlighting the artificiality of the child subject within adult discourse[16].

By textual paedophilia I mean to consider the adult construction of childhood innocence paralleled with a constructed innocent language[17]. Both support the ideology of adult society and its desire to hold the child in this state of enforced and artificially created innocence. The child is consequently placed outside society, allowing a haven for the adult to recapture a

sense of lost childhood. It is paedophilic because it satisfies adult society's desire at the expense of the child's wants or needs. Thus the parallel is between a sexual paedophilia, where the child is shaped into innocence for the satisfaction of adult erotic desire, and textual paedophilia, where the language of the children's text is constructed into apparent innocent transparency for the needs of adult society. Behind this innocence lurks experience, created as a cover to conceal the investment of adult satisfaction. Both innocent child and text are shaped and constructed by the adult's demands, not the child's. The latter, in effect, is erased to the extent of becoming an empty vessel or sign which is filled with adult desire[18]. It is paedophilic because innocence and transparency are concepts coined by adult society, which is postlapsarian and masks an inescapable erotic desire of otherness behind its presentation of "normal" adult-child relations[19]. What also occurs, though, is that the text, by applying this adult desirability to create the child in an ideal mould, sustains ruptures which necessarily displays the very fictionality and constructedness of its apparent "natural" child image.

There is a consequential tension in trying to write in an innocent language from the position of a sexualised state, as adult experience necessarily impinges on this presentation of purity. Mainstream society likes to view

the paedophile as that abhorrent other on the fringes of normal life, where all blame can be cast[20]. However, I believe that there is something sinister in the repetitious demand on the child that it remain innocent in a synchronic time structure, regardless of the diachronic nature of society and language. This desire for innocence therefore removes paedophilia from the safe margins of society's other and places it firmly in the centre of normality's self: 'the outside (pedophilia) is inside and ... the one being protected (the child) is being assaulted by its protections'[21].

It is not a question of whether or not the genitals are being interfered with, but of investment and desire placed on the child by the adult - after all, many paedophiles do not engage in the complete physical act (though I do not wish to diminish the very real trauma experienced by sex abuse victims or in any way condone paedophilia) - leading to a voyeuristic need to see an embodiment of innocence[22]. Textually, it is a language which claims purity, but lurking beneath is a prominent adult construction of such a language, and thus desire: the very essence of language refuses innocence at its point of utterance, as textual shifts and gaps expose purity existing only at a superficial level. In the texts to be discussed in this thesis, that facade of linguistic innocence will be stripped away to expose its concealed impurities.

Children's literature, according to Rose's argument, seeks for closure of meaning at the end of the story, as innocence reinforces the belief that the text is a pure form enclosed within itself and offering purity of interpretation. This may be the *intention* of such fiction, but the result, as I hope to demonstrate, produces texts which are filled with a language which cannot be closed in interpretation, and is prone to continual slippages. It is erotic because the window-like claims of innocence are exposed by the text to be the view of the voyeuristic distorted lens of adult narration. Transparency is obscured as the lens shows a misrepresentation of the child subject. In asserting the point that children's literature strives to contain the child in a perpetual state of innocence, I hope to build on Rose's work, but in recognising that textually this is fraught with eroticism, gaps and ambiguities, I stand firmly beyond Rose and her belief that children's texts really are as uncomplicated as they seek to be. For, as Perry Nodelman recognises:

> Rose ignores the ambiguity that underlies the apparent simplicity of most good children's books, for she seems to be determined to read children's books in terms of the quite limited and often wrongheaded assertions that critics and authors make about them ... Far too many writers and critics want children's fiction to represent all that is true and good in both life and literature, as opposed to the

> supposed sickness and decadence and chaos of contemporary life and of all other modern fiction. The trouble with Rose's argument is that she actually *believes* these ridiculous comments that writers and critics make about children's books. In doing so, she misses most of what is interesting about children's fiction.[23]

It is this gap in children's literary criticism which I wish to fill by acknowledging some 'of what is most interesting about children's fiction' in the golden age.

Let us return to Rose's discussion of the influence of Rousseau, and his beliefs of the child being close to nature, on children's literature. It is seen as a pure point of origin where the child can return us to a lost state of innocence of world and word. In *Emile*, Rousseau emphasises repeatedly the importance of a natural environment for the upbringing of the child in maintaining this purity:

> Cities are the abyss of the human species. At the end of a few generations the races perish or degenerate. They must be renewed, and it is always the country which provides for this renewal. Send your children, then, to renew themselves, as it were, and to regain in the midst of the fields the vigor that is lost in the unhealthy air of overpopulated places.[24]

It is not difficult to recognise the importance of this on Victorian attitudes, where, for instance, Emile

Durkeim considers the increasing industrialisation of society as creating a sense of anomie, or Karl Marx argues that it creates an alienated workforce[25]. Urbanisation was a fact of the Industrial Revolution, where rural communities broke down, as people moved to cities for employment. If childhood is a place of adult refuge, it is hardly surprising that this fragmented and industrial world is also the environment which breeds the golden age of literature at its most productive. For adult society, the haven from this increasingly capitalist and fragmentary world is the family community, where much becomes invested in the child as the temple of worship beyond the cold, hostile outside existence. Insularity and artificial worlds feed off the creation of the nineteenth-century nursery, a protective environment for the sanctified child, such as that created by MacDonald for his Princess Irene. It is a time when the garden also becomes paramount, as children's literature recognises Rousseau's call to nature, and places its heroes and heroines in Edenic settings, like those found in *The Secret Garden* or *The Water-Babies*. These are pastoral paradises where adult society can holiday in an organic bliss, beyond the onward march of the machine: 'childhood here was a fountain irrigating the arid soils of adulthood. It came indeed to be seen as some recompense to mankind for the loss of Eden'[26].

Another highly influential figure contributing to

this prelapsarian mentality was Froebel, whose work on the kindergarten ensured that the child would be regarded as a young plant, best suited to the nursery, where it could be nurtured and cultivated with (significantly) maternal love. He states that:

> Through such fostering she (the mother) appears pre-eminently in her true nature, her real position, and in her manifold and, to the child, important connections, for first she stands as a connecting link between her child and his Creator, the Original Source of his life - God. Next she connects the child with her husband, his earthly father. She is the link that joins the child with the family of which he is a member. Through the family she unites the child to the human race, with humanity, and with each individual member of humanity ... Finally, and lastly, and in a special sense, she is the bond of union between the child and Nature.[27]

Froebel's insistence on the role of the mother in the kindergarten is obvious in the works to be discussed, as, for example, can be seen in the figures of Mother Carey and Susan Sowerby. However, this becomes more complicated with the lack of such a figure in the supposed Edenic worlds of *The Coral Island* and *Treasure Island*. But, as will be seen, these are not gardens entirely blessed by Mother Nature but ones which must be tamed by the cultivating presence of Mother England, though often with ambiguous results. So, not only is the

child constructed in this conception, but, so too are women and indeed nature, to fit a patriarchal framework within capitalist society.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, documentaries and newspaper articles increasingly track the decline of innocence. They ask 'is this the end of childhood?' of a world where the child grows up amidst a subculture of drugs, multimedia, and postmodernly acid music. In this culture of anxiety probably the threat most feared is the paedophile[28]. What is interesting about the Cleveland abuse case in 1987, as Nicci Gerrard points out, is that 'it was both the start of our awareness about child sexual abuse and the start of the backlash'[29]. The paedophile, rather than remaining safely at the monstrous margins of society, had entered its very centre of security and normality, the family home, so blurring the division between bogeyman and safe adult[30]. The result of this threat to the normality myth was that the case was silenced and, according to Sue Richardson, a child abuse consultant at Cleveland County Council in 1987: 'there is no doubt whatsoever that Cleveland County Council returned children, believing that they had been abused ... The children were returned to abusers'[31]. Perhaps part of that difficulty in establishing "truth" is the fluidly complicated nature of abuse: earlier I mentioned how many cases of abuse are non-violent, and this appears to be clarified by Marietta Higgs herself, who: 'stated that abuse is not always experienced as abuse, that the boundary between intrusion and intimacy can be blurred'[32].

It is significant in note 30, maybe, that Gerrard's article in reflecting on these grim circumstances turns quite readily for its analogy to an apparently innocent children's text, *Alice in Wonderland*. On the one hand, it remains safe reading for a child in danger of violation but on the other it is easily used as a metaphor for safety 'turned inside out'. The reference indicates just how unstable presumptions of innocence may be. It was noticeable in the James Bulger case in February 1993, that the public was outraged, less by the sufferings of the victim, than by the loss of their cherished notion of childhood because the perpetrators were themselves fallen innocents[33]. It is a world, viewed through the eyes of the media, of child killers and rapists, as adults lament 'children just aren't what they used to be when we were kids'. But then again neither is society.

Children and childhood are *never* what they were - they are an integral part of our perception of them. During the Bulger case, the possibility of video nasties was raised as influencing the two ten year old murderers. One of the videos was *Child's Play*, a title implying innocence taken from an essay by Robert Louis Stevenson, but displaying the actions of a terrifying doll[34]. What is interesting, though, is that the use of child's play in an adult film demonstrates that play is often subject to adult performance, just as childhood is constructed by adult society[35]. To play is to perform, and behind the children's playful texts in this thesis, often lies the mask of adult mimicry. To accuse children of acting out *Child's Play* is perhaps one of the greatest ironies in

the myth of childhood with its emphasis on the importance of play. As Stevenson's 'Child's Play' notices: 'it is grown people who make the nursery stories; all the children do, is jealously to preserve the text'[36], so acting out a role cast for them by adult society.

Perhaps to counteract these fears there has been a cinematic return to innocence through the digging up of golden age idols, such as *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Little Women*, *The Secret Garden*, and *A Little Princess*. They are an attempt perhaps to belittle the growth of the postmodern child through the return to the lost idealised world of green fields, exquisite mansions, and, most importantly, the family. There must be no ecstasy, no raves, no sex, no problem child whose problem cannot be solved. Recently we have witnessed calls from politicians and church leaders for a back-to-basics approach, where the decline of the family and its values is seen as attacking the moral fibre of its citizens (or rhetorically, its children). Most targeted are the usual scapegoats, such as single mothers, or, even worse, lesbian parents, who are accused of eroding the very foundations of the nuclear family and its patriarchal society. Again, these are some of the reasons for a desperately clutching return to a golden age. All literature is to an extent read from the viewpoint of the present and part of the interest in supposedly classic children's texts is that they offer a paradigm of stable values. The nostalgia for such books, or rather for their misreading, is motivated by an adult preoccupation with the changing identity of the family[37].

For Joan Smith, the view is more balanced, suggesting that marriage in Britain was founded on inequality for women, and therefore, as their position changes, it is necessary that such archaic institutions do too[38]. Importantly, she also recognises that the approach of the millenium is a recipe for social panic:

> what Britain is currently experiencing is a classic fin-de-siecle moral panic ... Except that this time around, unlike the final decades of the 18th and 19th centuries, we are standing on the brink of a new millenium, with all the extra load of psychological baggage ... Yeats put is rather more elegantly [than the tabloids]... but the sentiments are much the same: 'Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned.' The end of the world is nigh, according to this view. But ... we've heard it all before.[39]

In Yeats' apocalyptic lament the point is ironically precise: it is a 'ceremony of innocence' which is bestowed upon the child by adult society, so creating a mythologised childhood. Being a ceremony, there is also a sacrificial element, as the child is erased by an ideal vision, and is all the more religiously mourned when the myth disappoints its makers.

It is in relation to such social arguments, then,

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that the opinion has been advanced that the Victorian and early Twentieth Century children's novel was a reaction against the modernist adult novel, with its confusion and chaotic language. Both Rose and Nodelman acknowledge this as a likely possibility to explain the need to reach hold of the unchangeable sense of purity and stability that was provided through children's fiction, with a demand for the preservation of realism and plot[40]. I do think that this was a relevant factor in the shaping of the children's novel, and hence of an image of childhood itself. But, again, I would argue that this was an *intention*, which by no means produced the desired result. The obvious case in point is Carroll's *Alice* books with their distortion of meaning and plays on language; but even the more "realist" fictions, such as *Treasure Island* or *The Princess and the Goblin* will be seen to contain many gaps within the transparent mode[41]. Our own postmodern adult literature is even more fragmentary and self-consciously aware of language than its modernist predecessor, as it examines the extremes of metafictional possibility. Therefore, in this time of radical social change, it becomes even more urgent that the adult literature of the period exists outwith a protected realm of classic children's fiction. Cinematically, it would appear that such a return to innocence can only occur within adaptations of standard literary texts, for adults as well as children. This return to the physical detail of the world of innocence is also relevant to Rose's

argument that it often occurs in literature by returning to a primitive existence, going back geographically and historically, such as Ralph's civilised world encountering the primitive savages of *The Coral Island*. So certain elements in contemporary society seem to believe that if we can only recreate the nineteenth-century child, then innocence will be returned and chaos controlled.

The attempt to restore innocence is therefore close to the original intention of the Victorian texts and, again, it is done to satisfy and reassure the adult and to deny the child. As Freud reminds us, the child *does* have a sexual identity, which in its state of bisexuality and polymorphous perversity, is far from its innocent portrayal[42]. So this idealising of plot and language cannot be simply realist. It functions to serve adult society, whilst ahistoricising the child, which is eternally placed outside its contemporary society. It is a bid to retain a never changing point of origin that claims an absolute purity. Works of children's fiction may strive towards this innocent origin, but, ultimately, with the result of textual paedophilia, since they are written by the pen of the postlapsarian adult. It is always comfortable to consider the paedophile as a marginalised other, who lures children into corrupt acts of debauchery. Actually it is a common potentiality within the centred self, and pertains more to a desire

than to a physical act. We have to ask who innocence benefits, who *desires* it, and who constructs it: the adult. Within children's literature that innocence is destabilised under an adult constructed language which purports to be serving the innocent child. To suggest that children's literature has a unifying closure of meaning, which is realist in its transparent purity, is to deny the tensions and complexities existing at the very heart of this genre.

As Rose recognises, it also suits adults to claim innocence for childhood and deny its sexuality, for that perverse sexuality identified by Freud is a threat to adult sexuality. It is itself other, and as such, must be suppressed and denied, until maturity, when adulthood instills its normative sexuality (with only a few deviants retaining signs of perversion, such as the homosexual or paedophile, who are often grouped together in a misrepresentation of two distinct sexualities[43]), thus leaving any bisexuality and polymorphous perversity safely behind in the realms of forgotten childhood. But, as Freud also reminds us, that is not the case. Childhood is not an alien form from which we metamorphosise into an altogether different species, but is carried with us as part of our unconscious identity, and, as such, that perverse sexuality becomes part of our repressed unconscious which emerges itself in parapraxes, such as slips of the tongue and puns[44]. Children's literature is

partly seen as innocent because of its lack of expressed sexuality, that is, adult-identifiable genital sexuality, but within its gaps there exists a potential polymorphous sexuality which is written into the unconscious of the adult-constructed text. As such, it is identifiable as textual paedophilia because the adult's claims of innocence are exposed through the form and content of the literary work.

By focusing on the language of each particular text in question, I hope to rescue children's literature from the revered status of purity and nostalgia, implied by its current literary position in both readership worlds and academia alike. I want to explore the difficulties which arise in these works, thus rendering impossible a closed and "safe" reading, or a fixed interpretation, resolved through psychobiographical material, where the text purely equates with the author's state of mind. As already mentioned, part of this will involve looking at the image of the garden with all its potential imagery within these texts, and examining its contribution to the image of innocence, where the child is tended like, and associated with, a young plant. The other side of this will involve discussing its erotic possibilities, as an Eden created by the fallen adult writer and society, bringing into focus, for example, the fertility associations of nature, and the garden as being beyond social control - the *secret* garden.

Other important factors will be the examination of the child as subject, influenced by the work of Louis Althusser and his argument for the interpellation of the subject[45]. For example, Alice's identity is continually thrown into question, as the self becomes a site of chaotic instability, under threat of annihilation. Obviously, this is vital in order to refute society's insistence on the coherence of the child as a fixed entity of innocence, and to show that the self is fragmentary and uncertain, and is prone to social construction. The use of the lens as an instrument of viewing and thus knowing the child will also be examined, for, like language, it constructs the child from the power-position of the adult. But, also like language, it is a distorted vision, which is forever imposing itself in a bid to pin down the subject, and is thus open to continual misrepresentation.

Similarly, I want to focus on consumption as a tool of construction, for, again especially in *Alice*, eating and drinking, and language directing these actions, become acts which are targeted towards Alice as subject. As in the typical cosmetic advertisements, her identity is altered by the recognition that the product is *for her*, and thus her consumption of that market commodity ensures her metamorphosis. Consumption as a means of control is more generally important as in *The Coral Island*, where the most extreme consumer durable good of

capitalist marketing is the human body itself, as portrayed literally through cannibalism. Yet consumption can also have a counter and illicit value as an agent of textual eroticism, for orality is a significant sexual pleasure for children, as is expounded by Freud's arguments of polymorphous perversity. So, although we do not find explicit adult definitions of sexuality within these texts (ie. genital sex), it is nonetheless naive to argue that they are consequently innocent texts. Childhood sexuality goes beyond the genital signifier and moves fluidly around the physical body and textual body in an array of erogenous zones, disabling the demand to close off an innocent text. Instead, it swims within an under language of eroticism, in a similar fashion to Tom's subterranean journey in *The Water-Babies*.

I start with the most obvious and extreme case of linguistic disturbance in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books. Rose considers Carroll to be an 'exception' to the rule of transparent realism, for 'this other side of language ... has largely been kept out of children's fiction'[46]. Rather, I believe that Carroll's texts are extreme versions of an argument for textual eroticism, but are by no means the exception to the rule. I will demonstrate, with a variety of texts which play with the notion of childhood innocence and Edenic space, the deep disturbance which abounds in children's literature. By focusing on play as an adult performance of a children's

text, I hope to show that the child is presented to be as mythical as its fictional genre. Kincaid argues that the adult constructs the child in an image of its own making:

> The child performs as a complex narcissistic image offering entry into a vision of play ... The pedophile, in short, plays the part of the child in order to play with the desire for the child-who-ought-to-be ... Play eroticizes the whole world - and keeps it that way.[47]

Play and performance is an important aspect of the narrative voice in many of the following texts, which offer a presentation of the child, but beneath its facade, lurks an adult mimic, creating the 'fabulous monsters' of mythology.

1."Child-centred" tends to apply to the move in education from the chalk and talk approach, to one which revolves around the child's needs.

2.For further discussion of this see Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). He argues that: 'the real change in writing for children, perhaps the point at which we can see an emphatic, rather than directive narrative relationship with children, comes with Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, and Charles Kingsley, whose work began the "first golden age" of children's literature' (p.30). It is regarded as a shift from overtly moral didacticism to a more child-centred approach: 'about 1850, the point at which books began to move from the didactic to the recreational' (p.9).

3.Maria Edgeworth, *Early Lessons: in Four Volumes. Volume II, containing Rosamond, Harry and Lucy* (London: C. Baldwin, 1822, 8th edn. First published, 1801).

4.James R. Kincaid suggests in *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), that: 'one could say that innocence is more than a blank, that it takes on substance by feeding off its polar opposite, which we might call depravity, a word with plenty of substance ... If innocence depends for its existence on depravity, how can it be said to be

free of the depraved? Isn't it possible that depravity is not around on the other side of the world from innocence but at its core?', p.78.

5.Peter Hunt, ed., *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.13-14.

6.Kincaid, *Child-Loving* refers to this 'privileging' of the child as being apparently child-centred: 'we live under the assumption that children are especially privileged and that our entire culture is "child-centred," but the "romantic mythology" encrusting childhood is very much like that used for racial and gender power-moves: "children, 'coloreds,' and women are all depicted as naturally carefree, fortunate to be unsuited to the burdens of autonomy and decision-making, and better off protected by those in control', (p.64).

7.Adam Bresnick, 'One person's eroticism is another's innocence' in *Times Literary Supplement*, July 10, 1998, p.9.

8.Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman, 1996. First published, 1995), p.160.

9.Cunningham, *Children and Childhood* states: 'by the middle of the twentieth century the death of a baby was something which few parents would experience ... and consequently the notion of family planning could take on new meaning; not surprisingly the decline in infant mortality was accompanied by a sharp decline in fertility', (p.165).

10.For the basis of much of my discussion see Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1994, rev. edn. First published, 1984), especially Chapters 1 & 2.

11.Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p.73.

12.See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy* Tr. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971) for further discussion of the interpellation of the subject. Cited in 'Louis Althusser from "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970)', Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp.50-58.

13.Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education* Tr. by Allan Bloom (London: Penguin Books, 1991. First published, 1762), p.65.

14.See Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, tr. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. First published, 1974). See also Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977). Pam Morris offers a useful insight to both Kristeva's work and Lacan's in, *Literature and Feminism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), pp.136-163.

15.See *The Case of Peter Pan*, Ch.3, especially p.84.

16.Victor Watson, 'Innocent Children and Unstable Literature' in Morag Styles, Eve Bearne and Victor Watson, ed., *Voices Off: Texts, Contexts and Readers* (London: Cassell, 1996), pp.6-7, suggests that: 'it seems to me that we have to consider the intriguing and paradoxical possibility that children's literature is repeatedly and consistently *misread* ... My thesis is that children's literature has in general been misread, and that it has had little part in what Marina Warner calls "the consecration of childhood" - and has in fact sought to work against it.' This is interesting, but I think oversimplifies the complicated subtlety of children's literature. I agree with Rose that it does consciously follow a tradition of innocence from Rousseau and beyond, but disagree that the text maintains only this superficial level of the socially constructed innocent child. I think that, unconsciously, the language of the text deconstructs and problematises the desire for innocence of both child and fiction. This is different from Watson, who believes that this is a conscious decision, where I would consider it as part of the overdetermination of the text. As my thesis was already formed before the appearance of Watson's book, I could not make full use of it, unfortunately.

17.Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan* discusses *Peter Pan*'s confusion of narrative voice in its 1911 text, when it became a novel for children, derived from its original place in an adult book. She suggests: 'when children's fiction touches on that barrier, it becomes not experiment ... but *molestation*. Thus the writer for children must keep his or her narrative hands clean and stay in his or her proper place' (p.70). Rose argues that *Peter Pan* is the only book which transgresses this boundary into erotic complicity, but my thesis will demonstrate that this is not the case. I would also like to point out that I will not be particularly concerned in this thesis with the gender division of children, but will be mainly considering the desire of the adult for the child, so incorporating both genders. This is because I consider paedophilia to be a comparatively ungendered desire for the child, a view supported by Kincaid, *Child-Loving*: 'gender is a construction far less important to pedophilia than to other forms of perception' (p.14). As most of my chosen texts occur in the Victorian period, this point is even more important, and is again supported by Kincaid: 'pedophilia is remarkable for melting down gender difference ... such oppositions just do not enter much into the play of child-loving ... there is reason to suppose that a century or so ago gender was of little importance in the usual sort of thinking on children, that many Victorians were comfortable in minimizing gender differences in children, in regarding them, like Kraft-Ebing, as "neuters."' He continues: 'Victorian advice manuals tend heavily to discourage too much gender discrimination in the rearing of children, suggesting that they be treated pretty much the same', (p.64), and in relation to modern paedophilia: 'it is true that, for whatever reason, some child-lovers seem consistent in their gender preferences; but many, like the Victorians and like Freud, see little difference between the sexes in children ... What's

more, pedophiles, some experts tell us, have sexual preferences which are "blurred" as regards gender', (p.189). Note, too, how it is 'the play of child-loving', as adult desire becomes part of the rules of child's play.

18.See Kincaid, *Child-Loving*: 'the "child" is nothing more than what it is construed to be, nothing in itself at all', p.90.

19.Kincaid, *Child-Loving* says: 'admiring children, responding to children as erotic forms, investing one's primary emotions in children, desiring children, engaging in sex with children, helping children, molesting children, living for children, living through children: all these forms (and more) are available to us under the general rubric of "child-love". Some are sanctified; others are censured. How they are to be distinguished one from another is never, in practice, very clear, though there is pressure to pretend that nothing could be clearer. Loving children does not mean doing so in *that* way, which is the way of "pedophiles" (lovers of children) or "pederasts" (lovers of boys). We use those terms as if they marked off an area of the population and an area of modern experience entirely distinct from the rest of us. We conduct clinical studies on them, the medical establishment having been called in to confirm what the law has asserted: that paedophilia exists and can be cut out of the herd ... we conduct studies of pedophilia mostly in jails or hospitals, the two institutions most clearly set up to reassure us that there are those who are different. Even so, the results of these inquiries can be unsettling. They often do not indicate marked deviations in this population' (p.187).

20.As Kincaid says in *Child-Loving*, 'we tend to turn the whole theater of pedophilia into a melodrama of monsters and innocents', p.27.

21.ibid., p.10.

22.Kincaid suggests that: 'the assumption that "a violent, forcible attack" is involved on the child is contradicted by the "large body of evidence showing that child sexual abuse often involves nonviolent, nonforcible contact" ... in the overwhelming majority of cases, the attentions are not forced on the child; very seldom is sexual intercourse attempted or intended', p.185.

23.Perry Nodelman, 'The Case of Children's Fiction: or the Impossibility of Jacqueline Rose' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Fall 1985, Vol.10, No.3, p.99.

24.Rousseau, *Emile*, p.59.

25.See Michael Haralambos, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (London: University Tutorial Press, 1980).

26.Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, p.143.

27.Friedrich Froebel, *Education by Development: The Second Part of the Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, tr. by Josephine Jarvis (London: Edward Arnold, 1899), p.307.

28.Dea Birkett's article, 'Monsters with human faces' in *The Guardian Weekend*, Sept. 27, 1997, challenges this myth of the monstrous paedophile, interviewing a 'nice old man', p.22. She concludes: 'monsters exist only in children's fairy tales. Beneath the hood, the men I met had human faces', p.30.

29.Nicci Gerrard, 'Into the arms of the abusers' in *The Observer Review*, 25 May, 1997, p.3.

30.ibid., p.4. Gerrard continues: 'The happy family is a consoling and persisting myth ... we cling to ... Parents should be protectors; parents are often abusers. Home is where we should feel safe; home is where a child is most in danger. The doors close upon secret violations. This is a grim Alice in Wonderland world where everything we hold dear is turned inside out', p.4.

31.ibid., p.3. Gerrard goes on to discuss the claim of a Channel 4 documentary on Cleveland, 'The Death of Childhood': 'although 96 children were indeed returned to their homes, most of these were still kept under strict supervision ... Two independent panels subsequently set up to give second opinions on the diagnoses of Dr Higgs and Dr Wyatt reported at least 70-75 per cent to have been accurate. Since the controversy, 25 of the returned children had already been referred again, and five re-referred, for sexual abuse. However, claims *The Death of Childhood*, when the council sent details of the re-referrals to the Department of Health, a joint policy decision was taken that no further follow-up was to be carried out on the Cleveland children. Records relating to them as a group were destroyed. The past was erased', p.4.

32.Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, p.xvi.

33.Watson, 'Innocent Children and Unstable Literature' suggests: 'the killing of one child by two others brought into direct and articulate conflict our compassion for the innocent child victim and our fear of the child monster', p.1. Note how, like the paedophile, the child which defies the myth of innocence is demonised into the monstrous other. Yet a recent documentary, 'Children of Crime' (BBC1, April 7, 1998) points to the "normality" of Thomson and Venebles: 'what was it in the background of two such unremarkable boys that prompted this? There was nothing to suggest in their backgrounds that they could carry out such horrific injuries'.

34.The 'Children of Crime' documentary discusses the suggestion that horror

films my have influenced the death of James Bulger: 'Venebles' father rented some, for example, *Child's Play 3*, but there is no evidence that Jon watched any'.

35.Rosalind Miles, 'Plastic values for a fragile generation' in 'Childhood: an innocence betrayed', *The Observer*, 18 June, 1995, discusses the saturation of consumer products in the child entertainment market and the drive to attract children to their products, saying that: 'there's nothing more serious than child's play', p.2.

36.'Child's Play' in Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Essays in Belles Lettres* (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1924), p.110.

37.Miles, 'Plastic values for a fragile generation' takes this witch-hunting attitude towards divorce, as though a voice for the Christian Right: 'the greatest problems faced by ... today's children spring from that everyday tragedy ... family breakdown ... parents were sold the idea of the benign divorce ... If there is one lesson to be learned from the virtual marriage holocaust of the last 20 years, it is that the needs of the children may best be answered by supporting the parents, and helping them to pull together "for the sake of the children"', p.3. The desire to stop the hands of time, denying that the family structure will inevitably change as the social structure evolves, produces emotive language for this purpose, such as 'holocaust' and 'tragedy'. Overturning previous views that this very tension could be destructive, she denies that a tense family atmosphere may be worse than divorce, and fails to take account of alternative structures to "mum and dad", or to acknowledge that such fears are adult fears, as society reaches what is regarded as the chaotic end of a century.

38.Joan Smith, 'We all fall down on the eve of our 21st' in *The Guardian - Outlook*, April 27, 1996: 'the tabloids are quick to assign blame for corrupting our youth to that army of working mothers ... Divorce, is for such right-wing theorists, the root of most of the evils currently afflicting British society ... Around a third of children in Britain are now born outside marriage ... It is far from obvious that these unions produce children worse adjusted than traditional ones; the disruptive 13-year old at the heart of this week's threatened strike by teachers at a Nottingham comprehensive appears to be the product of a traditional two-parent family', p.21.

39.ibid., p.21.

40.Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan* suggests that children's books 'above all ... are the supreme embodiments of a "sense of story"' and so are 'unequivocally opposed to the decadence of modernism', p.65. Nodelman's

reference to modernism is cited earlier in the introduction.

41.I use "realist" here and throughout this thesis in the sense that Rose does, in that language is reduced to its
transparent form in the interests of story. Therefore, I am aware that MacDonald's text is a fantasy, but is taken as realist for its sense of story and linguistic purity. Of course, this supposed realism will also be challenged in the thesis.

42.See Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, tr. by James Strachey, ed. by Angela Richards (London: Penguin Books, 1991. First published, 1905).

43.Kincaid, *Child-Loving* states: 'in one important study, most of the subjects were not old; most did not abuse drugs or alcohol ... and none were homosexuals. Some groups studied have indicated an "abundance of marital coitus and [a] high degree of happiness in marriage"', (pp.187-8); and: 'Victorian notions that pederasts are associating boys with something feminine (in the normal heterosexual way) find some recent echoes, and the most respected empirical studies reluctantly admit that adult offenders against boys are "almost uniformly heterosexual and not homosexual," that perhaps not just offenders but pederasts in general are heterosexual, that there is even a possibility that what we think of as "homosexual pedophilia" may be not only unrelated to but mutually exclusive with what we think of as "homo-sexuality". This is not to say that the ignorant, the unscrupulous, and the brutal have discontinued making the association between these two bogeys, homosexuality and pedophilia. It is just that no respectable explanation of the second "perversion" can depend on the first for support', p.191.

44.Pierre Macherey identifies the unconscious of a literary work within its gaps and silences which serves to decentre the text. See Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, tr. by Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). See also Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1989. First published, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1976).

45.Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, tr. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971). For a useful extract of this, see 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (1970)', in Antony Easthope & Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp.50-57.

46.Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, pp.40-41.

47.Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, pp.196-7.

Chapter 2 - 'Fabulous Monsters' - Constructing Childhood/Creating Fictions: The *Alice* Books

The peculiarities of Lewis Carroll's books, like so many fictional works, are often resolved by relating them to a psychobiographical explanation, where text offers an account of the author's life, thus providing a fixed interpretation in order to enclose and contain the book. His works are often attributed to his fascination with and attraction to female children, especially Alice Liddell, who inspired his creations in Wonderland and Beyond the Looking-Glass. As Rose rightly points out concerning children's fiction, this allows meaning to be pinned down and fixed, denying any disturbance at the linguistic level of the work: 'for this certainty takes control of the play and deformation of language which the *Alice* books ceaselessly enact by subordinating them, again, to the biography of the author'[1]. Carroll's work, however, abounds with unconscious seepage through his manipulation of the dream structure, and offers insight for the poststructuralist into the fragmented and constructed self, which rests upon an equally fragmented and fluid linguistic framework. His fiction offers a self-conscious commentary on childhood innocence as a social construction, where children become nothing more

than the 'fabulous monsters' of literary creation.

Subjectivity and meaning are deferred, as each signifier slips along a never-ending chain of signifieds, leaving transparent realism adrift on a tide of dreams. Alice's questions of 'do cats eat bats?' or 'do bats eat cats?' become, in this world, interchangeable and arbitrary signs devoid of substance for, 'it didn't much matter which way she put it'[2]. The innocent child is not safe in its world of innocent language which adequately describes its existence, for each sign, just within grasp, when taken hold of and depended upon for solid meaning, disappears like looking-glass rushes. So the expected safety of transparent closure in a children's text slips beyond grasp, where innocence of child and its literary genre are refused asylum from the cultural erosion and decadence of adult society, often associated with the approaching onslaught of modernism in the adult novel, as discussed in the introduction. On the contrary, Carroll's writing for children anticipates the self-conscious awareness of the modernist text[3].

Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland (hereafter shortened to *Wonderland*) involves an episodic dream structure, as Alice falls asleep from the boredom of her adult sister's book with no pictures or conversation. She corrects this situation by creating the images of her own fantasy story which abounds with illustrations

originally by Carroll himself and later by Tenniel. Alice, in effect, goes *through* her sister's adult book - having 'peeped into the book her sister was reading' (p.25) - into her own book, therefore becoming framed by an adult text. Similarly, Alice as a fictional creation in a child's story is framed by an adult narrator, and so is controlled by the parameters of adult creation. Alice's text is set in the world of a child's unconscious, which hints that the linguistic narrative will be subject to parapraxes, slips and gaps. This is especially appropriate to the dream world, with which Freud was later to also associate so inextricably, suggesting that language is structured very much like the unconscious[4]. By presenting a children's novel which deals with both the phenomena of dreams and language, then safety is shattered through the instability of meaning and a fragmented subjectivity. It is with *Alice* as the extreme instance of a textual instability which is, I believe, endemic in Victorian children's literature that I am concerned here.

One of the overriding aspects of both *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (hereafter shortened to *Looking-Glass*) is unsurprisingly the question of identity: Alice's self is consistently threatened with erasure and annihilation, and the failure of reliability in the sign makes it impossible for her to uphold her constructed preconceptions of who she is. In

Wonderland, her dramatic size alterations lead her to ponder: 'if I'm not the same ... who in the world am I? Ah, *that's* the great puzzle!' (p.37). Meanwhile, in *Looking-Glass* she responds to the Caterpillar's imposing question of 'who are You?', with the trembling fear of a displaced body and stuttered first person pronoun: 'I - I hardly know, Sir ... because I'm not myself, you see' (p.67). To be not one's self is to acknowledge the fragmentation and deferral of the subject, and the possibility that part of that identity is other, beyond the constructed signifier of innocent child. It is also to acknowledge the potential fictionality of the subject, as it is constructed by linguistic inadequacies, which are forever potentially sliding beyond control into a dark unutterable non-existence, where one is extinguished like a candle.

Closely aligned with the construction and instability of identity is consumption, whereby a parallel between orality and language is paramount. Alice is consumed by the words 'DRINK ME' (p.31), as she is lured through the aesthetic attraction of their being 'beautifully printed ... in large letters' (p.31). Louis Althusser refers to this as a process of interpellation, whereby the individual is hailed (or interpellated) through language, and steps into an awaiting subject position in society[5]. Like media advertising, where we assume that we are being addressed personally to consume

a product, so too does Alice feel that the bottle is marketed towards her. By consuming she in turn is consumed whilst 'freely' subjecting herself to the commands of language. Because the signifier 'poison' (p.31) is not visible, she trusts in the safety of the bottle's content, without considering that it might be in the gap of what is not written, as a sign under erasure, that possible danger may lurk. There is a preconceived belief in the safety of labelling - if bottles contain poison they say so. The flaw in the logic here, of course, is that this bottle has no description of its contents whatsoever. The description of what it *is* becomes replaced by the command or description of what it is *for*. Often, the gap between signifier and signified leads to thwarted pleasure, as the subject is consumed by the false marketing of language: 'she took down a jar from one of the shelves ... labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE", but to her great disappointment it was empty' (p.27). Disappointment comes in the realisation that the word does not necessarily apply to its material referent, but, being arbitrary, becomes important only for its own sound, not the sense of an expected end product which relies on an 'empty' sign.

Adults also have this naive trust in language as the unitary source of truth and knowledge in our world, when actually it is forever incapable of merely adequate reflection. Perhaps the point is most evident with the

cake, 'on which the words "EAT ME" were beautifully marked in currants' (p.33). Language acquires a level of erotic pleasure as the words literally become edible, and the distinction between sign and signified slides into complete distortion. Nothing is stable, least of all the child's identity, constantly deferred and exposed to the pervading threat of annihilation through language's consumptive tendencies. The linguistic marketing of 'EAT ME' and 'DRINK ME' interpellate her subject position, as the child is constructed through the internalisation (taking into her body literally the language that will mould her) of adult words. Rose's definition of realism in children's literature can itself be regarded as a consumption of the child reader by the adult written text, as the child is lured into the pages through the guise of innocent truth. By applying a self-conscious language, Carroll's texts potentially awaken the child reader to this adult desire for innocence and accentuate an awareness of the works' fictionality.

Notably each oral interpellation metamorphosises Alice, so that her subjectivity becomes as fluid as her Pool of Tears, where she is almost swept away and drowned by its very liquidised quality, just like the insecure language which slips beneath the fixity of the sign and threatens to digest her. It is the poststructuralist belief that a sign has no material referent, only multiple signifiers which slide and rupture beyond the

control of stable interpretation. As Alice tries and fails to solve the Mad Hatter's unanswerable riddle of 'why is a raven like a writing-desk?' (p.95), she is threatened by a similar textual insecurity because both elements of the puzzle are linguistic constructs or signs, with no substance beyond their arbitrary application[6]. So, too, the cat and bat become mutually interchangable, each dependent upon another signifier, beyond which they are empty signs, where either will suffice. If what is true for the texts is applied to Alice herself as their heroine, the nightmarish and annihilative aspect is heightened on realising that her subjectivity is also based upon the inadequacy of an empty sign. Hence she portrays the epitome of the fictional character, locked within her literary covers. When these are thrown back so as to awaken from the dream stage or finish the novel, then her substance vapourises, leaving only a memory behind for the reader. Alice Liddell the child, can only be substantiated when locked within the memory of Carroll, for, outside the mind or text, her childhood slips into adulthood, as will be seen later in his dedicatory poem to *Looking-Glass*. What remains of the child in *Looking-Glass* is a 'fabulous monster[s]' (p.287), where childhood innocence becomes the construct of adult desire.

Humpty Dumpty points out in *Looking-Glass* that Alice's name does not hold any substance beyond its

utterance:

> 'It's a stupid name enough! ... What does it mean?'
> '*Must* a name mean something?' Alice asked doubtfully.
> 'Of course it must ... *my* name means the shape I am ... With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.' (p.263).

'Alice' as a sign is meaningless, for it does not convey a specific referent, as Humpty Dumpty asserts (yet linguistically Alice could mean *her* shape and size just as much as Humpty Dumpty does his). But, because the books were written, 'Alice' is now inextricably linked to the fictional Alice, just as Humpty Dumpty is inescapably bound to his nursery rhyme, as it takes a text to fix a sign. In themselves these signs are devoid of substance, but within a literary context, they are loaded with fictional expectations: hence Humpty Dumpty is interpellated into his subject position in *Looking-Glass* by living out the preconceived expectation that he *does* fall off the wall. The chapter ends with 'a heavy crash' (p.276), leading into the next chapter where 'soldiers came running through the wood' (p.277). Although we do not see the fall, we know that it has occurred and the king's men are rushing to Humpty's aid without success.

However, the importance to Alice of her interpellated subject position, constructed by her name, is underlined when it is threatened by the Edenic setting of

'the wood where things have no names' (p.225) in *Looking-Glass*. The scene sets up an anti-Edenic irony in the adult desire for children's literature and the child to become sites of prelapsarian harmony[7], where a primitive language exists beyond the polluting influences of the social world. At this crucial point of glimpsed innocence, the text ingeniously renders the notion absurd by dismissing the claim that the child is somehow beyond socialisation by setting her within a highly socialised context, where the need for identity through one's name and the ensuing interpellation which accompanies that subject position, amplifies just how affected by society that ahistoricised so-called "innocent" really is.

Initially, then, Alice walks through the wood with the Fawn in a state of prelapsarian harmony, for:

> it looked at Alice with its large gentle
> eyes, but didn't seem at all frightened
> ... So they walked on together through
> the wood, Alice with her arms clasped
> lovingly round the soft neck of the Fawn. (pp.226-7).

It could also be read as a post-apocalyptic piece, with its echoes of a New Jerusalem, where 'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb .. the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den'[8]. It is a wood where things are beyond naming, where the symbolic order has no authority to label and hierarchically interpellate, amidst an unconscious dream world of Imaginary language,

and the child as human saviour coexists in ecological harmony with her surrounding environment.

Or is it? When one awakens to the fact that both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* are placed within the dreams of a fictional heroine, but are nevertheless told and controlled by the highly structured patriarchal voice of an adult narrator, then the potential for linguistic innocence is thrown into disarray. The child is manipulated and led through these novels by a nameless, yet extremely powerful and influential, voice of post-lapsarian desire. It is hardly surprising, then, that Alice does not remain in an Edenic environment with the Fawn, but instead re-enters the symbolic order where, on leaving the wood, 'the Fawn gave a sudden bound into the air, and shook itself free from Alice's arm' (p.227). This loss of innocence occurs through the reinitiation into the symbolic order, where natural harmony and unification become severed and classification of self and other takes control, exemplified in the words: 'I'm a Fawn ... And dear me! you're a human child!' (p.227). With this recognition, 'a sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed' (p.227), as the indistinguishable union of child and nature is recognised as nothing more than adult wish fulfilment. Alice resolves this crisis of loss in the aforementioned ironic anti-Eden, by embracing that which has rent them apart: 'I

know my name now ... that's *some* comfort. Alice - Alice - I won't forget it again' (p.227). The act of repetition enforces social meaning, as she takes possession of her name. Or, more accurately, her name takes control of her, as her identity becomes indistinguishable from the sign. Indeed fictional Alice *is* the sign, for she has no existence beyond the language of her text. Moreover, she has no affinity with the constructed innocent supplanted in our minds, for even as she enters this potential Eden of ecological equality, Alice rejects the possibility of such purity, saying:

> 'I wonder what'll become of *my* name ...
> I shouldn't like to lose it at all -
> because they'd give me another ... That's
> just like the advertisements, you know.' (p.225).

She realises her dependence upon her interpellated position within language and so rejects the adult preconception that children exist beyond such social constraints in Edenic bliss. Aware that she has stepped into her constructed Althusserian advertisement of 'Alice', she welcomes its sense of self, albeit fictional. Thus Carroll's texts mirror this adult desire for purity, for the expected prelapsarian child of children's literature is placed within the disturbing and distorting looking-glass of a proto-modernist anti-Eden, where society is recognised as an inescapable entity.

Alice's attempts in *Wonderland* 'to get into that beautiful garden' (p.77) anticipate Mary Lennox's search

for *The Secret Garden*'s hidden key, where 'she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains' in 'the loveliest garden you ever saw' (p.30). But Alice, as potential innocent child, is trapped in a proto-modernist textual world, where Eden's bliss is constantly held at bay by its anti-Edenic other, which undercuts any transparent expectations with a sliding, nightmarish disillusionment, reminding one that she has already Fallen via the rabbit-hole into this wonder-land. Her entry to the garden as innocent environment is immediately negated by the recognition of an unnatural act, namely the gardeners painting the white roses red, for fear of losing their heads at the command of the Queen of Hearts; the garden is also itself a highly artificial construction.

Just as roses which are naturally white are being painted red, so the kind of play going on in this garden is not the apparently free, innocent play of a child, but a game which is savagely enforced by the adult Queen. The participants are anonymous cards, subject to the Queen's authority, for: 'as they were lying on their faces, and the pattern on their backs was the same ... she could not tell whether they were gardeners, or soldiers, or courtiers, or ... her own children' (pp.108-9). Each effaced subject precariously participates in the game under fear of their lives. The notion of play

is increasingly disturbing for the subjects because the game is devoid of rules, and moves beyond any rigid structure with the movement of the live pieces, such as flamingoes and hedgehogs, as well as the courtiers themselves. It becomes a parody of play, where the goal posts are continually shifted, just as Alice as pawn in the *Looking-Glass* chess game is at the mercy of the narrator's invisible hand: 'it's a great huge game of chess that's being played - all over the world - if this *is* the world at all' (pp.207-8). Child's play, then, becomes subject to the rules of a disturbing adult desire (as the Cheshire Cat says in *Wonderland*, 'we're all mad here' (p.89)), where one is played upon in a game of adult pleasure's endless free play.

Even the Queen of Hearts' threat of 'shouting, "Off with his head!" or "Off with her head!" about once in a minute' (p.112) is unsubstantiated because its repetition empties it of meaning, leaving the utterance removed from any consequent action, and again denying transparency of sign to referent, for meaning is always transient and deferred. Also the shouted imperious command of the Queen is countermanded by the hushed whisper of the King, as the patriarchal voice becomes the more powerful definer here: 'Alice heard the King say in a low voice ... "You are all pardoned"' (p.124). However, the apparent security of meaning lying with the King is undermined by the Cheshire Cat who presents a disembodied

head and so a paradox. The trial scene at the end where the King's authority is seen to rest on spacious control is easily defied by the larger Alice and the fact that 'the oldest rule in the book' ought to be 'Number One' (p.156). The implications of the anonymous verse will be considered later. The slippage, then, from one secure place to another continues, as commands are countermanded, rules defied and, in the end, knowledge rests with a child, who therefore cannot be maintained as innocent, as she is manipulated into an authoritative role.

If innocence is such a precariously shifting void in these texts, it suggests that eroticism or desire, as a symbiotic other within its chain of signifiers, must be sliding beneath it in an undercurrent of gaps and silences. As the adult narrator is earlier identified with an important slippage in childhood innocence, it is worthwhile to focus on the narrative gaze and specifically the references made to lenses within both tales. An analogy can be made between the way in which a lens interprets its viewed object and the gap within language and the world it attempts to explain, both resulting in a distorted vision. The lens does not merely view the object, but instils a distance between the human eye of the observer and that which is under observation, so manipulating and distorting the view. Just as there are linguistic difficulties in Carroll's texts, so too do

they contain multiple references to lenses. For example in *Wonderland*: 'I must be shutting up like a telescope!' (p.31) and 'now I'm opening out like the largest telescope' (p.35)[9]. Alice's size is distorted in a similar way to that of a lens altering the size of its object under scrutiny.

She is metamorphisised by consumable products linked with glass, such as 'a little bottle that stood near the looking-glass' (p.57); 'a little glass box that was lying under the table' (p.33); and the table itself is 'made of solid glass' (p.29). So the glass distorts her identity, as she is observed through the *looking* glass of the text. Like a fairground mirror where we become a parody of ourselves, Alice is overwhelmed by the telesopic lens, becoming the centre of the grotesque vision. It is suggestive of what Bakhtin refers to as the 'carniva-lesque'[10]; the child is constantly being constructed and observed through the looking-glass of a distorted adult gaze. When she meets the caterpillar on the mushroom, it is an exchange of sight: 'her eyes immediately met those of a large blue caterpillar' (p.66) and, as though such an encounter on terms of size equality with an insect were not enough, the male larva disturbingly asks her, 'who are *You?*' (p.67). So in *Looking-Glass* the Guard on the train surveys Alice 'first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass' (p.218). Alice, as a female child, is constantly under

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the scrutiny of a predominantly male gaze, and is locked within a text which, like a photograph, retains her in a freeze-frame of childhood[11]. She has also passed *through* a glass into this textual world and discovered a text which can only be read *in* a glass. This is 'Jabberwocky', a poem which begins with a set of words which are later defined by Humpty Dumpty, famously considering words to mean whatever he wants them to mean. Even more wonderfully, several of those words have since become 'words' defined in the dictionary, thus confirming the slippage and arbitrariness of language. So the text before us is revealed to be as a glass which both constructs and stands between us and a material existence.

Both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* control and construct the child heroine through a manipulative narrative voice which can only be perceived to be textually paedophilic. The all but invisible lens of the narrator both views and constructs Alice through the lens of the text, through which the reader "sees" the narrative and in particular the characters within the text. This, of course, raises the possibility of distortion as the narrative voice chooses what attention will be focused on. The critic's job is then to be aware of what is left out of the frame or what is out-of-focus. Alice herself can be perceived in the "soft-focus" of a romanticised picture of the child, yet, like the child,

she keeps moving, so occasionally comes into sharp focus. At which points one may, if one chooses, become aware of the fluidity of her identity, which flows beyond idealism, showing innocence to be an adult imposition on the figure of the child in the text, as she is part of a fictional game.

Innocence is almost an adult demand upon the child, as *Wonderland*'s prefatory poem instructs the reader:

> Alice! A childish story take,
> And with a gentle hand
> Lay it where Childhood's dreams are
> In Memory's mystic band. (p.23).

The girl is always too old for the child the poet wants her to remain. The childishness remains only in the story, which must be preserved for the 'Memory' of idealised childhood innocence. The idea that it is 'mystic' almost confesses that the cherished innocence exists only as a construct, with its implications of being fictive or invented. The dedicatory poem of *Looking-Glass* bitterly acknowledges (as Gardner's notes confirm) the slipping away of childhood and desperately clings in paedophilic longing to the 'Child of the pure unclouded brow', bestowing it with a 'love-gift' (p.173). The only way to retain that desire for innocence is to lock the child within a textual frame to be viewed through the narrator's gaze, whose 'magic words shall hold thee fast' (p.174). Beyond this textual mysticism is the recognition that 'I and thou/Are half a life

asunder', divided by 'envious years', where innocence is lost to the 'unwelcome bed' (p.173) of adult genital love and the ensuing death-bed: to become adult is indeed a form of death, as it is the end of childhood[12].

Critics, such as Peter Hunt, have argued that both *Alice* books are free from the constraints of earlier children's fiction because the heroine is outspoken and free-thinking, with no adult parental control over her. He suggests that the *Alice* books 'might be offered as examples of books that can be read as being tacitly "on the side" of the child and against the adult domain, the Word'[13]. From this perspective they are regarded as an indulgence of pleasurable entertainment for the child as a retreat from the encroaching adult world. Alice, as a character *appears* to uphold this analysis, in that she apparently provides the child reader with an identifiable heroine (as Rose points out, reader identification is the main ideological purpose of realism in children's fiction). In *Wonderland* she escapes the dreariness of her sister's world of boring adult literature and enters her own textual fantasy; in *Looking-Glass* she escapes from the Victorian hothouse of parental control and conventionality to the other side of the mirror where:

> 'there'll be no one here to scold me away from the fire. Oh, what fun it'll be, when they see me through the glass in here, and can't get at me!' (p.185).

The irony of course is that the narrator has put her through the mirror precisely so that he can look and 'get at' her, with all the erotic implications which go with it. The point is that she cannot escape the adult gaze, as, like any fictional character, she is a projection of the mind portraying her: she is a constructed child, a 'fabulous monster', not a free agent. Play, freedom and independence are problematised in this light, as the child is confined within a tight regime of adult control, and locked within a confusing framework of signifiers that continually evade fixity. Hence child's play here is at the mercy of adult language which, like the Red Queen, continually makes up the rules, subjecting Alice to commands conducted in signs which implode with uncertainty and contradiction.

Critical claims, such as: 'a central truth about Alice ... is this: that Alice is a child in a world of mystifying adult behaviour'[14], whilst accurately highlighting the central confusion within Carroll's texts, is nevertheless attempting a misguided unified closure, by reducing the textual play to a 'central truth'. Batchelor's so-called 'emancipation' of Alice in his essay title suggests that the world inside the text is viewed through her eyes, where the reader has a child's-eye view, and can identify with the confusion of adult logic, where, 'the underlying message ... is a rejection of adult authority, a vindication of the rights

of the child, even the right of the child to self-assertion'[15]. Another critic claims: 'it was the coming to the surface, powerfully and permanently, the first unapologetic, undocumented appearance in print, for readers who sorely needed it, of liberty of thought in children's books'[16]. But there is little freedom in a social existence which interpellates and distorts the subject through language. Alice is viewed continuously - her dreams are penetrated by a narrative gaze which is skillfully concealed behind the lens of the texts.

This lack of freedom is stressed in *Looking-Glass* by Tweedledum and Tweedledee: 'why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream! If that there King was to wake ... you'd go out - bang! - just like a candle!' (p.238). Alice objects with the ultimate irony of 'I *am* real!' (p.239). Such metafictional awareness stresses the point that Alice is not free-thinking, but a linguistic construct, for beyond the sign she ceases to exist. As a child, she is nothing more than a desired 'dream-child' (p.23), suggesting that the social perception of childhood itself is just such a construct. She is not writing the text but is being written *by* the text and its adult authority:

> 'When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one! There ought to be a book written about me ... And when I

grow up, I'll write one.' (p.59).

This is a metafictional comment by a child character under adult control, who realises that linguistic authority does not rest with the child, but grown ups[17].

Alice is subject to several distorting gazes, not just that of the narrator: the White Rabbit mistakes her for his housemaid, Mary Ann; the pigeon insists, 'you're a serpent; and there's no use denying it' (p.76). The pigeon's language has interpellated Alice into this position as serpent and therefore it refuses to accept that Alice can be anything other. This classification also has echoes of the original Fall, where Alice as female child is perceived as a daughter of Eve, and so subjected to patriarchal stereotypes like 'serpent', where her innocence is undermined, as she recognises her self fragility: 'I'm never sure what I'm going to be, from one minute to another!' (p.77). So also the aforementioned Caterpillar destabilises her identity, 'because I'm not myself, you see' (p.67). The loss of identity between the enunciated 'I' and 'my' occurs in the distorted gaze of the viewer, 'you see', whose own metamorphic identity is projected onto the child, both surrounded by the hallucinogenic magic mushroom[18]. Like the distorting lens, the mushroom causes alterations to the subject, whose fluid construction passes through a dream narrative of narcotic language. That which is seen may not therefore appear as it seems to be:

> '"Be what you would seem to be" ... "Never
> imagine yourself not to be otherwise
> than what it might appear to others
> that what you were or might have been
> was not otherwise than what you had
> been would have appeared to them to be
> otherwise."' (p.122).

As the Duchess (not so) clearly asserts, the self is constructed through the assumed external gaze of 'seem' and 'appear' and so can never be unified, but always open to multiple interpretations, like language itself. However, it is this very openness which, importantly for the child and children's literature, does in fact have liberating potential because it focuses the concept of innocence as constructed misrepresentation, which can be deconstructed to incorporate the numerous facets of childhood. This is not the same freedom perceived by the critics cited earlier, but one which by its very demonstration of the child's interpellation through language, highlights the very fictionality of that preconceived subjected innocence.

Perhaps the most compelling and effective example of the child as linguistic construct occurs in 'The Lion and the Unicorn' chapter of *Looking-Glass*, itself an inter-textual development of an already formed nursery rhyme[19]. The ultimate irony surrounds the Unicorn who, as a fabulous monster of mythical creation, addresses Alice with the belief that children are 'fabulous monsters'

(p.287). Of course Alice *is* a fabulous monster, belonging to the fictional world of a book, just like the Unicorn. But, importantly, the suggestion is that all children are fabulous monsters: Frankensteinian creations in the hands of adult society and its linguistic framework. The child slides into the mythical context of fairy tales, where identity is taken to be a matter of 'let's pretend' (p.180), for 'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you' (p.287). The self becomes lost amidst the eternal shifting play of language, in a nightmarish game of belief pacts. The Lion and Unicorn proceed to address her as a monster, and this repetitive hailing leads Alice to step into the subject position constructed for her by answering to and identifying with her new label: '(she was getting quite used to being called "the Monster")' (p.290). It is the self-consciousness and absurdity of these authoritarian and often male voices which makes the *Alice* books a parody of children's literature, instead of merely an addition to it. By associating Alice with a 'fabulous monster' of mythology, the Unicorn, childhood itself, with its connotations of innocence, is presented as a fictional myth.

The sliding of identity with each changing signifier renders transparent fixity impossible, which Alice recognises by professing in *Looking-Glass* that 'things flow about so here!' (p.253), just before the sheep in

the shop asks if she is 'a child or a teetotum?' (p.253). Again this allusion to constructed identity is closely aligned with the application of a lens, as the sheep is 'look[ing] at her through a great pair of spectacles' (p.252). Piggins and Phillips offer a humourous, yet interesting essay about this chapter, suggesting that the elderly sheep's glasses, used for knitting, are then focused on Alice, which would cause blurring: 'the sheep left off her knitting to look at Alice *through* the lenses, an unlikely optical situation if the lenses were employed for a reading/knitting distance ... their power would be such that vision would be rapidly blurred'[20]. They also argue that sheep vision is very rarely in need of correction, which suggests that any lens would distort the sheep's view. This coincides with the rest of my argument that the child is viewed through a distorted, blurred lens which offers a misrepresentation of child-hood and, which in Carroll's texts, is self-consciously focused upon.

Evidently the child is as much a fictional creation as children's literature itself, both created by an adult desire for an enforced idealised space, insisting that 'I'm older than you, and must know better' (*Wonderland*, p.45). Tweedledum and Tweedledee disillusion Alice about her desperate clinging to the security of the symbolic order, saying 'you know very well you're not real' and 'you won't make yourself a bit realer by crying'

(*Looking-Glass*, p.239), as 'you're only a sort of thing in his dream!' (p.238). Any hope of her reality is lost amidst a layering of representations of herself, whereby Alice is part of the Red King's dream, who is part of her dream, who is part of the narrator's story, who is part of the author's book.

Just as Alice's subjectivity is seen to be constructed by an inadequate and fluid language, so too are other labels perceived to be arbitrary terms. Alice confirms her anti-Edenic social dependency when questioned about the purpose of names in *Looking-Glass*, which she concedes to be, 'no use to *them* [the people to whom they apply] ... but it's useful to the people that name them' (p.222). Again names are openly acknowledged to be part of a linguistic system of classification, devoid of substance or meaning, but essential to an ideological social framework, where "innocent child" is part of that grid. However, in Alice's dream worlds the unconscious provides a site for linguistic gaps, where continual parapraxes and slips of the tongue lead her to conclude that she is not herself, pondering in *Wonderland*, 'if I've been changed in the night? ... was I the same when I got up this morning? ... Who am I, then?' (pp.37-9). The 'wonder' which commences her questioning becomes disconcerting, as *Wonderland* is not a fun place, but one which reduces the subject to a non-entity.

Whereas contemporary adult novels presented texts in prose, this children's writing of the period includes poems in the text, which serve to distort and fragment any form of transparent story further, as they focus on the varying styles of language which exist within literary forms. Carroll further interrupts the expected narrative flow because poems come out of Alice's mouth as parodic alternatives to the original versions. Her attempt to recite Isaac Watts' poem, 'Against Idleness and Mischief' of 'How doth the little busy bee' (p.38) (promoting Christian values of hard work to counteract the evils of idleness), becomes 'How doth the little crocodile' (p.38), who does not appear to labour, but happily indulges in the pleasures of orality by welcoming fish into his 'gently smiling jaws' (p.38). Her repetition of Southey's moralising in which Father William attributes his health to his youthful sobriety ('abus'd not my health and my vigour at first', p.69, notes), becomes, in Alice's version, amazement at the old man's voracious appetite: 'you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak - /Pray how did you manage to do it?' (p.71). Also the songs sung by the Mock Turtle become parodic poems about edibles, such as 'whiting' and 'snail' (p.134), and 'Beautiful Soup' (p.141), which, being a potential ingredient himself, he sings 'in a voice choked with sobs' (p.141). The proverbial tears of the crocodile swim into a verse in *Looking-Glass* where the Walrus weeps copiously for the oysters which he and

the Carpenter consume with relish.

Orality features overwhelmingly in these books, where its erotic pleasure is tinged with an equally transgressive violence towards the nothingness of consumption's annihilating death. The earlier mention of Alice's consumption of food and drink almost leads to her own consumption by these products into a dark void: 'it might end ... in my going out altogether, like a candle' (p.32). This mention of candles in *Wonderland* echoes the continuing threat of nonexistence which Tweedledum and Tweedledee discuss in *Looking-Glass*, referred to earlier. Alice's almost obsessive orality[21] impulse is closely aligned with her cat, Dinah (notice how it *sounds* very much like diner), which carries the threat of annihilation to other textual bodies, like the Mouse, whom she addresses in French (again sliding between languages, showing the arbitrary nature of the sign), to ask where her cat is. Naturally, this induces a violent reaction from the mouse as potential dinner (not diner) for Dinah, forcing Alice to change the subject, having realised her tactlessness.

That error in choice is a potential parapraxis, as Alice's resolve not to mention such a predator to its potential prey again results in a repeated unconscious slip, as she once more has to apologise for admiring Dinah's mousing abilities. Though finally steering clear

of felines, she remains locked in a violent oral struggle, mentioning a dog which is an impressive ratter. Importantly, these slips occur whilst swimming in the Pool of Tears, as each conscious choice of subject is submerged in the fluidly persuasive unconscious, where oral desire emerges to the surface of the utterance. This Freudian slip continues as she mentions Dinah dining on birds - 'she'll eat a little bird as soon as look at it' (p.53), whilst in the company of potential feathered victims, who scurry off in terror, leaving her alone.

This transformation of character into food source is a kind of physical punning where one identity has two distinct values. Verbal puns are an important part of this difficulty of interpretation, where the mention of 'tale' conjures up the image of a 'tail' (p.50), which is then typographically shown on the page. The mouse's tale becomes a tail. As it is printed, each word diminishes in size until the final one, 'death' (p.51), aptly almost disintegrates into a dark void, as the mouse ends up in Fury's mouth. The play on 'not' and 'knot' (p.52), leads Alice to offer to 'help to undo it' (p52); she is as keen to unravel an interpretation from the mouse's tale as most critics are eager to unravel Carroll's texts. Again, this sliding of signifier leads to a metamorphosis of identity, as each linguistic interpellation alters the subject's position. The Duchess says 'pig!' in a tone of 'sudden violence', which is 'addressed to the baby'

(p.83), and not mentioned again until the baby begins to grunt, whereby it assumes the identity of its constructed position, becoming 'neither more nor less than a pig' (p.87). The self is as unstable as the signifier which labels it. The baby's identity is consumed by language, exaggerated by its presence in the kitchen, where the chain of its metamorphosis into a consumable product as pork occurs. From there it has the further potential of sliding into the rhyming identity of another consumable product, a 'fig' (p.90). It is hardly surprising, too, that the last part of the Cheshire Cat to dissolve is the mouth, and indeed its grin is its defining feature.

If identity disappears into the danger of becoming a consumable, the final consumer of all identities is time. The events of *Wonderland* start with a rabbit anxiously consulting his watch because he is 'late' (p.26). At the Mad Hatter's Tea-Party, time is literally submerged in an eternal tea-time: 'the March Hare took the watch and ... dipped it into his cup of tea' (p.96). In these language games tea is an anagram of eat, as the former easily pours into the latter. The Hatter explains that 'it's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles' (p.99): the conventional linear time structure of realist novels is fractured here, as the progression at the tea-table is circular, with the continual change of positions until, in the end, they must arrive back where they started.

Alice herself travels episodically and without temporal transitions through a broken chain of dream events. Thus, in *Looking-Glass*, she finds herself in a shop with a sheep (another close pairing of words) and then suddenly discovers that she is in a boat, and each shift is triggered by words, puns or associations, rather than temporal explanation. For example, the White Queen's identity slides into a sheep, as language hails the subject: 'Better! Be-e-e-etter! Be-e-ehh!' (p.252). Coupled with the "wooliness" of the language is the liquid surrounding their boat in the 'Wool and Water' chapter, where the fluidly changing subject is clearly signalled. As noted earlier, the sheep's distorted view of Alice through her spectacles, also adds to the instability of the subject, where it is uncertain whether Alice is child or teetotum. Alice finds it impossible to pin down any potential purchase in the shop, where objects slide around the shelves as she tries to focus on them, suggesting that the gaze inevitably leads to a shifting viewpoint.

Chronological normality is reversed as one has to walk in the opposite direction to reach a forward destination and run very fast to stay in the same place. Carroll does not remain bound by such moments of reverse logic, for Alice is neither continuously having to run, nor to move away from her destinations. Cause and effect are also subverted: the White Queen demonstrates this by

plastering her finger before cutting it, 'I haven't pricked it *yet* ... but I soon shall' (p.249), or when Alice must pass the cake round first 'and cut it afterwards' (p.290), for, as she is informed, 'the rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday - but never jam today ... That's the effect of living backwards' (p.247). The emphasis is on sound at the expense of sense; the sign stressing its importance, as the King of Hearts' repetition suggests in *Wonderland*: 'important - unimportant - important -' in a bid to find 'which word sounded best' (p.155).

During the trial scene, the clarification of meaning appears to be the crux of the accusatory dilemma, with the question of who stole or consumed the tarts. As orality in these texts tends to push the subject into a constantly deferred position, the mystery of the consumer is never solved, just as the anonymous author of the verses remains unidentified[22]. Subjectivity is intertwined with the sliding enunciation of impersonal pronouns, such as 'I', 'her' and 'you' (p.158)[23]. The King of Hearts attempts to associate the 'I' with the Knave of Hearts in an attempt to reduce the text to an authorial being, but its lack of fixed meaning renders this impossible, so 'we needn't try to find any' (p.159). Identity, then, flows out of control, just as the subject of the child moves beyond the recognisable face of innocence. Alice is a 'dream-child', a pawn in the game

of an invisible narrator, showing that childhood is the mythical construction of adult desire. Ultimately it creates Frankensteinian 'fabulous monsters', where reality is subverted to the nightmare of wish-fulfilment, resulting in a subject which is as shattered as Humpty Dumpty's shell.

What is ultimately desired is to hold at bay the forward motion of time, which brings with it the death of the child to adulthood. *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), a nonsense poem, demonstrates this awareness of time by the ringing of the bell, as the Bellman passes through each narrative scene. As the ship's captain, his presence saturates the text with a sense of foreboding, marking the passing of time and its impending mortality, as he steers his crew towards annihilation. Like the authoritative figures in the *Alice* books, he is preoccupied with the urgency of time; he hastily informs the Baker that 'we have hardly a minute to waste!'[24], and then 'angrily tingled his bell' (p.64) to quicken the pace of the narrative and lead his crew on towards the hunt at the centre of the text. What is discovered at the centre, however, is a vacuous nonexistence, like the map which charts them towards it, 'a perfect and absolute blank' (p.56), where the subject is consumed by an indescribable nonentity, the 'fabulous monster' of fiction, here namely the Boojum.

The Baker's (his profession involves consumption of course) loss of selfhood through his forgotten name reaches the ultimate point of loss here, as 'the ominous words, "It's a Boo -"' (p.94) breaks off at the end, as he meets his own end, both sentence and subject's existence being interrupted and consumed by a dark void of silence. The dash at the point of the Baker's consumption echoes Alice's halted oral utterances in *Wonderland*, such as 'it kills all the rats and -' (p.43), 'I once tasted -' (p.131), 'I've often seen them at dinn-' (p.135), and in a parodied verse, 'concluded the banquet by -' (p.140). The threat of oral annihilation throughout the *Alice* books ultimately occurs in the *Snark*, as the self is consumed in a terrifying and erotic act. He stands:

> On the top of a neighbouring crag,
>
> Erect and sublime, for one moment of time.
> In the next, that wild figure they saw
> (As if stung by a spasm) plunge into a chasm. (pp.93-4).

Gardner's notes also recognise the erotic implications, saying that:

> 'Many children have some fabled ogre,' writes
> Phyllis Greenacre ... 'often in animal form,
> or some "secret", with which they scare each
> other and themselves ... Psychoanalysis
> reveals that it is generally some represent-
> ation of the primal scene, in which the
> sexual images of the parents are fused into
> a frightening or awe-inspiring single figure.
> This is probably ... the significance of the

> *Snark*, in which the last "fit" is an acting out of the primal scene with the Baker first standing "erect and sublime" and then plunging into the chasm between the crags.' (p.94).

The Boojum, then, is seen as a form of childhood sexualised bogeyman[25], but what is not recognised is that this is *not* the child's imaginary eroticism. It is a sexual phantom created by an adult for children and, as such, is full of paedophilic implications, just as the bogeyman also stems from adult suggestion[26].

Ultimately, then, the Baker disappears through the mouth of an invisible linguistic creation[27]. Guiliano suggests that the *Snark* 'is a poem with much of the *Alices* in it, "a kind of *Alice in Wonderland* without Alice", as one commentator has remarked'[28]. Just as childhood becomes a 'fabulous monster' in the *Alice* books, where the child is constantly under threat of annihilation, in the *Snark* Alice as the child has disappeared, perhaps already in the mouth of that other fabulous monster, the Boojum. Fabulous monsters, then, are fictional creations of adult authority, where the child is subjected to the play of postlapsarian desire. Stepping into the realm of mythology, the child is constructed through a narrative lens, which ultimately distorts and misrepresents, as will be discussed in *The Coral Island*.

1.Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994, rev. edn. First published, 1984), p.83.

2.Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* (1865) in ed. and intro. by Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970. First published in USA, 1960), p.28. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text. *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland* will be cited as *Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872) will be cited as *Looking-Glass*.

3.For a more in-depth discussion of the relation of the *Alice* books to modernism, see Juliet Dusinberre, *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art* (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1987).

4.Lacan, of course, was more closely to associate the unconscious with language. His work on 'The mirror stage' in *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977) is also applicable to my discussion of lenses, espcecially as Alice passes through a mirror, leading to a distortion of identity. Cited in ed. by Antony Easthope, *Contemporary Film Theory* (London: Longman, 1993).

5.See Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, tr. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971). For a useful extract, see 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1970), Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp.50-58.

6.Carroll always claimed that the riddle *had* no answer (see Gardner's note on p.95 of *The Annotated Alice*) but a multitude were supplied by readers, inevitably adults who wanted to know what the answer was. The adult need for an answer is so great that they will create one. Alice is here being at her most extreme imitation of an adult in a way, with her affront when told there is no answer, instead of it being a joke to be shared.

7.This idea is mentioned in my introduction, but receives a fuller comment in the chapters concerning *The Secret Garden* and *A Child's Garden of Verses*, where reference to Rousseau and Froebel is made in relation to the concept of the innocent child in an Edenic setting.

8.Isaiah, Ch.11, v.6-8 in *The Holy Bible*, Authorized King James Version (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.).

9.Biblically, this distortion between lens and world is also upheld in I Corinthians, Ch.13, v.12 in *The Holy Bible*, Authorized King James Version, where it states that: 'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face'.

10.Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, tr. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Cited in Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p.155.

11.Carroll himself was a keen photographer, especially of female children, which is further discussed in Helmut Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll - Photographer* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1969).

12.For further discussion of the paedophilic desire in the *Alice* books, see 'The Wonder Child in Neverland' chapter in James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992).

13.Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.13.

14.John Batchelor, 'Dodgson, Carroll, and the Emancipation of Alice' in Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs, ed., *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.181.

15.Robert Phillips, ed., *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as Seen Through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981. First published, 1972), p.125.

16.Dusinberre, *Alice to the Lighthouse*, p.37.

17.My chapter on *A Child's Garden of Verses* also focuses on the adult as creator of the child's text.

18.Gardner's notes refer to 'the hallucinogenic properties of certain mushrooms. When eaten they cause hallucinations concerning size and distance' in *The Annotated Alice*, p.73.

19.The nursery rhyme says:

> The lion and the unicorn
> Were fighting for the crown;
> The lion beat the unicorn
> All round about the town.
>
> Some gave them white bread,
> And some gave them brown;
> Some gave them plum cake
> And drummed them out of town.

The rivalry is popularly believed to be that between England and Scotland, when, after the Act of Union (1707), a new British coat of arms displayed the English lion and Scottish unicorn.
This information is derived from Iona and Peter Opie, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. First published, 1951), p.269.

20.David Piggins and Clive Phillips, 'Sheep Vision in *Through the Looking Glass*' in *Jabberwocky: The Journal of the Lewis Carroll Society*, Spring 1994, Vol.23, No.2, p.33.

21.My chapter on *The Secret Garden* further discusses the use of orality with reference to Freud's argument concerning child sexuality.

22.Nigel Hand presents an interesting discussion of the trial scene's anonymous verses in relation to Carroll as author in 'Anxieties of Authorship in the Alice Books; or, 'Sentence first - verdict afterwards': The Trial of Lewis Carroll', in Neil Broadbent, Ann Hogan, Gillian Inkson, & Maggie Miller, ed., *Researching Children's Literature - A Coming of Age?* (LSU Publications, 1994). Noticing that 'these untitled verses are people only by pronouns' (p.38), he goes on to suggest that 'The question of authorship and the question of interpretation turn out, of course, to be one and the same. There is no determinate answer to the question 'what does it mean?' - because the question 'who is speaking/writing?' cannot be settled ... in the trial scene, Carroll's writing does (as it were) interrogate itself, in a perplexed and perplexing way. In an extraordinary modern fashion the author evidently senses that writing itself puts the identity of the writing subject in question. Roughly speaking, then, the Carrollesque, anxiety is that the writing self has no determinate being, that writing opens up a kind of absence' (p.40). That absence remains at the very heart of children's literature as a genre which is presumed to retain the security of child as absolute innocent within a textual framework of linguistic innocence. Needless to say that safety is surrounded by the shadow of adult desire, where the child is nothing but a constructed 'fabulous monster'.

23.Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, pp.21-2, states that: 'when we speak, there is an "I" behind the statement, who is never the same as the person or thing to which we refer, even when (or especially when) we are speaking about ourselves (that "about" in itself reveals the distance between these two moments of an apparent identity). "Enunciation" is the term for that division in language which speaking to anyone (including children) necessarily reveals. It marks a potential dislocation at the heart of any utterance (that same dislocation which Freud identified at its most insistent in the gap between the dreamer and the message of his or her dream). Above all, it undermines the idea of language as a simple tool of communication by allowing us to ask what might be the relationship - of procurement or desire - which holds between the one who speaks and what he or she offers as the innocence of their statement'.

24.Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark* in Martin Gardner, ed. and intro., *The Annotated Snark* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987. First published, 1876). Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text. The title will be shortened to *Snark*.

25.See, for example, my chapters on *Treasure Island* and *A Child's Garden of Verses* for an fuller account of the paedophilic bogeyman.

26.See Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. First published, 1984), p70. They state: '**Bogey**, an imaginary being invoked by adults to frighten children into good behaviour'.

27.The *Snark*'s illustrator, Henry Holiday, offered a representation of the Boojum, but this was suppressed by Carroll: 'Mr Dodgson wrote that it was a delightful monster, but that it was inadmissable. All his descriptions of the Boojum were quite unimaginable, and he wanted the creature to remain so'. Cited in *The Annotated Snark*, p.18. The fluid indescribability of the Boojum, of course, adds to its potential menace, as it heightens its dark bogeyman qualities.

28.Edward Guiliano, 'Lewis Carroll, Laughter and Despair, and *The Hunting of the Snark*' in Harold Bloom, ed., *Modern Critical Views: Lewis Carroll* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987).

Chapter 3 - 'The Broken Telescope' - Misrepresentation in *The Coral Island*

The importance of lenses in the previous chapter, where the subject is viewed and constructed through the narrative gaze, is equally relevant in an analysis of Robert Michael Ballantyne's novel of boyhood adventure, *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858). Rose perceives Ballantyne's text to be a prime example of realism in children's literature, in its sense of innocent language and childhood. She says that:

> In *The Coral Island*, there is an explicit link made between moral order and linguistic truth. The book is a type of 'look and learn' where the children acquire knowledge of the natural world and an understanding of their moral superiority over the savages at one and the same time. Seeing with their own eyes, telling the truth and documenting without falsehood - what characterises the child's vision is its innocence in both senses of the term (moral purity and the undistorted registering of the surrounding world). The stress is constantly on empirical verification, on objects and on facts.[1]

Whilst there is an inherent accuracy in this statement, as there are factual accounts within the text, what Rose

seems to overlook is the instability of the fiction's linguistic innocence.

Children's literature may imply a quality of transparent purity of text, yet within it there arise problematic ruptures of language, rendering the fixity of meaning unstable. There may be accurate accounts of 'lemonade' made from cocoa-nuts and other observations on natural history, but the claim for truth about savages is built upon a whole mass of colonialist discourse legitimising Western intervention: in itself such literature is nothing more than a hegemonistic fiction which purports to be factual. In Ballantyne's novel, that instability between fact and fiction is subtly embedded within its surface veneer of white ideology - it is a case of self viewing other, not through a clear-cut "look and learn", but 'through a glass, darkly'[2]; through 'the broken telescope'[3]. It is an instability which consistently undercuts any claims for truth in the novel, as there is a sense of discomfort between the subject and how it is (mis)represented, and an uncertainty between the presentation of good and evil.

Children's fiction provides an ideal genre for Ballantyne because it elicits expectations of truth and reliability, so acting as an excellent and influential vehicle to convey colonialist propaganda. The conjunction of children and island results in a mutual

construction whereby these English boys are replanted as innocent Christian children on their island of 'ancient Paradise' (p.28), where 'we had often wondered whether Adam and Eve had found Eden more sweet' (p.187). It is in accord with Rousseau and Froebel's belief that the innocent child ought to be subjected to the innocence of nature, which is further discussed in later chapters of this thesis. Ballantyne's boys are placed amidst the beauty of a remote island, beyond the impurity of western adult social influence and authority, where they live in a sheltered 'rustic bower' (p.29) of Edenic bliss.

Alone in Paradise they begin to educate themselves through direct contact with the wonders of nature, all of which are attributed to the splendour of the Christian God, whom Ralph consistently praises; 'my thoughts again turned to the great and kind Creator of this wonderful world' (pp.32-3). Apparently it takes a western eye to appreciate such beauty as being from the work of God, for the natives are portrayed as ignorant of such splendour. Ralph's words are spoken, however, with a tinge of irony, for there is a close alignment between this Creator as the Christian God and the western concept of authorship, where the beauty created is an image conjured by words on a page[4]. As narrator, Ralph in a sense becomes that creator, as the gaze slips from marvelling at God's work to the appreciation by the reader of a fictional presentation of that real world. Being a fictional

creation, it is also a misrepresentation for, like the broken lens, the textual language stands between and in place of the world it attempts to reflect.

Factual description within the narrative is based heavily on visibility (what Rose calls "look and learn"), where the narrative gaze is equated with knowledge and power over the island and savages. Edward Said argues that it is this western patriarchal gaze which constructs and thereby controls the other, providing a discourse *about* the subject under scrutiny and silencing its own voice as being incapable of self-knowledge:

> Only an Occidental could speak of Orientals, for example, just as it was the White Man who could designate and name the coloreds, or nonwhites ... [so keeping] the Oriental-colored to his position of *object studied by the Occidental-white.*[5]

Similarly, in Ballantyne's text the native's voice is erased and, when focused upon at all, is only to utter a stereotypical western mimicry, overshadowing the other and placing it within an English echo chamber of translated language. Textual authority, then, belongs to the boys of Empire and the fiction of colonialist discourse which they carry with them to overwhelm and "save" the savage from itself, aided by Christian hegemony, though that discourse is also itself reversed and destabilised at points in the text.

To enhance its false sense of factual security, the narrative provides educational accounts of the island's resources, for the benefit of its intended western boy readers. This is achieved by the boy characters looking at objects and providing a direct account in terms of function, so attempting to reduce the difficulty of relation between sign and material referent, as the gaze focuses directly upon what is linguistically described. It is a Robinsonade (a genre influenced by *Robinson Crusoe*) style which equates with Rousseau's recommendation of a direct language for children, denying that language itself is inherently contradictory and problematic. It is also an attempt to control, as well as make sense of the world, for the gaze projects an identity onto what is seen, so maintaining a power and knowledge of self from the external other. The novel becomes a powerful source of knowledge for the reader about how the island and natives differ from "home", whilst simultaneously legitimising western authority over what is being described.

The ways of the native and its habitation, according to colonialist ideology, can only be explained by the discourse of Empire, demonstrated through such passages as: 'Jack told us that this tree is one of the most valuable in the islands of the south ... and that it constitutes the principal food of many of the islanders' (p.43). Jack's information derives from reading books

written by westerners *about* the native and its islands, saying that 'I have been a great reader of books of travel and adventure all my life, and that has put me up to a good many things' (p.25). Jack goes on to enable Peterkin to quench his thirst by informing him of 'lemonade' from cocoa-nuts, affirming that 'I once read that the green nuts contain that stuff, and you see it is true!' (p.27). His knowledge allows him to take charge of the situation, as it equates with a sense of power.

As narrator, Ralph meticulously discusses objects examined on the island to contribute to the reader's education, so adhering to the Victorian belief that children's 'fiction should entertain but not divert its readers from useful knowledge and proper conduct'[6]. This, in turn, legitimises the novel as being more than sensational adventure, as each phenomenon is pinned down to the sobering and educative realm of fact, for:

> When I call this substance cloth I do not exaggerate. Indeed, with regard to all the things I saw during my eventful career in the South Seas, I have been exceedingly careful not to exaggerate, or in any way to mislead or deceive my readers. (p.68).

Throughout this fiction there is the perpetual ironic claim that it is a collation of factual information, much like a captain's log of seafaring accounts, each chapter providing a synopsis heading of the forthcoming details, rather than a sensationalised western view of the other

and its environment. In the mouth of an idealised innocent how could these details be anything but the absolute truth? Innocence, facts, truth - each reassuring certainty becomes increasingly sinister when used as a disguise for colonialist discourse, the very intention of which is 'to exaggerate ... mislead or deceive' in the name of economic expansion. Money, exploitation, white supremism - none of these sit very comfortably beside the claim for children's literary innocence.

The text's linguistic structure, however, refuses to permit such innocent expectations to remain comfortable bedfellows with colonialism. The recognition that the claim for transparent precision is tinged with an ironic flavour, given that *The Coral Island* is a work of *fiction*, effectively disrupts and contradicts the imperialism which is one of the idioms of the author. He himself is a contradiction as a colonialist. He worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, whose philosophy was 'the complete subjection of the Indian tribes ... The ruthlessness and enterprise of these early pioneers quickly yielded results and valuable furs and other goods brought in by the defeated Indians were soon being despatched to London in ever increasing quantities'[7]. He is also a Scot, and so a colonised other of 'dear old England' (p.335), perhaps in the same schizophrenic vein as the native missionary in *The Coral Island*.

Just as Jack's aura of superiority stems from his literary knowledge of the South Pacific islands, so too does Ballantyne's information for his novel rely on western textual authority. The truth of what Jack has 'once read' in books of 'travel and adventure' is demonstrated, as already shown, regarding the cocoa-nut. By passing this information on in his tale of travel and adventure, Ralph is providing his reader with the same knowledge of truth. Jack visits the coral island in the imagination of the story's narrator which is related in a fictional novel written by Ballantyne.

It was only in the author's imagination that he ever visited the South Pacific, as his only knowledge of it is derived from stories of 'travel and adventure':

> when a third story was wanted I was compelled to seek new fields of adventure in the books of travellers. Regarding the Southern seas as the most romantic part of the world ... I mentally and spiritually plunged into those warm waters, and the dive resulted in *The Coral Island*.[8]

In essence Ballantyne has written a fiction based on fiction[9], for 'his text may be regarded ... as inhabiting a textual web of imitations and mediated borrowings'[10]. According to Quayle, the greatest borrowing appears to be from 'a book which had appeared in 1852 ... if one reads James Bowman's *The Island Home; or, The Young Cast-Aways*,

one can feel little doubt that many of the incidents which appear in Ballantyne's best-seller were culled by the author from this obscure fictional work'[11].

This effectively slides the innocent truth of *The Coral Island* into a sea of intertextuality, as one is submerged in layer upon layer of fiction, which stands between the reader and what is being narrated. The view of the South Pacific is distorted, presenting a shattered lens of kaleidoscopic misrepresentations, which renders the authority of Christianising the savage unstable. It is interesting to note that Ballantyne himself admits to an error when relying solely on linguistic accounts of the other's natural history:

> I fell into a blunder through ignorance in regard to a familiar fruit ...I admit that this was a slip, but ... I have always laboured to be true to fact, and to nature, even in my wildest flights of fancy.[12]

The error is when he has Peterkin drink the 'lemonade' from a cocoa-nut which his penknife has bored a hole in, as the penknife would not have been appropriate for the task. Ironically, though, Ballantyne goes on to make the contradictory claim of truth even in his 'wildest flights of fancy', which usefully encapsulates the aspiration of colonialist fiction, such as *The Coral Island*.

The seemingly insignificant reference to the broken

telescope lens can be seen as a highly important textual parapraxis, enabling the reader to see how subjectivity is a distorted construction of the narrative gaze. Innocence becomes a voyeuristically constructed fiction, where the "true" child is exhibited in front of a shattered lens to fulfill its interpellated and false position within the realm of idealised childhood. When Ralph, as *adult* narrator reflecting on his boyhood adventure, recalls that 'I cannot understand why I kept such a firm hold of this telescope ... as the glass at the small end was broken to pieces' (p.19), one may recognise that this sets up the entire text as a *misrepresentation* of both child and native, so sliding realism into a tempestuous Pacific Ocean of undercurrents beneath its facade of calm. Childhood becomes as much an other as the savage, for both are interpellated into subject positions, which are perceived through broken glass, where they emerge as hyperbolic grotesque images[13], serving the desire of the observer's gaze, who constructs the image for its own illicit pleasure. The shattered glass becomes an image of the textual rupture; each fragment reflects part of the fragmented subject, so that many identities are apparent within its splintered lens. The self is composed of a deferred and sliding subject which is interpellated through a constructed linguistic gaze, which often blurs into the realm of other.

The native is infantilised further than the actual western child, becoming subjected to the latter's cultural authority, enabling its education or assimilation to European norms and values. This is achieved through a subtle blend of chivalry and Christianity, both of which serve to legitimise intervention, to "save" the native. In pursuance of the chivalric mode, language acquires the role of dehumanising the native, in order to present the role of Empire as a taming the beast or the ejection of the serpent from a westernised Eden. So the apparently unimportant passing reference to 'Jack the Giant Killer' (p.75) is actually one of the cornerstones of *The Coral Island*.

When the boys first encounter the natives, the latter are introduced as 'these giants' (p.174) of seemingly superhuman power, who are nevertheless defeated and 'awe-struck by the sweeping fury of Jack' (p.179). The boys intervene to save the archetypal damsel in distress from the monstrous other - 'she was a woman in distress, and that was enough to secure to her the aid of a Christian man' (p.335); chivalry is closely intertwined with Christianity. Indeed in the fairy tale, Jack kills the *Welsh* giant, Blunderbore, proving to be a great English hero against cannibalistic giants, who threatens to devour the Empire with the words:

> Fe, fi, fo, fum,
> I smell the blood of an Englishman,
> Be he living or be he dead

> I'll grind his bones to be my bread.[14]

Thus the boys of Empire adopt the role of crusaders, ridding the land of impurities and defending the honour of sweet maidens (who, being female, cannot help themselves, in accord with patriarchal presentations), just as St. George killed a human-devouring Eastern dragon in the name of Christendom[15]. The western defence of Avatea from the savages, saves not only her life, but also her soul. She is freed from the constraints of a native wedding to marry her Christian lover, so enhancing the link between colonialism and Christianity as saviour of the native.

An array of images instils the reader with a sense of horror of the native, such as 'incarnate fiends' (p.173), 'they looked more like demons than human beings' (p.173), 'the most terrible monster I ever beheld' (pp.173-4), 'these giants' (p.174), 'a wild shout' (p.174), and 'the monsters cut slices of flesh from his body, and, after roasting them slightly over the fire, devoured them' (p.175). The native, in order to uphold the colonialist discourse and legitimate its existence in a children's novel, acquires the role of bogeyman[16], the sexualised other created by adults to instil fear in the child's mind and create a scapegoat for "normal" adult love of the child. It is hardly surprising that one of Ballantyne's stereotypes of the native is a subhuman primitive cannibal, as this emphasises the need for

western intervention against the giant who smells the blood of, and apparently wants to devour, the Englishman.

Such an indulgent insatiable appetite might also be closely associated with childhood sexuality, so creating a further slip beneath the textual innocence. It is highly threatening that this cannibalistic appetite is indulged out of a sense of sheer *pleasure*, as it suggests an erotic satisfaction. To authenticate this colonialist propaganda, the narrator must claim it as factual evidence. Ironically, it is not the upstanding English boys who educate us in this perversity of consumption, but the murdering pirate, Bloody Bill, who says:

> 'there's thousands o' people in England who are sich born drivellin' *won't-believers* that they think the black fellows hereaways at the worst eat an enemy only now an' then, out o' spite; whereas I know for certain ... that the Feejee Islanders eat not only their enemies but one another; and they do it not for spite, but for pleasure. It's a *fact* that they prefer human flesh to any other.' (p.219).

This effectively blackens the image of the savage further, for if a buccaneer can be disgusted at the native diet, then it is guaranteed that an innocent child of the Christian Empire will be morally outraged. At the same time, it retains the safe assurance that such atrocities can only occur in dark continents, and not be endorsed by even our

blackest criminals, so maintaining an extra distance between the native and its worst western counterpart. His words become part of the colonialist discourse[17] to justify western intervention to 'the people [back home] in England'. Yet textually, the placing of such 'fact' into the mouth of an untrust-worthy pirate serves to undermine the authority of the utterance, and perhaps relates it to the fictional yarns of seafarers.

Bill goes on to say that:

> 'these blackguards eat men an' women just as readily as they eat pigs; and, as baked pigs and baked men are very like each other in appearance, they call men *long* pigs.' (p.239).

Yet the human and the pig merge into an indistinguishable identity, as the boys themselves indulge in eating numerous animal pigs as opposed to human pigs, the savage delicacy. The textual framework threatens to rupture at this point, for narrative authority is lost amidst an interplay of signifiers, which slide along an insecure chain of reference. Similarly, the baby in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, slips from human to pig, and the pig trots off beyond its textual boundaries, as its subjectivity fluidly spills out of control. In fiction nothing can be fixed to transparent meaning.

Cannibalism, then, is a phenomenon which incorporates a degree of oral eroticism within the presumed

innocent genre of children's fiction, but here it also disrupts the fixity of identity between human and animal. The so-called factual account that pleasure is the reason for savage cannibalism is, of course, as fictional as the entire novel and, as colonial discourse, served the western psyche with images of the other:

> the thought of cannibalism ... preyed on the Victorian mind. Eating human flesh was not part of the Fijians' everyday diet; it contributed to periodic rituals. In Ballantyne's adventure, the islander's consumption of flesh turns into an insatiable appetite.[18]

This gross exaggeration of native practice seems to link closely with the western view of the other's sexual appetite[19]. Orality as such within children's fiction is very much associated with the child's polymorphously perverse sexuality[20], thereby disrupting the innocence of child and genre. Ralph, Jack and Peterkin indulge in this consumption throughout the text:

> having thus cut off the two hind-legs [of the pig], he made several deep gashes in them, thrust a sharp-pointed stick through each, and stuck them up before the blaze to roast. The wood-pigeon was then split open. (p.90).

The language employed here is eroticised, with such terminology as 'cut', 'deep gashes', 'thrust a sharp-pointed stick through', and 'split open', as the adult

narrator is carried away on a descriptive feast. This 'luxurious supper' (p.90) progresses to 'a feast consisting of hot rolls ... roast pig, roast duck, boiled and roasted yams, cocoa-nuts, taro, and sweet potatoes ... plums, apples, and plantains' (p.133)[21].

This voraciousness is also, I would argue, metonymic of the appetite of Empire, where the island, as well as its edibles are claimed by the boys:

> 'We've got an island all to ourselves. We'll take possession in the name of the king; we'll go and enter the service of its black inhabitants. Of course we'll rise, naturally, to the top of affairs. White men always do in savage countries.' (p.16).

Like the unstable signifiers of human and pig, it makes the concept of cannibalism insecure, rendering western consumerism ambiguous in its own condemnation of the savage appetite. Said argues that:

> scarcely a corner of life was untouched by the facts of empire; the economies were hungry for overseas markets, raw materials, cheap labour, and hugely profitable land ... But there is more than that to imperialism and colonialism. There was a commitment to them over and above profit ... which, on the one hand allowed decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples *should* be subjuga-ted, and, on the other, replenished

> metropolitan energies so that these
> decent people could think of the *imperium*
> as a protracted, almost metaphysical
> obligation to rule subordinate, inferior,
> or less advanced peoples.[22]

The oral imagery effectively describes colonialism's insatiable appetite, which is 'hungry' for exploitative trade, often feasting on edible products like 'spices' and 'sugar'[23]. Said also raises the crucial point about the colonialist discourse which exists in *The Coral Island*, namely that westerners are led to believe that they are enlightening the native. Bloody Bill, quoted earlier says that those back in England must know that the behaviour of the savages is a 'fact'. Later, the native missionary implores the boys:

> 'that if you ever return to England, you
> will tell your Christian friends that
> the horrors which they hear in regard
> to these islands are *literally true* ...
> You may also tell them ... of the bles-
> sings that the Gospel has wrought *here!*' (p.297).

To legitimise western intervention further, these words are placed in the mouth of the converted other, as he is portrayed as being grateful to his saviours. Not only is his country appropriated, but so too is his native voice, as the words are mimicked by western dialogue in Ralph's narrative. This again questions the authority of the text's colonialism, as it is presented as an imaginative performance of a narrative voice mimicking other voices.

The hegemonistic view that western influence is for the native's own good, then, is expressed through gratitude for its intervention being placed in the renegade other's mouth by the adult narrator of Empire. Behind the converted savages' appeals to the greatness of Christianity, one may hear with sceptical ears the persuading voice of colonialism from an English narrator, as the native voices become crude masks of western discourse:

> 'We, who live in these islands of the sea, know that the true Christians always act thus. Their religion is one of love and kindness. We thank God that so many Christians have been sent here; we hope many more will come.' (p.335).

What better legitimisation could a novel have than the gratitude of the converted savage that this is truly an innocent children's text of 'fact'? But the language does not permit this fixed interpretation, for there is a level of irony in its dialogue. As the words are created by a western narrator, the enunciated 'we' is blurred, as the subject behind its utterance becomes obscured.

Such comments undermine the apparent requirement for a reliable text in children's fiction. Language refuses to allow meaning to become settled and instead opts to swim on its own tide of high sea adventure. Importantly, this fluid surrounds the novel's setting which is, of course, an island, suggesting (as we have noted in the

Alice chapter) that such slips will be an unavoidable occurrence. At the beginning of the narrative one is prepared for this instability, for Ralph himself is 'born on the foaming bosom of the broad Atlantic Ocean' (p.1), hinting that his subjectivity will parallel the changing tides of 'the great watery waste' (p.1). Immediately afterwards, he informs the reader that 'Rover was not my real name, but ... I see no good reason why I should not introduce myself to the reader as Ralph Rover' (p.3). It leaves us to doubt this fictional narrator's constructed identity or mask, whose desire to go to sea is fuelled by enticing tales from sailors, which 'captivated and charmed my imagination ... [where] men were wild, blood-thirsty savages, excepting in those favoured isles to which the Gospel of our Saviour had been conveyed' (p.4). When 'the hoisting of the anchor on deck' (p.6) is done and Ralph sets sail, there is a sense of unanchored subjectivity, as the ship and its novel are cast adrift on an ocean already fictionalised, leaving one to question his claims for truth as being nothing more than the authorising of tales heard in his boyhood, just as Ballantyne based his story on other stories. The solidity of truth dissolves amidst a shattered lens of multiple tales of adventure, where the text metafictionally comments on its own status as a presentation of fact.

The boys are set free to live on an island away from

adult control, but described by an adult, who inscribes his values on them. Ralph clutches the broken telescope because, as adult narrator reconstructing a childhood event, he is misrepresenting that adventure. Of course the book is a fiction, but within that it is possible to read it as the escapist invention of its adult narrator into a desired and lost ideal childhood, only retrievable in his imagination. The text at this level becomes a paradigm of itself in a dual fiction, where Ralph is narrating his story, but also self-consciously symbolising the adult narrator in children's fiction, who reconstructs and thus misrepresents childhood through a shattered narrative gaze. The paedophilic pleasure of this is that the adult narrator wrecks these innocents on an isolated Edenic island and views them in a constructed laboratory through a broken, distorted lens. In much the same way, Ralph, the imagined child, observes his highly artificial 'miniature Pacific' (p.107), where 'our burning-glass ... enabled me to magnify, and so to perceive more clearly the forms and actions of these curious creatures of the deep' (p.61). Once more it is the concept that seeing is knowledge which, in turn, becomes power over that being seen, whether it is natural history, native or child: all of which are closely studied by the Victorians.

The Coral Island, then, is an extension of the narrator's imagination which stored the ingredients for a

recipe of sea adventure and blood-thirsty savages, tamed by the Gospel and its chivalric representatives. Innocence is perpetually threatened, for the novel continually casts doubt upon its own claims for truth, by basing the narrator's thirst for adventure on boyhood stories (who then recites his own very similar boyhood story of adventure). The present story offered as truth becomes another tall tale confirming the stereotypes that "charmed" the child's imagination. He had wanted to find 'wild, bloodthirsty savages', so naturally discovers them. The "realistic" tale joins such mythic nursery texts as 'Jack the Giant-Killer', rupturing the transparent closure of the text, as it swims into other genres and time-scales. It also hints at its fairy tale components of anti-realism, such as metaphor and unbelievability. Truth is also problematised in "factual" accounts for, 'only in the nineteenth century did European historians of the Crusades begin *not* to allude to the practice of cannibalism among the Frankish knights, even though eating human flesh is mentioned unashamedly in contemporary Crusader chronicles'[24]. Ballantyne's nineteenth century fiction condemns the other as heathenish cannibal in the name of truth, but its textual parapraxis suggests that the selective historical silencing of western acts is voiced in the dubious intentions of colonialist Christianity, which devours weaker nations.

Ralph, as narrator, is hardly the prototype of innocence which Rose perceives him to be, but an adult, with a wealth of experience and story-telling behind him. As such, the narrative is economical with the truth, whatever that might be, appropriating it as a licence to rule. That word 'truth' occurs in the native's dialogue towards the end of the novel (quoted earlier), when he refers to the boys as 'true Christians' (p.335) for chivalrously defending Avatea. Ironically, the speaker himself is a converted savage, thus Christian, but apparently by his own admission, not a *true* Christian. Or, more accurately, he is not English, for it still remains 'their religion' (p.335), as Ralph's allusion to the speaker as 'the savage' (p.334) demonstrates. Even though he is a native chief, he can still be condescendingly alluded to by Jack (a child in a children's text) as 'my lad' (p.334), since the purpose of western colonial discourse to infantilise and belittle the native, serves to legitimise Mother England's intervention.

This contradiction of even the converted heathen still being other occurs again in relation to the native missionary when not he, but an English missionary succeeds when 'sent' to 'unloose[d] the bonds of the captive, and set the prisoners free' (p.332), as an authority of 'true' Christianity. The native becomes the binary opposite of the truthful English; an opposition

that remains despite the native missionary's attempt to assert his own probity and make it only the heathen who is false: 'Tararo ... is a man of falsehood, as all the unconverted savages are' (p.313). Again this is spoken by the native missionary himself to maximise the legitimacy of colonial intervention and, ironically, confirms his own deceitful nature beyond the word of the Gospel. To remain true he must ape or echo English concepts and language, being swallowed into their acculturation and erased of any sense of self. Even with the saving Word, however, the native remains a step removed from the 'true Christian', not being western, for it is 'their religion', and so he is continuously shifted between the identities of embracer of God's truth and inherent disrupter of that truth.

Truth therefore is identified with the English in this narrative, who display chivalrous acts in the name of Christendom: both signifiers intertwine and seem to merge, for to be English is to be truthful. When the narrator expostulates, 'O reader, this is no fiction ... It was witnessed. It is true' (p.248), the text is behaving in its appropriate Robinsonade tradition of merely recording facts. Identifying with fictional characters and being lured into a text by a convincing story-teller is the aim, especially so in children's fiction, where truth and innocence are interdependent[25]. The narrative techniques are not, however, so purely

naive as I have hitherto maintained. The novel ponders solemnly over the potential failure of the English to act up to the height of their imperial mission. The boys are not Christian in the evangelical practising sense, but only born in a Christian country, as are the pirates. This causes another gap in the text, where its narrative claims are undermined for, as Ralph himself admits:

> I now reflected, with great sadness and self-reproach, on the way in which I had neglected my Bible; and it flashed across me that I was actually in the sight of God a greater sinner than this blood-stained pirate; for, thought I, he tells me that he never read the Bible, and was never brought up to care for it; whereas I was carefully taught to read it by my own mother. (pp.261-2).

The native missionary, himself not a 'true Christian', also points out this discrepancy, as 'he pressed us more closely in regard to our personal interest in religion, and exhorted us to consider that our souls were certainly in as great danger as those of the wretched heathen' (p.302). Truth becomes increasingly problematised, heard rather than spoken by the westerner here and rejected, for:

> 'if such be your unhappy case, you are, in the sight of God, much worse than these savages ... for they have no knowledge, no light, and do not profess to believe; while you, on the contrary, have been brought up in the light of the blessed

> Gospel, and call yourselves Christians. These poor savages are indeed the enemies of our Lord; but you, if ye be not true believers, are traitors!' (pp.302-3).

Although this could be mere evangelising to the child reader, it also serves to disrupt the flow of colonialist legitimisation within the text, as our chivalric knights are suddenly brought to book, with the possibility that they are as false as the native, who ironically points this out.

Such blurring of chivalric Empire's truthfulness with the other's falsity ends by transforming the western into other, represented by the pirates as hyperbolic representatives of colonial trade. They indulge in piracy though apparently sailing a trade ship for, as Bloody Bill says: 'she trades when she can't take by force, but she takes by force, when she can, in preference' (p.214)[26]. Marlowe's words, spoken in the footnote, echo throughout Bill's statement, as the pirate philosophy of 'brute force' becomes the overwhelming desire of colonial economic expansion, despite its rhetoric of civilizing the native. Christianity, from the pirate perspective becomes a convenient ruse (or untruth) of Empire, strategically employed to ease the passage of trade in exploiting or cannibalising the other. As piracy is masked by a trade ship, so too is colonialism masked by Christianity, which causes a rupture in the text's assumed transparent narrative.

Bill continues by saying that:

> 'As for the missionaries, the captain favours them because they are useful to him. The South Sea Islanders are such incarnate fiends that they are the better of being tamed, and the missionaries are the only men who can do it.' (pp.214-5).

Christianity 'tame[s]' the savage, inducing a narcotising aura to numb the effects of colonial oppression, suggesting Karl Marx's belief that 'religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world ... It is the opium of the people'[27]. Bristow also observes this link between trade and Christianity:

> missionaries and traders settled on the islands, spreading Methodism among the tribes and carrying off plentiful supplies of sandalwood ... the arrival of British warships frightened the Fijians into converting to Christianity. The date of their conversion, 1855, roughly coincides with the composition and publication of Ballantyne's adventure.[28]

This coercion to see the light is hardly the gratitude expressed by Ballantyne's natives, but the very fact that they are western mimics questions the sincerity of their words.

Bloody Bill continues to highlight this point,

saying that:

> 'the only place among the southern islands where a ship can put in and get what she wants in comfort is where the Gospel has been sent to ... For my part, I don't know and I don't care what the Gospel does to them, but I know that when any o' the islands chance to get it, trade goes all smooth and easy.' (pp.213-4).

The interdependence of colonialism and Christianity is evident, and is perhaps more of an act of cannibalism than the condemned practise of the savage, for western society ('*hungry* for raw materials') consumes the goods of its colonies to satisfy its capitalist appetite, whilst simultaneously legitimising such exploitation as the divine intervention of God's truthful Word. Christianity is free to eat its way through other countries, paving the way for unfair trade, by taming the natives:

> 'The London Missionary Society have a great many in the Tahiti group ... Then the Wesleyans have the Feejee islands all to themselves, and the Americans have many stations in other groups.' (pp.296-7).

The dark continents serve as one gigantic dinner plate which is carved up and swallowed to satiate the gargantuan appetite of the west, as natives are reduced to accumulative numbers.

This intermingling of legitimate and illegitimate

colonising between chivalry and piracy (such as the pirate ship disguised as a trader), is extended to the similarities between Ralph and Bloody Bill:

> 'you're a brick boy, and I have no doubt will turn out a rare cove.[29] Bloody Bill there was just such a fellow as you are, and he's now the biggest cut-throat of us all.' (p.202).

The leap from self to other is not that vast, as the text acknowledges that the revered traits of Empire are the same qualities required by murderous criminals. When the pirate ship's captain exclaims 'I am no pirate, boy, but a lawful trader' (p.205), his position is easily confused with the reference to legitimate colonialism for, 'thorough-goin' blackguards some o' them traders are; no better than pirates' (p.220). It has been claimed that 'Ballantyne's juvenile odyssey ... proves an unambiguous paean to the mercantile and missionary spirit of the homeland. Each confrontation with the chaotic, savage Other reinforces the inconquerable spirit of his heroes. They are impervious to evil and destructive forces'[30]. Such certainties seem questionable as the divisions of self and other are blended into linguistic obscurity and seen through a glass darkly, despite presumed authorial intentions.

Such parapraxes threaten to undermine colonial authority and textual innocence, which attempts to compensate by alienating the pirates from the chivalric

heroes. Earlier it is noted how bestial and gargantuan imagery is applied to distance the native, but added to this is the use of colour as a defining trait of self and other[31]. There are multiple images presented of the native: 'black faces' (p.172), 'blacks' (p.174), 'black-guard' (p.184), and 'black critters' (p.221), which distance and define the other as an inseparable mass, without individuality. A parallel is drawn between the native and pirate in order to secure their distinction from the light of civilization's chivalry, as the buccaneers are also blackened by language: 'he was a white man ... though his face, from long exposure to the weather, was deeply bronzed' (p.196), shifting his identity from western self to tropical other. Acts and characteristics associated with the other are themselves portrayed as opaque, being 'pirates of the blackest dye' (p.224), and 'there are perpetrated here foul deeds of darkness of which man may not speak' (p.297). Being unutterable suggests an incapability of language in supposedly transparent children's fiction and adds a sexual dimension to the dark illicit deeds. Colour is also paramount in the chivalric rescue of Avatea, who is more akin to the western self and so worthy of help, as 'we were struck with the modesty of her demeanour and the gentle expression of her face, which, although she had a flattish nose and thick lips of the others, was of a light-brown colour' (p.176), as opposed to the black nebulous anonymity 'of the others'. It is supported by

her desire to embrace Christianity and leave heathenish ways behind.

Similarly, the likeness of native child's play to western is acknowledged but also distanced: 'I could not help wondering that some of the games of those little savages should be so like to our own' (pp.234-5). The ownership of these innocent games belongs to 'our', that is the western self. But the narrator immediately adds: 'other games there were, some of which showed the natural depravity of the hearts of these poor savages, and made me wish fervently that missionaries might be sent to them' (p.235). The statement's vagueness leaves these 'other games' unspecified, and throws the text spiralling into silence when confronted with play which contradicts the accepted innocent pleasure of Froebel and Rousseau's Edenic ideal. Its silence denies textual transparency, exposing a possibly erotic gap of 'natural depravity', and also raising the potential focus on innocence as a western construct.

In this primitive paradise, native childhood is not perceived as innocent, but sexualised, which is emphasised by the narrator's apparent disapproval of their nakedness: 'boys and girls ... clad in no other garment than their own glossy little black skins' (p234), and 'almost naked, savage-looking inhabitants' (p305). They are not, that is, innocent by western definitions,

and so must be led towards the Christian light of constructed and instilled purity, with Christ as the epitomised innocent babe. It is with increasing urgency that Ralph prays for missionaries to shed light on their dark hearts, to purge such 'terrible sins' (p.297) from these 'poor heathens' (p.289) and cleanse them with baptismal waters. The desire to guide towards civilized behaviour and innocence highlights just how artificial that childhood purity is. Within a children's novel, such a rupture endangers its perceived realism, as 'natural depravity' or sexuality slides beneath the text's superficial security, anticipating Freud's belief in childhood's sexual perversion.

To reinstate that safety, the adult narrator recommends that his child reader follow the pursuits of the novel's stalwart prodigies of Empire, by practising the healthy pursuit of 'cold bathing' (p.91). In a narrative interruption, Ralph seems to digress for the purpose of instilling purity into his child reader, who 'will pardon me for recommending ... the cold-water cure' (p.92). Again the language exposes gaps when it approaches potential areas of eroticism, for what he is recommending a cure from remains vague and unmentioned, the narrator 'not know[ing] much about that system' (p.92). My chapter on *The Water-Babies* also mentions this 'cold-water cure', the main purpose of which is believed to be the prevention of masturbation in

children, with which the Victorians were more than a little preoccupied[32]. The apparent innocence of children appears to require careful observation to prevent them slipping into the primitive urge of 'natural depravity'. The serpent of sexuality in this Edenic island must be externalised and so is projected onto the other: 'we had seen the quiet solitudes of *our paradise* suddenly broke in upon by ferocious savages' (p.187, my italics), but again it is almost blended with the self, as the need for cold-bathing suggests.

The Edenic in *The Coral Island* is an example of western constructed innocence, as 'our paradise' is claimed as belonging to the English. The native missionary is 'clad in a respectable suit of European clothes' (p.285), whilst:

> The cottages of the natives were ... kept in the most excellent order, each having a little garden in front, tastefully laid out and planted, while the walks were covered with black and white pebbles ... I could not avoid contrasting it with the wretched village of Emo, where I had witnessed so many frightful scenes. When the teacher afterwards told me that the people of this tribe had become converts only a year previous to our arrival, and that they had been living before that in the practice of the most bloody system of idolatory, I could not refrain from exc-

> laiming, 'What a convincing proof that
> Christianity is of God!' (p.288).

Their homes could almost be in English suburbia from this description, as the native and its habitat undergoes a process of western acculturation. 'The most excellent order' is imposed on the presumed chaotic disorder of the island's wild vegetation (and native), which becomes a controlled, domestic garden of western paradise. Civilizing a wild nature is part of the colonial drive to tame the land and its people. Otherwise, the wild, untamed dark territories potentially pose an erotic threat from the uncontrolled libido of the savage other, to the innocence of the civilized self and its text.

Nakedness is covered and mud huts replaced with white cottages: paradise acquires the look of an English country garden. Postlapsarian society recognises the eroticism of being unclothed and untamed, and therefore imposes respectability as a social control to aid trade and subject the young colony to its mother country[33], just as the child reader is taught by the innocent text. But there is a discrepancy or contradiction between the native cottages and the boy heroes' decision *not* to build a house, but remain in their primitive bower:

> We ... once or twice spoke of building
> us a house; but we had so great an
> affection for the bower, and withal
> found it so serviceable, that we deter-
> mined not to leave it, not to attempt

> the building of a house, which in such
> a climate might turn out to be rather
> disagreeable than useful. (p.169).

The natives are persuaded to build houses (disagreeable in such a climate) as part of their Christian conversion imposed by western ideology, but the civilized boys are permitted to live like natives on the island, presumably because they are already westernised. Yet they are not enthusiastically Christian, so causing a slip where the identities of self and other again blur.

Even though clothed natives are preferred to naked ones, the text nevertheless implies that the garments overshadow the other's subjectivity in a gross aping of western norms: 'many of the dresses, both of women and men, were grotesque enough, being very bad imitations of the European garb' (p.289). The converted native, who is not a *true* Christian, also appears to be seen as a bad copy of its original, the *true* westerner, thus maintaining a level of distance between acceptable self and wild other. More importantly, though, it shows that this representation of the native can only ever be a misrepresentation, as it is a western mimic. Subjectivity, both of native and child, is shown to be as fluid as the island's surroundings and forever distorted by the narrator's gaze through a broken telescope, which necessarily results in misrepresentation and masquerade. This is also the case in *Treasure Island*.

1.Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994, rev. edn. First published, 1984), p.79.

2.I Corinthians, Ch.13, V.12 in *The Holy Bible*, Authorized King James Version (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.).

3.R.M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean*, ed. and Intro. by J.S. Bratton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. First published, 1858), p.280. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

4.Roland Barthes' essay, 'The Death of the Author', discusses this link between the author and God in Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, tr. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp.142-8.

5.Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991. First published, 1978). Cited in by Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), p.63.

6.Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), p.97.

7.Eric Quayle, *Ballantyne the Brave: A Victorian Writer and His Family* (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1967), p.33. Quayle's book provides a useful biographical account of Ballantyne. Of further interest biographically is Stuart Hannabus' essay, 'Moral Islands: A Study of Robert Michael Ballantyne, Writer for Children' in *Scottish Literary Journal*, November 1995, Vol.22, No.2, pp.29-40.

8.R.M. Ballantyne, *An Author's Adventures, Or Personal Reminiscences in Book-Making* (London: James Nisbet & Co. Ltd., n.d.), p.12. Interestingly, he refers to the process of writing fiction as an adventure, just as the content of *The Coral Island* is a tale of adventure.

9.Hannabuss, 'Moral Islands', states that: '*The Coral Island* draws extensively on works like Jenkins's *Recent Exploring Expeditions to the Pacific and the South Seas* (1853) and Russell's *Polynesia: A History of the South Sea Islands* (1852), works which provide not only information about the region but also the ways in which Christain missionaries succeeded in converting it. The textual dependence operates on several levels, from that of detail ... to that of broader messages about missionary work and how far Pacific islands can be regarded as utopias or dystopias', (pp.32-3).

10.ibid., p.32.

11.Quayle, *Ballantyne the Brave*, p.114.

12.Ballantyne, *An Author's Adventures*, pp.13-14.

13.For an interesting discussion of this parallel between the other as savage and as child, see Perry Nodelman, 'The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Spring 1992, Vol.17, No.1, pp.29-35. He argues that: 'as Orientalism is primarily for the benefit of Europeans, child psychology and children's literature are primarily for the benefit of adults. We may claim to study childhood in order to benefit children, but we actually do it so that *we* will know how to deal with children; and as Rose suggests, we write books for children to provide them with values and with images of themselves *we* approve of or feel comfortable with.' He also acknowledges that Rose perceives children's fiction as 'a form of colonization' (p.29). Rose argues that landing children on an island is an appropriate metaphor for an entire literature which isolates and constructs their whole identity within society: 'literature for children is ... a way of colonising (or wrecking) the child' (Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, p.26). This is part of what I believe to be the sinister structure of children's literature as an innocent genre, though bubbling beneath its surface is an element of paedophilic desire.

14.'Jack The Giant-Killer' in Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. First published, 1984). It states that: 'Jack, with the king's permission, sets out to rid the country of all giants and monsters' and that 'Stories of giants were undoubtedly part of medieval English folk entertainment' (p.277). So fear of the other and its annihilation become legitimised by Empire as the necessity of ridding the world of a monstrous evil. The other is dehumanised through metaphoric language, where it becomes a gargantuan savage, as in Ballantyne's text.

15.See 'St. George of Merrie England' in *English Fairy Tales* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994), pp.1-18. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* states that there was: 'a lively cult of St George in the Middle East ... He became a favourite saint of English warriors, and a focus for growing nationalism and the cult of chivalry' (p.203). It goes on to discuss his fight with the dragon, suggesting that 'the dragon was ... a medieval EMBLEM of the devil and of pagan power' (p.203).

16.For further discussion of the bogeyman, see my chapters on *The Princess and the Goblin* and *A Child's Garden of Verses*, in particular.

17.Bristow, *Empire Boys* notes that: 'the island story is located in a 'world' where colonial discourse can justify its existence. This Robinsonade, therefore, suggests that it has, simply as a piece of fiction, no self-sustaining value independent from colonialism - the history shaping its moral purpose' (p.99). Within *The Coral Island*, though, is a whole structure which comments on that colonialist discourse from a metafictional level.

18.Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p.104.

19.For example, in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), this fear of sexuality is dramatised in the trial of Dr. Aziz.

20.My introduction discusses Freud's theory of this childhood sexuality, as discussed in Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, tr. by James Strachey, ed. by Angela Richards (London: Penguin Books, 1991. First published, 1905), pp.88-126. Also useful is Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings, Myths & Modern Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993. First published, 1985), pp.138-48.

21.My chapter on *The Secret Garden* discusses this idea of feasting in relation to Rousseau's view of a plain childhood diet.

22.Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994. First published in Britain, 1993), pp.7-10.

23.ibid., p.10.

24.ibid., p.16.

25.See Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, Ch.2.

26.Joseph Conrad writes in *Heart of Darkness* that: 'they were no colonists ... They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force - nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind - as is proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.' (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1989. First published, 1902), pp.31-2.

27.Cited in Michael Haralambos with R.M. Heald, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* (London: University Tutorial Press, 1980), p.460.

28.Bristow, *Empire Boys*, p.104.

29.The textual note in this edition of *The Coral Island* suggests that: '"cove" was a piece of London underworld slang which popular writers had taken up to decorate their narratives of low life; it simply means "man", but its use here implies confederate, fellow criminal. The use of slang terms throughout this conversation is another instance of Ballantyne's ability to indulge his boy readers with excitingly illicit language under cover of pretences to verisimilitude' (p.342). Or, more likely, it breaks the text beyond the boundaries of innocence, as transparent language is lost amidst 'underworld slang', which

would possibly be unfamiliar to the child reader, but provide postlapsarian pleasure for the adult narrator.

30.Susan Naramore Maher, 'Recasting Crusoe: Frederick Marryat, R.M. Ballantyne and the Nineteenth-Century Robinsonade' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol.13, No. 4, Winter 1988, p.172.

31.The use of dark and light or black and white as a way of externalising the other is discussed in more chapters of this thesis, such as those concerned with *The Water-Babies*, *The Princess and the Goblin* and *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

32.Foucault says that: 'since the nineteenth century, the sexuality of children has been subordinated and their "solitary habits" interfered with ... Educators and doctors combatted children's onanism like an epidemic that needed to be eradicated. What this actually entailed, throughout this whole secular campaign that mobilized the adult world around the sex of children, was using these tenuous pleasures as a prop, constituting them as secrets (that is, forcing them into hiding so as to make possible their discovery) ... Wherever there was a chance they might appear, devices of surveillance were installed ... with the suspicion that all children were guilty', in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, tr. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990. First published in Britain, 1979. *La Volonté de savoir* first published, 1976), pp.41-2.

33.Rose argues that 'the fictitious romance for boys thus completes the transition into narrative of that conception of the world in which discovering, or seeing, the world is equivalent to controlling, or subduing it. Latent to this ... is an equation between infancy, savagery and the territory of colonial lands: "what a parallel there is between a colony and her mother-country and a child and its parent" (Marryat (1841-2) 1878, p.140)', in *The Case of Peter Pan*, p.58.

Chapter 4 - 'A Sort of Amphitheatre' - Performing in *Treasure Island*

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* first published in novel form in 1883, was serialised in *Young Folks* magazine from October 1881 to January 1882 under the pseudonym of Captain George North. With the choice of this name the author significantly sets himself up as a fictional character, complete with seafaring connection. The prefatory poem 'To the Hesitating Purchaser' confirms these connections and simultaneously acknowledges the influence of Ballantyne's *The Coral Island.* This poem claims that the story to follow will be 'all the old romance, retold/Exactly in the ancient way' of 'Ballantyne the brave'. However, some of his contemporary critics disputed this, as Paul Maixner points out: 'the "Graphic" (No.41) declared that his characters were as different from those of Marryat and Ballantyne "as any suit of clothes from a breathing man"'[1]. This itself is an illuminating choice of metaphor given that 'Captain North' is a cover for Stevenson just as Jim Hawkins is the voice adopted by Captain North. It is no easy task to pin-point the 'breathing man' of the author beneath the many layers of

narrative which make up the text *Treasure Island*, which complicates even the masquerade discussed in the previous chapter concerning Ballantyne's novel. An anonymous critic argues that, 'there is no resemblance between Mr. Stevenson and any other boys' writer, and this romance is told in anything but the ancient way', arguing that, 'in "Treasure Island" there is combined with an imagination far stronger than that of any of the writers named, a power of expression unique in the literature of our day, and an insight into character ... unsurpassed'[2]. Stevenson's text, then, is perceived to be, in content at least, a decisive break from the norm, as characterisation takes over from moralising.

Jacqueline Rose, on the other hand, notices the similarities, so agreeing with the opening poem, saying that it:

> is ... no different, although it is often seen as a major breakthrough against the earlier moral and ideological constraint. But while it may have dropped the most obvious trappings of the colonialist ethos, the form of its writing makes exactly the same claims - a story told by the child hero who is also the only real explorer ... Jack Hawkins, the narrator, takes up his pen in the 'year of grace 17-' ..., an historical allusion to the earliest days of colonialist venture and, more importantly, to its associated forms of writing, which should signal to the reader that the way is

> not forward, but back. *Treasure Island* is written on the model of the earliest novels in which the chief protagonist tells the story and offers it to the reader on the basis of the truth of his experiences.[3]

In terms of structure and form, Rose argues that there is no decisive break, given that Stevenson's novel belongs firmly within a children's literary history which demands innocence in the shape of transparent language, where the sign equates with a fundamental textual and narrative truth, and preserves that realm of purity for its unblemished child reader. However, just as my discussion of Ballantyne's text has demonstrated an opposing tone within its apparent simplicities, it would hardly be fitting to view Stevenson's as an innocent recording of factual details. Perhaps what Rose is overlooking (apart from the fact that the narrator is Jim, not Jack Hawkins) is the acknowledgement that *Treasure Island* from its poem 'To the Hesitating Purchaser' is a highly self-conscious work, which highlights its intertextual ancestors in order to alert its readership to the fact that it is a piece of *fiction*. Being 'all the old romance, retold/Exactly in the ancient way'[4] confirms that *Treasure Island* will provide a reconstructed voice of the past, by telling a sea yarn of buccaneers and buried treasure, much in the same way as Ralph Rover provides his metafictional account of the sea tale heard in boyhood. Jim Hawkins tells an already formatted tale which, therefore, is a metafictional narrative of 'the

old romance' being 'retold', with each character performing a recognisable role. Claims for truth may well be stated, but they are washed away on a tide of adventure, as the thirst for story drowns fact in a sliding subjectivity of theatrical performance.

Stevenson himself disagrees with Henry James' belief that literature's role is to provide a moral mimesis of life, arguing in 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884), a year after *Treasure Island*, that:

> Mr. James utters his mind with a becoming fervour on the sanctity of truth to the novelist; on a more careful examination truth will seem a word of very debatable propriety, not only for the labours of the novelist, but for those of the historian. No art - to use the daring phrase of Mr. James - can successfully "compete with life": not even history, built indeed of indisputable facts, but these facts robbed of their vivacity and sting; so that even when we read of the sack of a city or the fall of an empire, we are surprised, and justly commend the author's talent, if our pulse be quickened.[5]

In what is apparently a proto-modernist attitude, Stevenson expounds the importance of self-conscious artifice, not a transparent reflection of life. Truth is 'a word of very debatable propriety', which he takes to task, sophisticatedly recognising that even history can only ever be composed of the fictional language of a

story. He goes on to say that:

> The arts, like arithmetic and geometry, turn away their eyes from the gross, coloured and mobile nature at our feet, and regard instead a certain figmentary abstraction ... Life is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-contained, rational, flowing and emasculate.[6]

So when *Treasure Island*'s poem claims a link with 'all the old romance, retold', we should think not of how the text reflects an attitude of Empire in children's literature, but how it self-consciously discusses that attitude which has been incorporated into its fictional predecessors, and how Stevenson's text is aware of that fictional history, noticing that: 'from all its chapters, from all its pages, from all its sentences, the well-written novel echoes and re-echoes its one creative and controlling thought'[7], being, presumably, a sense of the material text.

Treasure Island is a text bursting with its own sense of artifice, not, as Rose suggests, with a desire to preserve its place in the history of truthful children's literature, though many critics may claim that place for it. As a text specifically written for children, it is a much more useful piece of metafictional commentary on children's fiction than Rose's reverencing of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, originally intended as part

of an adult novel[8]. The desire, the chase between adult voice and child consumer, is more heavily visible in *Treasure Island* because its initial intention is to put to sea the child whose attention it wishes to capture. It is a powerful site of textual paedophilia. Stevenson himself admits the economical exploitation of this adventure, let alone its narrative pull of child reader into the story, saying: 'there's more coin in it than in any amount of crawlers ... I'll make this boy's business pay'[9]. Stevenson's comment here on his desire for profit is addressed to Henley who was the inspiration for the 'gentleman of fortune' (p.59), Long John Silver, and reveals how inner narrative and outer market product of the text combine and blur in a drive towards treasure. Indeed both textual form and content indulge in piracy, for beyond the fictional pirates striving for bounty, is the text's awareness of its own piracy of "stolen" or appropriated tales, as it sails towards fame and fortune abstracted from the purse of its Hesitating Purchaser, by being released in time for the Christmas children's book market. In 'My first book', placed at the end of my copy of the novel, Stevenson readily admits to this piracy charge, saying 'I believe plagiarism was rarely carried farther' (p.196), but in almost Silveresque fashion, he also says 'It may be, I care not a jot' (p.195).

This blending of inner and outer, where 'the frame gets into the picture'[10] or the form gets into the

narrative, is evident throughout *Treasure Island*, as it consistently draws attention to its own existence as a work of fiction (we have already seen that Stevenson emphasises this point in 'My first book'). What seems to stand out most is the feel of *Treasure Island* as a textual performance, where Silver in particular indulges to the extreme in the art of role-playing. Highlighting this performative aspect is the literary terminology which intersperses the text, such as: 'the whole story was a pretext' (p.137); 'it was as good as the play to see them' (p.107); 'I had soon told my story' (p.100); 'the short and long of the whole story' (p.150); 'an ironical air' (p.157); 'this tops the stiffest yarn to nothing' (p.159); 'you found out the plot' (p.168); 'I read them like print' (p.179); 'the hero from beginning to end' (p.183); 'to make a long story short' (p.190); 'the whole story of our voyage' (p.81); 'took up the story' (p.74); and 'a sort of amphitheatre' (p.69). The point of using so many examples is to display just how packed this tale is with a sense of its own literary function, employing such terms as 'ironical', 'plot', 'yarn, and 'story', which might be used in a criticism of it as a work of fiction, being a metalanguage of the primary text. As such, *Treasure Island* adopts a rather sophisticated framework, incorporating the doubling or dual voice of literary fiction and literary criticism, more akin to the metafiction associated with postmodernist fiction.

The island, then, is portrayed as 'a sort of amphitheatre' (p.69), where the characters perform 'as good as the play' (p.107) within their own textual space of comic 'tragical adventures' (p.144), as role-playing becomes a parodic 'boy's game' (p.141) of life or death, where Stevenson 'can enjoy exposing the fictionality of his fictions'[11]. This performative doubling of metafiction and fiction is carried towards narrative awareness, as Hawkins deliberately 'takes up [his] pen' (p.1) in order to tell the tale that is before us. Rose concentrates on the issue of travelling back in time, as being common to a children's literary need for purity, but in *Treasure Island* the archaic opening formula 'the year of grace 17-' (p.1) appears only to serve the purpose of highlighting how fictional that return is, being influenced by the yarns of swashbuckling adventure stories. Importantly, to take up one's pen is to construct or reconstruct an event which may or may not have happened and, either way, is heavily influenced by the passage of time and distanced by the inadequacies of language. So, in a further doubling, Jim the adult writes of Jim the child's alleged adventures on Treasure Island, where nothing is said to be held back but the very 'bearings of the island' (p.1): a sense of location is swept into a fictional sea of story-telling.

The parallel with an amphitheatre calls to mind the classical usage of masks, and there is no better

portrayer of this ever-changing costume drama than Long John Silver himself, who is 'roundly accused of playing double', which is the 'exact thing that he was doing' (p.165). It is the idea of playing, a childhood pursuit, that overwhelms the game that is this text, as Stevenson himself admits: 'fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child'[12] - combine the two and you have a playful fiction 'as good as the play'. So the play is both game and performative fiction in a 'kind of amphitheatre'. From the outset Silver disrupts the fixity of identity associated with the pirate as other, for: 'he was very tall and strong ... plain and pale, but intelligent ... I thought I knew what a buccaneer was like - a very different creature, according to me, from this clean and pleasant-tempered landlord' (pp.42-3). A sense of self and other is therefore disrupted and merged, as Hawkins learns that given discourses are unreliable fictions, much like the one he is providing. Silver is not the drunken sailor, but 'had good schooling in his young days and can speak like a book when so minded' (p.54), leaving one to ponder the stability of social categorisation.

Moreover, the reliability of narration must be questioned, for to speak like a book as a pirate, is surely to use silver-tongued flattery to deceive. Given that the piracy of this text is noted earlier, perhaps one should be uncomfortably aware of the consequences of speaking like a book, or spinning a yarn, which is

exactly what both Silver and Hawkins accomplish in this tale, thereby merging their identities even further. Silver, of course, is also speaking *in* a book, as a fictional character in *Treasure Island.* The reader is informed that his history predates this novel and, as Stevenson admits to being heavily influenced by *The Coral Island,* perhaps Silver's earlier offstage performance begins there in the buried minor role of *cast*away, 'J.S., but we could not be certain'[13]. Language, then, is not a moralistic entrance to the truth, but is a tool for deception, murder and performance, where nothing is as it seems. Seeming is an apt term, for this tale abounds with performance and constructed subjectivity, as each character is more than aware of its audience or readership. Squire Trelawny is 'all dressed out like a sea-officer ... [with] a capital imitation of a sailor's walk' (pp.40-1): the words 'like' and 'imitation' underline the artifice of his exterior appearance, as his title of *land*owner undermines and opposes the subject of sailor under the narrative gaze.

Closely related to this performative role is Silver's art of story-telling, given that 'Long John told the story from first to last, with a great deal of spirit and the most perfect truth' (p.46). Hawkins, as narrator, here displays a great capacity for misjudging character for, ironically, Silver is incapable of anything close to truth throughout the narrative. Indeed

he provides Hawkins with nothing but stories, 'every now and then telling me some little anecdote of ships or seamen' (p.46), which entice Jim towards a sea adventure and his own story of *Treasure Island*, similarly assumed to be told with perfect truth, 'keeping nothing back' (p.1). Hawkins naively suggests that he 'would have gone to bail for the innocence of Long John Silver' (p.45), which throws the concept of an innocent language in children's literature into disarray, for behind Silver's innocence lies murderous deceit, just as behind Hawkins' innocent text lies fictional narrative and alleged adventure of intertextual depths.

As Stevenson rightly acknowledges earlier, truth is a highly problematic entity and, within a work of fiction, can be nothing but linguistic artifice. Both Hawkins and Silver deceive their respective audiences, employing language as truth to mask its inherent falsity, so preventing a transparent reading. Hawkins demonstrates this continual shifting of ground as his belief in the word is asserted only to be undermined by the 'very flattering' (p.44) language of Silver. Flattery tends to conceal one's true beliefs, especially when coupled with 'false', which is exactly how it is used here, for: 'you may imagine how I felt when I heard this abominable old rogue addressing another in the very same words of flattery as he had used to myself' (p.58). Silver's set script obscures truth and dupes whomever it

addresses, drawing in its listener with often fatal consequences, just as Hawkins' words lure the child reader into partaking in a performative text. The opacity of Silver's language is emphasised in its staccato manner: 'all the time he was jerking out these phrases he was stumping up and down the tavern on his crutch' (p.44). The utterance does not flow in a realist manner, but, like its speaker, is deformed, disjointed and jerky. Silver's language, as much as his appearance, forms a theatrical deception, as he indulges to the full in his part, 'slapping tables with his hand, and giving such a *show* of excitement as would have convinced an Old Bailey judge' (p.44, my italics).

Just as the show must go on, so too must the story and, as we have already acknowledged, Silver displays an eagerness to advance the plot by 'speak[ing] like a book' (p.54) within Hawkins' wider narrative, which is itself a book. One of Silver's famous tales is of his parrot:

> 'Now that bird,' he would say, 'is, may be, two hundred years old, Hawkins - they lives for ever mostly; and if anybody's seen more wickedness, it must be the devil himself. She's sailed with England, the great Cap'n England, the pirate.' (p.54).

He tells the parrot's history in obviously fictional terms as part of a seaman's yarn, just as Hawkins narrates his story of a fictional history in the realm of sea adventure. Moreover, the parrot's association with

piracy hints at Silver's occupation, given that 'I calls my parrot Cap'n Flint, after the famous buccaneer' (p.54). In a way, the bird utters the language which Silver conceals beneath his flattery, for 'you can't touch pitch and not be mucked, lad. Here's this poor old innocent bird o' mine swearing blue fire, and none the wiser' (p.45). In perplexing fashion, Silver utters complete falsities and his pirate speaks 'the truth' of the situation, but is incapable of associating signifier with signified. The parrot's babble is not taken seriously, since its meaning is not understood by its utterer, yet Silver's highly structured silver-tongued flattery is devoid of the truth, which is instead squawked by an uncomprehending bird. Early in the novel there is confusion or ambiguity with the parrot as a literary concept:

> 'the secret has been told to the parrot.'
> 'Silver's parrot?' asked the squire.
> 'It's a way of speaking,' said the captain.
> 'Blabbed, I mean.' (p.48).

What Siver's parrot in effect does is to parrot or blab about his dark deeds which are concealed beneath his flattery, but the doubling is lost on its listeners, who fail to recognise or hear the sense beneath the sounds. The assumed innocent bird in an evil environment remains unblemished like Hawkins at the start, whose own innocence is lost when, appropriately in the apple barrel, he hears of Silver's intentions regarding the treasure, and goes on to witness murder and even partakes

in killing.

The sense of duality or doubling associated with Silver is extended to the so-called model Englishmen aboard, for they too are as eager to find the treasure as the buccaneers they so richly condemn. Which is why, in almost the same breath, Trelawney can say:

> 'What were these villains after but money? What do they care for but money? For what would they risk their rascal carcases but money? ... if we have the clue you talk about, I fit out a ship in Bristol dock, and take you and Hawkins here along, and I'll have that treasure if I search a year ... We'll have ... money to eat.' (pp.33-4).

The voracious appetite for the consumption of wealth to be regurgitated from the island's 'fat dragon' (p.34) stomach is therefore blurred between legitimate and illegitimate intent, each cancelling out the other's right in a double negative of hunger for material gain, as they strive towards the deceptive void of silver from Silver's previous fictional story with Flint. This sliding of self and other is further seen when the squire extols the infamy of the pirate Flint (the parrot's namesake), for:

> 'He was the bloodthirstiest buccaneer that sailed. Blackbeard was a child to Flint. The Spaniards were so prodigiously afraid of him, that, I tell you, sir, I was sometimes proud he was an Englishman.' (pp.31-2).

As in *The Coral Island*, the subjects of authentic tradesman and pirate slip into a somewhat obscured territory.

Nowhere is this ambiguity more at play than in the tension between a gentleman of fortune as upstanding Englishman, and a gentleman of fortune as bloodthirsty pirate, for 'by a "gentleman of fortune" they plainly meant neither more nor less than a common pirate' (p.59). When 'they' speak this phrase then it is corrupted in the mouth of the other to mean buccaneer, but when uttered by the self, then it is equated with gentlemanly status. When Silver refers to Hawkins as 'a young gentleman' (p.165) there is a sense that his words of flattery conceal the other meaning beneath them. Silver desires to further corrupt this distinction by 'playing double' and changing his other mask for that of the self, by aspiring to Parliament. His corruption of the English language serves to fuel his corruption of the English state, for:

> 'Dooty is dooty ... When I'm in Parlyment,
> and riding in my coach, I don't want none of
> these sea-lawyers in the cabin a-coming home,
> unlooked for, like the devil at prayers.' (p.61).

To pervert the word 'duty', is to pervert its action, by bringing the establishment into the hands of a pirate. Of course, the further irony may be the hint at the widespread corruption of parliament appropriate to an eighteenth century tale and the regime of Robert Walpole. What performs as a trustworthy institution, beneath its

facade, houses many 'gentleman of fortune'. It is hardly surprising, then, that part of Treasure Island is called 'Capt. Kidd's Anchorage', for, as Letley's explanatory notes inform us:

> William Kidd ... Scottish sailor. In the 1690s, when the problem of piracy was at its height in the American colonies, Coote, Earl of Bellomont, was appointed Governor of New York and Massachusetts by William III and instructed to suppress the pirates. Kidd was sent as Captain both to help in this action and to suppress the French. Arriving in Madagascar in 1697, Kidd shortly afterwards turned pirate ... He was hanged at Execution Dock. He is believed to have buried treasure at Gardiner's Island off Long Island. (p.205).

The link between colonialism, piracy and treasure becomes inseperable and intertwined within *Treasure Island*, as self and other sail towards the same goal of material satisfaction.

Taken in this light, the comment by Silver to Hawkins that 'I've always liked you, I have, for a lad of spirit, and the picter of my own self when I was young and handsome' (p.150), is less a surprise than a confirmation of the doubling of identity between Hawkins and Silver which exists throughout the tale, and reflects the previous chapter's discussion of the similarity between Ralph and Bloody Bill in Ballantyne's text.

Hawkins, who according to Long John, is like Silver in facial appearance, is similar too in his deceptive tale-telling based on truthful narrative, so they are doubles both in outward seeming and as spinners of yarns. Squire Trelawny adds to the similarity in his linguistic description of Silver: 'the man's a perfect trump' (p.46), and 'this lad Hawkins is a trump' (p.31). His mistaken assessment of Long John suggests that he may also be deceived by Hawkins, the 'young gentleman' who seeks his fortune in treasure. Silver, as the ship's cook, Barbecue (the original title of the novel being *The Sea Cook*), cooks up stories to feed his listeners, just as Hawkins narrates his tale to eager listeners or readers, reminding us that "to hawk" can mean to spread news or gossip. Spreading gossip tends to be based on fictional hearsay, which *Treasure Island* is metafictionally aware of.

Moreover, Hawkins' narrative gaze is also hinted at by his name, as he steadily watches like a hawk the performance on the island and constructs his own tale forthwith: 'raising my head to an aperture among the leaves, I could see clear down' (p.74), as his 'aperture' is focused on the amphitheatre performance below. Silver too gazes, 'his eye a mere pin-point in his big face, but gleaming like a crumb of glass' (p.75), as his subject under scrutiny is constructed into the position of victim, locked in his over-powering sights. More

importantly is his association with the Spy-glass, which is the name of his inn and the central hill of the island. The *Alice* chapter discusses the application of lenses to interpellate the subject, and here too the lens is used to gaze and construct subject positions, which perform in front of the shutter. The large brass telescope, which is the inn's sign, echoes its counterpart of a hill on the island, which is similarly used as 'a look-out' (p.63) point, being 'the tallest on the island' (p.68). Just as the inn's large telescope is disproportionate in size to the 'little tavern' (p.42), so also is the island's Spy-glass's shape 'the strangest in configuration' (p.68). Both, therefore, are gazes which misrepresent the subject, as we discover throughout the tale that nothing is as it first seems to appear: Long John performing his deception and 'jerking out ... phrases' (p.44) in the tavern, of 'the most perfect truth' (p.46), and the island providing a theatrical setting of rapid costume changes. We have already mentioned Silver himself as a constructing gaze with his eye 'a crumb of glass', but it is also worthy of mention that the compounds of silver as a metal are used in photography, as well as it being used to silver the back of looking-glasses. Like the language of this text, these lenses never simply reflect a material reality or truth, but construct a distorted image in the gap between human eye and physical subject. Hence the awareness of performance in Stevenson's novel as *seeming* is always an

outer deception.

Playing double, then, is not left to Silver alone, but incorporates the entire textual form, as each literary component is exposed and blurred by its own double vision. Hawkins plays double as adult narrator and boy character, claiming heroism for advancing the adventure, as Dr. Livesey confirms, 'every step, it's you that save our lives ... You found out the plot' (p.168). By discovering the plot, he is then in the position to lead or authorise the text in the form of narrator. To emphasise the truth of his boyhood past, he steps off the theatrical stage of the island periodically to address the reader in his authorial voice, such as when describing the 'black spot' to depose Silver: 'I have that curiousity beside me at this moment; but not a trace of writing now remains beyond a single scratch' (p.162). The sign is under erasure, as the past events are overwritten as a new signifier reconstructs the story over the fugitive transience of the ink's fading shadow on the paper which itself has been cut out of the Arch signifier text, the Bible. The result is a form of palimpsest where we, as the audience of the text, are clearly aware of an alternative, perhaps more authentic text underneath. This apprehension can only be heightened by *Treasure Island*'s overt consciousness of its own fictional history, signalled first in the prefatory poem and inscribed throughout the book.

Such complex doubling or over-writing brings the figure of Hawkins under greater scrutiny. Hawkins is not only a deceptive adult figure, but, as his name suggests, is a predatory adult figure ('I was as hungry as a hawk' (p.31)), whose theatrical ruse draws in an unsuspecting child reader to identify with the novel's child hero who is, in effect, a masquerading adult. This is undoubtedly an example of the textual paedophilia which I have attempted to demonstrate throughout the thesis, as the adult preys on the child who is lured beneath the textual covers by a false and desiring adult narrator. Moreover, this paedophilic concept is relevant not only to its textual form, but also content, as the child Hawkins is attracted by the flattery and desire of false adult intentions, in the character especially of Silver. As a performative text, *Treasure Island* masks adult desire in 'a boy's game' (p.141) of superficial innocent children's fiction. Silver suggests that 'it's child's play to find the stuff now' (p.175) in reference to the treasure: the child's game of hunting for treasure is mimicked by adults playing that role.

Another adult figure, Billy Bones, a violent and dangerous pirate, nevertheless draws Jim towards him as confidant concerning 'a seafaring man with one leg' (p.3), where he becomes, 'in a way, a sharer in his alarms' (p.3). He wreaks terror on the people of the inn, with only Hawkins sensing his attraction, for:

> His stories were what frightened people worst of all. Dreadful stories they were; about hanging, and walking the plank, and storms at sea ... but I really believe his presence did us good. People were frightened at the time, but on looking back they rather liked it; it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life. (p.4).

Noticably, it is Bones' skill as a storyteller which lures Hawkins most, just as he himself lures his child reader into an enthralling tale of the sea. The storyteller here becomes in himself a form of bogeyman or paedophile, for it is the terror which he instills that is the main attraction, as the other is never completely rejected by the purity of the self, which senses a titillation in terror, much like the pleasure of reading gothic fiction. This doubling of identification between self and other is paramount at Bones' death, where Hawkins states: 'as soon as I saw that he was dead, I burst into a flood of tears' (p.18), which is more than is allotted to his own father's passing three pages before. Like the expected figure of the bogeyman or other, Bones is a menacing sight as:

> a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man; his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails; and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. (p.1).

He is 'soiled' and 'dirty', a perfect description of the

paedophilic other, yet simultaneously evokes a level of attraction and sympathy from the child Hawkins, which is also a typical padeophilic relationship, rather than the overblown media view of sexual predation and penetration. Another representation of the other as paedophile and pirate is Pew, who is similarly described:

> He was plainly blind, for he tapped before him with a stick, and wore a great green shade over his eyes and nose; and he was hunched, as if with age or weakness, and wore a huge old tattered sea-cloak with a hood, that made him appear positively deformed. I never saw in my life a more dreadful looking figure ... I held out my hand, and the horrible, soft-spoken, eyeless creature gripped it in a moment like a vice. (p.16).

His image invokes terror of the bogeyman, yet this deformed hunchbacked 'creature' is nevertheless given the innocent and unblemished hand to hold.

Sandison also notices the eroticism in these male adult characters, but while he argues that they are Oedipal father-figures, I would say that they are homoerotic representations of the bogeyman as paeophilic figure. Thus when he asserts that: 'by far the most insidious of the father-figures in *Treasure Island*, Long John Silver is also the most seductive'[14], I would suggest that Silver is actually the most alluringly seductive of the paedophilic figures because his flattering language deceives with its assimilation from

other to be incorporated within the self. When Silver acknowledges Hawkins to be the 'picter of my own self ...', he is not espousing his fatherly qualities in producing offspring, but is highlighting the existence of other within self. The very qualities that Silver possesses as the attractive paedophile are drawn into the innocence of Hawkins as self, so that he in turn becomes the attractive paedophile figure as adult narrator, who draws in his own innocent audience. As such, the defining characteristics of loathsome bogeyman are concealed in an attractive outward performance of normative self, as paedophilia's boundaries shift from margin to centre.

Sandison rightly identifies Hawkins' unconscious dreams as an important framework for Silver's disturbing sexual influence which pervades the text that forms Jim's conscious tale. After Bones' terrifying sea yarns and his warning to Hawkins to keep 'a weather-eye open' (p.3) for a one-legged man, Jim is haunted by a series of nightmares:

> How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you ... I would see him in a thousand forms, and with a thousand diabolical expressions. Now the leg would be cut off at the knee; now at the hip; now he was a monstrous kind of a creature who had never had but the one leg, and that in the middle of his body. To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and

> ditch was the worst of nightmares. (p.3).

The vivid images are erotically charged (as Sandison notices), with the pursuit of a maimed figure comprising the duality of terror and erotic thrill, as the strength of the one leg in pursuit of the child, almost metaphorically describes an upstanding male member 'in the middle of his body', and deformity heightens the paedophilic threat of the other. Phallic symbolism is not lost on Sandison, who views the murder of Tom as a parodic act of sodomy, as 'Silver strikes in a manner that is more like a sexual assault'[15], for:

> Silver, agile as a monkey, even without leg or crutch, was on the top of him next moment, and had twice buried his knife up to the hilt in that defenceless body. From my place of ambush, I could hear him pant aloud as he struck the blows. (p.76).

Sandison goes on to say that 'in many ways the description is a realisation of Jim's nightmare when he first dreamed of Silver'[16]. The fear of the sexual bogeyman is played out on the island's stage, with the panting orgasmic climax culminating in the death of a 'defenceless' innocent at the hands of 'the monster' (p.76), whose dehumanised antics of 'a monkey' (p.76) and 'a snake about to spring' (p.75) emphasise his position as paedophile.

The phallic threat of the knife is also relevant to the attack on Jim by Israel Hands: 'one of the strategies

of emasculation practised by the old upon the young in Stevenson'[17]. While Sandison is referring to the power of Hands' gaze over Hawkins, which 'craftily watched, and watched, and watched me at my work' (p.135), it nevertheless ties into this observation of eroticism, for both are heavily charged with paedophilic tendency. Hands conceals 'a long knife, or rather a short dirk, discoloured to the hilt with blood' (p.137) in his coat, hiding from view the paedophilic threat beneath a performance of goodwill. Closely tied to this threat to the innocent child's body is the threat to disrupt its innocent language, where sign is trusted to reflect signified transparently; previously our narrator has asserted that 'Israel Hands ... could be trusted at a pinch with almost anything' (p.53). Hands demonstrates the performative role of language as being not what it seems when his words conceal (like the hidden knife) an ugly truth. His false disclaimer that 'I haven't no knife' (p.138) is quickly overturned with his attack on Hawkins, who realises that 'nine or ten inches of the bloodstained dirk would be my last experience on this side of eternity' (p.141). Grammatically, Hands' words 'haven't no knife' reveal by their solecism of the double negative the opposite of what he intends to conceal. Hawkins' recognition becomes a symbolic sexual experience, the climax of which would result, not in pleasant euphoria, but in death; innocence would be lost at the cutting edge of experiential difference between

adult and child. However, being performative, it must be recognised as such, for:

> It was such a game as I had often played at home about the rocks of Black Hill Cove ... It was a boy's game, and I thought I could hold my own at it, against an elderly sea-man with a wounded thigh. (p.141).

Again it is the link between fiction and child's play, as each performance threatens to topple innocence in this erotic 'boy's game' of catch. It is noticable that Hands, as other, is maimed (just as Pew and Bones have bogeyman-like deformities, and also Black Dog's 'two talons' on his ' mutilated hand' (p.9)), with his gash in the thigh, which also reinforces the notion of paedophilia with the bleeding wound of forced penetration. The language of threat and tenderness continues, moreover: 'my foe was almost touching me' (p.141), and 'with the dirk in his teeth, began slowly and painfully to mount' (p.142).

Even by the end of the text, Hawkins continues to be threatened by the bogeyman, as his nightmare cyclically returns to the memory of Silver, which is displaced with 'the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: "Pieces of eight! pieces of eight!"' (p.191). The *voice* is what remains of a parrot mimicking a dead pirate, in a text concerned with the theatrical performance of role-playing or parroting, where the voice is of paramount importance. As Sandison also recognises,

the claim by the narrator that 'of Silver we have heard no more. That formidable seafaring man with one leg has at last gone clean out of my life' (p.191), is not entirely the case; his physical appearance is replaced with the spectre of his parrot. Perhaps most importantly is the recognition that Silver's story does not conclude with the end of Hawkins' narrative, but expands beyond the frame of *Treasure Island* into the realm of inconclusive possibilities of speculation, where 'I daresay he met his old negress, and perhaps still lives in comfort with her and Captain Flint' (p.191). Just as Silver's history dates before the beginning of Stevenson's text, having sailed 'first with England, then with Flint, that's my story' (p.57), so too does his end outlive its textual closure, where children's literary realism and closed meaning are evaded.

The island, too, adds to the dark nightmarish presence within the text, already noted as a 'sort of amphitheatre' where the characters perform their parts in a narrative of masquerade and deception. Unlike Ballantyne's paradisiacal setting where the boys of Empire instill innocence into the savage island, *Treasure Island* overwhelms with an atmosphere of the anti-Edenic, which encroaches upon each character and feeds the mutinous intentions of the pirates, spurring Hawkins to relate that:

> perhaps it was the look of the island,

> with its grey, melancholy woods, and stone spires ... my heart sank, as the saying is, into my boots; and from that first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island. (pp.68-9).

His narration continues to acknowledge that 'the heat was sweltering, and the men grumbled fiercely over their work', adding that 'up to that day, the men had gone briskly and willingly about their business; but the very sight of the island had relaxed the cords of discipline' (p.69). So the dark claustrophobic atmosphere of the external environment parallels the internal evil of the buccaneers' intentions:

> There was not a breath of air moving ... A peculiar stagnant smell hung over the anchorage - a smell of sodden leaves and rotting tree trunks ... If the conduct of the men had been alarming in the boat, it became truly threatening when they had come aboard. They lay about the deck growling together in talk. The slightest order was received with a black look, and grudgingly and carelessly obeyed ... Mutiny, it was plain, hung over us like a thunder-cloud. (p.70).

Again inside and outside merge to form a doubling of intent, as thundery tempers are fuelled by thundery air, complementing the stagnation, greed, and decay which is part of the unquenchable thirst for the island's hidden treasure. William Blackburn says that:

> As an image of the fully integrated self,

> the island is often an earthly paradise - it makes no difference whether we speak of Avalon, or the Isles of the Blessed, or even the Garden of Eden ... Paradise is, imaginatively if not literally, an island. It is, therefore, an image of the self.[18]

Importantly, in Stevenson's novel, that paradise is overturned to become anti-Eden, where its negative atmosphere fuels a performance which displaces play with deadly intent. Like the parrot, this island tends to blab what is concealed within the subject's external language, drawing back the curtain on the performative aspects of identity and speech, and showing that what something or someone *seems* to be is a superficial mask concealing a dark opacity, not a transparent window of truth, for 'the chill and the vapour taken together told a poor tale of the island. It was plainly a damp, feverish, unhealthy spot' (p.104). Significantly, it is self-consciously narrating 'a poor tale', as its atmosphere reveals the decay rotting away behind an external performance of Edenic harmony in previous fictional texts. When Hawkins informs us that: 'I approached that island in my fancy ... but in all my fancies nothing occurred to me so strange and tragic as our actual adventures' (p.36), he is hinting at the deception of language, which can never signify the reality, and of fiction with its desire to tell a good story. All the tales which are intertextually linked

with this text never provide a transparent view of its story, for previous discourses are acknowledged only to be doubled back upon in this self-conscious performance of fiction. Even the tales of savages which he has heard prove untenable, beginning 'to recall what I had heard of cannibals' (p.78), as the island's savage turns out to be 'a white man like myself' (p.79). Ben Gunn's dark skin is caused by the sun; external visible concepts of the other are shown to be mere surface performances, which conceal the self lurking beneath. The savage in Stevenson's text lurks within the self, not within the externalised other of *The Coral Island*; the English arrival on Treasure Island does not transform it into a blissful Eden, but reinforces its status of a space invoking material greed, murder and erotic terror - it is an island composed of treasure, which proves to be the essence of deception and performative masking at the empty core of its characters, who sway between illegitimate and legitimate 'gentlemen of fortune'.

An element of this swaying is the shift of narrator from Jim Hawkins to Dr Livesey, forcing the reader to adjust their sense of narrative voice to fit another subject, and suggesting the instability of the enunciated 'I'. One begins to ponder if this inserted narration is the voice of a medic or a further doctoring of the text in order to add a new angle of deception. Given that a doctor is also slang for a ship's cook (Silver), it might

not be too far off-beam to comment on the extreme craft of this narrative in blending subjects towards a mass concocted dish of performative voices, which shift and mutate to emphasise the deception at the heart of any fiction. Moreover, when 'the doctor was named cook' (p.101), the merging of Livesey and Silver becomes closer, and what is perhaps on the menu is the cooking of the books, or book, namely *Treasure Island*. Dr Livesey evidently controls part of the text's advancement through his direct control of some of the plot, as Hawkins acknowledges by admitting, 'the mystery that still hung over the behaviour of my friends; their unexplained desertion ... their inexplicable cession of the chart; or, harder still to understand, the doctor's last warning to Silver' (p.170).

As the main narrator, Hawkins is confronted with an overwhelming sense of opaque incomprehension, leaving him as much at sea as his readers about much of the plot, thereby metafictionally aware of his limited control of the text. This boy's game is played out by the doctor, as he checks his narrative knowledge to assert: 'I've no right to say more; it's not my secret, you see, Silver, or, I give you my word, I'd tell it you. But I'll go as far with you as I dare go' (p.168). Hawkins claims at the opening of the novel that he is narrating under another authority, 'these gentlemen having asked me to write down the whole particulars about Treasure Island'

(p.1), and informs the readers of the limits they must accept, 'I am not allowed to be more plain' (p56). So Dr Livesey says that he cannot reveal all because the secret is not his to tell. When he later informs Silver with biting irony that 'you're the man to keep your word, we know that' (p.188), he apparently fails to recognise the double irony in this comment, for he himself is equally as economical with his 'word'.

This idea of holding back words is therefore equally applicable to Hawkins, Silver and Dr Livesey: each appears to conceal a hidden agenda beneath their set script, evoking a feeling that 'there's something under that' (p.155). What remains at the end is the voice of the parrot, a female impersonator of the male pirate, Flint[19]. Her words reverberate in the ears of the narrator, Hawkins, another bird-like figure flying between adult voice and boy impersonator, whose words are the parroted recordings of the player's adventures. Language, then, as well as the text's characters, performs and conceals in a masquerade of fiction. The performative voice is also employed by Ben Gunn when impersonating the spirit of Flint: 'it had sounded airily and sweetly; and the effect on my companions was the stranger' (p.176). There is a sense of the magic and deception of the theatre here with the voice's strange 'effect' on its listeners, which also echoes the spirit Ariel's 'sweet air'[20] in Shakespeare's play of island

illusion, *The Tempest*. What occurs in *Treasure Island* is a 'child's play' of surface appearance, where underneath lurks an adult performance. The adult mask often conceals a bogeyman figure desiring the child who it chases through the game. In *The Princess and the Goblin* the bogeyman is placed in the darkness of underground caves, so emphasising its threatening desire.

1.Paul Maixner, ed., *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1981), p.17.

2.'Unsigned Review, "Graphic", 15 December 1883, xxxviii, 599', reprinted in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, pp.140-41.

3.Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: Or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994, rev. edn. First published, 1984), pp.79-80.

4.Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, ed. and intro. by Emma Letley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. First published 1883), p.xxx. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

5.'Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) "A Humble Remonstrance", 1884', in Edwin M. Eigner & George J. Worth, ed., *Victorian Criticism of the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.216.

6.ibid., pp.216-7.

7.ibid., p.217.

8.Alan Riach in '*Treasure Island* and Time' in *Children's Literature in Education* (Vol.27, No.3, Sept. 1996), p.182, rightly draws attention to the gap which Rose discusses in children's fiction between adult writer and child reader, arguing: 'this sense of difference or rupture is particularly relevant to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, a paradigm of "Children's Fiction" even more revealing than the text Jacqueline Rose focuses on, J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*'.

9.'Stevenson on "Treasure Island", From Letters to W.E. Henley, August, September 1881', in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, pp.124-5.

10.This is taken from Alan Sandison's discussion of modernism in, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism: A Future Feeling* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), p.10. Unfortunately this book appeared too late for me to take full advantage of it in my own discussion. However, I do diverge when discussing the bogeyman as opposed to father figure, and take account later in the thesis of Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, which Sandison does not appear to do, as the children's literary genre is the prominent part of my work.

11.Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism: A Future Feeling*, p.62.

12.'A Gossip on Romance' in Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Lantern-Bearers and Other Essays*, intro. by Jeremy Treglown (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988. First published in *Longman's Magazine*, Nov. 1882), p.180.

13.R.M. Ballantyne, *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean*, ed. and Intro. by J.S. Bratton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. First published, 1858), p.46.

14.Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*, p.73.

15.ibid., p.66.

16.ibid., p.67.

17.ibid., p.70.

18.William Blackburn, 'Mirror in the Sea: *Treasure Island* and the Internalization of Juvenile Romance' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. Fall 1983, Vol.8, No.3, p.9.

19.Sandison also notices this point : 'Cap'n Flint is a female masquerading as a male parrot' in *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*, p.49.

20.William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I, Sc.ii, L.393 in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. and intro. by Peter Alexander (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1989. First published, 1951).

Chapter 5 - 'They Never Came Out But at Night' - Protecting Innocence in *The Princess and The Goblin*

The previous chapter's mention of the bogeyman figure will now be discussed with reference to George MacDonald's novel, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872)[1]. In *Treasure Island* there proved to be a shift or uncertainty between the respectable and demonic adult, which is also noticed in *A Child's Garden of Verses* later. At first sight, MacDonald's text takes the bogeyman and externalises him, sent underground as an outcast from acceptable society. However, if interpretation also probes beneath the surface, the textual representation of the goblin as bogeyman, to render the upper world's inhabitants "respectable", can be shown to be equally unstable. MacDonald's novel contains a degree of what I have called "textual paedophilia" within the covers of a presumed innocent children's literary genre, the invented fairy tale. The heading of this chapter indicates the fundamental crux of this; it refers to the goblins who only come out at night. They are terrifying nocturnal creatures, closely aligned with the sexually threatening figure of the bogeyman, created by adults to

petrify children into a desired behaviour[2]. The 'coming out' phrase is today associated with the assertion of one's homosexuality, considered in the nineteenth century as a perversion. But, I want to go on to claim, contextualised within MacDonald's novel, it suggests the coming out of the closet of that other great perversion, paedophilia, as embodied in the bogeymen of the mines[3].

The goblins inhabit an outcast world of darkness, and only enter society's external world when it is night, thereby underlining a sense of terror, seediness and disturbing sexuality, such as we find in the nocturnal city life of Stevenson's Mr Hyde[4]. Although *The Princess and the Goblin* evidently has a pastoral setting, with the mountain and castle, it is nevertheless possible that the goblins' counter-society, offset by the norm of the upper world, is an opposite of this. The goblins live in an industrial city, in effect, and the link between city life and moral corruption has been discussed throughout the thesis as a nineteenth century issue. Further support of this is that Irene's father, the king, rules in the corrupt city of Gwyntystorm, as we discover in *The Princess and Curdie*, and is absent most of the time from his country domains (though is not in himself corrupt). The goblin state is ruled by 'a king and a government of their own'[5], thus suggesting that they are placed in a political city environment, so enhancing their sense of other against the respected country life of the perceived

norm.

Just as in our own society we prefer to distance and dehumanise this form of sexuality, so too does the "normal" society of *The Princess and the Goblin* provide that safety barrier. The goblins are confined to a world of darkness which is created as a way of distancing or objectifying the figure of the "bad" adult, who is thus safely distinguished from the "good" one, who only tells the child about the bogeyman "for their own good". However, this binary opposition of good and bad presents the bad as a possible aspect of, as well as guarantee for, the good. After all, it is the good adult who constructs this image of the bogeyman in order to frighten the child into good behaviour. So in MacDonald's text, Irene becomes aware of the threat of evil and is protected from it, and the reader is informed of this bad element by the good narrator, who tells the tale of *The Princess and the Goblin*, thus alerting our senses to the existence of a bad presence. Interesting, though is the comment that these monsters were originally inhabitants of the light, just like the "good" adults, for 'they lived above ground, and were very like other people' (p.8). The division between self and other therefore becomes blurred and safety destabilised, and the bogeyman is potentially internalised. The descriptive language of the text places the goblins in the category of external monstrous other through a

regressive evolutionary process: 'they were now, not ordinarily ugly, but either absolutely hideous, or ludicrously grotesque both in face and form' (p.10). Their outward appearance, then, is emblematic of their 'cunning ... mischief' (p.10), employed to 'annoy the people who lived in the open-air storey above them' (p.10).

What is most at threat is childhood innocence, in the figure of princess Irene, as:

> It will now be pretty evident why the little princess had never seen the sky at night. They were much too afraid of the goblins to let her out of the house then. (p.10).

Like the paedophilic bogeyman figure, this fear is created and perpetuated by adults, in a continual preoccupied fear of childhood innocence being threatened by goblin influence. The child is not innately afraid of the dark, but becomes so due to stories spun by adult imaginations in the name of protecting normality, for 'Irene was not in the least frightened, not knowing anything to be frightened at' (p.32). The child's so-called natural fear of the dark and its attendant bogeyman is therefore revealed to be instilled into the child by adult fear of the other threatening their constructed innocent; when accidentally the Princess is out late, it is Lootie the nurse who runs in terror, pulling Irene with her. By denying Irene the pleasure of

the night sky, we wonder whether the adults are protecting or imprisoning her from the outside world in her fortress, for the main effect of protecting innocence appears to be at the cost of the child. The demonised and dehumanised figures emerge from dark or unknown places, yet such places are turned into a threat by the central "norm", whereas their darkness is evidently a simple law of nature; to be underground is to be in darkness. This darkness is not in itself a fear to the child, but is saddled with the connotations of the bogeyman in order to heighten its sense of looming danger.

Irene's confinement after dark is to prevent an encounter with the sexualised bogeyman. More importantly, though, is the necessity to prevent her *knowledge* of the goblins, as this would acknowledge and awaken her sexual curiosity and potential, so destroying the adult construction of the innocent child. Irene is therefore kept in intellectual darkness about this eroticised other: 'now Irene did not know what good reason there was for her nurse's terror, for the servants had all strict orders never to mention the goblins to her' (p.34). Irene's fear only takes root when she is made aware of the threat; until then language's silent gap plants the seed of unease. Rose contends that what is linguistically important often lies in what is not said, as adult-perpetuated unconscious fears provide a

gap in childhood innocence, where sexuality can seep in. What is interesting here, though, is that the silence is broken by the text, so exposing a threat to Irene's fragile innocence and potentially, the child reader's.

The next level of protection, then, is the physical threat, as Irene must be guarded from abduction; linguistic knowledge gives way to the possibility of physical knowledge, with its sensual connotations. Innocence is maintained by this careful protection of the child by the "good" adult from externalised fears. So the princess is kept away from the "evil" goblin influence, confined to the safety of the Victorian nursery, with its sterile imitation of the "real" world: 'the ceiling of her nursery was blue, with stars in it, as like the sky as they could make it. But I doubt if ever she saw the real sky with the stars in it' (p.8). Here she can be tended and nurtured towards a desired innocence. The nursery portrays a constructed imitation, just like the innocence it houses. The good adult's *desire* to protect the child's innocence is maintained by providing a threatening bogeyman to be saved from by the loving arms of "safety".

However, the artificial creation of the nursery is directly juxtaposed with a wildly erotic description of the goblin habitat of the mountain, for:

> These mountains were full of hollow

> places underneath ... in these sub-
> terranean caverns lived a strange
> race of beings ... they lived ...
> in ... wet and dark places. (pp.8-10).

Such descriptive language is pervaded with eroticism, as the hollows of the mountains suggest a sensual life of 'wet and dark places' from which Irene must be shielded, in order to maintain the innocence of the child and its social construction from the underground deviantly infectious world of goblins. To be underground is to exist beyond the fringes of the norm, so the aura bestowed on such places is then connected with those who survive in them, as it is assumed that these inhabitants bring such pollutant auras with them into the "healthy safe normal" world and so infect it, and may thus be justifiably regarded as dangerous to the people of that safe, normal world.

As Cordelia Sherman argues: 'we do not need MacDonald or LeGuin to tell us that evil belongs in dark, subterranean places; we are predisposed to judge anything living in such a place as being frightening, destructive, greedy: evil'[6]. The caverns are evidently symbolically vaginal, with their darkly moist 'natural' (p.8) openings, which enwomb the erotic outcasts in the caves, so posing a further threat of feminine sexuality to the patriarchal capitalist regime based on the gold mine beyond its hole. For the child, it is this womb-like opening that unbalances the purity of the innocent text

and fills the gap with sexual connotations, as the language of fantasy interrupts the constructed flow of the symbolic order. Such eroticism in children's literature is perceived by David Gooderham to be areas of 'incorporation', where the child achieves sexual satisfaction through its erotogenic zones:

> the close intimacy of the child with the mother, in dandling, nursing, and feeding - and, most fundamentally, in the womb - ... is manifest principally in imaginal themes of being incorporated and incorporation ... In children's texts, the holes, burrows, and corners in which the little creatures of fantasy hide securely away ... are the most obvious instances of being incorporated.[7]

With the goblins and within the mines, then, lies the threat of a polymorphous pre-Oedipal sexuality, which must be denied the child and destroyed in this text in order to preserve a socialised notion of innocence within the symbolic order. But its very existence allows ruptures and stutters which suggest an underlying sexual unconscious within a text otherwise regarded as one of Christian purity.

Such good/evil dichotomous readings of MacDonald's novel are well documented, but might be worth pondering for a moment in regard to an awareness of the sexual unconscious of this presumed innocent fantasy. Robert

Lee Wolff, for example, sees:

> The goblins [as] ... suggesting the greedy, cunning side of our own human nature tunneling away in the secret subterranean chambers of the subconscious and always threatening to take possession of the castle of our minds, unless we, like Curdie, remain on our guard against them, with the aid of our higher selves, which dwell like grandmother in the lofty towers of our personalities.[8]

Numerous other critical approaches exist to uphold or oppose this statement, but most reinforce the belief in Christian or a psychologically defined good fighting to overcome evil[9]. However, such a reading as Wolff's appears a little simplistic: the goblins are far more complicated in their presentation than such an allegory would imply and they add to the eroticising of the apparent textual innocence. Indeed, just as the evil bogeyman is constructed and therefore contained as part of the good normality, the Christian argument in Blakean terms is also a marriage of the contraries of good and evil: without one the other ceases to exist. MacDonald is also said to have noted this existence of evil as a necessary element of the mainstream good, for everything springs from God and so, in the end, will attain heaven. Thus, 'all evils, all conflicts ... seem only a mode in which this vision of eternity may be realised'[10], or 'God is both omnipresent ... and inescapable ... Thus evil has

no final reality'[11]. In non-theological terms we might extend this argument, to turn evil into a construction of the social norm, for, as many sociologists argue, without dysfunctionalism, society could have no norm to legitimise against its antisocial reflection. It forms part of the necessary fear which children are desired to be shielded from, just as the goblins provide the essential element of evil to MacDonald's plot.

However, the goblins cannot simply be regarded as the source of evil within the story, as much of their revenge has a justifiable basis. MacDonald's novel embraces the safety of children's literature as a space to explore potentially subversive isssues, such as social stratification in a capitalist culture. The opening chapter presents reasons for the goblins' supposedly evil nature. They have been dispossessed by the king's ancestors: 'they so heartily cherished the ancestral grudge against those who occupied their former possessions, and especially against the descendants of the king who had caused their expulsion, that they sought every opportunity of tormenting them' (p.10). The comment slides beyond the confines of innocent children's fiction to take on several potential referants. Among these, for example, might be a residual Scottish nationalism, where the ancestral dispossession could be viewed as the integration of Scotland by England through the Act of Union. MacDonald himself was a Highlander

whose ancestors are said to have fought at Glencoe[12]. The text could also be a platform for Christian socialism[13], as the poor are crushed under the weight of ruling class financial demands.

The goblins consider that 'the king had laid what they thought too severe taxes upon them ... and the consequence was that they had all disappeared from the face of the country' (p.8). MacDonald's own socialist beliefs are said to have been fuelled by an alleged love rejection by a wealthy woman, which left him with 'a permanent distrust of the upper classes in general, and at the same time a touching need to belong[14]. On a religious, socialist note, Pennington says:

> MacDonald actively condemns Social Darwinism for its peculiar survival of the fittest theology: the strong and privileged survive and flourish; the poor do not. MacDonald Christianizes Darwinism, and in doing so, truly "socializes" it. Darwinism therefore becomes the basis for an evolved ethical system that is positive and constructive; at the same time Darwinism is condemned when it is appropriated for use in a materialistic, capitalistic system that is morally remiss and destructive. MacDonald denounces greed and self-interest, especially where capitalism invades organized religion and erodes its spiritual foundation by placing the

excessive weight of materialism on it.[15]

Even whilst in their own outcast world, the demands of capitalism still affect the everday living of the goblin society, as they are pushed further into the mines by the miners excavating for precious ore, at the behest of the king: 'they were making new houses for themselves, to which they might retreat when the miners should threaten to break into their dwellings' (p.53). The very concept of breaking into their homes suggests the burglary of goblin wealth, habitat and livelihood by the forces of the legitimised outer world. So Pennington seems to miss his own point in the above quotation, going on to imply that the novel is about the spiritual triumph of the upper world's good over the dark recesses of evil: '*Goblin's* simplicity is its greatest asset; MacDonald's simple sermon of spiritual strength enlists fairy-tale functions of binary opposition: good/evil, light/dark, spirit/matter'[16]. It is much more complicated and overdetermined textually, for the world of light contains a forceful element of dark greed imposed on the goblins as social inferiors.

However, any of these suggestions can only ever be fluid meanings, with no fixed signified, as the goblins' origins are based on hearsay, so creating multiple discourses of their history. The reader is told that: 'there was a legend ... for some reason or other, concerning which there were different legendery theories,

the king had ... or had ... or had ... in some way or other ...' (p.8). These ellipses point out the essential focus, being the varying elusive versions of the goblin story which MacDonald has written, where he refuses to provide a singular interpretation. MacDonald regarded human creation as a creation of God, since humanity is made by God:

> This God therefore honours the imagination by His presence in it ... 'If we ... consider the so-called creative faculty in man, we shall find that in no *primary* sense is this faculty creative. Indeed, a man is rather *being thought* than *thinking* ...'[17].

Manlove goes on to say that 'in [MacDonald's] view, a fairy tale, never wakens the same thought in all its readers, or even a single impression in any one reader: it is continually mobile and shifting in its effects, and so too should its forms be multiple[18]. Similarly Humphrey Carpenter quotes MacDonald as saying that: 'a genuine work of art must mean many things; the truer the art, the more things it will mean'[19].

Even labelling the goblins is subject to more than one description, as they are 'a strange race of beings, called by some gnomes, by some kobolds, by some goblins' (p.8), and are also referred to throughout the text as 'cobs'[20]. Such utterances provide a confusion and conflict of meaning, as each possibility collides with

another, creating gaps and unconscious meanings: like language, the goblin story cannot be pinned to a single, coherent signified, but slips between signifiers to create a textual structure which is subversive, as nothing can finally be said about it in complete transparent innocence. Meaning fluidly eludes us, just like the stream of 'subterranean waters' (p.196) which runs through the goblin habitat, threatening chaos on the normality of the upper world.

Indeed, the case of the goblins as a fragmentation of discourses could be perceived as a metafictional microcosm of the act of story telling itself, and in this particular case MacDonald's novel is a dialogic multiplicity of stories and voices colliding with each other, each trying to attain supremacy, but ultimately settling for a position in the chain of textual signifiers[21]. Like the goblins, no pure source of origin of one story can be traced, which highlights the futility of such criticism which attempts to equate the story with aspects of the author's life or favours the truth of one character over another. Similarly, the spider's webs form part of this multiplicious plot structure, where tracing each thread to its source becomes an intangling mass of interlocking web which consistently doubles back upon itself. It leaves the expected linearity of innocent realism enmeshed within an impenetrable cyclical maze of entwined voices and untraceable origins[22].

Even the settings of the house and the caves suggest a labyrinthian untraceability, as their maze-like structures require the aid of narrative devices, such as the thread and the lamp in order to place a semblance of form upon their chaotic entanglements[23]. The thread is composed of various 'spider webs' (p.79), just as the thread of the text incorporates many voices and stories, which self-consciously acknowledge the weaving of the plot and deny the possibility of singular meaning, for many of these tales exist beyond the covers of *The Princess and the Goblin*. For example, the goblins' story has already been shown to be unknown in this tale; Irene and Curdie tell each other stories within the novel; and Mrs. Peterson's story of the pseudo-rape occurs before the textual time-scale, as does her mention of the royal family: 'there were strange stories told concerning them - all good stories - but strange, very strange' (p.158). Mysterious stories win the day, as explanations appear to forever slip out of control of the main narrative, carried on a stream of possibilities.

Irene's grandmother spins an interlaced/woven thread made from various spider's webs - 'it is spider-webs - of a particular kind' (p.79), and the 'thread of a spider, though there are many of them twisted together to make it' (p.145) - which Irene must use to find her way to Curdie trapped in the goblins' cave and lead both of them out of the mountain towards the light of safety above

ground, for 'they spied a glimmer of light, and in a minute they were almost blinded by the full sunlight, into which they emerged' (p.147). It is hardly surprising, given the connotations of seeing the light, that many critics have read *The Princess and the Goblin* as part of MacDonald's Christian belief in the light of Christ leading His people out of darkness towards belief. However, in the light of the text, it could as appropriately be read as being a narrative thread which leads the children through the plot's circumstances into the light of social safety and innocence. Irene is told to trust and follow the thread by her grandmother who has spun it and, by doing so, the princess begins to unravel the thread of the tale that is before her, thus advancing the plot for its reader. In a self-conscious *mis-en-abime* fashion, Irene tells her story of Queen Irene to Curdie after he has told her about the goblins, which sets up an entire narrative about the belief or otherwise in the textual fantasy that is before us:

> Curdie ... gave her a full account ... of the character and habit of the goblins ... Irene too had to tell a long story, which she did in rather a roundabout manner, interrupted by many questions concerning things she had not explained. But her tale, as he did not believe more than half of it, left everything as unaccountable to him as before ... He could not believe that she was deliberately telling stories. (pp.144-5).

Irene's narrative is metafictionally interrupted by

Curdie's reader anxieties, which begs the question of a parallel interruption of MacDonald's fantasy with a similar questioning of its realism in the face of its obvious fairy tale elements of a princess, a fairy (god)grandmother, a castle, and a variation of "Once upon a time" with 'there was once a little princess' (p.7).

A further level is raised with the metaphoric use of spider's webs as a thread to lead the trusting child, which provides connotations of being lured and trapped by a predatory guiding or pushing adult narrator, demonstrated by it being woven on the grandmother's spinning wheel. To weave a web is to create a trap, as the chapter 'Woven and the Spun' suggests, heightening the implication of textual paedophilia. The child is lured into following the thread of the plot by a "trustworthy" adult, and is then enmeshed in the tale. Indeed in *The Princess and Curdie*, the grandmother is described as being 'like a long-legged spider holding up its own web'[24], as she spins on her spinning wheel. It is interesting to note that the goblins, too, are provided with this predatory description in *The Princess and the Goblin*, where one of them 'ran straight up one of the rocks like a huge spider' (p.40), so complicating and blurring the labels of bogeyman and good adult.

So the chapter explaining 'Why the Princess has a Story About Her' exemplifies the notion that Irene is

caught up and created within the plot, not telling her own story. Time and again the adult narrator reminds us that telling a tale in children's literature is an act of possessing the child, for it is not her tale, but 'my story' (p.7). His anonymity and omniscience reinforce an inescapable omnipotence, as we have seen in the *Alice* chapter. A certain sinister aspect arises in this ownership ritual, for surely to own, to possess, to penetrate and control the child's very thoughts is in itself a form of dubious intimacy between adult narrator and child subject. To own a story is a taken-for-granted authorial right, instilled into the way in which we discuss the telling of stories. At any time this authority, this control is precarious, but in the field of children's literature it becomes doubly so, as the power relation of adult/child comes into play, realising the entire implication of such a desired creation.

This adult control of the child is evident in the disempowerment of Irene's language. When she tells Lootie about her grandmother, the adult reaction is: 'what nonsense you are talking' (p.21), for 'the nurse ... did not believe a word Irene was saying' (p.22), which leads the child to an awareness of how 'little in her power [it was] to prove her words' (p.29). The entire concept of childhood innocence is therefore put under threat at this point, for to disbelieve one's words it to display an inherent falsity in language, which is

otherwise portrayed as possessing a transparent realism in the mode of children's fiction, according to Rose's argument discussed in the introduction. It appears to be an interesting contradiction which arises in several of the texts being considered that, whilst children's literature is often assumed to be using a sacrosanct form of language in its most transparent and purest form, nevertheless, the child itself is often disempowered or overwritten by the dominant authority of adult narration, which tells the reader or the protagonist that they will not understand or are not to be trusted beyond adult control.

For example, in the *Alice* chapter it is noticed that Alice will be able to narrate her tale only when she is a grown up, and the phrase 'I'm older than you and must know better' neatly places the child into a constructed position of adult desire, where even its very utterance can only be perceived as innocent when created in an adult-written text for children. In *The Coral Island* the text tells of an adventure in boyhood from the narrative reconstruction of adult experience. Perhaps the edible letters in *Alice* are most apt, for the implication is that the child must eat the adult's words in order to be believed. Irene acknowledges the division between truth and tale, saying 'when I tell you the truth ... you say to me "Don't tell stories": it seems I must tell stories before you will believe me' (p.166). Irene as child is

accused of 'telling stories' as lies by Lootie, yet the story being narrated by an adult voice of *The Princess and the Goblin* is to be believed and identified by the child reader within the realm of children's literary truth. Such metafictional commentary on story-telling therefore casts a shadow on the authoritative adult voice; MacDonald's fantasy considers the implications of realism as linguistic innocence amid the art of spinning fantastic tales. It also gives rise to the question of transparency and singularity of interpretation within a closed textual structure, as MacDonald's earlier quotation of art's multifaceted meanings demonstrates. The complex origins and narrative threads of the story confirm its ambition to be just such 'a genuine work of art'.

What it means for the fictional child to be shaped by an adult mould is perhaps no more clearly demonstrated than in the conversational exchange which occurs between Irene the child and Irene the ghostly grandmother, whose thread is woven through the text for the child to follow and trust:

> 'My name is Irene.'
> 'That's *my* name!' cried the princess.
> 'I know that. I let you have mine. I
> haven't got your name. You've got mine.' (p.17).

In a sense, princess Irene is written by her grandmother, whose name is bestowed upon her and is woven into the text by her spinning wheel. The problematic enunciation

of the pronoun 'I' by the subject is doubly fragmented here, as the 'my' and 'I' slip around the exchange, creating an exchange of identity between two characters with the same name. Like the controlling textual web, Irene is also controlled by her name which is given or imposed upon her by her grandmother, showing the fluidity of an identity at the mercy of the precarious nature of language, to be owned only at the moment of utterance. Without being woven and named, princess Irene ceases to exist, and it is Queen Irene who provides the child with a sense of self. When she runs upstairs through the labyrinth to the top of the castle she finds that she cannot return because 'she had lost herself long ago' (p.13). As in *Alice*, identity depends upon being both lost and found, and here upon the existence of the grandmother's presence, who informs her that 'I've been here ever since you came yourself' (p.18). Genealogically, the idea of the child being constructed through the spinning of the adult's thread also fits when we consider that, without the ancestral Queen, Irene's reproductive thread, the princess would not have been born ('I'm your father's mother's father's mother' (p.17)). She is created by the authorial adult at more than one level.

Of course, such acknowledgement of one's ancestral descent raises the question of origins which, in turn, opens a potential route for sexuality. The question of

birth and physical origin is indeed raised by Irene's grandmother, but then, for fear of threatening her off-spring's childhood innocence, is immediately displaced with the inevitable phrase, 'I will explain it all to you when you are older' (p.17), so evading the discomfort of answering those awkward questions about where we come from. Freud argues that each child questions its own origins and sexual identity, which can be answered on the level of parental reproduction and gender difference[25]. But, as Rose says, there is also the impossibility of an answer, for before conception the child ceases to exist[26], which relates neatly to MacDonald's belief, cited earlier, that individuals exist from the projected mind of God's creation. As in *Alice*, if God as the ultimate creator or dreamer awakens, then our existence is blown out like a candle, just as Irene is the fictional creation or dream of MacDonald. Freud suggests that the certainty of the parental answer to this question of origin, where identity is given as fixed in language, is a deception for, before this assurance of existence, there is a point of erasure, a point of nothingness.

Language is not a stable entity, but is prone to uncertainty as much as origin is, thus highlighting the fictionality of the stability. As Rose argues: 'it is as if the child serves to sanction that concept of a pure origin because the child is seen as just such an origin

in itself. The child is there, and the original meaning is there - they *reinforce* each other'[27]. By problematising this question of origins within a children's novel, MacDonald's text focuses on the uncertainty of the child's origins and sexuality. Given that the goblins are an overwhelming source of sexual tension within the text and that they have been associated with unstable origins, it is hardly surprising that Irene, as the innocent child, becomes the focus of a protective adult angst against that instability of source and closely entwined sexualisation.

The goblins' intention, as a subhuman underclass, is to mingle with the civilized ruling class through Irene, by marrying her to the goblin prince, Harelip. This poses many possible meanings ranging from eugenics to the rise of the working class. The lower orders are perceived by the elite as a primitive and sexual threat to the very foundations of society's structural fabric. It is not accidental that the goblins have evolved backwards into such a monstrous state: 'they were now, not ordinarily ugly, but either absolutely hideous, or ludicrously grotesque both in face and form' (p.10). However, the novel does not fix the meaning of primitive threat, for the narrator informs us that:

> The goblins themselves were not so far removed from the human as such a description would imply. And as they grew misshapen in body they had grown in

knowledge and cleverness. (p.10).

Unlike the natives in *The Coral Island*, they have educated themselves as outcasts from this society, adding to their potential danger to the ruling elite. Working class intelligence enhances and fuels their revolutionary position, resulting in the establishment of a counter-society, for 'in the process of time they had got a king and a government of their own' (p.10). Meaning is therefore shifted beyond a single interpretation, as the goblins slide between grotesque beasts and sagacious social critics. Though the narrative identifies them as unmitigated evil, the text often compels an admiration or sympathy that does not fit the explicit agenda, like the expression of the other in many of the books discussed in this thesis, such as the pirates in *Treasure Island*. The goblins achieve an autonomy that threatens the defined didacticism of the text, the fight of good against evil.

Just as the goblin habitat of the mountain with its damply enclosing passages adds to the sexual threat of Irene's innocence and the safety of the Victorian nursery where she can be tended and nurtured in that innocent construction, so too does the unfettered wildness of the mountain (beneath which the goblins live) threaten to penetrate the controlled domestic garden which surrounds the castle where Irene lives. Metaphorically the garden contains a contradictory image of Edenic purity and sexual fertility, as the wildness of nature is directly

juxtaposed to an artificial environment; 'this mingling of the wild mountain with the civilized garden was very quaint' (p.73). 'Quaint' is an expression that mildly disguises the desire to mingle the sexualised goblin race with the pure blood of royalty. This is dramatised in the narrative when the goblins penetrate through the guarded castle floors in a bid to kidnap Irene and deflower her. The civilized controlled world of the castle is to be fertilized by the raw nature of the goblins. Though we are never consistently allowed to see things from their point of view, this action poses a debate that bears comparison with the discussion between Perdita and Polixenes in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* about the desire for flowers to be pure or to be influenced by art and become hybrids or 'nature's bastards' by 'marry[ing]/A gentler scion to the wildest stock'[28]. The potential union of her presumed lower stock (all is well as she is in fact not a peasant, after all) with Florizel's royal lineage, neatly echoes the mingling of wild with domestic or elite with lower orders which is threatened in *The Princess and the Goblin*. There is also a possibility that MacDonald's novel is referring to the mingling of civilized England with wild Scotland, as one of the mountain plants is 'heather', whereas the domestic garden contains 'roses and lilies', symbolic plants of wildness and innocence.

The most voiced sexual threat emanates from the

goblins of the underworld, as the outcast bogeyman other, but Curdie too is of the lower classes, providing a further tension, which Lootie realises: 'formerly the goblins were her only fear; now she had to protect her charge from Curdie as well' (p.42). This protection from the threat of the other takes the form of careful imprisonment or surveillance of the innocent child, as 'she resolved to watch her far better in future' (p.42). Her father places men around Irene's home: 'he left six of his attendants ... with orders that three of them should watch outside the house every night. It was clear he was not quite comfortable about the princess' (p.73). Later 'he left other six gentlemen behind him, that there might be six of them always on guard' (p.112). Like Perdita, Curdie's mingling with royal purity is only permissible when it is established that he too is of noble stock. This is hinted at in the text: 'there is some ground for supposing that Curdie was not a miner only, but a prince as well' (p.169), and firmly stated by Queen Irene in *The Princess and Curdie*, which enables and legitimises their impending marriage:

> 'I am going to tell you what no one knows but myself: you, Peter, and your wife both have the blood of the royal family in your veins. I have been trying to cultivate your family tree, every branch of which is known to me, and I expect Curdie to turn out a blossom on it.' (p.54).

The grandmother, as weaver of the plot, spins the tale

towards a union of royals, aware that Curdie will 'blossom on it' (notice the language is horticultural, like the garden described earlier), as the future husband of princess Irene.

That the children are paralleled with flowers in *The Princess and the Goblin* is a reminder to informed readers of the mythical capture of Persephone (Proserpina, Kore) by her uncle, Hades (Pluto), god of the underworld, who captured her to be his wife in the underworld, giving her pomegranate seeds to eat to bind her eternally to hell: 'Persephone would rise up into the world above with the first growth of spring and return to her subterranean home when the seed was sown in autumn'[29]. The myth gives authority to the mingling of subterranean and upper world in MacDonald's tale, which the specific narrative denies. The agreement with Hades is reached after Persephone's mother, Demeter (Ceres), searches the world with a torch to find her, also emblematic of the lamp and thread of Irene's grandmother. Persephone's abduction occurs whilst picking a narcissus, and it is interesting that Irene too is placed within the garden setting as 'a first and central parallel with the figure of Persephone, the Kore of the myth'[30] to anticipate her attempted kidnap from underground. Patterson's acknowledgement of the echo of this myth, even down to Irene's searching for primroses when she is captured, is indeed worthwhile, but if we take her argument a step beyond, it is clear that

Persephone's plucking of the flower and sexual deflowering by Hades is abated in MacDonald's text. Irene's innocence must be protected: 'unlike some children I know, instead of pulling it, [she] would touch it as tenderly as if it had been a new baby, and, having made its aquaintance, would leave it as happy as she found it' (p.112). She does not pluck and is not raped, leaving the sexual threat hanging in the air to surround her with a highly eroticised innocence, which is protected but extremely fragile and vulnerable. The flowers are not plucked and the child is not deflowered, as each displays its superficial purity and beauty, but below the surface, it is the underground world which nourishes and provides the fertility for the plants to bloom.

As noted, both the goblins and Curdie come under scrutiny in the desire to protect Irene's innocence. But, if the goblins do not penetrate into Irene's purified world, then Curdie, the miner boy, certainly does. Having disposed of the sexual and social extreme threat of the goblins, a path is cleared for Curdie, another symbol of the working classes, who works in the goblins' home. Although his royal lineage renders him safe in *The Princess and Curdie*, it is nevertheless only suggested in its predecessor, so bringing him closer to the goblins than the text may initially lead us to believe. As noted, he works in the mines, even choosing

to stay there all night on a regular basis. More significant, though, is his mother's encounter with the goblins before Curdie is born:

> 'soon after we were married, and not very long before you were born ... I was suddenly surrounded by about half a dozen of the cobs ... and they all began tormenting and teasing me in a way it makes me shudder to think of even now ... They had torn my clothes very much, and I was afraid they were going to tear myself to pieces.' (p.159).

In a scene reminiscent of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', where Lizzie is attacked by goblins ('they trod and hustled her ... Tore her gown and soiled her stocking'[31]), Curdie's mother is subjected to a symbolic gang rape, as the innocence of the text is forced into a language of sexual violence, where Mrs. Peterson is tormented 'in a way [which makes her] shudder to think of'. It also throws Curdie's origins into question, as the vague remark of 'not *very* long before your were born' (my italics), prompts one to ask whether she was pregnant before, or as a result of, this encounter.

His differences from the goblins are increasingly blurred, as we wonder if, since Harelip is half human, could not Curdie be half goblin? Human and goblin have already mingled, then, as Harelip's mother was human and the goblin king's second (current) goblin queen has toes, a human trait. Disturbingly, Curdie is mistaken for a

goblin or one of their creatures when shot by a man-at-arms - 'I thought it was one of those demons' (p.171), and 'taking him for one of the goblin creatures, had wounded him' (p.172). Leading up to this incident, the language itself describes Curdie in terms of a bogeyman figure; 'he ... remained in the garden the whole night, creeping on hands and knees'; 'he continued to haunt the garden' and 'he was creeping from behind the rock' (p.170). These instances occur at night, as he creeps and haunts his way around Irene's fragile world of safety, shifting between the identity of boy and bogey, the innocent word itself contained within the paramaters of its sinister associate.

Curdie, as the agent of protection for Irene from the sexual knowledge surrounding the goblins, is also the one who knows most about them. Either way, his sexual influence on Irene is important. She is significantly laid down to sleep in his bed, which prepares us for the kiss at the end of the novel, and the beginning of her sexual awakening: 'the princess reached down, threw her arms round Curdie's neck, and kissed him on the mouth' (p.195). This has also been prepared for by the erotic juxtaposition of Irene's eyes being like the night sky with Curdie's parallel attractiveness: 'he was a very nice looking boy, with eyes as dark as the mines in which he worked and as sparkling as the crystals in their rocks' (p.35). Both their eyes are observed by the adult

narrator as sparkling, in an erotic undermining of their purity, which hints at their union, realised in the sequel. Moreover, Curdie's eyes have that darkness which is normally frightening in the text and is here specifically associated with the mines, the haunt of the goblins. Humphrey Carpenter also notes the erotic relationship of the children:

> MacDonald is one of the very few children's authors who make a success of portraying romantic feelings between a boy and a girl. Irene and Curdie are strongly attracted to each other from their first meeting in *The Princess and the Goblin*.[32]

Child labour is an aspect of the novel's contemporary realism which is approached within its fantasy mode. Curdie is the representative of this child labour in MacDonald's text, which provides a vivid description of mining conditions:

> when the lode, or vein of ore, was small, one miner would have to dig away alone in a passage no bigger than gave him just room to work - sometimes in uncomfortable cramped positions ... you could not tell night from day down there, except from feeling tired and sleepy; for no light of the sun ever came into those gloomy regions. (p.45).

This harsh reality of working-class childhood is acknowledged in historical accounts of the period, such

as that written by the twentieth century historian, R.K. Webb:

> the terrible conditions in which women and children worked ... Miners at the coal face worked naked in the heat; small children were confined for hours in total darkness, expected to work the trapdoors controlling the ventilation of the mines - and not to go to sleep; women and children served as draft animals, pulling coal carts through tunnels not more than three feet high by means of chains about their necks and passing between their legs.[33]

This dehumanisation of the working classes by capitalist industry is a far cry from the innocent child required by the Rousseauists of the period. Being forced to work naked underground is indeed a fantasy world compared to the idealised Victorian nursery.

The world of child labour only exists in the literature and imagination of the typical child reader of children's fiction. The world of Victorian idealised childhood only existed in the imagination of that Victorian child labourer (though Parliamentary measures were taken to restrict child employment as the century progressed, including the introduction of the 1870 Education Act). The child in the Lancashire mill had neither the education, the time nor the money for

expensive middle-class children's books. Another historical account entwines physical with sexual abuse:

> Small children, both boys and girls, sometimes as young as four years old, were employed underground hauling trucks full of coal along passages which were too low for adults ... The report also expressed outrage that naked and semi-naked men, women, girls and boys all worked together, which had a demoralising effect on the women and girls.[34]

Ignoring the sexism of this remark, and the assumption that the lower classes are highly sexed even in such exhausting conditions, it nevertheless demonstrates that innocence can only ever be a social construct, as that same society exploits a class which is conveniently excluded from such an ideal. They are social fodder, only useful when they are feeding the machine of the state, but ultimately dispensable, as MacDonald's text suggests:

> the goblins, who, fancying the miners of more importance to the upper world than they were, had resolved, if they should fail in carrying off the king's daughter, to flood the mine and drown the miners. (p.198).

There is a linguistic uncertainty here of whether the narrator is referring to the importance of the goblins or miners, pivoting on the emphasis of 'they were'. Does the narrator mean that the goblins thought they were less

important or did they miscalculate the miners' importance? As working-class representative, Curdie is indeed more useful than the goblins who are self-employed entrepreneurs with their own king and queen, so the text can express a sympathy for the miners pertinent to its period. But there is a linguistic undercurrent which suggests that they too are dispensible.

The goblins, then, according to part of the narrative voice, have miscalculated their assumed importance of the miners in upholding the economic base of society, by failing to recognise the dispensibility of fodder fuel for that base's production, as they can always be replaced. The treatment of the mountain as the base of the novel's social strata is discussed by Roderick McGillis, who recognises that Irene is 'brought up by country people in a large house, half castle, half farmhouse, on the side of [a] ... mountain, about half-way between its base and its peak' (p.7), where:

> The words 'base' and 'peak' suggest the value associated with the mountain top and the mountain bottom. The house in the middle, however, is more interesting. Being half castle, half farmhouse it embraces social and economic opposites; it is the product of a synthesis.[35]

At the top of the house is Queen Irene, while princess Irene travels between both extremes, and lives in the

middle, identifying with the miners and the Queen, finally uniting with Curdie (the royal miner). It is also interesting from a social perspective that the goblins' strength is their hard heads and their weakness, their soft feet. Their intelligence has increased in their underground world, adding to the danger to above-ground, while their refusal to be subservient at the foot of the king has perhaps led to a reminder by being weak-footed. Curdie's exploitation, on the other hand, receives attempted justification within the text, since he is a highly idealised child labourer, enjoying his work, loving his life, his family and displaying a sense of maturity and responsibility beyond his years.

The social commentary upon child labour remains, albeit in diluted form, as the harsh reality of the coal mines is shifted to the more romantic fantasy of 'precious ore' (p.45). To become suitable for the hand of the princess, Curdie must first be discovered by the text to be of noble birth, and thus cleansed of his underground associations. He is never fully cleansed, though, of his bogeyman associations, as there is a consistent tension in the text between self and other, and an awareness that innocence is maintained as a fragile desire. Another text which discusses the issue of child labour in an otherwise idealised period of children's innocence, where the hero must be raised from the Darwinian slime of the lower classes to be washed

clean and fit for a lady's love, is *The Water-Babies*.

1.*The Princess and the Goblin* was first published as a serial in *Good Words For the Young* between November 1870 and June 1871.

2.For a further discussion of the bogeyman as paedophilic figure, see my chapter on *A Child's Garden of Verses*.

3.By placing homosexuality and paedophilia in such close proximity here, I in no way wish to debase homosexuality or justify paedophilia, as both are absolutely separate sexual concepts. However, there does appear to be a tendency to place homosexuality in the same category as paedophilia, fuelled by media exaggeration, as many ignorant people seem to consider paedophiles as homosexuals, which is a total misconception. Interesting, though, is MacDonald's use of this coming out phrase with regard to a sexual deviant of the dark underground world, as homosexuality itself (especially in the nineteenth century) is associated with such seediness and dark worlds, as a nocturnal subculture.

4.Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories*, ed. and intro. by Jenni Calder (London: Penguin Books Ltd., n.d. First published, 1886).

5.George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* (London: Puffin Books, 1964. First published, 1872), p.10. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

6.Cordelia Sherman, 'The Princess and the Wizard: The Fantasy Worlds of Ursula K. LeGuin and George MacDonald' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol.12, No.1, Spring 1987, p.25.

7.David Gooderham, 'Children's Fantasy Literature: Toward an Anatomy' in *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol.26, No.3, September 1995, p.177.

8.Robert Lee Wolff, *The Golden Key: A Study of the Fiction of George MacDonald* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p.166.

9.See, for example, John Pennington, 'Muscular spirituality in George MacDonald's *Curdie* books' in Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Ch.6; C.N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), Ch.3; Colin Manlove, *Christian Fantasy: From 1200 to the Present* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), Ch.13.

10.Manlove, *Christian Fantasy*, p.175.

11.Manlove, *Modern Fantasy*, p.61.

12.Wolff informs us that MacDonald's 'great-grandfather's father and grandfather had fled from the massacre at Glencoe (1692)', in *The Golden Key*, p.11. See also Elizabeth Sutherland, ed., *The Golden Key and the Green Life: Some Fantasies and Celtic Tales* by George MacDonald and Fiona MacLeod (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1986), p.22, which says: 'descended from the MacDonalds of Glencoe, his great-grandfather, Gaelic-speaking and Catholic, escaped with his infant son, Charles Edward, from the bloody aftermath of Culloden to take refuge in the caves of Portsoy where he eventually became town piper. Charles Edward was raised a Protestant ... [and] opened a thread-spinning factory'. This information ultimately comes from Greville MacDonald's parental biography, *George MacDonald and his Wife* (1924).

13.Pennington, for example, tells us that MacDonald, like Kingsley, was heavily influenced by F.D. Maurice, 'a central figure in the Christian Socialist movement', in Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity*, p.133).

14.Sutherland, *The Golden Key*, p.29. Wolff, *The Golden Key* suggests that this alleged incident 'enhanced his fierce pride in his own origin - he felt himself to be as greatly born as anybody - and at the same time created a lasting distrust - even hatred - or rich noblemen' (p.17).

15.Hall, *Muscular Christianity*, pp.135-6.

16.ibid., p.140.

17.Cited in Manlove, *Christian Fantasy*, p.165.

18.ibid., pp.166-7.

19.Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1985), p.80.

20.The term cob would seem to derive from cobalt, a hard silvery-white element that is a ferromagnetic metal, which, in the *Collins Softback English Dictionary* states that it is extracted from the German kobolt, meaning goblin, as the miners' believed that malicious goblins put it in the silver ore.

21.For a further discussion of metafiction in MacDonald's texts, see Graeme A. Muirhead, 'Meta-Phantastes: A Self-Referential Faerie Romance For Men And Women' in *Scottish Literary Journal*, Vol.19, No.2, Nov. 1992, pp.36-49.

22.Stephen Prickett's essay, 'George MacDonald and the Poetics of Realism' discusses this notion of what is realistic (though does not refer to the concept of language's transparent innocence in direct relation to children's literature), suggesting that 'the whole concept of "reality" was much more up for grabs in the middle of the nineteenth century than later trends of canonical criticism have led us to suppose. Perhaps it would suffice to say that what MacDonald's fiction ... suggests, is that the

critical approach of someone like Bakhtin, with his powerful sense of "heteroglossia" - that sheer sense of the multiplicity and complexity of the linguistic codes by which we create our sense of "reality" - is much more appropriate for discussions of the nineteenth century novel than those critical schools which lay stress on "intertextuality" and the closed-circle of literary hermeneutics'. In Kathy Filmer, ed., *The Victorian Fantasists: Essays on Culture, Society and Belief in the Mythopoeic Fiction of the Victorian Age* (London: Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd., 1991), p.88.

23.Such labyrinthian material has provided many psychological readings, such as Sally Adair Rigsbee's article, 'Fantasy Places and Imaginative Belief: *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *The Princess and the Goblin*' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol.8, No.1, Spring 1983, p.10, which suggests that: 'just as the deeper levels of the psyche contain varied and mysterious moods and intuitions which are sources of creative vitality, these houses offer the children new and varied dimensions of existence. The houses are huge, with rooms leading mysteriously into hidden rooms that suggest the rich and limitless potential of the interior life of the self ... the attic home of the grandmother, and the caverns where the goblins live are concrete images which make the intangible world of emotions and imagination articulate and visible.' An interesting reading, though her assertion that: 'the goblins, who ... are distorted human figures, plan to overpower Irene by extending their dark, underground caverns into the cellar of the castle and finally entering the upper floors to make their home there' (p.11) seems a little inaccurate, as there is no evidence that they wish to stay above ground, but actually intend to take Irene below with them. Cordelia Sherman in 'The Princess and the Wizard' says that: 'both writers set at least a part of their narratives in physical labyrinths and mazes that serve as backgrounds to and figures of the children's choices.' (p.25).

24.George MacDonald, *The Princess and Curdie* (London: Puffin Books, 1966. First published in book form, 1882. First published in serial form from January to June 1877 in *Good Things*), p.27. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

25.Freud, 'On the Sexual Theories of Children' (1908) in Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, tr. by James Strachey, ed. by Angela Richards (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991), pp.183-204.

26.Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994, rev. edn. First published, 1984), pp.12-41.

27.ibid., p.19.

28.William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, Act IV, Sc.IV, L.83 & 93, in ed. by Peter Alexander, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1989. First published,

1951).

29.Fernand Comte, *The Wordworth Dictionary of Mythology,* tr. by Alison Goring (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994. First published in France as *Les grandes figures des mythologies,* 1988), p.69.

30.Nancy-Lou Patterson, '*Kore* Motifs in *The Princess and the Goblin*' in Roderick McGillis, ed., *For the Childlike: George MacDonald's Fantasies For Children* (Metuchen, N.J. & London: The Children's Literature Association and the Scarecrow Press Inc., 1992), p.170.

31.Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems,* ed. by Candace Ward (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1994. First published, 1862), p.11.

32.Carpenter, *Secret Gardens,* p.74.

33.R.K. Webb, *Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989. 2nd edn. First published, 1980), pp.263-4.

34.Norman Lowe, *Mastering Modern British History* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987. First published, 1984), pp.148-50.

35.Roderick McGillis, 'George MacDonald's *Princess* Books: High Seriousness' in Perry Nodelman, ed., *Touchstones: Reflections On the Best in Children's Literature, Vol.1* (West Lafayette: Children's Literature Association, Purdue University, 1985), p.151.

Chapter 6 - 'I Must be Clean, I Must be Clean' - Purifying *The Water-Babies*

Like MacDonald's story of a miner boy, Charles Kingsley's fantasy children's novel *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby* (1863) also focuses on the issue of child labour. Unlike the romantically attractive life of Curdie's precious ore mine, however, Kingsley's text confronts the reader with perhaps a more grittily realist hero of contemporary Victorian society in the chimney-sweep Tom, a member of the insignificant and dispensable underclass, as the shortness of his name and anonymous lack of surname suggests[1]. The fairy tale opening of 'once upon a time there was a little chimney-sweep, and his name was Tom'[2] provides an antithesis of all things fairy-like in the immediate social surrounding of the Victorian reader's society (albeit keeping a fairy-like distance of poverty and disease from the intended bourgeois child reader). This contradiction is self-consciously borne out at the end when the narrator anticipates the reader's perception of the traditional fairy tale:

> 'And of course Tom married Ellie?'
> My dear child, what a silly notion!
> Don't you know that no one ever marries

> in a fairy tale, under the rank of a
> prince or a princess? (p.182).

Tom is raised from the diseased dirt of the lower classes, but not far enough to merit the hand of the fair Ellie, as he has no royal blood, unlike Curdie, as the status to equate him with his partner, and we are reminded of this consistently; 'he jumped at her, and longed to hug and kiss her; but did not, remembering that she was a lady born' (p121), and 'Tom longed very much again to kiss her; but he thought it would not be respectful, considering she was a lady born' (p.153). Clearly what one is 'born' is a distinguishing factor.

Indeed it is because of this potential breach in class difference that Tom is pursued to his imminent death and resultant rebirth as a water-baby. The main fear is that Tom, as a member of the 'dangerous class'[3] has soiled Ellie's pristine innocence. It is this prejudice against Tom as other which leads to Sir John's aristocratic eradication of a working-class epidemic that is seen to be threatening the very foundations of respectable society. Tom's abuse at the hands of the aptly named Grimes suggests that he is the victim of a neglect which has threatened the very essence of his childhood innocence; he has become the sexualised other in his black sooty existence, much like the goblins of the previous chapter. To be redeemed, he becomes part of a wider community of cleansed souls:

> there were the water-babies in thousands ... All the little children whom the good fairies take to, because their cruel mothers and fathers will not ... all who come to grief by ill-usage or ignorance or neglect ... all the little children in alleys and courts ... who die by fever, and cholera, and measles, and scarlatina, and nasty complaints which no one has any business to have. (p.105).

Like the diseases which consume them (some of which are undoubtedly sexual diseases, as suggested by the 'nasty complaints which no one has any business to have', or even 'grief', the result of 'ill-usage'), these children are consumed by society and then discarded into the gutter, as the waste product of industry. They are the children whom many would rather forget, reminders that the child is a consumable product to be used and abused, and then discarded, showing a fine line between childhood innocence and its debasement[4]. There had been numerous Acts passed to abolish the employment of children, the alternative face of Victorian society and its desire for the cleansed state of innocence, so the book involves both images. Tom is both working-boy and the idealised fictional child, who is created for the desire and pleasure of adult society's innocent fantasy of childhood.

It is this representation of the working-class child who is eroticised and subjected to exploitation within an

adult narration which is marketed towards the ideal child reader. Tom, as a chimney-sweep, is described in Darwinian terms as a 'little black ape' (p.17), who penetrates the symbolically virginal white room of Ellie, the idealised innocent. Claudia Nelson's book *Boys Will Be Girls* also recognises that 'the novel is ambiguous about sexuality', but goes on to say that:

> Tom's intrusion into Ellie's bedroom, in which she is 'an angel out of heaven' and he 'a little black ape,' suggests the customary mid-Victorian suspicion that men are highly sexed and therefore dirty and bestial, while women are virginal and unawakened and therefore pure and Angelic.[5]

Nelson argues that the aim of children's literature was to effeminate boys into the tradition of the Angel in the house, but, in this case at least, it is more likely that it is not masculinity that is being denounced here, but the sexual appetite of the lower orders of society, as a threat to the dearly desired innocence of idealised childhood, like the protection of Irene from the subterranean goblins.

It is the sharp contrast between black and white which suggests the difference between savagery and civilised life. The threat of the sexually and socially 'dirty' working class mingling with the purity of the ruling class is exposed here through textual symbolism:

> The room was all dressed in white; white window curtains, white bed curtains, white furniture, and white walls ... Under the snow-white coverlet, upon the snow-white pillow, lay the most beautiful little girl that Tom had ever seen. Her cheeks were almost as white as the pillow ... She never could have been dirty. (pp.16-17).

It could almost be Cinderella meets Snow White, but nowhere in sight is the untarnished Prince for juxtaposed to this virginal Snow White is the sexual threat of Tom, viewed from the social 'eye' of the mirror:

> he suddenly saw ... a little ugly, black, ragged figure ... What did such a little black ape want in that sweet young lady's room? And behold, it was himself, reflected in a great mirror ... And Tom, for the first time in his life, found out that he was dirty; and burst into tears with shame and anger; and turned to sneak up the chimney again and hide. (p.17).

Tom, 'for the first time in his life', feels the full weight of social prejudice, as he sees himself within the ruling class environment of the brilliant white bedroom. It is not a narcissistic image (he is not the *fairest* of them all), but a subject position, into which he is interpellated due to the encroaching surroundings of social superiority. The mirror provides the view that society has of Tom, which forces him to feel shame and the need to 'hide' from disapproving eyes. He judges himself in these terms, seeing *himself* as dirty, unworthy

and shameful. The language used ensures that Tom is defined and trapped by the terms available to him, and so the narrator provides the description as Tom's view. He is also held up to the mirror of Ellie as the idealised innocent who 'never could have been dirty' (p.17), thus portraying a representation of the desired norm set against his own diseased and sexual filth of lower class otherness[6].

It is only when he catches sight of his own distasteful appearance, which at first he fails to recognise as himself, that the full weight of that social fear is impacted: 'he turned on it angrily. What did such a little black ape want in that sweet young lady's room?' (p.17). The implications, both moral and physical, are felt in the desired overtones of the verb 'want', leaving him as a figure of social want in need of raising or cleansing from his Darwinian slime, and also as a representative of sexual 'want' or abnormality of appetite, respectable society's suspicions with regard to the working classes. Such want is listed in the opening of Pandora's box, where 'out flew all the ills which flesh is heir to; all the children of the four great bogies' (p.151). One of these ills of the flesh is 'Dirt' (p.151), as it is ever closely aligned with immorality in this text. It is echoed by the Beveridge Report of 1942, which advocated a Welfare State to defeat the five great evils of want, disease, ignorance, squalor

and idleness.

This complicated, if comparatively short scene in Ellie's bedroom, is the one upon which the entire novel pivots, as it leads Tom into his adventures as a water-baby. He is driven by the twice repeated urge: 'I must be clean, I must be clean' (p.32), and spurred on by the echo of the Irishwoman's voice of: 'those that wish to be clean, clean they will be; and those that wish to be foul, foul they will be' (p.12 & 32), with the clanging sound of 'church bells' (p.32) in his ears, which spell out and legitimise the divine need for cleanliness being next to Godliness. He must metamorphosise from his ape-like body and reach the accepted standards of English class-ridden purity.

Charged with a sexual undercurrent, the narrative setting of this crucial point takes place in a child's bedroom, where the unsuspecting innocent is erotically presented in bed, where: 'her hair was like threads of gold spread all about over the bed' (p.17). Into this haven enters Tom from the dark, dirty, outside world of the chimney (emerging into white daylight, much as MacDonald's goblins crawl from the depths of their debauchery, besmearing the social norm), contaminating its purity with soot, and representing the sexual knowledge suspected of the lower classes by 'respectable society'. This is clearly a social as well as sexual

threat. The house, 'Harthover Place' (p.7), represents a past golden age of a landowning aristocracy, which comes under increasing pressure from the Industrial Revolution, as urbanisation and the working classes enlarge to provide a threat to the existing status quo of the social order, demonstrated through such radical movements as Chartism, the anti-Corn Law League and the movement for factory reform. Harthover Place also echoes through the scene: Tom, coming down the 'wrong' chimney, 'found himself standing on the hearthrug' (p.16). It is when he crosses *over* the *hearth* that his guilt is suspected at Harthover. It is later discovered: 'by the mark of his little sooty feet' that 'he had never been off the hearth-rug till the nurse caught hold of him. It was all a mistake' (p.36). At this point the text suggests a difficulty in preconceived beliefs about the threat of Tom as social soot.

The picture of Christ's crucifixion in Ellie's bedroom further suggests a sense of defiled purity, as Tom considers it to be someone 'murdered by the savages in foreign parts' (p.17). Ironically, 'savages' is adopted here to parallel a view of the social norm towards the lower orders, namely Tom. In turn, this justifies the need for them to be civilized or cleansed, as we have witnessed in the exploitation of MacDonald's miners, goblins and the colonised native of *The Coral Island*. Christ, as the sacrificial white lamb again

echoes the white lamb-child, Ellie, threatened to be 'sacrificed' by the savage 'ape', Tom. This adds to the eroticism of the scene, as the sadistic pain and pleasure of crucifixion is paralleled with the sexual threat to childhood innocence. Christ, of course, is also an apt figure because he is the ideal child representative, who has been sacrificed for the sins of a corrupt adult society. As with the Christ figure, society clings on to the image of the innocent child as a means of returning to innocence.

An overwhelming preoccupation with controlling these masses drove Kingsley to deliver his 'Human Soot' sermon of 1870, which he preached for the Kirkdale Ragged Schools in Liverpool about the 'dangerous class' that is referred to earlier in my chapter. He provides an interesting, if disturbing link between the waste product of industry and of human society, both of which he wishes to "recycle" for the good of social, economic and environmental efficiency, saying that:

> Our processes are hasty, imperfect, barbaric; and their result is vast and rapid production, but also waste, refuse, in the shape of a dangerous class. We know well how, in some manufactures, a certain amount of waste is profitable - that it pays better to let certain substances run to refuse, than to use every product of the manufacture - as in a steam-mill every atom of soot is so much wasted fuel; but

> it pays better not to consume the whole fuel and to let the soot escape. So it is in our present social system; it pays better. Capital is accumulated more rapidly by wasting a certain amount of human life, human health, human intellect, human morals, by producing and throwing away a regular percentage of human soot - of that thinking and acting dirt which lies about, and, alas! breeds and perpetuates itself in foul alleys and low public-houses, and all and any of the dark places of the earth.[7]

As benevolent as his approach may be, it nevertheless equates the masses with an image of all that is undesirable and filthy. In literary and political terms what matters is the image of the 'dangerous class', 'thinking and acting dirt', which is spreading itself into the virginal state of an ideal class, just as the 'human soot' embodied in Tom invades Ellie's bedroom. It is the social dread which we witnessed in the previous chapter that contagion, both moral and physical, emanates from 'the dark places of the earth', where the margins of the other threaten the hem of innocence with their dirt, both physiological and psychological. Such diseases must be neutralised by scouring the body and mind of the lower orders through the introduction of improved sanitation and an awareness of the evils of alcoholism, thereby retaining a social control against an epidemic of the masses filtering into the mainstream norm[8].

Such recycling messages on an environmental basis are to be found in *The Water-Babies*, as the narrator constantly rebukes all that is wasteful in society, and describes the nature figure of Mother Carey as 'she sits making old beasts into new' (p145), causing Kingsley to be seen as a proto-environmentalist by some ecocritics[9]. His blatant attack on sea-pollution is a useful example of this:

> where men are wasteful and dirty, and let sewers run into the sea, instead of putting the stuff upon the fields like thrifty reasonable souls; or throw herrings' heads, and dead dog-fish, or any other refuse, into the water ... there the water-babies will not come ... but leave the sea-anemones and the crabs to clear away every-thing, till the good tidy sea has covered up all the dirt in soft mud and clean sand ... after man's dirt is cleared away. (pp.101-2).

The water-babies sweep out rock-pools and keep gardens tidy under the sea, and the crabs and anemones clear up the waste products, scavenging among the dirt:

> to keep the place clean and sweet, the crabs picked up all the scraps off the floor, and ate them like so many monkeys; while the rocks were covered with ten thousand sea-anemones, and corals and madrepores, who scavenged the water all day long, and kept it nice and pure. (pp.103-4).

The soot of the earth is therefore recycled into harmless materials by the workers who digest it, just as Tom, as

'human soot' has been recycled into a harmless, cleansed figure, who in turn cleans the sea and then benefits society. Both environment and child inhabitant reach a state of return to innocence through mutual recycling, as the desire to protect both nature and child from the degrading effects of industrialisation mutually support and influence each other. An abused environment and an abused child both have far-reaching negative social impacts in this novel, so by cultivating each to its highest potential for purity, an Edenic harmony is found. As the division between urban and country displays, a green environment is preferred in the text, which is in keeping with the Rousseauist philosophy of innocent child and garden, discussed throughout this thesis. However, although Kingsley and the narrator of *The Water-Babies* clearly favour nature, they do so with a view to cleaning up rather than radicalising cities, as their industrial wealth is recognised:

> Then the city will become what it ought to be; the workshop, and not the dwelling-house, of a mighty and healthy people. The old foul alleys, as they become gradually depopulated, will be replaced by fresh warehouses, fresh public buildings; and the city, in spite of all its smoke and dirt, will become a place on which the workman will look down with pride and joy, because it will be to him no longer a prison and a poison-trap, but merely a place for honest labour.[10]

A return to innocence for the lower orders involves, not a nostalgic journey towards a lost golden age, but the cultivation of that ecological heaven in an urban hell.

It is an ideology which suggests that treating the labour force with surface humanity will prevent insurrection, but the scavenging crabs are still exploited:

> to make up for them having to do such nasty work, they were not left black and dirty, as poor chimney-sweeps and dustmen are. No; the fairies are more considerate than that, and have dressed them all in the most beautiful colours and patterns, till they look like vast flower-beds of gay blossoms. (p.104).

The crabs are not besmeared with the soot which Tom had to endure as a sweep, thus following the textual claim that cleanliness instils contentment. The analogy between these sea creatures and the working-classes is evident from the passage just quoted, and to emphasise the point, the narrator continues to say that:

> an old gentleman named Fourier used to say that we ought to do the same by chimney-sweeps and dustmen, and honour them instead of despising them; and he was a very clever old gentleman: but unfortunately for him and the world, as mad as a March hare. (p.104).

The method in such madness is clearly extracted by Kingsley in his 'Human Soot' sermon, as he argues that:

> our human refuse shall be utilized like our material refuse, when man as man, even down to the weakest and most ignorant, shall be found to be (as he really is) so valuable that it will be worth while to preserve his health, to the level of his capabilities ... one has only to go into the streets of this or any great city to see how we, with all our boast of civilization, are as yet but one step removed from barbarism ... there *are* barbarians around us, at every street corner - grown barbarians, it may be now, all but past saving - but bringing into the world young barbarians, whom we may yet save.[11]

The desire to utilise and profit from such 'human refuse' seems to outweigh any altruistic humanitarian concerns, and is adopted throughout nineteenth-century business thinking with such subscribers as Robert Owen, owner of the New Lanark cotton mills who: 'demonstrated that better conditions and shorter working hours increased rather than reduced output'[12]. It is hardly with a compassionate voice that Kingsley declares: 'the dangerous classes began to be recognised as an awful fact which must be faced; and faced, not by repression, but by improvement.'[13] It seems to be more of a reaction to the fear of revolution which swept Europe in 1848 and was seen as a possibility from the rise of radical movements in Britain, than to a genuine empathy with such masses. Kingsley himself declared that 'I am a Chartist' at a Christian Socialist meeting in 1849, but the claim was arguably made to get the mob to listen to the Christian

socialist message, whilst not really being "one of them", a message which supported social improvement through sanitary reform rather than suffrage or violence[14].

The desire to raise Tom from the soot of his exploited existence, then, is as much for the good of the social body as for his personal body; the requirement of purity or innocence becomes part of an elitist class ideology preventing widespread contamination from the masses. Before the epiphany in front of the mirror in Ellie's room, where Tom sees for the first time his dirt, he 'was as much at home in a chimney as a mole is underground' (p.16), and his only ambition is to become like his master, Grimes, as he:

> thought of the fine times coming, when he would be a man, and a master sweep, and sit in the public-house ... And he would have apprentices, one, two, three, if he could. How he would bully them, and knock them about, just as his master did to him. (p.6).

The mentality is to reproduce the lifestyle that one is used to in the ironic mind-set that 'there were good times coming' (p.6), but the narrator shows that improvement can only exist through a raising from this foulness into being a respectable cog in society's working engine[15]. Even the most menial of tasks are essential, though seemingly possible without the physical and psychological grime. Up until this point, Tom is dirty both in body and soul, for:

> He could not read nor write ... and he never washed himself, for there was no water up the court where he lived. He had never been taught to say his prayers. He never had heard of God, or of Christ, except in words which you never have heard, and which it would have been well if he had never heard. (p.5).

The association with physical cleansing and religious sanctity is clear here and indeed throughout the novel, as the bathing of one's body is equated time and again with Christian baptism.

The physical need for cleanliness is clearly evident in Kingsley's 'Human Soot' sermon, but is also apparent in his work within the area of sanitary reform. In 'The Water of Life' sermon, which he preached at Westminster Abbey, he equates the physical need for free clean water, especially during a cholera epidemic, with a spiritual thirst for the Word of God, saying that:

> here in the heart of London, in murky alleys and foul courts, where there is too often, as in the poet's rotting sea -
>
> 'Water, water, everywhere,
> Yet not a drop to drink.' ...
>
> they heard One who ate and drank with publicans and sinners stand up ... and cry; 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the scripture hath said, Out of him shall flow rivers of living water.'[16]

Water is what Tom heads towards in his escape from being chased, and from his miserable life, as he enters into a form of Christian baptismal rebirth, in a subterranean Eden where innocence can be regained:

> they found a black thing in the water, and said it was Tom's body, and that he had been drowned. They were utterly mistaken. Tom was quite alive; and cleaner, and merrier, than he ever had been. The fairies had washed him, you see, in the swift river, so thoroughly, that not only his dirt, but his whole husk and shell had been washed quite off him, and the pretty little real Tom was washed out of the inside of it. (p.44).

This is the Christian idea of the soul leaving the sinful body in order to be pure, and is significantly achieved here through water. Again, this concept of the purifying qualities of water is expounded in a song of the river: 'clear and cool ... Undefiled, for the undefiled ... bathe in me, mother and child ... Like a soul that has sinned and is pardoned again' (pp.25-6). The image is clearly of baptism, especially in the River Jordan, where sins are washed away through Christian rituals. It is an idea which Kingsley expands in his sermons, saying: 'and when they died, or seemed to die, you felt that THEY were not dead, but only their husk and shell'[17].

Like Curdie, the working conditions for Tom are dark and cramped:

> He cried when he had to climb the dark flues, rubbing his poor knees and elbows raw; and when the soot got into his eyes ... and when his master beat him ... and when he had not enough to eat. (p.5).

Tom has to suffer the further indignities of being orphaned (perfect for chimney-sweep work), isolated, beaten by Grimes, and going hungry on a regular basis. Abuse is therefore part of his daily life, and he is continuously maltreated to satisfy his master's whims:

> His master was so delighted at his new customer that he knocked Tom down out of hand ... And, when he did get up at four the next morning, he knocked Tom down again. (p.7).

Such physical abuse can be related to paedophilia, as James Kincaid demonstrates:

> Doubtless it is true that there are not six people now alive who will openly admit to being sexually aroused by spanking children - among the several billion who actually are.[18]

As with the scene in Ellie's bedroom, the narrative views this incident between Tom and Grimes in terms of black and white, or dirty and clean, as a reminiscence of the Irishwoman's echo of fair and foul. Her echo suggests a theme which runs throughout the novel, cited earlier as the need to combat dirt with clean water. The narrator steps away from the slime of the Victorian poor

to directly address his idealised innocent child reader: 'thank God that you have plenty of cold water to wash in; and wash in it too' (p.183), as this upholds the division of self from other. The latter is talked *about* in the novel in an effort to educate the reader about social ills from a safely distanced expert commentary, whereas the reader, as innocent norm (both as Kingsley's own son, and external reader), is talked *to* on a more personal level, which tends to heighten the line between them and us. The salvation of cleansing is further approached in observing that: 'you must know and believe that people's souls make their bodies, just as a snail makes its shell' (p.119). Again it is not only external dirt which is required to be cleaned, but one's inner soul: it is only when Grimes cries that his tears wash away the sins of outer and inner foulness:

> as poor Grimes cried ... his own tears did what his mother's could not do, and Tom's could not do, and nobody's on earth could do for him; for they washed the soot off his face and off his clothes; and then they washed the mortar away from between the bricks; and the chimney crumbled down; and Grimes began to get out of it. (p.177).

Only by purging oneself of sin can grace be obtained in this novel, as the grime of the chimney is destroyed by the cleansing element of Grimes' tears. Again, the sin is hinted at as being sexual, as well as moral, for the final warning from the narrator to 'my dear little man'

(p.182), appears to be against masturbation (a pursuit of children held in continual vigilant check by the Victorians through voyeuristic surveillance[19]), to 'keep your eye single, and your hands clean' (p.180). Most of *The Water-Babies* occurs in water and part of the remedy to prevent masturbation was cold bathing; Nelson points out that: 'later Kingsley ties the novel's insistence on cold baths to the common cure for masturbation'[20].

Just as 'the dangerous classes' are viewed as a distasteful aspect of industrial urbanisation on a human population, so too does that industrialisation create a black spot upon the environment. Valentine Cunningham discusses this connection between Tom as chimney-sweep and the chimney itself, saying: 'the chimney: the place where soot was emitted, an emblem of wealth, but also of that wealth's by-product, dirt, ash, cinder, soot, filth'[21]. Hence we have the narrator in *The Water-Babies* advocating the need for that human waste (both in terms of polluted environment and humans) to be recycled into harmless, functioning particles. Like the potential fear of human revolution, nature too is regarded as volatile when neglected:

> We talk of the loss of human life in war ... I will tell you what is ten times, and ten thousand times, more terrible than War, and that is - outraged Nature ... Nature, insidious, inexpensive, silent, sends no

> roar of cannon, no glitter of arms to do her work; she gives no warning note of preparation; she has no protocol, nor any diplomatic advances, whereby she warns her enemy that war is coming. Silently, I say, and insidiously she goes forth ... by the very same means by which she makes alive, she puts to death; and so avenges herself of those who have rebelled against her ... till she has taught man the terrible lesson he is so slow to learn, that Nature is only conquered by obeying her.[22]

In *The Water-Babies*, the figure of Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid appropriately embodies this concept of being responsible for one's own actions. She works like a machine on a cause and effect basis:

> 'I cannot help punishing people when they do wrong ... For I work by machinery, just like an engine; and am full of wheels and springs inside; and am wound up very carefully, so that I cannot help going.' (pp.107-8).

The narrator draws a similarity between industrial machines and environmental processes, where the output of both is effected by its relevant input. Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid punishes people who misuse others through cruelty or ignorance, and it is their sins which affect her appearance:

> 'I am very ugly. I am the ugliest fairy in the world; and I shall be, till people behave themselves as they ought to do. And then I shall grow as handsome as my sister, who is the loveliest fairy in the

> world.' (p.108).

Just as Tom's soot rubs off on the surrounding countryside ('he dirtied everything terribly as he went. There has been a great black smudge all down the crag ever since' (p.29)), so too does the wasteful behaviour of people rub off on nature's representative, leaving her blackened, as Wood notices that:

> Her clothing recalls the landscape at the beginning of the book; she is contaminated by the blackness of the sooty, industrial city and will not be white and beautiful until humanity cleans itself up.[23]

This refers to Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid's 'black bonnet, and ... black shawl' (p.106); she is as soot-coloured as the urban scene which is described before reaching Harthover House.

Tom's urban environment is a reflection of his sooty body, as he 'plod[s] along the black dusty road, between black slag walls, with no sound but the groaning and thumping of the pit-engine' (p.8). The juxtapostion of black and white is clearly marked as he and Grimes venture into Sir John's territory, for:

> soon the road grew white, and the walls likewise; and at the wall's foot grew long grass and gay flowers, all drenched with dew; and instead of the groaning of the pit-engine, they heard the skylark saying his matins high up in the air. (p.9).

The reference back to the pit-engine is underlining the

parallel which the narrator wishes to draw between both settings, which clearly accommodate very different social classes. The danger in *The Water-Babies* is that that division will become blurred, as the grime of industrialisation pollutes the green landscape which it borders on. The very mobility in the text of Tom and Grimes from their contained urban ash-heap into the countryside reserve of the social elite, sparks a fear that the 'dangerous classes' can reach into and penetrate otherwise protected areas of innocence. Throughout the novel the narrator consistently alerts his reader to this environmental and social blackening, as Tom blackens the landscape with soot, and penetrates Ellie's virginal chambers. On the journey to Harthover House, Grimes cools his hangover by 'dipping his ugly head into the spring - and very dirty he made it' (p.10). Just as industrial by-products are thrown into the sea alongside human sewage, so too does the human by-product of industrialisation infringe upon and begrime the country-side and its privileged owners with their supposed immorality and diseases. The rigidly contained division between black and white is therefore threatened by an Industrial Revolution which has created pollution and a large working class. Even supposed havens can host hidden dangers:

> she started for the sea-side with all the children ... She might as well have stayed at home ... and saved the chance, also, of making all the children ill instead of

> well (as hundreds are made), by taking them
> to some nasty smelling undrained lodging,
> and then wondering how they caught scar-
> latina and diptheria: but people won't be
> wise enough to understand that till they
> are all dead of bad smells, and then it
> will be too late. (p.80).

Only the ruling-class 'home' is safe and and enivron-mentally clean, and Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid will punish truants in an act of nature's revenge. In such passages, the supposed division in the text between the narrator's hero, Tom, who is held within the story, and 'my little man' beyond the text, who is being read to by the narrator, is somewhat destablised and threatened, as both social worlds potentially merge within its covers reflecting a possible social blurring beyond the fiction. It is a potential merging of self and other, as the lower orders, personified by Tom, threaten to blur into the privileged innocence of the 'little man' beyond the fiction: this little man, by being addressed *in* the fiction therefore is brought into its covers from an outside position, so bringing the innocent child's world into the vicinity of its impoverished other.

The only solution to such human and ecological threats from social soot is to cleanse it, so rendering it fit for decent society and returning society and people to a state of innocence through rebirth and recycling. If such warnings are not heeded, Mrs

Bedonebyasyoudid warns us that we will degenerate into a nation of 'Doasyoulikes' (p.126), whose laziness and lack of responsibility for their actions leads to a Darwinian decline into savages and then extinction[24]. Closely aligned to such concern for nature is the Protestant work ethic whereby:

> 'if only they would have behaved like men, and set to work to do what they did not like. But the longer they waited, and behaved like the dumb beasts, who only do what they like, the stupider and clumsier they grew; till at last they were past all cure, for they had thrown their own wits away ... [for] if I can turn beasts into men, I can, by the same laws of circumstance, and selection, and competition, turn men into beasts. You were very near being turned into a beast once or twice, little Tom. Indeed, if you had not made up your mind to go on this journey, and see the world, like an Englishman, I am not sure but that you would have ended as an eft in a pond.' (pp.130-1).

If Tom had not done what he did not like in going off in search of Grimes to help him and expanding his mind by seeing the world, then he would have undergone evolutionary regression, just like the trout who are relatives of the salmon, for:

> 'A great many years ago they were just like us: but they were so lazy, and cowardly, and greedy, that instead of going down to the sea every year to see the world and grow strong and fat, they chose to stay and

> poke about in the little streams and eat worms and grubs: and they are very properly punished for it; for they have grown ugly and brown and spotted and small.' (pp.68-9).

The idea of a degenerate being growing ugly or savage-like is part of the narrator's lesson that 'people's souls make their bodies, just as a snail makes its shell' (p.119). When Tom is covered in prickles it is because he has disobeyed the laws of nature and indulged his own greed, and only he can alter this position by being responsible for his own actions[25].

In his journey from sweep to scientist, Tom has evidently undergone such an evolutionary process. Initially he is considered as 'but a savage' (p.33), and described to be 'like a small black gorilla fleeing to the forest' (p.19), which echoes his ape-like reflection in Ellie's mirror. Moreover, Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid says that he was in danger of being turned into an eft, which is what he is originally interpellated as: 'I say you are an eft, and therefore you are' (p.59), and, indeed at the end of the novel the narrator informs the reader that:

> these efts are nothing else but the water-babies who are stupid and dirty, and will not learn their lessons and keep themselves clean; and, therefore, ... their skulls grow flat, their jaws grow out, and their brains grow small ... and live in the mud, and eat worms, as they deserve to do. (p.182-3).

Such savagery is also racistly bestowed upon 'the wild

Irish' (p.102) who would not be converted to the Christianity of St Brandan: 'but the people who would not hear him were changed into gorillas, and gorillas they are until this day' (p.102). This anti-Irishness is continued in the stereotype of Dennis, whom:

> you must not trust ... because he is in the habit of giving pleasant answers: but, instead of being angry with him, you must remember that he is a poor Paddy, and knows no better ... and wonder all the while why poor ould Ireland does not prosper like England and Scotland, and some other places, where folk have taken up a ridiculous fancy that honesty is the best policy. (p.64).

This message that the savage other is more to be pitied than scolded is repeated at the end of the text in relation to the efts, for:

> you should pity them, and be kind to them, and hope that some day they will wake up, and be ashamed of their nasty, dirty, lazy, stupid life, and try to amend, and become something better. (p.183).

English nationalism in *The Water-Babies*, like so many of the texts we have discussed, relates directly to a concept of civilization and innocence, where anything on its borders, such as wild Ireland or Wales become areas of fear of contamination for the 'English bulldog' (p.74) spirit of 'a brave English lad' (p.146). In his letters Kingsley refers again to this anti-Irish sentiment after a fishing trip to Ireland:

> I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours.[26]

This is indeed nineteenth-century British nationalism at its most disturbing, as a colony of England is described in degenerate evolutionary terms, mildly improved by the 'aid' of English civilization. It also serves as an interesting parallel to his 'Human Soot' sermon concerning the 'dangerous class' of Liverpool, which just happened to be populated by such wild Irish immigrants. When discussing the division between salmon and trout in *The Water-Babies*, the narrator informs us that:

> you must know, no enemies are so bitter against each other as those who are of the same race; and a salmon looks on a trout, as some great folks look on some little folks, as something just too much like himself to be tolerated. (p.69).

It is a warning which recognises the precarious and unstable division between self and other, as the mirror comes too close to holding up an image rather than a difference between the norm and the outsider. This voice seems to unwittingly undermine its own prejudice, as

identity and normality are seen as social constructs, whose blurred transience needs to be reaffirmed time and again by maintaining stereotypes and scapegoats beyond the mirror of the self.

Therefore, although *The Water-Babies* undoubtedly condemns the working conditions of the poor through Tom[27], there is nevertheless a slippage, as the language of the text does not allow it to remain true to its supposed message. As has been seen, water is of paramount importance in revealing the "savage" nature of such lower orders. Only by baptismal cleansing can they aspire to an accepted role in this novel's society, for prior to this, Tom is at the lower end of the Darwinian social spectrum, kept away from the fairies because of these "savage" tendencies, until cleansing washes away the 'black ape' within. The language of this text forces its meaning to be as fluid as the watery underworld, for Tom's life in the sea is less a subterranean Eden than a descent into purgatory, as:

> whether or not we lived before, we shall live again; though not, I hope, as poor little Tom did. For he went downward into the water: but we, I hope, shall go upward to a very different place. (p.49).

Once more the distancing between "them" and "us" is asserted, as the narrator addresses the 'little man' reader with a collective 'we'. It is like a club to which only the privileged can belong instantly, and to

which young Tom aspires through his waterworld quest, finally attaining the realms of "acceptable society" at adulthood, when 'he is a great man of science, and can plan railroads, and steam-engines, and electric telegraphs' (p.182). Such products of capitalist industry will, of course, require their own little 'heathen' Toms for labour power. The selective 'we' also includes Ellie, Tom's moral educator, who ascends into heaven rather than becoming a water-baby, and whom Tom does not get to marry at the end of the novel.

Although water is symbolised as soul-cleansing innocence, it is also charged with eroticism, as the womb-like subterranean world of swimming naked children is presided over by an erotic mother-figure, Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby (another face of Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, the Irishwoman, and Mother Carey):

> she took Tom in her arms, and laid him in the softest place of all, and kissed him, and patted him, and talked to him, tenderly and low, such things as he had never heard before in his life; and Tom looked up into her eyes, and loved her, and loved, till he fell fast asleep from pure love. (p.113).

The adult narrator's language is extremely sensual in its description of a clearly erotic scene, which sexualises both the child and the text itself. Each sign slips beyond the realms of transparent innocence into gaps and metaphoric undertones, where it closes in orgasmic

exhaustion at the point of Tom's slip into unconsciousness[28]. Like the sexualised underworld of MacDonald's goblins, this subterranean setting is bubbling and frothing with eroticism, as a sort of amniotic water surrounds and engulfs the naked flesh of the child, satiated with the loving language of a pre-Oedipal mother figure, whispering 'such things as he had never heard before'. Her voluptuousness is all embracing, for 'she was the most nice, soft, fat, smooth, pussy, cuddly, delicious creature who ever nursed a baby' (p.112); she oozes unfettered love from every pore.

Such an aqueous habitation of fluid changeability, where Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid can slip into the face of Mrs Doasyouwouldbedoneby - 'she begins where I end, and I begin where she ends' (p.108); and 'when they looked she was neither of them, and yet all of them at once' (p.181) - provides an environment whereby Tom and the other water-babies, as unwanted and neglected children, can be equated with a watery existence, beyond solid origins. Tom is provided with no surname in the novel, and has no parental memories, being an orphan ideal for chimney-sweep work: 'Tom did not remember ever having had a father; so he did not look for one' (p.20) and; 'he might have looked till Doomsday for them, for one was dead, and the other was in Botany Bay' (p.45). His 'Human Soot' heritage has been safely disposed of to the margins of society (through death and transportation), leaving Tom

as a blank page who can be rewritten by the text. He is therefore in a special way created to be manipulated by the novel, and is contained within it by the narrator, who continuously stakes his claim for ownership of 'my story' (p.46), as we have also seen in *The Princess and the Goblin*. When Tom is 'reborn' as a water-baby, he has no memory of his origins before this:

> He did not remember ever having been dirty. Indeed, he did not remember any of his old troubles, being tired, or hungry, or beaten, or sent up dark chimneys ... he had forgotten all about his master, and Harthover Place ... and in a word, all that had happened to him when he lived before. (p.47).

He is born into the purity of an innocent language without origin, where the textual world can contain him in an enclosed space beyond society and its "ills", which is ultimately what adult society desires for all its children. It is Tom's uncertainty of origin which enables language to construct the subject. Tom is at one stage interpellated into a subject position almost as undesirable as a chimney-sweep (and similar to Carroll's Alice, where she is seen as a serpent), namely that of an eft, the otter's despicable newt. His is a vulnerable innocence, for without origins to provide definition, there is always the need to define and describe: the otter is compelled to *name* this being. Even in this idealised world, there is the social obsession to categorise, to interpellate within a system of language,

for it is through naming that control becomes possible.

Tom's forgetfulness of his origins becomes a pre-requisite for innocence which implies that no origin is in itself the origin, whereby Tom becomes a figure for a children's text. However, the reader already knows about Tom's dirt from before, so an innocent reading is impossible and, under scrutiny, the myth of an innocent text collapses. So also does the idea of Tom's ignorance of his previous life. If he had no memory of Ellie, then she would mean nothing to him, but this is clearly not the case from his words: 'I know you, too, now. You are the very little white lady whom I saw in bed' (p.121). Moreover, the drowning of Grimes also triggers a memory in Tom, for: 'as he saw, he recollected, bit by bit. It was his old master, Grimes' (p.72). Such instances would appear to be textual parapraxes, and the claim of total rebirth is thwarted by past influences encroaching on his new identity, thus bringing into question the narrative claim that:

> he had forgotten all about his master ... and the little white girl ... and what was best of all, he had forgotten all the bad words which he had learnt from Grimes, and the rude boys with whom he used to play. That is not strange: for you know, when you came into this world, and became a land-baby, you remembered nothing. So why should he, when he became a water-baby? (p.47).

Why indeed? And yet, remember is exactly what he does.

Given that he recalls people, there is reason to doubt that he has completely wiped any non-innocent language from his mind, and by analogy that throws any claim for children's literary innocence of language into disarray. Tom is provided with a whole stack of opaque references from his association with the adult 'dangerous classes' which cut into and mar the claim for purity of children's literature.

Such instability of language itself also throws the origins of the text for the child into question, as it becomes a hybrid 'tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'[29]. Hence there is the metafictional recognition of this dispute in textual origin of children's literature. One reads of:

> Waste-paper-land, where all the stupid books lie in heaps ... and there he saw people digging and grubbing among them, to make worse books out of bad ones ... and a very good trade they drove thereby, especially among children. (p.157).

Although this is recognised as an obvious attack on "factual" and didactic children's literature[30], it nevertheless demonstrates the intertextuality of literature, including Kingsley's own novel, influenced by many cultural and literary elements, including his own aforementioned writings on environmental reform. Children's books are especially intertextual because the relatively recent arrival of specific books for children

required children's authors to rely on previous literary forms in the creation of their own fictional genre. Therefore, once again origins are placed beyond grasp concerning both character and text, thus distorting the possibility of a closed and contained innocent novel for children.

The Water-Babies Edenic subterranean world is eroticised, and the supposedly innocent environment is constantly challenged by a continuous slippage of signifiers, where nothing can be claimed to be the truth or origin of the narrative, for: 'a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'[31]. It is a magic world where child labour occurs without the visible dirt, as the subject 'freely submits'[32] in a society where its powers of control are internalised: 'he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself ... he becomes the principle of his own subjection'[33]. Tom works now, not from poverty, but out of his desire to be a better person, in the knowledge that he is being watched by Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid, who can panoptically see everything, 'so there is no use trying to hide anything', as she 'knows everything' (p.107).

What is most under scrutiny is the behaviour of humans to their environment, and the drive to achieve a purity in both, as the humiliation and degradation of dirt and waste are checked at the levels of both personal body and social body. The aforementioned 'Waste-paper-land' (p.157) represents part of that waste, where even recycling it by 'digging and grubbing ... and thrashing chaff to save the dust of it' (p.47) does not redeem it in the eyes of the narrator. The end result is yet more bad books, which pollute the mind and profit the purse. This commentary relates to other areas of *The Water-Babies* where the learning of facts in a *Hard Times* type Utilitarian education system are criticised for dulling the imagination of children: 'some people think that there are no fairies. Cousin Cramchild tells little folks so. ' (p.34). Such a system is embodied in 'the Isle of Tomtoddies, all heads and no bodies' (p.165), whose heads are so filled with facts that they have 'water on the brain' (p.169) and 'their legs have turned to roots and grown into the ground, by never taking any exercise' (p.168). Again, according to the laws of the text, the result is human waste; 'half of them burst and decayed, with toadstools growing out of them' (p.165). The narrator describes the Tomtoddies as children overwhelmed by factual education, until they have regressed to become literal vegetables ('turnips and radishes' (p.165)), in a hydrocephalic state where their 'poor brains [run] away' (p.166), and 'there was a great

worm inside it eating out all its brains' (p.166)[34]. Perhaps it is a parapraxis of the text that these children could be seen as ultimate water-babies.

This graphically disturbing allusion is adopted by *The Water-Babies* to argue against factual learning and in favour of fairy tales, of the kind of text presented before the reader. This in turn allows a fixed notion of established truth to be questioned within this fantasy. The assurance of the innocent word is cast into a textual ocean, open to the fluxions of each passing tide and undercurrent, as the narrator shifts between claims of truth and fiction:

> You never heard of a water-baby. Perhaps not. That is the very reason why this story was written ... don't tell me about what cannot be, or fancy that anything is too wonderful to be true. (pp.39-44).

Immediately this forceful persuasion is refuted with:

> Am I in earnest? Oh dear no. Don't you know that this is a fairy tale, and all fun and pretence; and that you are not to believe one word of it, even if it is true? (p.44).

The child reader is being consciously teased with an insoluble puzzle; it could be 'true', for 'at all events, so it happened to Tom' (p.44), only to be contradicted by its being 'fun and pretence ... even if it is true' (p.184). This effectively problematises the claim for transparent language as innocent truth in children's

literature, and displays the futility of attempting to secure the text in a closed interpretation of meaning. Indeed, the epigraph, 'come read my riddle', teases and plays with the concept of signification. Fixed scientific beliefs are undermined, as the narrator shows that some animals were once taken to be as fantastic as fairies or water-babies:

> People would surely have said, 'Nonsense; your elephant is contrary to nature'; and have thought you were telling stories - as the French thought of Le Vaillant when he came back to Paris and said that he had shot a giraffe. (p.41).

It is only when such narrow-minded scientists as 'Professor Ptthmllnsprts' (p.81), (said to be perhaps Putthemallinspirits) is driven mad that he believes in fairies and a whole list of mythical creatures, such as 'unicorns' (p.88). When he is cured he becomes 'a sadder and a wiser man' (p.94), thus showing that rigid classification of nature closes down people's minds, rather than retaining an openness to unknown possibilities. It is also interesting that, as with *Through the Looking-Glass*, the mythical unicorn is referred to in this children's book, where it is perhaps less mythical than the idealised childhood itself which the adult narrator desires. Part of the belief in Kingsley's 'fairy tale' becomes the belief in 'water-babies' as well as 'griffins' (p.88). As these water-babies are cleansed innocent children, the child acquires

the status of mythological creature, the 'fabulous monster' of the *Alice* chapter.

With an avoidance of facts in mind, Tom is submerged into a fluid fairy tale, where he and the reader can learn about nature in a more imaginative surrounding, for: 'Kingsley described with scientific accuracy all the creatures that Tom met in the underwater world, but to that accuracy he added a touch of humour that made them delightful'[35]. It is such ecological training which Tom takes with him into adulthood in becoming a great scientist, for he has the imagination to retain an open mind (such as believing in fairies) and a respect for nature, bestowed upon him by Mrs Bedonebyasyoudid. He also becomes an industrialist, upholding the narrator's and Kingsley's views that urban industry exists and so can best be accepted through a respectful use of materials and recycling which will not dump waste and dirt upon the earth. By doing this, nature is preserved from the encroaching black fingers of urbanisation. A similar desire to respect nature and create or fuel a link between its Edenic connotations and the child as innocent are taken beyond the urban landscape to the pastoral haven in *The Secret Garden*.

1.James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) states that: 'these little boys ... crawled up chimney after chimney,

squeezing into impossibly small places, swallowing soot ... suffering from "knap knee" and twisted ankle joints, open sores, various lung diseases, burns, cancer of the lip, and the special "chimney sweeper's disease," cancer of the scrotum ... Boys became lodged in tight places. If that happened, other boys might be sent up with pins to drive into their feet or a fire might be lit. Some boys were roasted alive', p.76. Similarly Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Longman, 1996. First published 1995) confirms that: 'they had to be induced up the chimneys by pinpricks on their feet or by a fire lit in the grate; and if they avoided death by suffocation they were peculiarly liable to cancer of the scrotum', pp.138-9.

2.Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies: A Fairy Tale for a Land-Baby*, ed. and intro. by Brian Alderson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. First published, 1863), p.5. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

3.Kingsley, 'Human Soot' in Mrs. Kingsley, ed., *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, Vol.II, 7th abridged edn. (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880), p.242.

4.In an effort to erase or render invisible this distasteful side of childhood, many were shipped out of the country. Kincaid, *Child-Loving* questions this contradiction in the social idealising of the child: 'how do we read the massive exportation of surplus children to all parts of the empire ... "Between 1868 and 1925 eighty thousand British boys and girls were sent to Canada to work ... All were unaccompanied by parents, although only one-third of them were orphans" ... How precious or how innocent could they be?' (p.75). Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* states: 'critics could raise questions over the policies and practices of philanthropists in transporting children to Canada; both Barnardos and the British National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children were subject to serious criticisms of the scope and direction of their activities', (p.135).

5.Claudia Nelson, *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857-1917* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp.152-3.

6.Cunningham, *Children and Childhood* suggests that there: 'was a missionary zeal to reach out to people who, in the slums of the new big cities of an industrializing world, seemed as heathen as the "savages" of Africa or Polynesia. Of course this missionary zeal had its limits: a rank fear of "the dangerous classes" sometimes surfaced alarmingly' (p.135).

7.Mrs. Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life* Vol.II, pp.242-3.

8.In 'Great Cities and Their Influence For Good and Evil', Kingsley states that 'a most fearful evil of great cities ... [is] drunkenness. I am one of those who cannot, on scientific grounds, consider drunkenness as a cause of evil, but as an effect.' In *The Works of Charles Kingsley Volume XVIII: Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays*. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1880), p.201. He sees alcohol as an escape mode used by the 'dangerous classes' from the squalor of their existence which, in turn, breeds further problems.

9.See, for example, Naomi Wood, 'A (Sea) Green Victorian: Charles Kingsley and *The Water-Babies*', in *The Lion and the Unicorn* Vol.19, No.2, December 1995. Wood's article provides a good insight to this eco-argument, but does not make a link between nature and childhood, as returns or rebirths to innocence.

10.Taken from Kingsley's lecture delivered at Bristol, October 5, 1857 on 'Great Cities and Their Influence for Good and Evil', cited in *The Works of Charles Kingsley Volume XVIII: Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays*, p.214.

11.Mrs. Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, Vol.II, p.243.

12.Norman Lowe, *Mastering Modern British History* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1987. First published 1984), p.55. See also R.K. Webb, *Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989. First published 1980), p.160, which says that: 'Owen made a fortune at New Lanark ... Convinced that man was a creature of circumstances and rejecting the notion of personal responsibility, Owen was certain that human nature could be regenerated by establishing a proper environment.'

13.*The Works of Charles Kingsley Volume XVIII: Sanitary and Social Lectures and Essays*, p.191.

14.See Brenda Colloms, *Charles Kingsley: The Lion of Eversley* (London: Constable & Company, Ltd., 1975), pp. 116, 126 & 147, where she says that: 'the final message was not revolutionary, since Kingsley, like Maurice, was a Tory at heart and valued order and stability. He believed that when working men struggled to rise above their station they usually succeeded only when they used the most brutish weapons of capitalism and industrialisation. Better, declared Kingsley, that they should improve themselves and their lives as far as they could according to God's law than that they should desert their class' and 'he anticipated improvement for the conditions of working men to be accomplished through education and legislation, not through the violent overthrow of institutions and the substitution of one political party for another. Reconciliation was ... the keynote of Kingsley's hopes.' Tom is not revolutionary, but does raise himself above his original class through being educated.

15.For a further discussion of the role of the machine in *The Water-Babies*, see Colin Manlove, 'Charles Kingsley, H.G. Wells, and the Machine in Victorian Fiction' in *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol.48, No.2, September 1993, pp.212-239.

16.Charles Kingsley, *The Water of Life and Other Sermons* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879), pp.2-5.

17.Kingsley, *The Water of Life and Other Sermons*, p.9.

18.Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, p.264.

19.See, for example, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1: An Introduction*, tr. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990. *La Volonté de savoir* first published 1976. First published in Britain by Allen Lane 1979).

20.Claudia Nelson, *Boys Will Be Girls*, p.153. Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991) states that: 'a cold tub was thought best to bring an end to compulsive masturbation', p.41. Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk* suggests: '*The Water-Babies* probably does mirror Kingsley's sense of guilt about sex and his consequent obsession with washing ... From this preoccupation with personal cleanliness grew his absurd conviction that a man has only to take a cold bath every morning to become morally good, a conviction for which generations of English public schoolboys have had reason to curse him', (pp.220-21).

21.Valentine Cunningham, 'Soiled Fairy: *The Water-Babies in its Time*' in *Essays in Criticism*, Vol.35, 1985, p.128.

22.Kingsley, 'The Massacre of the Innocents' in *The Works of Charles Kingsley, Volume XVIII*. Also cited in edited form in Mrs. Kingsley, ed., *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890. First published, 1876), p.228.

23.Wood, 'A (Sea) Green Victorian: Charles Kingsley and *The Water-Babies*', p.244.

24.Kingsley is widely known through his letters to have read and admired Darwin, saying that: 'we might accept what Mr. Darwin and Professor Huxley have written on physical science, and yet preserve our natural theology ... ' (*Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, Vol.II, p.258). In a recent (September 1997) Radio 4 programme on *The Water-Babies*, the geneticist, Steve Jones, discusses its Darwinist influence, saying that: 'if evolution culminated in that miracle, the Englishman, why could it not product the greater miracle, the soul, and where better to find it than in an English baby? It's a tale of evolutionary progress, from darkness into light.' Indeed Kingsley's novel was reviewed in its contemporary time by the *Anthropological Review* (see John C. Hawley, '*The Water-Babies* as Catechetical Paradigm', in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 1989, p.21). Jones' radio

broadcast also draws our attention to the relation in Kingsley's novel between this perfect evolved English race and degenerate races, such as Irish and black people: 'if evolution could progress, it could also go backwards to the Welsh, the Irish and the Blacks, to the apes themselves. The soul would be lost on the way. Charles Kingsley was the first, but by no means the last, to fall into the trap that captures all evolutionary explanations of human society: first you choose your prejudice and then you choose the biology to justify it. Noble Englishmen, subhuman Blacks; evolution explains it all.'

25.Colin Manlove says that: 'if men behave like beasts, nature will appear equally nasty and brutish in reply; if they behave, as they were meant to, like men, nature will show her human and redeemed face' in C.N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.47. Although the message of ecological retribution is taken, Manlove nevertheless seems to miss the point here that humans are part of an environmental system, where we need to respect each part in its chain, not that nature should have a 'human ... face' as though it mirrors us and asks to be treated well by its master. His comments are thus open to the criticism of being androcentric, instead of considering people as part of a larger ecosystem.

26.Mrs. Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, (1890), p.236.

27.See Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), p.222, who says that: 'so horrified was the public by the story of Tom that, within a year of the publication of the book, the Chimney Sweepers Regulation Act was put on the Statute Book. This act forbade the use of children for sweeping chimneys'.

28.Kincaid, *Child-Loving* equates 'naked bathing' with paedophilic desire: 'the particular attractions of the sick or dying child seem to have figured importantly for the culture generally, and certainly for pedophiles. The surviving pedophile poetry and what we know of public activity suggests that, next to dying and the even-more-popular flogging, bathing may have provided the most important subject', (p.199).

29.Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image Music Text*, tr. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p.146.

30.Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*: 'he had a poor opinion of the children's books that were being produced at the time, whose chief intention was to inculcate good morals', p.179.

31.Barthes, *Image Music Text*, p.146.

32.This refers to Louis Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1970), which I discuss in the Introduction, in *Lenin and Philosophy*, tr. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971). A useful extract can be found in Antony Easthope

and Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp.50-58.

33.Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991. First published as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* by Éditions Gallimard, 1975. This translation first published by Allen Lane, 1977), pp.202-3.

34.Kincaid, *Child-Loving*: 'warnings against any kind of precocity seem to have been widespread ... There were worse things than foolishness ahead for children allowed to be precocious: "inflammation, and either convulsions, or water on the brain, or insanity" were on the horizon, a forecast on which there was considerable agreement: "water in the head, diseases of the brain, and frequently idiocy"', (p.120).

35.Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*, p.218.

Chapter 7 - 'I Shall Stop Being Queer ... if I Go Every Day to the Garden' - Edenic Childhood in *The Secret Garden*

The link forged between environment and child in the previous chapter's discussion of *The Water-Babies* is also relevant to Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel, *The Secret Garden* (1911). Here we will see the shift in focus from Kingsley's industrial urban area to the ideal pastoral space of Burnett's enclosed Edenic garden. Purity of landscape and purity of child are mutually interdependent in many children's texts, both serving to construct a concept of innocence which is perpetuated by adult ideology. It is a discourse of childhood which is heavily influenced by the theories of Rousseau and Froebel, which have been embraced by children's literature in the pursuit of the ideal child, and no-where is this more evident than in Burnett's novel of a pastoral paradise. However, it will also be made clear that this striving for innocence within children's literature is undermined when the rich soil of Burnett's fertile garden is revealed as cultivating an eroticism that lies beneath:

> I want to raise Emile in the country far from ... the black morals of cities which

> are covered with a veneer seductive and contagious for children.[1]

Victoria Rijke comments on such pastoralism:

> 'It is closing time in the gardens of the West' wrote Connelly in The Condemned Playground, and it certainly feels like the garden gates are closing. Childhood is fast becoming out of date ... This year over 20,000 adults signed a petition to keep two 11 yr old boys in prison for life, for 70 years, forever. Does our received understanding of the significance of the garden in literature for children wither and die in the face of the atrophied myth of childhood itself? Does the threat to the environment parallel the disappearance of garden and the child? ... metaphors of the garden are also those of childhood ... but we are no longer in a 'Golden Age'.[2]

The second quotation's somewhat apocalyptic tone seems heightened by the approaching end of millenium feeling, with its imminent end-of-the-world hysteria paralleling society's fear of the end of the golden age of childhood, an issue discussed more fully in the introduction to this thesis. Nevertheless, albeit part of such language, Rijke does recognise an interesting interrelation between the erosion of childhood and environmental decline, which the end of the millenium feel is fuelling. Is it the case that the importance of the Edenic garden in children's fiction becomes barren and sterile amidst a fear that childhood as we know and love it is dying out?

Coupled to this is the question of whether our endangered environment typifies the fading blooms of garden and child?

Indeed we no longer are in a golden age, as population increases, industrial and technological advances and their resultant waste have steadily altered the ageing face of Mother Earth. Much of this change has also been viewed in a positive light, where industrialisation is considered to be progress for the good of society, as we have noticed in our discussion of *The Water-Babies*. Even in the so-called golden age of children's literature, we were never actually basking in the delights of unspoiled innocence, for the landscape was being changed dramatically through the effects of the Industrial Revolution: the countryside was depopulated as people moved to the towns for work in the factories, and these urban areas were rapidly expanding and sprawling onto green areas to accommodate the new workforce and industries. In short, there never was a real golden age, for humanity has always interfered with its surroundings and, in doing so, has equally reminisced of a perfect and unspoiled world. Similarly, the childhood of our reminisences has never existed in reality; it is as much a construct as the golden age.

No matter how great the adult desire for a restoration of the ideal child may be, one should not become

lost amidst a pastoral nostalgia which ignores the fact that childhood is not locked within an ahistoric time-warp, but is as prone to the changes within society as our landscape is. Having said that, it does not erase the inherent panic perpetuated by the media and right-wing moralists that the fallen child is busy gnawing away at the feet of our idols of protected innocence, unravelling the very essence of childhood. The solution, as Rose points out[3], is to make rapid return to that presumed age of innocence, thus sheltering us from the onslaught of contemporary society. As childhood and the environment are viewed as endangered, there emerges a desperate reaching back, a clinging on for dear life to that shimmering golden age and its literature for children. It is this going back to basics to the child of conservative myth, which perpetuates and ensures the revival of an assumed idyllic lifestyle, when the earth and its children were unspoiled purities. Yet what we are running back to is itself essentially a middle-class vision, carved out as an escape from the wider ills of Victorian and Edwardian society. But let us be caught up in the mood of the moment, take up our babes and return to the woods of Eden's spiritual healing. Let us enter this idyllic scene, the world of children's literature, that haven from the beast, where we adults can rest assured that all is well with the world once more. For here we are beyond the defects of society, especially in our romantic return to the golden age of children's

fiction, where our idealised child can play in the safety of an enclosed secret garden, timeless and unspoiled from the chaos of life:

> Here the gardens and respective beds of the children must be surrounded by the garden of the whole ... The part for the general is the inclosing, as it were, the protecting part; that for the children, the inclosed, protected part.[4]

The garden tends to signify a place of safety from society, from sexual awakening (suggested by Rousseau's opening quotation), or the unthinkable paedophile. The city is 'contagious' in its 'seduction' and so, to remove any hint of sexuality, one must return the child to a purified nature, helped by the literature of innocence. In turning now to that most famous of enclosures, the walled Eden of *The Secret Garden*, we will question the transparency of its language in examining its status as a realist text, whilst pondering on the erotic implications of a *secret* garden. The narrative may well be enclosed safely within the space of a walled garden, as advocated by Froebel, but whether the text's "meaning" can be contained within its covers remains open to discussion.

Many critics have acknowledged the Edenic qualities of Burnett's textual garden[5], a pastoral paradise where the forces of nature bring health and healing to the displaced figures of an orphaned Anglo-Indian, and her

equally isolated "mad" cousin in the attic of a sterile labyrinthian mansion[6]. Growth and self-awareness have become critical key words, each interpretation promising to unlock the secret door of this literary Eden. I say 'literary Eden' fully aware of the implications that refer not only to *The Secret Garden*'s content as Edenic (ie. the garden), but also its linguistic structure. Rose claims that children's literature necessitates that it is linguistically realist, its language reduced to absolute transparency, thus equating the sign directly with its object in the world[7]. However, I want to go beyond Rose, to suggest that this demand is never actually met in the children's literature under discussion, for it is essential to note that language can never simply reflect, as each sign necessarily plays an actively disturbing and competitive role within a text. Again I turn to Rose's argument:

> Deception is, however, for Freud, in the very order of language. When we speak, we take up a position of identity and certainty in language, a position whose largely fictional nature only the occasional slip ... is allowed to reveal ... Language is not something which we simply use to communicate, as everything in psychoanalytic practice makes clear. Psycho-analysis directs its attention to what cannot be spoken in what is actually being said. It starts from the assumption that there is a difficulty in language ... the idea that language might *be* a problem is the dimension of pyschoanalysis which has been most rigo-

> rously avoided in discussions of fiction for the child ... Objects are defined in language, but the relation between the linguistic term and its referent is arbitrary ... and the meaning of one word can only be fixed with reference to another, in a process which finally has us going round in circles (the chase through the dictionary from one entry to the next to find out what a word *really* means) ... We need to ask why interpreting children's fiction ... seems to be untouched by the idea that language itself might be unstable, and that our relationship to it is never safe.[8]

The sign becomes competitive, as each one battles for dominance against the other within the confines of a literary work, thus rendering the text unstable and its closure (its innocent meaning), impossible. Literary theory recognises this feature of language, as does Rose, yet she does not assess its general applicability to children's literature, settling instead on the instabilities of *Peter Pan* as a metalanguage and historical commentary on fiction for the child. On the contrary, I want to acknowledge the general difficulty of the language of children's fiction and introduce it into the academic commentary, using that uncontrollability instead of fixed interpretation, being sceptical of the possibility of such closed meaning.

Burnett's garden is usually read as heavily symbolic, and the varieties of interpretation in

themselves belie the possibility of scaling her work down to a single moment of truth[9]. Heavy symbolism suggests a multiplicity of metaphorical possibilities, as multiform as the labyrinthian structure of the house and garden. In the face of such critical certainties it is perhaps only possible to offer suggestions, not interpretations about this complex novel. Above all, what becomes questionable is the innocence of story and the structure of how that tale is told, bringing to the surface the gaps within its language system, the hint of what is not said. *The Secret Garden*: its very title negates meaning, questions innocence and suggests the infinite possibilities of a story untold - after all, a secret is something which must not be told.

Burnett's garden, according to received literary criticism of children's fiction, is often equated with a biographic analysis, such as her love of gardens or death of her son[10]. An origin is traced, meaning is fixed and innocence maintained: book closed. Psychobiographical readings conveniently fix the text, and I want instead to concentrate on the language of the book within its contemporary society. As we have already seen, the idea of a garden and nature was advocated as essential for the cultivation of the child by such figures as Rousseau and Froebel. Rousseau's influence on children's literary innocence has been charted by Rose, but it is only recently that Froebel's contribution to this literature

has been acknowledged[11]. I want to trace this influence deeper into Burnett's text, and to suggest that it goes beyond her novel, and into the whole arena of the garden in children's literature, such as the poems of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, to be discussed in the next chapter.

The quotation from Froebel above highlights the idea of the child's garden as being a protected, enclosed space. Immediately one thinks of Burnett's garden with its wall, surrounded by a labyrinth of external, "adult" gardens; Froebel's 'garden of the whole'. Mary must pass through several gardens, such as the kitchen garden, with doors on her way to finding the innermost, secret garden. It becomes a haven of safety where she and Colin can grow, play and work, both awakening with the garden. Its safety encircles and nourishes like an ideal mother: 'she liked ... the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in, no one knew where she was. It seemed almost like being shut out of the world in some fairy place'[12]. This is the perfect enchanted place, heightened with its fairy-tale qualities; 'it was like a king's canopy, a fairy king's' (p.216). It is not difficult to see the influence of Froebel's kindergarten (meaning, children's garden), the child being nurtured in the safety of a walled paradise.

However, the language of the text refuses to place

our trust firmly in its utterance, for at the point of its greatest narrative safety, it slides into the disturbance of encroachment and a stifling atmosphere. Mary is, after all, 'shut in' by 'old walls', no one knowing where she is. She is abandoned to the mercies of nature, but, more importantly, a *controlled*, nature. It is an adult construction of paradise, with its artificial enclosure, and is surrounded by a maze of further adult-cultivated gardens. Moreover, it provides the perfect laboratory conditions for the child to be studied, observed, viewed by adult eyes. The most voyeuristic of these belong to the invisible, yet authoritarian controlling gaze of the adult narrator; the 'I' (p.285) placing itself firmly within the child's garden and text, for optimum control and commentary. A child's garden, as has been demonstrated by reference to Froebel, is an ideal space constructed by adult society to maintain and develop the cultivation of childhood innocence. No one receives greater pleasure from this Edenic environment within Burnett's novel than her narrator, achieving ultimate satisfaction at viewing and instigating, through the literary construction of the garden, the development of that state of innocence within its child characters. This slide from childhood haven to adult desire, to reconstruct that child by its influence, is what brings into question the legitimising of children's literature as a form of innocent plot structure, when really it is the playground of postlapsarian language.

To awaken, of course, the garden must first of all be dormant, an immediate consequence of Lilias' death which causes Archibald Craven to shut the garden. It takes on the symbolism of a cold tomb, with its dead branches and greyness of winter. This is the picture through which the narrator, Mary and the reader first encounter the garden. But the cyclical image of nature assures us that through death we have rebirth: Colin is born as his mother dies; the garden 'isn't a quite dead garden' (p.81), and the final parallel is drawn between childhood and the garden: 'the secret garden was coming alive and two children were coming alive with it' (p.282). Their first entry is during winter, then the garden and the children awaken to spring, health and life being restored with summer, to finally await the coming of autumn, when the returning adult can reap the harvest of his seed. One wonders, though, if the approaching maturity of autumn or fall brings with it the Fall of adulthood, thus beginning the cycle once again, for at the close of the novel Master Colin looks forward to his social position as patriarch of the estate. The garden has provided a space for "normal" childhood development which involves not 'being queer' (p.235) or 'contrary' (p.109), but innocent, and also socialised into one's future role. Thus the harmony and innocence of childhood, within the idyllic space of the garden, are fragmented as Dickon returns to his subjected lower-class position, Mary fades into her subordinated female role,

and Colin leaves the garden, reinvigorated and ready to rule the roost.

But let us consider in more detail the awakening of the garden as symbolically coinciding with the awakening of the children in the garden. We are first introduced to Mary in India, where she is a sickly, ill-tempered child (an obvious parallel with our later introduction to her cousin, Colin): 'her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another' (p.1). The language here is not as simple as it may first appear, but is part of what Edward Said would call the discourse of the Orient[13]. Mary at this stage is yellow *because* of India, and is thus associated with it as other. That other is unhealthy, according to the text, for the upbringing of English children (she is an Anglo-Indian), an environment described as claustrophobic and stifling, which is accentuated by the chaotic death-bringing plague of cholera[14]. Later, in England, Mary realises the impotence and implicit disorder of that other land:

> 'I didn't know about [gardens] in India ... I was always ill and tired, and it was so hot. I sometimes made little beds in the sand and stuck flowers in them. But there it is different.' (p.118).

She has recognised that 'there' is different from 'here', thus grasping a sense of what society considers to be other, and also legitimising the text's assumption and

creation of itself and its reader as 'here' - even if read in India, 'here' would always be England. The innocence of this children's text exposes in its gaps an attitude of Empire that was over-whelmingly prevalent in its contemporary society (the race between European countries to carve up colonised territories was noticeable prior to The First World War), thus using the genre of children's fiction as truth to legitimise colonialist jingoistic rule[15]. As a children's text, there is also the sense that India is a less developed, inferior, even childish place compared to England, and even the latter's children are superior to Indian adults who serve them.

Discreetly the language associates Mary's tyrannical behaviour (her contrariness) with the atmosphere of the Orient, thus diverting accusation from the child onto her environment, whilst simultaneously displacing the tyranny of Empire from coloniser to colonised (the balance of blame shifts from self to other). So Martha attributes Mary's self-indulgent behaviour to her previous lifestyle: 'I dare say it's because there's such a lot o' blacks there instead o' respectable white people' (p.27), while Ben Weatherstaff comments on her skipping: 'Tha' shapes well enough at it for a young 'un that's lived with heathen' (pp.73-4). What greater legitimising of Empire control than to place such language in the mouths of England's own labouring classes, so heightening the

discourse of truth about the colonised natives within a discourse of truth and innocence for children. Evidently this children's text becomes part of a British social myth regarding "inferior" peoples, so leading one to question the entire status of its innocence. Moreover, it is ambiguous whether the novel endorses this prejudice or exposes it; it may be description rather than prescription, just as we have already noticed with the return to the social hierarchy for Colin, Mary and Dickon at the close of the novel, the way society is perhaps more than how it ought to be.

Mary's behaviour is further justified by the actions of her mother in this other land:

> her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Memsahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible ... her Ayah and the other native servants ... always obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything, because the Memsahib would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying. (p.1).

In terms of the text and Froebel's concept of the role of the mother in the garden, Mrs. Lennox is an unnatural mother figure, who does not nurture her child, but abandons it[16]. She also provides an ambiguity, perhaps

being an unconscious textual criticism of the coloniser beneath the surface discourse, as the "unnatural" placing of the English in India produces a destruction of the "natural" mother-child relation. She is beautiful, but it is an external, surface beauty, employed for socialising in the superficial atmosphere of 'parties' with 'gay people', whilst denying her daughter's company to the extent that she is like a stranger: 'the Memsahib - Mary used to call her that oftener than anything else' (p.3). Mary's origin is therefore in crisis because she has missed the pre-Oedipal stimulation of the Mother and is an unwanted child, raised by unloving strangers. Indeed, even her very existence is questioned in the novel, as 'many people never even knew that she had a child at all' (p.11), and we are told that 'other children seemed to belong to their fathers and mothers, but she had never seemed to really be anyone's little girl' (p.12). Her gender accentuates her invisibility because Mary's mother 'had not wanted a little girl at all' (p.1), so she is the girl who should perhaps have been a boy, and is therefore discarded. Mary's lack of female voice is found in her garden, but even in England's superior setting, she is further erased at the close of the novel, being overshadowed by the boy she never is, namely Colin (who is often regarded by critics as her alter ego, as well as cousin).

It is appropriate that she becomes orphaned to

heighten this instability of origins, just as it is fitting that she is a displaced, alien figure with no sense of home[17]. On being told by Basil that she is to be sent home, she asks 'where is home?' (p.9), to which he replies, 'it's England, of course.' (p.10). Her sense of self is in tatters, as an English child born in India, who has no sense of that home, but does not fit into Indian lifestyle (she is homeless in India now, too, because of her parents' death). Her feeling of isolation is heightened by the introduction of the gothic into the novel:

> 'You are going to your uncle ... He lives
> in a great, big, desolate old house in
> the country, and no one goes near him ...
> He's a hunchback, and he's horrid.' (p.10).

Her sense of identity is further blurred by Basil providing the nursery-rhyme which runs throughout the novel. The origins of this apparently realist text are multiplied, for it is dependant on the gothic genre, the fairy-tale, the pastoral, and the nursery-rhyme of: 'Mistress Mary, quite contrary, How does your garden grow? With silver bells and cockle shells, And marigolds all in a row.' (p.9). Mary is born into a realist text, but her name is associated with a children's verse which reverberates like 'silver bells' through the plot. The reference is also a misquote, as the rhyme is 'pretty maids', not 'marigolds', which further destabilises Mary's origins, as she is associated with an inaccurate rhyme[18]. The novel's fluidity of origin helps to create

a text without closure, veiled by the reassurance of innocence. To settle such anomalies of character, she must be awakened with the garden; she must be reborn into a world of innocent childhood, which therefore becomes a secondary condition willed upon her by the adult narrator.

This idea of Mary's recreation from unstable origins is heightened by the references made to the ancestral portrait of a girl who looks like her, with a parrot: 'there was a stiff, plain little girl rather like herself. She wore a green brocade dress and held a green parrot on her finger' (p.56). The likeness is drawn to our attention again towards the end of the novel when Colin notices that: 'that parrot one, I believe, is one of my great, great, great great-aunts. She looks rather like you, Mary' (p.266). Mary's identity is here mirrored or parroted in the ancestral portrait, as she finds a sense of self in her "blood" country. However, the parrot here is just as deceptive as 'Cap'n Flint' discussed in my *Treasure Island* chapter, for it is an imitation of Mary, and therefore a distorting mirror image, much like the misquoted rhyme. This lookalike picture is hanging in the ancestral home of Colin, not Mary. When Archibald Craven is returning home we are told that 'the great old house ... had held those of his blood for six hundred years' (p.291). His blood, not her's. Mary is the daughter of Lilias' dead brother, and

Lilias is Archibald's dead wife, so is not part of the Craven ancestral home by blood. Why, then, does the picture of a girl with a parrot look like Mary, if Miselthwaite Manor is the Craven estate? Such a complication denies this novel an innocent reading, for the very introduction of a parrot within the frame of a picture breaks Mary's identity beyond the frame of the text, as her origin is confused with another family and so another story: she is more than we think and not who she appears to be. In a word she is contrary and further associated with the boy (Colin) that she never was (remember her mother did not want a girl) through the portrait of his ancestor.

Colin is also a child figure who needs to be healed through nature, as he is sickly, in anticipation of death, and, like Mary, is unwanted:

> 'I am like this always, ill and having to lie down ... If I live I may be a hunchback, but I shan't live. My father hates to think I may be like him ... My mother died when I was born and it makes him wretched to look at me ... He almost hates me.' (pp.127-8).

From Martha we hear a similar tale:

> 'Mr Craven ... wishes he'd never been born. Mother, she says that's th'worst thing on earth for a child. Them as is not wanted scarce ever thrives.' (p.161).

Like Mary, this lack of parental love causes Colin to be tyrannical to servants and, consequently, self-indulged

by them. Notably his tyranny, like Mary's, is also conveniently displaced onto the Orient, as he is described as a young Rajah of India, not a product of England and Empire. Thus his behaviour is shifted onto his environment, and is perpetuated through language, for he is interpellated into the subject position of an invalid through a discourse which repeatedly states his infirmity and impending death:

> 'Ever since I remember anything I have heard people say I shan't [live]. At first they thought I was too little to understand, and now they think I don't hear. But I do. My doctor is my father's cousin. He is quite poor and if I die he will have all Missel-thwaite when my father is dead.' (p.131).

The power of this language is reinforced by a professional medical discourse[19], which underlines his infirmity as being *true*, spurred on by financial incentive which inspires his doctor's diagnosis. This is also a kind of gothic plot, where Colin becomes almost part of another story of sinister motives.

However, such security within language is not allowed to rest easily within the text, but slides into a questioning instability, thereby denying our desire for a transparent story. Colin's story is, after all, based on the hearsay of servants and a multiplicity of discourses, whose origins stem from the influence of gothic *fiction*, with an ugly, hunchback father who in fact is neither

hunchbacked nor ugly: 'she could see that the man in the chair was not so much a hunchback as a man with high, rather crooked shoulders ... He was not ugly. His face would have been handsome if it had not been so miserable' (pp.115-6). So here the gothic plot begins to be rewritten into an Edenic one. For, on the other hand, a disinterested London doctor insists that:

> 'there'd been too much medicine and too much lettin' him have his own way ... The lad might live if he would make up his mind to it. Put him in the humour.' (pp.141-7).

Thus we realise that Colin's illness is psychosomatic, spurred on by a negative language which instils a belief within him of its truth:

> So long as Colin shut himself up in his room and thought only of his fears and weakness ... and early death, he was a hysterical, half-crazy little hypochondriac who knew nothing of the sunshine and the spring, and also did not know that he could get well and stand upon his feet if he tried to do it. (p.282).

The persuasive discourse of the local doctor is a linguistic corruption and not to be trusted: Colin too must enter the healing world of the prelapsarian garden in order to be awakened and reborn.

From the outset, then, there is an interrelationship between child and garden, each equally dormant and in need of awakening; a parallel which is commented upon by Colin, who says 'I'm going to see everything grow here.

I'm going to grow here myself' (p.221). Prior to this growth, as has been previously stated, the garden is in a state of winter dormancy, symbolic of the death of Lilias and ensuing sterility of Archibald Craven. She died from a *fall* in the garden during pregnancy with Colin, causing Mr. Craven to lock it, thereby exluding humanity from this spoilt Eden. The garden therefore becomes a sort of tomb, and Archibald a figure of social expulsion and sterility, wandering the earth for ten years, avoiding close contact with his son and all human beings, keeping 'his mind filled with dark and heartbroken thinking', and 'poison[ing] the air about him with gloom' (p.283).

It is of paramount importance, when considering the role of the garden in children's literature, to recognise that it is the children who return to this Edenic space and make it flourish again. Adult experience has locked them out of paradise, so childhood innocence must regain it, in the Christlike fashion of grace, in order to offer it to the adult, thus reinforcing the concept that childhood is a point of return to innocence for a postlapsarian society; a paradise regained. Again the interdependency of garden and child is reinforced through the time span of ten years - the age of both children, and duration of the garden's 'winter' since the death of Lilias. Similarly, ten years is how long the adult wanderer must remain excluded from the garden, until childhood revives it, when he can be "saved" from his

sterile existence and return Odysseus-like, ready to set his house in order. It is only when this period of rejuvenation and fertility has counteracted the barrenness, through the presence of children in the garden, that adult society can be redeemed and re-enter paradise. This is echoed in the Fisher King myth and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* where the sterility of the Fisher King must be cured to restore the waste land to fertility[20], much as Burnett's garden evolves from its wintry dormancy to full fertile bloom. Towards the close of the novel, Archibald asks Colin to take him into the garden, 'and so they led him in' (p.295) - emphasising the necessity of childhood in children's literature to lead the adult back to a state of innocence. The desire for this apparent necessity "proves" the power and innocence of the child and so perpetuates the myth.

Colin and Mary are aided in their growth alongside that of the garden by the Pan-like figure of Dickon, again appropriately a child character, who is first encountered by Mary:

> sitting under a tree, with his back against it, playing on a rough wooden pipe ... And on the trunk of the tree he leaned against, a brown squirrel was clinging and watching him, and from behind a bush near by a cock pheasant was delicately stretching his neck to peep out, and quite near him were two rabbits ... and actually it appeared as if they were all drawing near to watch him and

> listen to the strange, low, little call his
> pipe seemed to make. (p.96).

In a scene reminiscent of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*[21], with The Piper at the Gates of Dawn entrancing the animals, it is clear that Dickon is to be perceived as a sort of nature god, with an affinity for all things natural. His mystic, Pan qualities are repeatedly stated throughout the language of the text: 'there was a clean fresh scent of heather and grass and leaves about him, almost as if he were made of them' (p.97); 'it seemed as if he might be a sort of wood fairy' (p.110); 'he's like an angel!' (p.168); 'his fox and his crow and his squirrels and his lamb ... seemed almost to be part of himself' (p.201); 'secretly she quite believed that Dickon worked Magic, of course, good Magic, on everything near him' (p.219). He plays a vital role in healing Mary, the garden and Colin, through his nurturing powers:

> The new-born lamb Dickon had found ... lying by its dead mother ... It was not the first motherless lamb he had found and he knew what to do with it. (p.198).

Clearly the association must be made between this orphaned lamb and Colin and Mary, all of whom he tends and feeds on milk. The idea of the lamb also adds to the concept of the child as saving Christ-figure in this Edenic garden.

However, the innocence of these connotations is

prone to slide beneath the instabilities of language, resulting in an eroticising of this purity. It is important to recognise the sexual symbolism attached to Dickon, for, in Greek mythology, Pan is a highly sexualised figure[22]. The 'inexplicable' concept of the god Pan, referred to in the footnote, adds complication to the language of this children's text and Pan's bisexuality seems to be met with two children of the opposite sex in the garden for Dickon to help come 'alive'. It is fitting, therefore, that he be placed within this garden, adding to the sensual fertility of nature within the child's garden, and so problematising the entire concept of innocence within a children's text. Dickon's act of feeding Mary and Colin recalls Freud's oral stage in the polymorphous perversity of childhood sexuality that he analyses[23]. The abundant references to eating within the novel add significant weight to the disturbance of textual innocence, involving polymorphous shifts which coincide with the multiple rhythms of sexuality in children: such erotic orality is also pointed out in the chapter discussing *Alice*.

They gorge themselves in what is almost an orgiastic display of orality: 'he ... stuffed himself with buns and drank milk out of the pail in copious draughts' (p.255); and 'she had packed a regular feast ... and when ... Dickon brought it out from its hiding place, she ... watched them devour their food, laughing and quite

gloating over their appetites' (pp.277-9). It is consumption in excess, as the language demonstrates with its use of 'stuffed', 'copious', 'feast' and 'devour', which is reminiscent of the erotic gluttony of Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*[24]. It juxtaposes the recommendation of Archibald Craven to 'give [Mary] simple, healthy food' (p.119), which, in itself, is an echo of Rousseau's influence:

> the most natural tastes ought also to be the simplest ... Our first food is milk ... Let us preserve in the child his primary taste as much as possible. Let his nourishment be common and simple ... to gratify children's appetites, there is no need to arouse their sensuality but only a need to satisfy it ... Fruit, dairy products, some baked thing ... for meat is not natural to man ... It is, above all, important not to denature this primitive taste and make children carnivorous.[25]

The link is clear between consumption and sexuality, for Rousseau demands that a child's appetite remain simple and 'natural' in order to prevent sensual awakening, mainly associated with blood and meat. The language of *The Secret Garden* provides a natural setting (i.e. the garden) for this 'simple' consumption of vegetarian products, but denies the withdrawal of sensuality by describing it as a feast, where the appetite is not only satisfied, but satiated. Moreover, the food consumed in this *secret* garden is *hidden* by Dickon until hunger bids it be disclosed, thereby heightening its darkly sensual

connotations, whilst simultaneously making it part of a natural proper desire as eating prompted by hunger, not gluttony - the move is thus subtle. Our Pan-figure crosses the boundary between satisfaction and satiation further by cooking some of the food in the wood beyond the garden, an uncontrollable patch of untamed, wild vegetation, beyond the boundary of the controlled garden and child:

> Dickon made the stimulating discovery that in the wood in the park outside the garden where Mary had found him piping to the wild creatures, there was a deep little hollow where you could build a sort of tiny oven ... Roasted eggs were a previously unknown luxury, and very hot potatoes ... were fit for a woodland king. (p.256).

Again the sexuality of the situation seeps into the language, associating the food with words like 'stimulating', 'wild' and 'luxury', which occur beyond the controlled artificial space of the child's garden. The heat involved in cooking cannot be quite separated from other associations in the secret meeting of male and female, especially when coupled with the environment in which the Pan-figure pipes to his wild creatures, as an earlier footnote acknowledges that Pan's piping induced mating.

Similarly, the garden itself is not allowed to retain the innocence of its textual domesticity, for it is also associated with the wildness of the wood. Dickon

says: 'I wouldn't want to make it look like a gardener's garden, all clipped an' spick an' span ... It's nicer like this with things runnin' wild', to which Mary replies, 'don't let us make it tidy ... It wouldn't seem like a secret garden if it was tidy' (p.107). Again the idea of secrecy is linked with wildness and its connotations of sexuality, thereby removing the garden and its children's text from the social demands of innocence, as this garden has been abandoned by adults, thus allowing the return of the 'wildness' of nature into which the children find their entry. The associations complicate the adult desire for innocence within children's fiction. This wild tendency is once more associated with Dickon as Pan-figure, and the sexual implications are emphasised with the reminder that Pan's pipes induce mating, which occurs in the garden, as part of nature: 'it's part o' th' springtime, this nest-buildin' is' (p.159), and the influence penetrates down to the children from the wild birds: 'us is near bein' wild things ourselves. Us is nest-buildin' too' (p.163).

This textual eroticism reaches a further level when one realises that the oral act is voyeuristically observed by 'Mother' (Susan Sowerby), who '*watched* them devour their food, laughing and quite *gloating* over their appetites' (p.279), my italics). The adult erotic pleasure is reinforced both by the language of the text and by the gaze of its adult narrator, who is

experiencing the scopophilic pleasure of watching Susan watching the children, whilst also watching the children, and constructing them through language. It is hardly a great leap of the imagination, then, to admit the textually paedophilic undertones of the adult desire for childhood to remain innocent, so that social norms filter out the associations that at the same time the text itself indulges. While the child supposedly plays freely in the 'wild' garden, the language of the text destabilises this position, to suggest the adult pleasure gained from observation in an enclosed space. This second feast is not in secret under the arrangement of Pan-Dickon, but is brought into the adult world, perhaps to render it safer, as 'Mother' being present in the garden may help the reader to regard the children as young needing food simply as sustenance (a sign of health), refusing the other connotations of appetite so pressing in the garden scene. The erotic pleasure *is* here, but as it can be disguised by being described as maternal, the adult can deceive itself and so enjoy the erotic in a false security of their own innocence, thus making the link from feeder to voyeur extremely subtle, but nevertheless powerful, as it is still within a secret garden.

Having touched on the concept of the Mother in the garden, we need to expand on this. Once again I turn to the influence of Froebel on Burnett's novel particularly, and the philosophy of the child and the garden in

general. He advocated that it was the mother's role to aid the child's development in the kindergarten, for 'the mother must take care that the child develops in union with Nature and in contrast with it'[26]. The mother is seen as the dominant link between the child and nature[27], and therefore must cultivate this relationship within a natural environment. Of course, this natural space is highly artificial, for it is an enclosed garden, designed and controlled by adults, and hence Froebel's insistence on 'contrast'. The secret garden is also walled within a protective and equally encroaching (perhaps even imprisoning) environment. It is the domain of the child, but also of the Mother: the mother here linked with Nature and herself both wild and domesticated - powerful yet subservient.

Susan Sowerby's maternal influence on the children throughout the text is of paramount importance, encouraging and enhancing their growth and development towards a "true" sense of childhood innocence and play (the desired social norm), as they are tamed and trained away from being 'queer' and 'contrary' to "proper" children, hinting at the anxiety surrounding the concept of child innocent. Unlike Mrs. Lennox, Susan, who 'doesn't seem to be like the mothers in India' (p.87), is beautiful in the sense of her inner beauty towards children and provides the ideal figure of a natural Earth Mother replenishing Mother Earth, within the parameters

of the text and Froebel's philosophy. Her positioning in the garden between the two children enhances this concept of protection and nourishment:

> Colin walked on one side of her and Mary on the other. Each of them kept looking up at her comfortable, rosy face, secretly curious about the delightful feeling she gave them - a sort of warm, supported feeling. It seemed as if she understood them as Dickon understood his 'creatures'. She stooped over the flowers and talked about them as if they were children. (p.276).

The connection between garden and child is completed by 'the comfortable, wonderful, mother creature' (p.251), as plant and child are both nurtured by the mother in its nursery or kindergarten. The garden itself is often described by critics as an enclosing womb[28], thus enhancing the position of the mother within the novel, and also relating to Susan Sowerby's fruitful womb (as the first syllable of her name suggests), which produces twelve children, becoming surrogate mother to two more. The idea of the garden as an enclosed, nourishing womb also brings the seasonal cycle full circle, as we witness the shift from the garden as tomb at the beginning, to womb with its fruit-bearing qualities, giving new life to its plants and children thereafter[29]. It also suggests that the opening of the garden door with the children rushing towards Archibald Craven, is a form of rebirth, as they are expelled through its vaginal cavity (the door), and into a new life of reconciliation and harmony,

which also reinforces the status quo of the social order by exiting into the realm of the Father.

So far we have acknowledged the presence of two mother figures in this text, Mrs. Lennox and Susan Sowerby, and noted their comparative differences in reference to Froebel's concept of the mother in the garden. However, there is a third, no less pervading mother figure in the novel, that of the dead Lilias Craven. It is due to her death that Archibald locks the garden and sterility invades the atmosphere. But she is there, nonetheless, offering the potential for life and rebirth, one might say as an absent presence, which again problematises the innocent language of the text, moving it from the immediacy of the sign describing the real and natural to the indescribable realm of the supernatural, thereby threatening the realist text by a ghostly sub-text.

Lilias' love of and presence in the garden are traced back to a point in the text before the origin of Colin and Mary: 'it was Mrs Craven's garden that she made when first they were married an' she just loved it ... Him an' her used to go in an' shut th' door an' stay there hours an' hours' (p.49). So, again, the garden is directly associated with the mother, as the secret garden was owned and constructed by Lilias. There are also hints of its fertility, for the newlyweds shared much of

their love in the garden, perhaps hinting at the possible conception of Colin here, where they spent many hours in private, nest-building. There is possibly also an echo in Lilias' name of Lilith, the first woman on earth, who refused Adam and disappeared, just as Archibald's wife leaves their Edenic space, but whose presence is never totally erased in an undercurrent of powerful absence. After death, Lilias' presence is still felt in the garden, as the language hints that 'between the blossoming branches of the canopy bits of blue sky looked down like wonderful eyes' (p.216), and a few pages later Dickon confirms this watching over the child and the garden by suggesting that:

> 'Mrs Craven was a very lovely young lady ... An' Mother she thinks maybe she's about Misselthwaite many a time lookin' after Mester Colin, same as all mothers do ... Happen she's been in the garden an' happen it was her set us to work, an' told us to bring him here.' (p.219).

Her eyes are also seen through Colin's, suggesting the cycle of death and rebirth, with Ben Weatherstaff noticing 'tha' mother's eyes starin' at me out o' tha' face' (p.224). Colin himself confirms the reassuring presence of the mother: 'sometimes since I've been in the garden I've looked up through the trees at the sky and I have had a strange feeling of being happy as if something were pushing and drawing in my chest and making me

breathe fast' (p.239). Once more, the child in the garden is observed through the gaze of the mother, but the interrelation of mother, child and garden is taken a step further here, suggesting the reincarnation of mother through child in the garden: 'you are so like her now ... that sometimes I think perhaps you are her ghost made into a boy' (p.268). This relationship is further sealed by the observation of Archibald to Mary on her request for 'a bit of earth' that 'you remind me of someone else who loved the earth and things that grow' (p.119). The final connection is made between her name, Lilias, and Archibald's re-entry to the garden which is blooming with 'sheaves of late lilies standing together' (p.295); and lilies are also a symbol of Mary, the mother of the ideal innocent child, Christ. Thus the final reconciliation has been reached to incorporate harmony within the garden and household: each curtain has been lifted, removing the veil of stifling dormancy to reveal new growth and self-awareness. There is a progressive unveiling with the lifting of the curtain of ivy to discover the secret garden, the lifting of the curtain to discover Colin's bedroom, and finally the lifting of the curtain over Lilias, as the mother restores life and innocence to the child.

This power of the mother in the garden and within the child has been regarded as positive by many feminist critics, such as Shirley Foster and Judy Simmons who

claim that:

> This enclosed, walled space, accessible only through a hidden door, invites entry into a world of licence and release from external constraints: both class and gender hierarchies are abandoned in its revisionary environment ... In Lacanian terms it is the world of the female Imaginary, a world where the symbolic order is temporarily suspended and male authority consequently marginalized. The affiliation of the garden with the romantic figuration of the lost mother ... perpetuates the cultural referents of woman, flowers, nature and paradisal innocence that are traditionally associated with female iconography. As a version of the Edenic world of innocence, the garden is also the site of Mary's transfiguration from moral ugliness to spiritual beauty. Set apart from the power centres of Edwardian patriarchy, it thus has the double function of liberating the female potential and reawakening the heroine to new life.[30]

This passage seems contradictory in both recognising the 'romantic' idea of the female in the garden, so perpetuating a notion of the beautiful woman/mother/wife, as the ideals of those of the heteropatriarchy; yet simultaneously it appears to celebrate this space of feminine power, as being free from 'external constraints'. Although this is a valid point within feminist criticism which can be applied to the Kristevan notion of the importance of the pre-Oedipal, where the Imaginary order overturns the Symbolic in a space of

erotic feminine harmony, it nevertheless recognises that the encroaching patriarchal world can only be 'temporarily suspended'. At the end of the novel, Master Colin resumes control of the social order of the house and his approach is viewed through the eyes of subordinates, the servants in the house. But, unlike Foster and Simmons, I am not even convinced that boundaries of hierarchy are so dissolved in the garden, for he clearly assumes ownership and control when he enters it, saying 'I'm your master ... you are to obey me. This is my garden' (p.226). Moreover, there is surely an inherent danger in essentialist feminist claims of the pre-Oedipal mother in the garden, considering that it is an ideal of patriarchal society that the mother be in the garden, as Froebel wants her to be.

The garden, then, shifts from the site of innocent childhood to being also a form of social control, as it perpetuates and legitimises patriarchal hierarchy. Again we shall turn to Froebel to confirm the garden as a tool of socialisation, where: 'the necessity of ... a garden of the children ... proceeds not only from the higher reason just given, but also from reasons of social and citizen collective life', for: 'this garden of the children, besides its general aim of representing the relation of the particular to the general, of the part to the whole, of the child to the family, of the citizen to the community, has to be in essentials not merely

developing, educating, and instructive about relations, but also about things, and here especially about plants'[31]. Strikingly this resembles the dominant message of the mother, Susan Sowerby, in Burnett's novel:

> 'When I was at school my jography told as th' world was shaped like a orange an' I found out ... that th' whole orange doesn't belong to nobody ... What children learns from children ... is that there's no sense in grabbin' at th' whole orange - peel an' all. If you do, you'll likely not even get th' pips, an' them's too bitter to eat.' (pp.195-6).

The company of other children and the garden therefore becomes a socialising influence, instilling within each potential citizen a sense of their position within the social order[32], for Colin must learn to be less a tyrant and more a benevolent and, therefore, actually successful patriarch: 'I'll warrant she teaches him that the whole orange does not belong to him ... And he'll be likely to find out the size of his own quarter' (p.209). The consoling fiction disguises the fact that the property will be his by inheritance. At this point, then, Burnett's novel slides from the proclaimed realm of innocence of language and realist novel with its safety of closure, beyond its textual covers, to incorporate the persuasions of patriarchal discourse, such as Froebel. It legitimises an adult social order within the guise of prelapsarian purity. The perfection of Dickon's Yorkshire dialect, although it can be taken as a form of

childhood harmony in becoming the language of all three children in paradise, can also be considered as an instrument for, in fact, perpetuating social superiority and control over "the native": 'it's like a native dialect in India. Very clever people try to learn them. I like it and so does Colin' (p.194). As Jerry Phillips says, 'the colonizer learned the language not to "please" the colonized but to cement his own social control'[33]. This also relates to Rousseau's belief that the child should be raised in the country amongst peasants, where their language can be experienced from a superior position[34], and again questions the innocence of language within this children's text, for it is shown to contain range and diversity, not a clear-cut sign and signified.

Within *The Secret Garden*, both Mary and Colin have been dissuaded from being 'queer' and 'contrary' through their introduction into nature and resultant rebirth. Many critics, in pointing out how dysfunctional these children are[35], tend to miss the crucial point that they are taken and trained, like young plants, by being led towards the "normality" of socialisation, so rendering them fully functional. In doing so, they become ideal innocent children within the parameters of a paradise regained. The important setting in achieving such innocence is the garden, a highly constructed and artificial environment created and controlled by adult design, just like its counterpart of childhood

innoncence. The vital third element in this equation of purity is children's fiction, for it provides the literary space where such a controlled alchemy can occur, and *A Child's Garden of Verses* provides that final link by recognising the literary element of the child and garden *of* verse. What one cannot lose sight of is the adult desire for childhood innocence, for it is that *desire* within children's literature which ultimately renders its purity unstable.

1.Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: or on Education*, tr. by Allan Bloom (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991. First published, 1762), p.95.

2.Victoria I.F. de Rijke, 'Metaphors of the Garden in Children's Literature' in Neil Broadbent, et. al., ed., *Researching Children's Literature - A Coming of Age?* (Southampton: LSU Publications, 1994), p.44.

3.Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1994, rev. edn. First published, 1984), Ch.2.

4.Friedrich Froebel, *Education by Development: The Second Part of the Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, tr. by Josephine Jarvis (London: Edward Arnold, 1899), pp.219-20. The translator's use of 'inclosed' rather than 'enclosed' is interesting here because its uncommon spelling draws attention to the word, and provides a useful and appropriate emphasis for the argument that the child is, to an extent, imprisoned and suffocated within a forced space of adult construction.

5.See, for example, Stephen D. Roxburgh, '"Our first world": form and meaning in The Secret Garden' in *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol.10, No.3, 1979, where he says that: '*The Secret Garden* is an extraordinarily complete summary of the symbols of the analogy of innocence. The "secret garden" of the title is Edenic.' (p.121). Also Margaret Mackey, 'Strip Mines in the Garden: Old Stories, New Formats, and the Challenge of Change' in *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol.27, No.1, 1996, states that: 'the garden also calls up images of the Garden of Eden, a chance to return to innocence and pleasure.' (p.16).

6.The parallels between Burnett's novel and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* are well documented, such as, Shirley Foster and Judy Simmons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), Ch.8; Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: the Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett 1849-1924* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974); U.C. Knoepflmacher, 'Little Girls Without their Curls: Female Aggression in Victorian Children's Literature' in *Children's Literature, Vol.11. Annual of the Modern Language Division on Children's Literature and the Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 1983.

7.Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan*, Ch.2, especially p.62: 'nothing must obtrude, and no word must be spoken, in excess of those which are absolutely necessary to convince the child that the world in which he or she is being asked to participate is, unquestionably, real.'

8.ibid. pp.16-20.

9.For example, Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party* attaches autobiographical meaning to Burnett's novel, whereas Foster and Simmons, *What Katy Read* sees the garden as a protecting womb of maternal nurturing.

10.Foster and Simmons, *What Katy Read*, Ch.8, especially p.173, suggests that: 'the repeated images of family trauma and boyhood illness in *The Secret Garden*, for instance, recall the death of her adolescent son, Lionel, from tuberculosis. The portrait of Colin Craven, lying pathetically on a sickbed, suggests consumptive symptoms, while his ultimate recovery can be read as a projection of her wish fulfilment, and even as an attempt to assuage her guilt at having spent so much time away from her children'. For a full biographical account of Burnett's life, see Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party*.

11.Foster and Simmons, *What Katy Read*, p.174, recognises: 'the pioneering work of Froebel, whose *System of Infant Gardens* had been published in England in 1855. Froebel's conviction that education is a "leading out of nature under the skill of an intelligent gardener" and the view that a correlation between mind and body was necessary for healthy child development clearly inform Burnett's novel'. See also Jerry Phillips, 'The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*' in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Vol.17, No.2, December, 1993.

12.Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (London: Puffin Books, 1994. First published, 1911), p.89. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

13.Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991. First published, 1978). A useful extract of Said's argument is cited in Antony Easthope & Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press),

pp.59-65.

14.Mike Caddin's essay 'Home is a Matter of Blood, Time, and Genre: Essentialism in Burnett and McKinley' in *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, Vol.28, No.1, January 1997, offers a useful discussion on the issue of Mary's illness in relation to her environmental and racial displacement in India, and her consequent rise to health in the home of her 'blood', namely England. This is raised in my own chapter, but unfortunately much of my own work had begun previously to Caddin's publication, in order for me to take full notice of it in my thesis. However, my chapter does go beyond this idea of blood ties in its discussion of the construction of Western childhood innocence, as well as racial purity.

15.This colonialism theme is explored more fully in my chapters on *The Coral Island* and *Treasure Island*.

16.Phillips', 'The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions' offers an interesting insight to this aspect of the English mother in India: 'in India, as a child of the colonial elite, Mary exercised total authority over native domestic servants. Such power ... forms her cultural identity ... in ways that accord with the subjective world of the "Mem Sahib," the canonical feminine ideal of the British Raj - the good, stable wife who efficiently manages a native-run household. That this vaunted ideal sentimentalized the difficult reality of the Mem Sahib's life, Burnett hints at in her portrayal of Mary's mother, who is selfish, callous, vain, and frivolous, an instance of the type of woman - "[she] cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people" - Calcutta society was notorious for.' (p.173).

17.Phillips', 'The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions ' asserts that: 'in fine, the orphan figured as a metaphor for the instability of identity, the crises of representation, in certain social relations.' (p.171).

18.See Iona and Peter Opie, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995. First published 1951), p.342.

19.For a discussion of the construction of the subject through discourse, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990, tr. by Robert Hurley. First published 1976).

20.This parallel is also noted in Humphrey Carpenter, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), p.189, who asks: 'is not the garden, dead and overgrown when Mary first finds it, reminiscent of another ancient symbol, the Waste Land? Its dead state seems profoundly related to the sickness of Colin, who is a kind of wounded Fisher King'. I do not agree, though, that Colin is emblematic of the Fisher King. Rather, I would argue that Colin's sickness is symptomatic of the sterility of his

father and adult society. When the adult re-enters the garden, then the healing is restored, in terms of this myth. Notably, Stephen D. Roxburgh's essay, '"Our first world": form and meaning in The Secret Garden' in *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol.10, No.3, 1979, pp.120-30, alludes to Eliot's 'Burnt Norton' in its similarity with Burnett's novel, as its enclosed rose garden too deals with concepts of childhood and innocence, with children hiding behind the leaves.

21.Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (Bristol: Parragon Book Service Ltd., 1993. First published, 1908).

22.See Fernand Comte, *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Mythology* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994, tr. by Alison Goring. First published in France, 1988), pp.156-7, which states: 'there was something of the beast about him ... Pan was ithyphallic, lascivious and debauched ... He was constantly pursuing nymphs ... Caves rang with the cries which escaped from their lips in the course of some furtive coupling with the god. However, Pan was no less interested in boys who often satisfied his needs ... He was the god of the inexplicable.' It also states that the music from his pipes 'induced mating'.

23.See Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, tr. by James Strachey, ed. by Angela Richards (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991. First published, 1905). My introduction also refers to Freud's belief in childhood sexuality.

24.Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, ed. by Candace Ward (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1994. First published, 1862).

25.Rousseau, *Emile*, pp.151-3.

26.Froebel, *Education by Development*, p.309.

27.See the quotation concerning the role of the mother from Froebel in my introduction.

28.See Foster and Simmons, *What Katy Read*, p.187, which states that: 'the womb-like seclusion of the garden can be seen as analogous to the power of the mother'. See also Mackey, 'Strip Mines in the Garden', which says that: 'the garden ... acts as a kind of womb in which the children can be renurtured; it is surely no coincidence that the scene in which Colin meets his father is so redolent of a birth scene', (p.16).

29.See Phyllis Bixler, *Frances Hodgson Burnett* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), Ch.3, pp.100-1: 'by making her "enclosure" a garden, Burnett is able to transform it from tomb to womb. It is approximately nine months from the time Mary first enters the garden, in late winter, until the children publicly exit it in the fall'. It also ties the association of their respective ten year ages closer, as each are born anew simultaneously.

30.Foster and Simmons, *What Katy Read*, p.187.

31.Froebel, *Education by Development*, pp.218-9.

32.See Phillips, 'The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah, and His Minions', which also recognises the garden as a site for socialising the working-class child: 'clearly influenced by the romantic theories of Friedrich Froebel, the famous nineteenth-century proponent of the kindergarten, McMillan - in 1911, the year in which *The Secret Garden* was published - established a "camp school" (i.e., a city garden) for the sick and impoverished children of Deptford, South London. Bridging the divide between education ideology and welfare policy, the camp school was an ideal cultural space designed to counter the spiritual deficits of urban working-class childhood ... The garden sought to realize the organic unity ... that allegedly existed between the child and the natural world ... In comparison with the raw squalor of the city, the garden offered a transcendent moral aesthetic - that of nature itself ... the notion that gardens constitute a form of social therapy and that they can rescue culture from political controversy, even from national decline ... the urban garden was not only called upon to take the slum out of the working-class child, it also set the task of building fit bodies and keeping the bulldog spirit in place', (pp.177-8). Thus the "savage" child of the lower orders is socialised (like Tom in *The Water Babies*) through the return to innocence and nature.

33.ibid., p.185.

34.Rousseau, *Emile*: 'nursed in the country amidst all the pastoral rusticity, your children will get more sonorous voices, they will not contract the obscure stuttering of city children. Nor will they contract there either the expression or the tone of the village; or at least they will easily lose them', p.73. An interesting contradiction arises here between the language of peasants and the universal prelapsarian language of all children, which he advocates earlier. It is also worth noting that the country dialect is seen to be primitive in some way, thus infantilising the peasantry, such as Susan Sowerby, just as the "native" is infantilised in India, as well as in *The Coral Island*, for example. It is interesting too, that the "inherent" superiority of these privileged children will protect them from being stuck with the country and peasant accents and dialects - the children will grow out of them, even lose them to become perfect social products.

35.See, for example, U.C. Knoepflmacher, 'Little Girls without Their Curls'; Marghanita Laski, *Mrs. Ewing, Mrs. Molesworth and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1950), Ch.V; and Rosemary Threadgold, 'The Secret Garden: an appreciation of Frances Hodgson Burnett as a novelist for children' in *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol.10, No.3, 1979, pp.113-9.

Chapter 8 - 'It is But a Child of Air That Lingers in the Garden There' - Desiring Innocence in *A Child's Garden of Verses*

In the last chapter the interconnection of garden and child as spaces of controlled innocence was affirmed by the final point in the triangle, children's literature, which provides a frame to contain this nurtured purity. The artificiality or literariness of this trio is most fully demonstrated in Robert Louis Stevenson's collection of poems, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), as the child and the garden are indistinguishably associated with fiction, being a child and garden *of* verses. In *A Child's Garden* the garden becomes immediately related to literature itself for the verses themselves are the garden created specially for a child, suggesting that the garden is as concerned with the language of flowers and grass as with the natural objects related to such signs. Verses are highly structured and worked groupings of words, just as formal gardens are carefully designed and created. So an analogy exists between horticultural cultivation and linguistic cultivation, allowing the text of the garden to display both sign and physical referent through images

within the verses. By introducing a child to this equation, we have a further link to the chain, for it is the Froebelian belief that the child belongs within the garden which creates the structured and moulded socialised innocent, whose imagination is enhanced by playing "freely" in this "natural" space. This enchanted space is, of course, the highly controlled garden of a highly controlled text which, in turn, creates a highly controlled child. This completes the circle (or triangle), for the fictional child's imagination is developed in a textual garden, just as the child reader's imagination is enhanced by reading and being drawn into the garden of verses. As with previous chapters in this thesis, that desire for innocent child and literature will be shown to be unstable and undermined by eroticism.

In 'The Moon', the placing of 'flowers and children'[1] in the same line heightens the association of child and nature, as does the reference in 'Night and Day' to 'child and garden' (p.113), which underlines the bond of childhood innocence constructed within an Edenic setting. 'Night and Day' consistently maintains this association throughout its stanzas, where sleep simultaneously befalls child and garden: 'garden darkened, daisy shut,/Child in bed, they slumber' (p.114). Like Susan Sowerby's child-like flowers, these flowers sleep when the child of the garden sleeps, with the further parallel of flower bed and child's bed. In

direct contrast to the night image is the description of daylight, where child and garden awaken together: 'there my garden grows again' (p.115). There is an inter-relation between growing garden and growing child, and after they are nurtured and rested in their respective beds, the child is called to by the garden's plants: 'playmate, join your allies!' (p.116). This closing line of the poem secures the relationship which is forged and constructed between child and natural world, as *allies* suggests the interdependency of each for a sense of identity. As in *The Secret Garden*, Stevenson's child plays in the enclosed enchanted world of the garden, reinforcing the concepts of innocence and nature as fundamental aspects of childhood.

Of course the reverse side of this safety and pleasantness associated with daylight is the juxtaposition of the sleeping garden and child with the creatures of the night who are awake. Darkness as a physical phenomenon and feeling pervades *A Child's Garden of Verses*, being closely related to the child's imaginary fears of the bogeyman. In 'North-West-Passage' this powerful fear takes on the shape of a three-part journey across dangerous psychological terrain. The language of fear begins in 'Good Night', where 'the haunted night returns again' (p86), to remind the child that it will soon have to 'face ... The long black passage up to bed' (p.86). The figure of the adult in relation to darkness

is touched upon, as the uncomprehending child reacts to the order to retire: 'must we to bed indeed?' (p.86). What is questioned is the logic of leaving the safety of the fireside family to partake a lonely and treacherous journey in the dark, being cast out by the sinister shadow of authority into the loneliness of fear. Stevenson himself wrote in an essay called 'Child's Play' of such ambiguous adult behaviour: 'who profess the tenderest solicitude for children, and yet every now and again reach down out of their altitude and terribly vindicate the prerogatives of age ... Were there ever such unthinkable deities as parents?'[2]

By part two, 'Shadow March', the poem's setting has become engulfed by the menace of darkness: 'all round the house is the jet-black night;/It stares through the window-pane;/It crawls in the corners' (p87), which acquires the personification of a staring, crawling beast. This animalistic night also has connotations of death, as 'jet' was a popular substance in jewellery of the Victorian period, worn as a symbol of mourning. So the 'jet-black night', which is menacingly lurking on the other side of the window, carries with it the numerous possibilities of darkness, including fear, sinister figures and death. By staring through the pane of glass, moreover, it provides an echo of the adult narrator in 'Envoys' who is staring through the window at the children playing in the garden, thus providing an

unstable association of the adult figure in the role of both safe protector and threatening bogeyman.

As darkness has engulfed the house, so too is the child narrator swallowed by its own fear, for 'now my little heart goes a-beating like a drum,/With the breath of the Bogie in my hair' (p.87). The bogeyman is now mentioned, breathing down the child's neck, and attracted moth-like to the child's light: 'all round the candle the crooked shadows come', and 'it moves with the moving flame' (p.87). Since the bogeyman is an adult figure, the candle moves from being a simple object in the child's hand, supposedly keeping, guiding and protecting the child, to a ray of light emanating beacon-like from the child, which radiates an innocence so desired by adults within childhood. Purity is thus destabilised as an empty vessel of childhood and filled with a kind of paedophilic attraction. Fear, too, heightens the child's attractiveness for the adult, for it becomes even more vulnerable and innocent, in need of adult comfort and reassurance. The safety of the "good" adult is therefore required, forcing a power relation, in which the bogeyman is a figure used to threaten children towards desired behaviour by adults. Thus the bogeyman becomes the other face of the loving adult. The final stanza reaches a climax of frenzied fear, as 'all the wicked shadows coming, tramp, tramp,/tramp,/With the black night overhead' (p.87) and creates a sense of urgency as they

come nearer, heightening the belief that they are sinister, empowered by the use of 'wicked', and that they come 'overhead' almost, like the black night.

Just as the tension becomes unbearable for the child narrator and reader, the page is turned and safety reached with part three, 'In Port', as a safety barrier is erected to shut out the darkness: 'come from out the cold and gloom/Into my warm and cheerful room' (p.88). Here the bogeyman cannot reach:

> There, safe arrived, we turn about
> To keep the coming shadows out,
> And close the happy door at last
> On the perils that we past. (p.88).

The slip into darkness and the sexually sinister is therefore assuaged by a framework common in children's literature of the safe return to the familiar and innocent, a space which is presented as being only for the child, thus satisfying the need for purity of closure. It is a literal closure, as the door closes on exterior threats to the child's own space of the bedroom, which is also a space claimed by the volume of poetry itself, as being *A Child's*, so owned by a child as well as apparently voiced by one, rather than just *for* children. But lurking beyond the text is the adult creator, just as the bogeyman lurks beyond the door.

The bedroom is a space, too, where the adult again takes on the face of safe familiarity, for:

Then, when mamma goes by to bed,
She shall come in with tip-toe tread,
And see me lying warm and fast
And in the Land of Nod at last. (p.88).

The perilous journey has been completed, the bogeyman held at bay, and the safety of the bedroom's port reached, with the comfort of peaceful slumber and the parent's assured presence. However, this does not erase the occurrence of the unfamiliar, erotic and sinister, and therefore allows the text to break out of its stipulated position of innocence, unleashing its language into a postlapsarian, fluidic plane of disturbance and contradictions. This child's space, like the claimed space of the textual *Child's Garden* is an adult construction, so what is presented as safe has the looming presence of adult beyond, just as the child persona is the facade of adult mimic. It is important then, that the child is "seen" to be 'lying warm and fast', for that is what the adult desires, with the voyeuristic possibility included of watching the child abed. To be seen can be presented through the distorted lens of the adult gaze, where the child may only be apparently lying warm and fast. 'Lying' itself enhances this doubt for it carries the weight of untruth behind the camera of narrative interpretation, as well as the potential pretence of sleep when the child consciously knows that the mother is present.

In 'Night and Day' a change in tone is gradually

apparent after the dash following 'slumber', when:

> Glow-worm in the highway rut,
> Mice among the lumber.
>
> In the darkness houses shine.
> Parents move with candles. (p.114).

Interestingly, adults as 'parents' are placed alongside the other nocturnal creatures: although adults also are awake during the day, and sleep a little later at night, it nevertheless raises the question of whether adults are not perhaps associated with the bogeyman of the dark, who is there only through being pointedly absent. For, here, any disturbance is concealed with holding off a full unleashing of the imagination's fears by associating parents with non-threatening creatures, such as glow-worms and mice, not rats. Although nocturnal, safety is maintained by the parents and glow-worms being intermingled, providing pin points of light from worms and candles to deter utter darkness.

Nevertheless, the concealment of fear is only ever partial, as nocturnal threats hover in the 'blinding shadows' (p.114) where, in such sinister obscurity, 'under evening's cloak' (p.114), there is a suffocating attempt to make 'vanish all things mortal' (p.113). It is this dark side of Stevenson's poems which destabilises the safety of innocence within children's fiction for, like plates within the earth's lithosphere, the textual language constantly shifts below the superficial fixity

of the sign, creating frictional "faults" or gaps which threaten an earthquake at the level of the required literary reassurance. This idea of a dark, unsafe presence hovering around the child's world is also hinted at in 'The Moon', where predatory night creatures arise after the sun sets: 'thieves', 'squalling cat', 'squeaking mouse', 'howling dog' and 'bat' (p.69).

It is also worth discussing in 'North-West-Passage' the acknowledgement of the persona as a child's voice, which enhances the atmosphere of isolation, fear and indiscernible bogeys from a child's-eye perspective, so that the child reader can easily identify and empathise with the trauma. However, this voice is of a mimic, being written in the postlapsarian vein of adulthood, and therefore heightens the concept of children's literature as a deceptive form of textual pædophilia. The narrative voice itself acquires the added potential of bogeyman in the guise of child, drawing the reader to a false flame, behind which lurks the concealed mask of linguistic desire. Like *Treasure Island*, the voice speaks behind the mask of a performer, whose words contain an undercurrent which lurks darkly beneath their surface utterance. Given that the bogeyman is an entity implanted in the child's mind by adults, the narrator as adult sets up this fear in order to provide escape through comfort and safety within the text, thus becoming both bogeyman and "good" adult, the dual faces of what I

have called "textual paedophilia". Throughout *A Child's Garden* the narrative voice constantly shifts between child and adult, the tone changing with each layer of performative utterance, until the very idea of innocent linguistic stability becomes lost amidst a multiplicity of voices colliding within the framework of the text in a slide between safety and fear, in a sinister 'game'[3] of masquerade.

'Good and Bad Children' is spoken very much in an adult persona, for it is in the vein of an instructive, knowledgable voice addressing itself to children: 'children, you are very little,/And your bones are very brittle' (p.59). It is not the child's uncertain wonder or imaginary beliefs, but an adult's authorative statement of assured information, where definitive points are made, such as 'you are' and 'your bones are', so constructing and interpellating the child through language, in much the same way as childhood itself is created. Like the other literature discussed in this thesis, it displays the inherent contradiction between a fiction of the child's prelapsarian innocence and the adult narrator and writer of postlapsarian experience, introducing unused sadistic implications and an ironic voice, with the apparent threat that the 'bones are very brittle' (p.59). Perhaps even more deceptive, though, is when the voice mimics a child's, so doubly eroticising the text for children, written by an adult in the guise

of the child narrator; duplicity rules, as the child willingly identifies with, and trusts this wolf in the cradle. It is because of the very power of that parodic voice that Joanne Lewis' essay views it as the most effective:

> The voices Stevenson employed in reconstructing his childhood typify the range of voices employed in most signed poetry for children: teacher, observer, adult playmate, nostalgic adult, and the child himself ... he is least successful as the didact, most successful as he moves across the continuum to the consciousness of the child himself.[4]

Success appears to lie, not only in capturing the child's voice, but also its consciousness, as its internal thoughts are reconstructed through adult role-play. The point is supported by Michael Rosen, who argues that: 'the least successful group of poems in the collection are those with an adult speaker'[5]. In celebration of that success, however, the effects of it seem to have been overlooked, by failing to question the significance of capturing the child's voice as one must surely do.

Again, 'Foreign Children' has the voice of a child narrator, personalised with the pronouns 'me' and 'I' (pp.61 & 62), as it speaks and questions from a perspective which the child reader will readily understand and identify with. However, this is not so innocent when we realise that the actual text is

postlapsarian, written with all the experience of adulthood and thus a reconstruction of childhood devised by its author, Stevenson. He symbolises the Blakean tension between innocence and experience in the interest of producing an apparently realist text. The poem is also heavily influenced by a whole series of cultural thoughts displayed during this period of British hegemony:

> Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
> Little frosty Eskimo,
> Little Turk or Japanee,
> O! don't you wish that you were me? (p.61).

The imperialist attitude continues with: 'you must often ... Have wearied *not* to be abroad' (p.61), which is immediately repeated in the next stanza.

Evidently a sense of self and other is created here within the child's socialisation process, where "here" must always be Britain and "there" abroad (as we have seen in *The Secret Garden*), so blindly ignoring that, to the other, they are *not* abroad but home, in their own "here". However, the logic in Stevenson's poem is so patently absurd that the prejudice is mocked by being attributed to the child who is presumably imitating the complacencies of adults. The poem shifts uneasily between an admission of the child's innocence and an acknowledgement of an adult guilt, which is similar to the instability of western discourse discussed in Burnett's novel in the previous chapter. The view that

'I am safe and live at home' (p.62) apparently rejects any other sense of belonging but the child narrator's, where Britain becomes synonymous with the language of safety and homeliness, and the other with mystery and danger, as we have witnessed in *The Coral Island*.

But the poem speaks with a sense of irony, for the very safety being claimed at home is the same one which is threatened by tramping shadows in the darkness. A hesitation also occurs in the reading of wearying '*not* to be abroad', as one wonders which cultural space the negative is applying to, for the emphasis on *not* adds a definite ironic confusion of tongues. This surface aspiration for the English homelands, where the British Empire tends to strike in one a sense of England, reaches a double level of irony, for Stevenson is writing such jingoistic patriotism as himself a marginalised other, the Scot. Again this disturbs the precarious 'safety' claimed for, once asserted, it is overturned by threats to the pure child of Empire from darkness, adults, and a disturbing sense of self and other, when abroad might be Scotland, a "wild" frontier, which borders or frames the safety of home, yet which in itself is also home, as part of Britain. Like the voices within the verses there is a sense of schizophrenic confusion, as the enunciated 'I' fluidly slides between speakers, providing a duality which could be child or adult, parent or bogeyman, Scotland or England, home or abroad, and safety or

danger, each colliding in a frenzy of theatrical role-play. Stevenson displays an awareness of such masquerade when he says that: 'in the child's world of dim sensation, play is all in all, "Make believe" is the gist of his whole life, and he cannot so much as take a walk except in character'[6].

The narrative voice in 'The Swing' is even more disturbing because it swings between adult and child persona, swaying between the push and pull of adult authority and child identification, and blurring almost beyond recognition the boundaries between adult and child relations, where an inducement towards textual paedophilia becomes inevitable. The poem opens posing a rhetorical question to the child reader about the enjoyment of swinging, and then immediately answering with the adult narrator's own view that 'I do think it the pleasantest thing/Ever a child can do!' (p.72), where it is recommended as a desired childish pursuit by a voice of experience. However, by the second stanza, this activity has become so appealing that the narrator itself takes that advice by becoming that child participant:

> Up in the air and over the wall,
> Till I can see so wide ...
>
> Till I look down on the garden green ...
> Up in the air I go flying again,
> Up in the air and down! (pp.72-3).

Thus the narrative swing or shift occurs from 'I' of

adult advisor and observer of child's play to 'I' of child participant in that play, whom the child reader can readily respond to, thereby drawing the child outside the text towards the play of swinging through the play of textual language, and inside the text itself.

Joanne Lewis also recognises the importance of narrative voice, but suggests that:

> he succeeds because he disciplines himself to plain diction, simple verse forms, confines himself to images from a child's reality, not to a grown-up's projection of it ... It is indeed a child's voice that Stevenson captured in the best of *A Child's Garden of Verses*.[7]

Some of these points on a superficial level may hold true, but as we have seen, the language of these poems goes far beyond the level of a singularly clear interpretation, sliding into an array of deeper possibilities. Moreover, to suggest that they stem from a child's *reality* surely begs the question of what that reality may actually entail, much of it being constructed for the child by adult society, and thus very much a grown-up projection and reconstruction of childhood. Indeed the last sentence above might be the most acute, unwittingly or otherwise, for what occurs in these poems is a *capturing* of the child's voice, in that it is mimicked to entice the child reader towards the duplicity of textual paedophilia. Stevenson himself notes that: 'it is the grown people who make the nursery stories; all

the children do, is jealously to preserve the text'[8]. He is suggesting the lack of imagination of the child without fiction, as stories are used to create child's play. It is almost an admittance that the child is constructed through the adult text, which instructs their play.

That this involves a kind of eroticising of textual innocence is also apparent with the references to orality which occur time and again throughout these poems. In 'Good and Bad Children' the adult persona advises 'innocent and honest children' to be 'content with simple diet', for it is 'the unkind and the unruly [who are] the sort to eat unduly' (p.59). The argument in the chapter concerning *The Secret Garden* clearly applies here; Rousseau's philosophy that children be fed plain food to subdue sensual arousal and preserve innocence, filters its influence into literature for children. Lewis argues that such adult didacticism is to be taken as Stevenson's sense of irony, where 'none of the proffered advice is meant to be taken literally'[9]. Irony in the narrative voice is certainly a recognised possibility in several of the verses, such as 'Looking Forward', 'Marching Song' and 'System' (although Rosen denies this, saying 'I am unable to find any irony or satire here ['A Thought'] or in "Good and Bad Children"'[10]), but it does not detract from the fact that Rousseau's influence is nevertheless acknowledged as a deep-seated belief about childhood

behaviour.

What the ironic voice does in these poems and in the children's fiction discussed in this thesis, is to recognise the discourse of childhood innocence perpetuated by such professionals as Rousseau and then subvert it with the weight of linguistic ambiguity. The expectation of innocence is consciously asserted, therefore, only to be undermined and destabilised amidst the unconscious gaps of a fluid language. The gargantuan appetite is threatened by equally excessive measures, involving the indulgers being 'hated' (p.60). Similarly, in 'Foreign Children', with its assertion of what is other to the innocent child of Western tradition, the persona states that 'you have curious things to eat, I am fed on proper meat' (p.62). The other is consequently linked to the sexual through its unnatural appetite, whereas the innocent self eats only what is 'proper', so suggesting the colonial myth noticed in *The Coral Island* of cannibalism.

Just as darkness is the other side of daylight in the poems, so too does the apparent safety of controlled consumption have its counterpart of danger. The very recognition of children's orality as an act which must come under constant surveillance by adults and controlled with 'simple diet' suggests that the erotic hunger is never far away. 'Fairy-Bread' provides that display of

sexual orality, for its tone hints at temptation and gratification of a desired appetite, as the child is lured into the adult's den with the words 'come up here', and invoking the image of the enticing stranger, promising sweets or puppy-dogs, a sort of fairy-bread in themselves. Fairies can also be treacherous things, which appear as sweet and young, but are tricky, deceptive and extremely old; the Victorian gothic is the other side of Victorian sentimentality.

Although these poems were originally published without illustration, Charles Robinson's illustration[11] here nevertheless enhances this point of a disturbing situation where the child is lured by the adult, for it shows a witch, bringing with it the added baggage of spells, imprisoning and consumption of children through false promises, thus implying abusive relations of power and deceit. Undoubtedly couched in an adult voice, this poem incorporates all the enticement and temptation that is textual paedophilia, its density accentuated by its shortness:

> Come up here, O dusty feet!
> Here is fairy bread to eat.
> Here in my retiring room,
> Children you may dine
> On the golden smell of broom
> And the shade of pine;
> And when you have eaten well,
> Fairy stories hear and tell. (p.77).

The intimacy of the invitation is heightened through the appeal of going up to the adult persona's private room, where one wonders exactly what or who is on the menu. The food being offered is 'fairy bread', '*smell* of broom' and '*shade* of pine', none of which would satisfy an appetite, not being solid, for they are either inconsumable or imaginary products. So, ironically, they will not eat well, the only appetite fed to satisfaction being the imagination through listening and telling fairy stories.

Ultimately, then, there is a connection between the consumption of food and stories, where orality becomes another aspect of textual paedophilia. The child reader is lured into the lair of the adult-written text, on the premise of a consumable product, but what may in effect be digested is the child itself, drawn into a world of false securities, behind which lurks adult desire. Stevenson also makes an association between food and fiction in 'Child's Play' saying: 'for the child it is still possible to weave an enchantment over eatables; and if he has but read of a dish in a story-book, it will be heavenly manna to him for a week'[12]. He attempts to shift the instigation of the relation of food and tales onto the child, but the second half of the sentence overturns this, for we see that the seed is planted initially by a 'story-book', which has been are created by 'grown people', as we observed earlier.

An important influence from the theory of childhood during this period is the image of the garden as playground, as part of the construction of innocence. Most influential in this, as noted in the previous chapter, is Froebel, as Rosen helpfully demonstrates:

> The new empiricists drew on the observations of people like Schiller ... and above all, Froebel ... Peter Coveney casts doubt on the impact of Rousseau and Froebel in England in the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the Froebel Society was founded in England in 1874, and according to Carolyn Steedman, 'Extensive discussion of his educational theory in family magazines and childcare manuals all ensured his ideas a substantial middle-class audience.' Froebel had said, 'Play ... is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul.'[13]

The terms in which Froebel's belief in play are expressed in English are significant here, for being the highest expression of *human development* within the child, it is almost demanded by adults that children partake in play in order to become acceptable social beings: Rosen goes on to argue that Froebel's philosophy concerning play involved 'quite rigid teaching'[14]. It cannot be a 'free expression' because it is earnestly sought as a development, part of the nineteenth-century's preoccupation with God-like introspection, with innocence as the demand instead of guilt. For the child citizen,

there is the additional reminder that adults as well as God can at any time voyeuristically look into their souls[15].

The idea of play is closely associated with the imagination, the cherished aspect of the innocent child's mind. Stevenson points out, as cited earlier that, for the child, 'play is all in all' and that it is constantly acting out a role. He also says in 'A Gossip on Romance' that: 'fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child'[16], so linking the child and adult relationship through fiction. Rosen suggests that: 'Stevenson thought such play was part of the creative and re-creative spirit that animates the writing and reading of poetry and fiction in general'[17]. If we think of Jacqueline Rose's point about the desire for innocence in children's literature, then it is apparent that the concept of writing children's fiction is, for adults, another way of recapturing that lost state of childhood. To write is to play, and when one writes about play, then ultimately the focus alights on its object of innocence, the child. This carries with it the question of who benefits most from such innocent fiction, as children become objects used in order to enhance adult desires. Playing emerges as another aspect of childhood which is instilled by adult desire; another slice in the cake of innocence, where the complete child is formed to satisfy adult expectations:

> children's play had been legitimized as a suitable topic in literary circles. Schiller and Spencer had linked it with art, and Froebel, with education. Empiricists had observed it in order to understand human development and to posit the idea that human development matched the evolution of species ... They are, of course, quite conventional for the period and have been linked to the idea of 'sacralization of child-hood.' Viviana Zelitzer's thesis in *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* is that this sacrilization came about particularly after 1870 as a direct result of taking children out of the labor market. Economically useless, they now became emotionally priceless.[18]

Again play is linked to social control, where the ideal citizen is formed for Western society in the evolutionary race for the advanced, civilized species.

Play is vital to the world of the child in Stevenson's poems, portrayed as being as natural as the daylight, being itself part of the nature of childhood, according to adult discourse. In 'Pirate Story', play is intricately linked to imagination and creativity, for the three children in their game can 'adventure ... to Africa ... Providence, or Babylon, or off to Malabar' (p.21), for the scope of the journeying child's imagination is perceived as being as limitless as the journeys of mankind across the globe. It is this boundless terrain of the mind that can metamorphose the dullest of

inanimate objects into the most fascinating of adventures. In 'A Good Play', the whole concept itself is promoted as healthy child activity, transforming adult items into the world of imagination:

> We built a ship upon the stairs
> All made of the back-bedroom
> chairs,
> And filled it full of sofa pillows
> To go a-sailing on the billows. (p.32).

When we reach the section entitled 'The Child Alone', imaginary play is even more vital, for it fills the void of other playmates for the solitary child. For example, in 'My Ship and I', the child persona, while playing with his toy ship, imagines shrinking to the size of the toy sailor and sailing in the ship. Or in 'My Kingdom', the child narrator imagines creating a miniature kingdom where it can rule, and attain power in an otherwise powerless state of childhood in the adult world. 'Block City' envisages an imaginary city with the aid of toy building blocks, where again adult material objects acquire an element of fantasy, with 'let the sofa be mountains, the carpet be sea' (p.101). The imagination, then, takes on a quality of linguistic creativity, for by saying "let such and such be", it automatically becomes so in the mind of the envisioner, just as the writer's creativity envisages a world through the network of textual language. So the world of child's play and adult writing to reconstruct that play are

inextricably bound up in this collection of poems for the child's pleasure, and the blurring of these child and adult relations is excellently captured in the varying voices employed by Stevenson.

The link is further cemented in 'The Land of Story-Books', where the child persona's imagination enables it to act out literary scenes: 'all in my hunter's camp I lie,/And play at books that I have read' (p.103). The positioning of 'play' and 'book' ensures that they will be taken as interrelated, as fiction becomes part of the game performed for child pleasure, which is an adult desire. Imagination and play are also considered as buffers against loneliness in 'The Child Alone', for in 'The Little Land', the child persona says:

> When at home alone I sit
> And am very tired of it,
> I have just to shut my eyes
> To go sailing through the skies -
> To go sailing far away
> To the pleasant Land of Play (p.107).

It is a land of childhood, beyond the tedium and powerlessness of the real world as controlled by adults, for on returning from the Land of Play, the narrator is struck by the barrenness and largeness of adult environments, where these 'great big people' are 'talking nonsense all the time' (p.110), which suggests an echo of the detachment and confusion that is experienced in the *Alice* books: it is what Stevenson refers to as 'the dread

irrationality of the whole affair, as it seems to children'[19].

The adult world for the child, then, is a place of confusion and incomprehensible rules ('the doings of their elders ... they let ... go over their heads'[20]), leading the persona to long to remain in the Land of Play all day, 'and just come back a sleepy-head,/Late at night to go to bed' (p.110). If we recall the 'long black passage up to bed' in 'Night and Day', this line is less comforting than it appears, for the safety of adult presence will also involve the threat of dark fears. The child voice of these poems desires to escape from adulthood, though this is an adult voice parodying the child, and remain among the ideal world of childhood, but is aware of the practical need to return to the "real" world for food and shelter, especially at night when the threat of the bogey returns. For instance, in 'My Kingdom' the child's voice enjoys the power bestowed upon it in the imaginary world ('this was the world and I was king;/For me the bees came by to sing,/For me the swallows flew.' (p.95)), but the pleasure is broken by the necessities of survival: 'at last I heard my mother call/Out from the house at even-fall,/To call me home to tea' (p.96). As Lewis points out:

> One of Stevenson's enduring strengths is that while he stays closely within the limits of a child's consciousness, he neither denies the adult world nor loses touch with the child's

> actual dependency on adults. The adult world hovers all around the fragile cocoon of security constructed by nanny, memory, remembered imaginative play.[21]

Surely it is less an 'enduring strength' than recognition of the instability of writing of a child's world which is constructed by adult society. The 'adult world' does indeed 'hover' threatening to burst into childhood's 'fragile cocoon', for it is a cocoon created by adult desire, which is constantly invaded by the need to recapture innocence.

Stevenson says that, even when the external adult world encroaches, the child remains detached by a continual process of role-playing: 'when children are together even a meal is felt as an interruption in the business of life; and they must find some imaginative sanction, and tell themselves some sort of story'[22]. It is a contradiction that children, as part of society, are said to be in a world of their own, which ultimately is created by fiction written by adults in order to maintain this desired distance, so that childhood is seen to be an enchanted safe place of innocence, reserved beyond adult problems. Stevenson concludes his essay in saying that:

> It would be easy to leave them in their native cloudland, where they figure so prettily - pretty like flowers and innocent like dogs. They will come out of their gardens soon enough, and have to go into offices and the witness-box. Spare them

> yet a while, O conscientious parent! Let them doze among their playthings yet a little! for who knows what a rough, warfaring existence lies before them in the future?[23]

The emphasis on observing their 'prettiness' signifies that the pleasure is all the adult's in watching, and creating a refuge from reality through child play-acting, the scripts of which are penned by adults.

In 'The Unseen Playmate' this looming presence of the adult within the child's world perhaps reaches its greatest point of invasion. The narrative voice is an adult's, adding to the possibility that this friend who appears among the children is an adult figure. The persona informs us that:

> When children are playing alone on the green,[24]
> In comes the playmate that never was seen.
> When children are happy and lonely and good,
> The Friend of the Children comes out of the wood.
>
> Nobody heard him and nobody saw, ...
> But he's sure to be present, abroad or at home,
> When children are happy and playing alone. (p.91).

It is a figure who creeps up on the lone child to partake in its happiness and indulge in its innocence. The intruder is male and creepily insistent, an eroticised potential Pan figure emerging from the untamed environment of the wood to join the child's world of the controlled garden 'green'. Importantly it also says that

'he loves to be little, he hates to be big' (p.92), suggesting the paedophilic aspect of the adult desire for a return to the prelapsarian through the unblemished, 'good' child, by itself trying to be child-like in a child's garden of verses, where the adult can perform the role of child in a fictional masquerade. If 'he hates to be big', it suggests that he is grown-up, but attempting to escape that through the company of the innocent child, who can lead him back to a paradise regained, like Archibald Craven. To love to be little, one has to enact a sense of childhood or *play* at being a child, as in the poem itself.

A Child's Garden is dedicated to Stevenson's childhood nurse, Alison Cunningham (or 'Cummy as Louis called her'[25]). The dedicatory verse, entitled 'To Alison Cunningham, From Her Boy' incorporates the slide from innocent verse to eroticism for, to the signatory of the poem (R.L.S), she is 'MY SECOND MOTHER, MY FIRST WIFE,/THE ANGEL OF MY INFANT LIFE'. The verse discloses the Oedipal relations between child and surrogate mother (already seen with Susan Sowerby in *The Secret Garden*), further sensualised by her portrayal as 'wife' and 'angel', where she becomes the loving adult of his innocent years. She 'LAY AWAKE' in times of his illness ('FOR ALL THE PAINS YOU COMFORTED,/FOR ALL YOU PITIED, ALL YOU BORE'), holding hands and telling stories at his bed-side. All of this, reflected in the adult narrator's verse, takes on the image of a

highly erotic scene, where illness is almost indulged in as an assurance of adult love.

It is interesting that, in reconstructing the play of childhood, which is tinged with darkness and illness, through fictional verse, Stevenson wrote the poems 'during times of illness'[26]. Although Stevenson asserts that the role of literature is to 'give joy'[27], there is nevertheless a prevalent undercurrent of darkness in his fiction which defies such simplicity. In a letter to William Archer in 1885, Stevenson claims that:

> you are very right about my voluntary aversion from the painful sides of life. My childhood was in reality a very mixed experience, full of fever, nightmare, insomnia, painful days and interminable nights; and I can speak with less authority of gardens than of that other 'land of counterpane.' But to what end should we renew these sorrows? The sufferings of life may be handled by the very greatest in their hours of insight; it is of its pleasures that our common poems should be formed; these are the experiences that we should seek to recall or to provoke[28].

It may be what 'we should seek', but the verses carry with them an undeniable element of uncertainty and fear[29].

The section of the collection called 'Garden Days' is also concerned with the importance of play during

childhood, for it is over all too soon when one reaches adulthood, as we have noted from Stevenson earlier. This is hinted at in the previous section, 'The Child Alone', when in 'The Land of Story-Books', the child narrator notices that: 'around the fire my parents sit;/ ... And do not play at anything' (p.103), in an almost incredulous voice. This lack of adult play and imagination is recorded too in 'My Treasures', when the child's voice insists that 'though father denies it, I'm sure it is gold' (p.100), in reference to a discovered stone which, in the child's eye, acquires precious qualities. By the time we reach 'Garden Days', this feeling of the importance of childhood play is paramount. This is manifest in 'The Gardener' poem, where restrictions are placed on the child narrator concerning access to areas of the garden in much the same way as those imposed in *The Secret Garden*: 'the gardener ... makes me keep the gravel walk ... He locks the door and takes the key' (p.129). The fact that he 'never seems to want to play' (p.129), provokes the child voice to take its revenge:

> Silly gardener! summer goes,
> And winter comes with pinching toes,
> When in the garden bare and brown
> You must lay your barrow down.
>
> Well now, and while the summer stays,
> To profit by these garden days,
> O how much wiser you would be
> To play at Indian wars with me! (p.130).

The narrator is appalled that the gardener tends the garden, yet does not appreciate its potential for the indulgences of innocence, such as pleasure and play. Yet the child voice is very much adult in its foresight of mortality; the allusion to summer leaving and winter approaching is related to the cycle of nature, where growth, youth and fruitfulness are overcome by decay, age and sterility. However, paradise is shown as a possibility to be regained through the child and garden, for the gardener is urged to participate in play: 'O how much wiser you would be/To play at Indian wars with me!'.

Lewis suggests that 'the end section, "Envoys," addresses specific adults, always in an adult voice; they are tributes or explanations, but are not really part of the main body of poems.'[30] I would rather argue that the 'Envoys' section betrays the whole obsession with lost childhood and the paedophilic adult desire to return to a prelapsarian state through children. Having 'alighted down/Before the gates of Babylon' (p.132) in the poem 'Historical Associations', which is the closing line immediately preceding 'Envoys', it is clear that we now enter that Babylonian state of lost innocence, as the adult narrator reflects on his lost childhood. 'To Willie and Henrietta', addressed to Stevenson's cousins encapsulates this sense of loss, as the narrator reflects on their childhood play in the garden. The adult narrative eye pulls this vision of past children back in

cinema-scope fashion from the child's garden to 'the elder's seat', where 'we rest with quiet feet,/And from the window-bay/We watch the children, our successors, play.' (p.135). They are no longer participants, but voyeuristic observers, the glass serving as a barrier between the Babylonian and innocent worlds, where it is possible for adults to see through but not pass through. The window thus becomes a kind of lens, through which the adults can speculate on the children beyond, and construct a distorted image of childhood and lost innocence from the narrative gaze, as occurs in Carroll's *Alice* books. The window also echoes the earlier reference to the lurking bogeyman on the other side of the pane, heightened by allusions to Babylon in the verses, with its connotations of depravity and corruption. The position of the adult in this new child's garden is also significant because it serves as a frame to the children observed within it from the window, just as the child's world and text are framed by the adult world. *A Child's Garden* claims to be a space for children, but is written by an adult mimicking a child, and reconstructing a distorted vision of childhood.

However, the final stanza of 'To Willie and Henrietta' admits that the physical return to childhood is impossible:

> 'Time was,' the golden head
> Irrevocably said;
> But time which none can bind,

While flowing fast away, leaves love behind. (p.136).

This appears to be an allusion to Friar Bacon's legendary creation of a golden head, which is broken in pieces after uttering, 'Time is ... Time was ... Time is past'[31]. The magical head announces the passage of time, leaving carefree youth behind irrevocably, and resulting in these 'Envoys', which are the end of childhood's journey, and the end of the collection. It is divided into four parts, perhaps emphasising the seasonal changes in a garden, here reflecting it in winter. The best that can be hoped for is a regaining of that innocence through children, resulting in a constructed ideal to suit adult desire. 'To My Name-Child' also recognises the construction and interpellation of the child. 'Little Louis Sanchez' (p.143) is created in a fictional space, where the life written about is the one he will live; he has been interpellated[32] through the language of this text and called (or hailed, as Althusser would say) by his name so that he should recognise himself as that subject:

> Some day soon this rhyming volume ...
> Little Louis Sanchez, will be given you
> to read.
> Then shall you discover that your name was
> printed down ...
>
> And remember in your playing, as the sea-fog
> rolls to you,
> Long ere you could read it, how I told you
> what to do. (pp.143-5).

His name and his games are constructed through language before he is aware of that language; told 'what to do', just as the child is constructed into the ideal subject position of innocent through interpellation, acting out the script that is already written. For the narrator of this 'Name-Child' it is also a further way of regaining innocence through children because the child is given the adult's name, so blurring the division between adult and child. This problematic identity becomes the adult mimic in these verses; when 'Louis' speaks, one is never quite certain where the adult ends and the child begins.

'To Minnie' is another adult reflection on lost childhood play: the semi-colon at the end of 'the happy children ankle-deep/And laughing as they wade;' (p.140), sets up a change in tone from childhood nostalgia to recognition of irrevocable loss with the line which immediately follows: 'all these are vanished clean away' (p.140). The poem acquires a melancholic, ghostly feel, seeing 'our childhood's garden still;/But ah! we children never more', for 'our phantom voices haunt the air' (p.140). The garden of verses themselves belong to a phantom child, resurrected and reconstructed, for the duration of this fictional text, by the adult mimic behind the child persona. The final poem, 'To Any Reader', says that: 'you may see, if you will look/Through the windows of this book,/Another child, far, far away,/And in another garden play.' (p.146). The

reader can see this fictional child, but again there is the barrier of a window, in this case the text, providing its own distorted vision of childhood, like the glass within the verses to gaze through at the child. The narrator goes on to say:

> But do not think that you can at all,
> By knocking on the window, call
> That child to hear you ...
> He does not hear; he will not look,
> Nor yet be lured out of his book.
> For, long ago, the truth to say,
> He has grown up and gone away,
> And it is but a child of air
> That Lingers in the garden there. (pp.146-7).

The child in these verses is a fictional phantom, 'a child of air', contained within the pages of an adult-framed text, like so much children's literature and childhood, locked within the realm of adult desire. Like an enclosed garden, the collection of verse keeps the child within, unable to be 'lured out of his book', which the child reader is lured into. Not to be lured suggests a safety from sinister connotations, as the child plays in its literary paradise, but that the child be required to remain in that innocent space is surely an interesting desire in itself. It is an adult narrative gaze which constructs this innocent child's garden to contain an ideal innocent, a role-player without substance; 'a child of air', born into language, the ultimate masquerade.

1.Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses* (London: Everyman's Library, David Campbell Publishers Ltd., 1992. First published 1885), p.71. Hereafter all references will be to this edition and will be included parenthetically in the text.

2.Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Child's Play' in *Virginibus Puerisque and Other Essays in Belles Lettres* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1924. First published in *Cornhill Magazine*, Sept. 1878), p.114.

3.This idea of a game is discussed more fully in my chapter on *Treasure Island*, where the 'boy's game' is discussed in terms of performance.

4.Joanne Lewis, 'How Far from Babylon? The Voices of Stevenson's Garden' in Charlotte F. Otten and Gary D. Schmidt, ed., *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights From Writers and Critics* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p.244.

5.Michael Rosen, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Children's Play: The Contexts of *A Child's Garden of Verses*' in *Children's Literature in Education*, Vol.26, No.1, March 1995, p.65.

6.Stevenson, 'Child's Play', p.112.

7.Lewis, 'How Far from Babylon?' pp.240-42.

8.Stevenson, 'Child's Play', p.110.

9.ibid., p.244.

10.Rosen, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Children's Play', p.65.

11.See Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. First published 1984), pp.114-15, which states that: 'the first edition [1885] was printed on high-quality paper but had no illustrations. In this form it was re-issued in July 1885 and again in 1888. In 1896, two years after Stevenson's death, an edition appeared with illustrations by Charles Robinson - a beautifully produced book, published by John Lane, The Bodley Head, for which Robinson (then an almost unkown young artist) provided not merely drawings but hand-lettered titles and head- and tail-pieces for the poems, some of the shorter verses being incorporated into the illustrations. This might claim to be the definitive edition (it was re-issued in 1976 by the Scolar Press), but there have been other illustrated versions.'

12.Stevenson, 'Child's Play', p.106.

13.Rosen, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Children's Play', p.57.

14.ibid., p.57.

15.For a discussion of such surveillance see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, tr. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990. First published 1976); and Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1991. First published 1975).

16.Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Gossip on Romance' in *The Lantern-Bearers and Other Essays*, sel. with an intro. by Jeremy Treglown (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988), p.180. 'A Gossip on Romance' first published in *Longman's Magazine*, Nov. 1882.

17.Rosen, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Children's Play', p.55.

18.ibid., p.58.

19.Stevenson, 'Child's Play', p.114.

20.ibid., pp.108-9.

21.Lewis, 'How Far from Babylon?', p.241.

22.Stevenson, 'Child's Play', p.112.

23.ibid., p.116.

24.This is an intertextual reference to Blake's 'Nurse's Song' in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, which similarly says, 'When the voices of children are heard on the green', in *The Works of William Blake* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994, pp.61 & 70. *Songs of Innocence* first published 1789. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* first published 1794).

25.Jenni Calder, *R L S: A Life Study* (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1980), p.32.

26.Paul Maixner, ed., *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), p.146. Lewis, 'How Far from Babylon?', p.241, confirms that: 'Stevenson wrote most of *A Child's Garden of Verses* during bouts of illness at Hyeres in 1883 and 1884'.

27.Maixner, *Robert Louis Stevenson*, p.174.

28.ibid., p.158.

29.Calder, *R L S: A Life Study*, says that: 'wistful longing, fear, loneliness, a sense of exclusion, are all to be found in Stevenson's poems for children, which are so often regarded as delightfully innocent prattle. He does not plumb the depths of his terror - we find that elsewhere in prose - but the disturbance is there. The child in his poems has often only a tentative grasp on safety ... Make-believe is double-edged. The "breath of the Bogie" and the tramp of the shadows accompany the child up the stairs ... Stevenson never lost his preoccupation

with evil, particularly with the duality of human nature, sin and respectability existing side by side ... The night for Stevenson was always to be sinister ... Darkness and evil are entwined.' (pp.30-36). This duality supports my point about the ambiguity of the adult figure.

30.Lewis, 'How Far from Babylon?', p.246.

31.Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. by Daniel Seltzer (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1964), pp.74-5.

32.For Althusser's discussion of the interpellation of the subject, see Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, tr. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971). A useful extract of 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' can be found in Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan, ed., *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992).

In discussing children's literature in the golden age it has become clear that, within each text, there are elements which challenge the expected assumption of an innocence of child and language. Although each text has Edenic qualities, lurking behind this innocent facade is an adult desire, which has been referred to as textual paedophilia. Parapraxes within each literary text have revealed elements of eroticism and slippage, whereby a story refuses to be closed within a fixed meaning, but continuously moves beyond its textual boundaries. As such, both child and fiction are perceived to be constructions within a system of language, which constantly defers interpretation and exposes the deception beneath each utterance.

The *Alice* books vehemently refuse to be pinned down, but instead push their child pawn through a series of darkly bizarre games, where she is constantly one step away from a devoured identity. The child becomes part of a system of mythical creatures, a subject as fictional as her text. Alice is forever evolving, subjected to extreme oral impulses and the distorted vision of adult desire, where identity is as precarious as the eye of its beholder. At any moment Alice as child subject may be extinguished like a candle, dependent for her existence upon the dream of an adult. The flimsiness of dreams

suggests the thin ice upon which the child totters: a fabulous monster in an adult mind.

This fictionality of childhood is apparent also in *The Coral Island*, where the characters are viewed through a broken telescope on an island, which serves as a laboratory for the focus of the adult narrator's gaze. As a shattered lens, it provides a distorted vision, where the voice behind the textual children is discovered to be that of an adult mimic, as the narrator attempts to recreate boyhood fictional adventure stories. The colonialist discourse is therefore also complicated, as the Christian gospel becomes an opiate to aid consumer "cannibalism". The native's voice is also mimicked by the western narrator, where truth is shifted out of focus, to display an angle of performance.

The employment of masks and performative voices shifts from this perhaps naive attempt to more professional acting in the amphitheatre of *Treasure Island*, where language is worn as a disguise to conceal what is hidden beneath the words of false flattery. Child's play at this stage becomes a murderous game of chase in a deceptive treasure hunt. Like Ralph, the adult narrator, Jim Hawkins, is attracted by sea tales to embark on his own adventure of spinning a yarn. Good and bad adult figures blur in a sea of confusion, where the bogeyman flatters his way into the child's confidence, leaving haunting nightmares behind and a performative voice.

The bogeyman inhabits a suitably dark abode in *The Princess and the Goblin*, as the goblins threaten to impinge on the innocence above of Princess Irene. The dark figure, though, is complicated with the introduction of Curdie, as his identity is blurred between boy and bogey. Innocence is shown to be a fragile construction, which is constantly being undermined with desire. This also complicates issues of social class, whereby Curdie's threat is only removed at the point of his royal identity being revealed in *The Princess and Curdie*.

The polluting soot of the lower classes is strongly suggested in *The Water-Babies*, where Tom must be reborn in amniotic purity to erase his savage nature. Innocence is again destabilised as it is subject to social accepta-bility, where a colonialist discourse dehumanises the black ape of child labour when in the presence of Ellie's snow-white elitism. The lower orders become a bogey which threaten to begrime virginal innocence, and so must be cleansed of their filth. What is also at threat is the purity of Mother Nature whose environment must be protected from the industrialised cities and their potential for infection.

The Secret Garden recognises this desire for nature to surround the child as part of the aura of innocence, where the child is nurtured and cultivated in its own inclosed garden. For Mary and Colin it is also a form of rebirth as their contrary and queer characteristics are removed by the healing qualities of mother earth. Like

orality in the other texts, however, erotic potential seeps into the linguistic innocence, unearthing desire and complications beneath the narrative top soil. Like childhood innocence, the garden is revealed to be a wish fulfilment of patriarchal society, which requires the mother to tend her young flowers.

As a collection of poems *A Child's Garden of Verses* brings together the whole range of images of child, garden and fiction as sites of innocence. As with the other books, the adult gaze is paramount in constructing this Edenic perfection, but is also the lens which distorts what is being represented. Adult desire for innocence is hinted at having a dark side, as the bogeyman on the outside comes close to the pane reflecting the face of the good adult inside. Stories themselves, like in *Alice* are revealed to be the domain of the adult, where child's play involves acting a pre-existing script. Behind the verses and behind all of these tales lies a voice of adult mimicry, where the child character is part of the performance being played upon.

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