CHAPTER ONE

WHAT BIG TEETH YOU HAVE GRANDMAMA

The evolution of the concept of Children and the genre of Children's Literature is a surprisingly recent phenomenon in the Western world. This chapter presents an overview of the origins and development of these signifiers until the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a view to creating a better understanding of the profoundly radical nature of the Nonsense texts of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll.

To arrive at an accurate definition of Children's Literature is so arduous a task as to be considered impossible. In order to understand what is meant by Children's Literature, it is necessary first to decide what we mean by the word children. Children is the plural of the word “child”. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a child is “the unborn or newly born human being, foetus, infant” or “a young person of either sex below the age of puberty; a boy or girl.” (OED 113). To understand this meaning, it would help to see what the OED means by referring to puberty. Puberty is “the state or condition of having become functionally capable of procreating offspring, which is characterized by various symptoms in each sex . . .”; a note is added which states: “In England the legal age of puberty is fourteen in boys and twelve in girls but the actual development varies in different climates and environments and with different individuals” (OED 778). However, puberty has no fixed age; so when does childhood end? Isn’t puberty/adolescence also a part of “childhood”? What psychological developments determine maturity, apart from the obvious physiological changes? If the “legal age” has no real correlation with actual puberty or the “end of childhood,” what is the use of the term legal age? Perhaps another dictionary could assist us.

The Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary says “A child is a person from the time of birth to the time when they become and adult” (234) and defines an adult as below:
An adult is (1.1) a mature, fully developed person or animal (1.2) someone who has reached the age when they become legally responsible for their own decisions and actions and are no longer the responsibility of their parents. In Britain this happens when they reach the age of eighteen. (Collins 20)

However, every term we arrive at eludes us. The categories for mature – whether psychologically or physically – vary from race to race, culture to culture; besides “the age when they become legally responsible for their own decisions and actions” is an age that will differ from country to country and from time to time. Although a person may become responsible for her own actions, in countries like India, often even legal adults continue to be the responsibility of their parents for several years (at least financially). As of now, a person becomes an adult at the age of eighteen, in England, according to the law. However, the law is subject to change from one age to another and one country to another. It would suffice to assume that readers/speakers of English share roughly common concepts of child and children – with a few slight variations from person to person. Given certain gender-specific and culture-specific differences, it would be safe to claim that childhood refers to the earlier stages of human development up to the stage at which she requires a minimal degree of assistance to associate with others, tend to her person, or earn her livelihood.

A similar compromise has to be worked out with the term Children’s Literature. The term could refer to literature of (about) children, literature (written) for children (by adults), or literature written by children – or all of these at once. However, there are no barriers to the type of literature that people can read today and it is quite inaccurate to say that a particular kind/genre of literature is only for a particular age group. Most books children like, though are enjoyed by older people as well. “The most famous of all children’s books, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, is more often enjoyed by older people than by children. Often, if far from always, adults are quite willing to say, or at least to admit, that they still enjoy very
much this or that book they loved as children” (Sale 2). Besides, as attitudes towards children changed, different sorts of literature were deemed appropriate for consumption by children. We can only agree with Roger Sale, that, “Our best definition is going to be very loose and unhelpful, or else cumbersomely long and unhelpful; we are better off saying we all have a pretty good idea of what children’s literature includes and letting the matter rest there” (Sale 1).

**The Birth of the Child**

The changing attitudes to children in England are a necessary background to the study of the history and progress of Children’s Literature in England and Europe.

Before there could be children’s books, there had to be children - children, that is, who were accepted as beings with their own particular needs and interests, not merely as miniature men and women. This acceptance is a fairly recent development in Western Social History. (Townsend 17)

Children were either seen as kinds of beasts to be disciplined, or little adults, prior to the seventeenth century.

In the Middle Ages, at the beginning of modern times, and for a long time after that in the lower class, children were mixed with adults as soon as they were considered capable of doing without their mothers or nannies, not long after a tardy weaning (in other words, at about the age of seven). They immediately went straight into the great community of men, sharing in the work and play of their companions, old and young alike. (Ariès 395)

“Small children often have bad habits,” Bartholomeus Anglicus - after Aristotle - wrote in his thirteenth-century treatise on medieval child-rearing: “They think only of the present,
caring not at all for the future. They love games and vain pursuits, refusing to concern themselves with what is profitable and useful. They consider unimportant matters important, and important matters of little or no significance . . . They cry and weep more over the loss of an apple or pear than over the loss of an inheritance. They forget favours they have received, desire and want everything they see, and ask for it with their voices and hands” (qtd. in Cott xiv).

There were no children; there were “either nursing infants, or young adults” (Sale 27). It is quite evidently unlikely that any literature would have existed for the exclusive consumption of children in or before the middle ages, because the recognition of children as a separate group was absent.

**Literature for Children**

According to Muller (1973), the development of the concept of childhood can be categorised according to four phases demarcated by trends in birth and death rates:

**Phase I:** (Medieval Ages to about 1750) When childhood was considered a necessary evil to be tolerated until the child reached adolescence and was able to participate in and contribute to productive activities.

**Phase II:** (1750-1880) The age of industrialization and urbanization – and the age of child labour. Children were cheap sources of labour and could perform several functions that adults would have found difficult – such as cleaning chimneys or repairing machines.

**Phase III:** (1880–1930) Education was made compulsory in Britain during these years and the minimum age of employment was raised. Children were seen as easily corruptible specimens of innocence and were punished severely in attempts to discipline them. The child, however, assumed central importance in the family.
Phase IV: (1930 to the present day) The child-centric perspective has changed to the contemporary attitude of care and understanding and of understanding the needs of individual children and assisting in their fullest possible development (Muller 2 – 10).

Before the spread of printing technology (Phase I in Muller’s classification), tales were told and transmitted orally. The oral tradition was perhaps least biased, as audiences would have consisted of all age groups, and narrators would have attempted to incorporate something for everyone. In that sense, the oral tradition and the free consumption of all literature by adults and children alike, until the seventeenth century, reflected, in a way, a more liberal, just and non-exclusive attitude towards children; seeing the child as a young adult, probably gave the child a more equalizing respect than is given even today.

Following Medieval times, the term Children’s Literature would have referred to those works which were suitable for children to read. Literature for children was basically didactic and had little that would entertain a child. In later years, the term would come to include the literature written by adults solely for the purpose of children’s entertainment or instruction; and the twentieth century has also seen books written by children, for children. The literature that was written for amusement was primarily targeted at adults. To sum up, “it could thus be said that the prehistory of Children’s Literature has two branches: the material that was intended specially for children or young people but was not story and the material that was story but was not meant specially for children” (Townsend 18).

As early as the 15th century, Courtesy books such as The Babees’ Book provided children with instruction on behaviour; but for entertainment, then, as in the next century, they had to turn to adult books such as Aesop or collections of legends. It was not until the 17th century that books were specifically written for children, and
then, the stories (such as James Janeway’s *A Token for Children* in 1671) were sternly moralistic. (Drabble 192)

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, children were never considered deserving of preferential treatment, or a special sort of literature. Till 1740, very little literature was written for children. The purpose of early Children’s Literature was to instruct; of later Children’s Literature was to amuse or instruct; and perhaps of contemporary Children’s Literature could be said to be either to amuse or to amuse and instruct, but rarely to solely instruct.

Most children in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries drew their reading from the same sources as adults. Out of the literature they selected the things they enjoyed - chapbooks, plays, romances, broadsides or ballads. They relished tales of witches and fairies. As the seventeenth century went on and the Puritan merchant class became strong, this frivolous literature was discouraged. The seventeenth century saw the beginnings of a literature for children only. Therefore one can say that much literature enjoyed by adults and children together . . . died in the seventeenth century, and segregated literature was born during that period (Butler xxxiii).

Myths, legends, and folklore, as communicated orally from generation to generation, were “material that was story” but was occasionally meant for children and occasionally not. The oral tradition would have had the advantage of being able to simultaneously alter the content according to the needs of the listener and the desires of the speaker. *Myths* are stories in a mythology—“a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances; and to establish the sanctions
for the rules by which people conduct their lives” (Abrams 122). M. H. Abrams remarks that if the protagonist is a person rather than a supernatural being, the traditional story is usually called a legend. If the story concerns “supernatural beings who are not gods”, and the story is not a part of a systematic mythology, it is usually called a folktale (Abrams 122).

Similarly, Fables are imaginary narratives, especially stories in which animals or non-living things are characters and usually, a meaning or message is “hidden beneath the surface of the tale” (Carpenter 173). But this message is usually a satirical or critical comment on human behaviour, and the upholding of social values. In Europe, in the sixth century BC, the fable captured the imagination of the people with Aesop’s Fables and was soon transmitted widely – both orally and in written form. The fable was probably closer to the modern day concept of Children’s Literature than the folk tales, myths, or legends; talking animals have always been interesting to children and are so even today. So, for the children of the twenty-four centuries, from the sixth century BC to the eighteenth century, the fable was perhaps the only entertaining narrative and literary form to which they had access (Carpenter 173).

The Fairy Tale

The true precursor of all children’s literature, however, must be the Fairy Tale. Fairy stories¹⁷ are narratives, typically set in a vague and remote past, in no specific geographical location, and usually to do with events that would be impossible in reality. These stories tend to include elements of magic and the supernatural, one or more child characters and the appearance of benevolent fairies eager to make wishes come true and/or malevolent fairies and witches. Several fairy tales prevalent in Europe for centuries since medieval times, can be

¹⁷ Fairy Tales are relevant to my study (and therefore warrant a detailed analysis here) for two reasons: (a) They are widely accepted as the first real literary material written solely for children. (b) The Nonsense stories of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll seem to be postmodern versions of the typical fairy tale – an assertion I shall discuss and demonstrate in Chapter Three of this dissertation.
traced to the sixth-century B.C. Collections of Indian stories, the *Panchatantra* and the *Katha Sarita Sagar*. Several European fairy stories came to Europe from the Middle East and China as well (Carpenter 177).

The words “once upon a time” are always associated with fairy tales — but a large number of written fairy tales begin in quite different ways. Yet, the phrase is ideal for placing a narrative in a past time without having to commit one’s story to an age or a specific year. This allowed wider latitude to imagination and enabled the author to combine cultural and extra-cultural elements, whenever she desired to communicate a particular kind of effect. Perhaps the best way to understand the term *Fairy Tale* would be to differentiate it from whatever it is not: it is not a legend (like the *King Arthur* stories), nor a myth (like *Pandora’s Box*) nor a romance (like the fourteenth century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), nor a fable (moralistic and about talking animals, like the stories of Aesop); but it borrows a little in content or technique from all of them.

Not all fairy tales contain fairies, elves, etc., but, just as today we club myths, legends and fables into the category *Children’s Literature*, a modern consensus has been arrived at regarding what can be classified as “fairy tales” and what cannot. The common motifs in fairy tales around the world, suitably establish that land boundaries were pervious to the transmission of fairy tales. As Roger Sale points out, the Japanese tale *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow* is similar to the Grimms’ *The Fisherman and His Wife*; some of the stories of *The Thousand and One Nights* have much in common with some Indian and European tales (24). “On the other hand, African and Native American Indian stories belong to other families altogether from the fairy tales of Europe and Asia” (Sale 24).

Evidence of the fairy story can be seen as early as 1387, in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, in the story told by the Wife of Bath. In this story, a knight is asked to
answer the question: “What do women most desire?” The correct answer is “sovereignty” and it is told to him by a hideous witch on condition that he marries her. When he does marry her, as in most fairy tales, a transformation takes place and the witch is restored to youth and beauty. But the first and most well-known collections of fairy tales, written specially for children, came from outside England:

(i) Charles Perrault’s *Histoires ou contes du temps passé - Contes de ma mère l’oye*, published in France in 1697 – and now better known as the *Mother Goose Tales*.

(ii) Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s *Kinderund Hausmärchen* (Nursery and Household Tales) published in 1812 in Germany.

(iii) The fairy tales of the Danish writer, Hans Christian Andersen, which appeared in Danish from 1835 onwards and in English in 1846, in three separate translations.

Charles Perrault is “usually and properly given credit for having written the first children’s book” (Sale 49) for he wrote with only children in mind as audience, and is completely devoid of all sermonising. He is responsible for recording for posterity such famous tales as *Puss in Boots, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, The Sleeping Beauty,* and *Hop o’ my Thumb*. The Brothers Grimm, in the face of much ridicule and amid politically turbulent times compiled more than “200 tales and children’s legends, of which the most well-known are *The Frog Prince, Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel, Musicians of Bremen, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Rumpelstiltskin*. Hans Christian Andersen (1805–75) authored more than 150 fairy stories but led a life of frustration and self-pity, for “he was physically ungainly, tall, with a large nose and small eyes,” and was often accused of “vanity and egotism” by his contemporaries (Carpenter 21). His touchiness won him no friends and
"women could only admire and pity him" (Sale 65). Although the son of a shoemaker, Andersen transcended his humble beginnings and, probably spurred by his physical flaws and rejections in love, by inventing fairy stories that were nothing but symbolic representations of his desires to compensate for these frustrations. He is well known for immortal tales such as *The Tinderbox*, *The Princess on the Pea*, *The Little Mermaid* and *The Swineherd*. The fact remains that it was with the publication of Andersen’s tales in English in 1848 that “the triumph of the fairy tale as legitimate children’s literature was complete” (Fass 182).

Of these three landmarks in children’s literature, only Perrault set out with the intention of amusing children. The Grimm Brothers had actually been collecting material to produce a history of German Literature but their friend Achim Von Arnim argued that “they should immediately publish the fairy tales they had gathered so far” (Carpenter 228). Hans Andersen, on the other hand, turned to writing because he had to give up his first love, theatre, after his voice broke; besides, his stories were projections of his own self-pitying views on the many rejections he faced in life – a cathartic retribution in the language of symbols in fairyland. But this fact does not prevent his tales from being part of Children’s Literature. In fact, it was the Fairy Tale that was responsible for reinforcing the view of children as a separate group of humans, with needs and desires different from those of adults.

Any brief study of fairy tales would reveal that these stories shared common motifs, or structures that were familiar and identifiable. The elements of fairy tales are often, basically,

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18 Although not to such an extent, Lear and Carroll, both, share some of the personality traits that we see in Andersen: they were both loners, extremely self-conscious of their appearance and public image and felt like social rejects – traits that may have led them to similar flights into fantasy. Andersen wrote fairy tales; Lear and Carroll wrote Nonsense.

19 Many of his tales incorporated the disappointments in love that he faced in his life. *The Sweethearts* was a metaphoric tale about his rejection by Riborg Voigt, the sister of a fellow student. The princess in *The Swineherd* was a representation of Louise Collin, a girl he was attracted to but who got “engaged to someone else” (Carpenter 21).
the same; with only a slight change in treatment, a new direction, a new tale may be formed. Variations were made on single stories, from narrator to narrator, until the same story could seem like two or three different ones. In the oral as well as the written modes, “everyone anticipated certain motifs or characters or events without ever insisting that one way of telling a story was the only way or the right way” (Sale 28).

Thus, although the tales were told in different countries and in different languages, they addressed a community that was non-specific; fairy tales were told to the human populace in general, because “the community’s sense of itself was not national” (Sale 29). Besides, languages were more diverse with many variations, and a fixed language could not be assigned to a “country” as is done now. Since fairy tales addressed a general audience, their content too was non-specific in terms time and place and the tales were typically about incidents that occurred a “long time ago” and set in lands that were “far, far away”.

A fairy tale is mythic in its structure, in the sense that it is open to innumerable possibilities for variations but resists any change in its basic structure. The same tale is told a hundred times, with a different way of presentation, and the audience has the comfort of familiarity and the pleasure of the minimal differences. It appeals to the sense of wonder in children and adults alike, because it has an “arbitrariness and obscurity” (Sale 45–46) which lie in the “telling”, because each “telling” changes the story and its effects. Perhaps that is the reason why, a fairy tale can never be talked about – because a summary makes it a sequence of events, and a fairy tale’s essence is in the way it is told. However, as indicated above, certain common patterns can be identified:

(i) The Wood: A forest is a recurring setting for fairy tales (even in the Alice books). It is as if the woods, with their deep mysteries, harbour potential for the strange and supernatural to emerge. The forests were indeed dangerous places and helped to create an atmosphere
unknown enough for the start of a fairy tale – or for its ongoing events. And the permutations were infinite:

A girl in a wood. Give her a brother and one has “Hansel and Gretel,” give her many brothers and sisters and one has “Hop o’ My Thumb,” send the girl to dwarves and one has “Snow White,” to bears and one has “Goldilocks,” to grandmother and one has “Little Red Riding Hood.” Make the girl a boy and one might have Jack, either the one who climbs beanstalks or the one who kills giants; make her a man and one has “The Wonderful Musician”; give her three drops of blood and a servant and one has “The Goose Girl”. (Sale 29)

(ii) Birth: The process or event of birth is represented in various symbolic ways. In Snow White a queen pricks her finger and wishes for a child, and one is soon born to her. In Rapunzel a couple vainly wishes for a child, and a witch, from whom the husband has stolen a European edible bellflower, rampion, announces that the child will be born. Countess d’Aulnoy’s The White Deer opens with a wife being told by a shrimp that she will have a child; in the Russian tale Kip, the Enchanted Cat, the cat has a kitten and then tells the Queen that she too will have a child.

(iii) Magic, Enchantment and Disenchantment: Spells are either cast (as in the beginning of Sleeping Beauty) or broken by a chain of events (as at the end of The Frog Prince). Magic and spells are never the object of focus in fairy tales. They are a means to an end, an instrument used by the narrator to complicate or resolve matters, usually used for the purpose of granting wishes or instilling fear.

20 Comtesse d’Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine Le Jumel De Bameville De La Motte (1650-1705) wrote twenty-five fairy tales in the ornate French fashion, full of courtly manners and comments on etiquette, etc.
(iv) **Happy Endings:** The common impression is that fairy tales have a formulaic “and they lived happily ever after” at the end. But a large number of fairy tales are not optimistic in their endings. Several do not have the proverbial “fairy-tale-ending”. However, familiar tales such as *The Frog Prince*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, have taught us to expect the resolution of problems and the elimination of threats; the conversion from ugliness to beauty (the frog becomes a handsome prince, the ugly duckling becomes a swan) and the entry of an extraneous factor to save the protagonist (as the woodcutter saves Little Red Riding Hood from the Big Bad Wolf). Thus, today, a happy ending is typically referred to as a “fairy-tale ending.”

(v) **Separation and (Re)Union:** The typical fairy tale usually begins with separation of some kind and ends in a happy reunion. In *Hansel and Gretel*, for example, the two children are abandoned in a forest because their parents cannot feed them but they return home at the end laden with pearls and jewels from a witch who tried to eat them, but has been baked alive herself instead. Similarly, in *Hop o' My Thumb*, the little boy of that name and his brothers are abandoned in a wood, but clever Hop saves them from an Ogre and brings back riches to his poor parents. The miller in *Rumpelstiltskin* sells his daughter (but they are never reconciled in the story). Kay leaves his village in *The Snow Queen* and Gerda, his friend, ends her quest by finally finding him.

(vi) **Transformation:** Changes in size, shape or form (and also attitudes) are often found in fairy tales—usually as effects of spells cast or broken. In the Grimm’s version of *The Frog Prince*, the frog finally desires a place in the Princess’ bed at which she flings it against a wall.

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21 In Perrault’s original version Little Red Riding Hood is devoured by the Wolf at the end. But the pressure of a happy ending has probably coerced later writers to alter the conclusion. In Henry Cole’s (1843) retelling, for example, Red Riding Hood’s father hears her screams, rushes in “just in time” and kills the wolf (Carpenter 320).
wall in disgust, and the spell is broken and the ugly frog turns into a handsome prince
(Carpenter 192)\textsuperscript{22}; in The Snow Queen, Gerda’s warm tears penetrate right into Kay’s heart
and melt the “splinter of glass” in it. Kay’s own tears wash the chip of glass out of his eyes
and thus Kay is finally changed back into a warm, happy child from the cold, self-centred boy
he had become; in The Wonderful Adventures of Nil, Nil, a rude, adolescent Swedish boy is
made miniature in size by an elf; the bear turns into a handsome prince in Snow-White and
Rose-Red, after he has killed the wicked dwarf who put the spell on him.

\textbf{(vii) Anthropomorphisms:} A common element in several fairy stories is the assigning of
human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects or supernatural beings. Talking animals
in fairy stories are akin to those in fables, but usually interacting with the child-protagonist.
The animals in fairy stories are thus shown to share linguistic communication with human
beings. In fables, by contrast, animals or inanimate objects are protagonists, and being
allegorical representations of human behaviour, do not interact directly with humans.
However, they are shown to interact with other animals or inanimate objects as humans
would with one another. Animals talk, wear clothes, live in houses, think and feel like
human beings and often, retain the characteristics of their own species while being capable of
all the human faculties. In fact, the personification of animals may be said to be the sole
connecting link from the oral tradition to the modern/postmodern literature written for
children. While our world in the twenty-first century is obsessed with the physical,
psychological, legal, and moral problems of childhood, magic and talking animals still

\textsuperscript{22} Neither in the earlier version nor in the Grimm’s retelling of the tale does the princess
kiss the frog: in one version, she allows the frog to sleep on her pillow for three nights
“before changing spontaneously into a prince without violent intervention” and in another,
she chops off the frog’s head with an axe “which brings about his change into a human
being” (Carpenter 192). The kiss that breaks the spell “first appeared in English translations
of the tale, influenced by Edgar Taylor’s English translation of the tale in 1823” (Heiner n.p.)
pervade children’s books, indicating that certain primal needs of the human mind do not change.

This list, though by no means comprehensive, is an attempt to trace a common design in fairy tales. Fairy stories became popular during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and found their way into works like Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Since then, fairy stories have been alternately upheld and maligned through the years.

Through the eighteenth century, thanks to Madame Marie de Beaumont’s (1711–1780) *The Young Misses Magazine*, John Newbery’s English publication of Perrault’s tales (1768) and the proliferation of chapbooks, fairy stories gained a firm footing in English culture. Their growing popularity led many educationists to oppose them even more vehemently than the Puritans of the previous century.

The didacticism that pervaded all of Children’s Literature during the seventeenth century was a consequence of the Puritanism that had begun to sweep across England from the sixteenth. The Puritans were staunch, conservative English Protestants who held the view that children, being closest, spiritually to original sin, were doomed to hell unless disciplined and instructed in religion. Puritan writers like John Bunyan (*A Book for Boys and Girls* [1686]), James Janeway (*A Token for Children* [1672]), Benjamin Keach (*Instruction for Children or Child and Youth’s Delight* [1664]), and Abraham Chear (*A Looking-Glass for Children* [1672]), wrote in the second half of the seventeenth century, books and verses full of didacticism, fears of early death for playful children, and threats of hell and eternal damnation. Cotton Mather (1663–1728), in America, also wrote didactic works for children. The works of Mather and Bunyan had a strong influence on Western children as compulsory
reading for over a century after they were published. They were the “healthy alternative” to chapbooks and fairy tales.

One of the most influential and vocal opponents of fairy tales, was Mrs. Sarah Trimmer (1741 – 1810) – reviewer, author, and promoter of the Sunday School Movement. In the Guardian of Education (1802-05), Mrs. Trimmer spoke against a new edition of Cinderella, saying that such literature was a spent fashion of half a century ago. For most of the opponents of the genre, the principal arguments were that fairy tales were unreal and filled a child’s mind with frightening images and superstitions. In Mrs. Trimmer’s words, they did “not wish to have such sensations awakened in the hearts of their grandchildren . . . for the terrific images, which tales of this kind present to the imagination, usually make deep impressions, and injure the tender minds of children, by exciting unreasonable and groundless fears. Neither do the generality of tales of this kind supply any moral instruction level to the infantile capacity” (qtd. in Carpenter 179). In 1798, the famous Edgeworths (Richard and his daughter, Maria) said that they did not “allude to fairy tales, for we apprehend these are not now much read” (qtd. in Opie 25).

But the claim that the fairy tale was out of fashion was more wishful thinking than factual observation and with the nineteenth-century translations of the tales by the brothers Grimm (1823) and of Hans Andersen’s tales (during the 1840s), the fairy tale became, evidently, the favourite form of literature for British children. Charles Dickens stoutly defended fairy tales in an article titled “Frauds on the Fairies” published in Household Words on October 1, 1853:

Dickens credited fairy tales with nourishing in the child’s heart such qualities as ‘forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force.’ (Dickens qtd. in Townsend 92)
The battle between the opponents and defenders of fairy tale literature continued into the twentieth century (Carpenter 179). With the development of the fairy tale genre into the ‘Heroic Fantasy’ narrative by J. R. R. Tolkien, the “sustained fairy tale in its purest form” (Clute 333), it can be said that the debate was finally put to rest. In the present day, the stupendous success of fantasy novels (like the Harry Potter series) and Hollywood movies (Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, The Chronicles of Narnia) the verdict seems to have been declared, without doubt, in favour of the fairy tale.

Fairy tales have, over the years, been considered unfit reading for children, for their violence, horror, unreality, immorality and sexism. The most comprehensive defences of the genre, however, have appeared in the twentieth century. Bruno Bettelheim argued that fairy stories contribute to the emotional health of a child in his landmark book, The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (1977). According to Bettelheim, fairy tales, “represent in imaginative form what the process of healthy human development consists of . . . (and) make great and positive psychological contributions to the child’s inner growth” (Bettelheim 12). As a child psychologist, he insists that a child’s preference for a certain fairy tale is a result of “what a tale evokes in his conscious and unconscious mind” (Bettelheim 17). He argues that when a little boy reads fairy tales, they “speak about his severe inner pressures in a way that the child unconsciously understands and . . . offer examples of both temporary and permanent solutions to pressing difficulties” (Bettelheim qtd. in Carpenter 57). He disagrees, citing examples, with the idea that young children identify with characters in fairy tales solely according to gender type. Instead, he claims that children identify more readily with the situation of a character, than the sharing of gender. According to him, a tale like Rapunzel could deeply impact even a young boy since “a fairy-tale – because it addresses itself in the most imaginative form to essential human problems,
and does so in an indirect way – can have much to offer to a little boy, even if the story’s heroine is an adolescent girl” (Bettelheim 17).

Bettelheim also analyses several fairy tales for Freudian or sexual symbolic representations. But although his attempts were path-breaking and very popular, his analyses were seen to be superficial, simplistic and layman-psychoanalysis at best. Yet, The Uses of Enchantment revived a critical interest in fairy tales and their effect on children’s minds.

Maureen Duffy’s (1989) analysis also altered perspectives on children’s stories as a whole. She defines fairy as “anything of an extra-human nature not within the Christian fold” (Duffy 3). Her work is a detailed Freudian study of the sexual symbols and overtones of fairy stories. One of the most prolific critics of the fairy tale genre (and Children’s Literature in

23 For example, he analyses The Frog King – the Brothers Grimm’s story – and finds it replete with Freudian symbolism. The ball is a potentially perfect, but so far undeveloped, narcissistic psyche; the King is the super-ego; the frog emerges out of life in the water, as a child does at birth; the throwing of the frog from the bed is a symbol of the violent but necessary separation from the mother that a child needs in order to mature. Similarly, the house that Hansel and Gretel eat is actually an object of their oral fixation and they are symbolically devouring the bad mother who has deserted them; Little Red Cap, in symbolic form, projects the girl into the dangers of her oedipal conflicts during puberty, and then saves her from them, so that she will be able to mature, free of all conflicts.

24 Several studies of Bruno Bettelheim have been published over the years, presenting sharply conflicting views of his personality and authenticity. After Bettelheim’s death in 1990, The Creation of Dr. B – a one-sided view of Bettelheim – revealed a surprising angle to the famed doctor. Pollak (1997) portrays him as a liar, hypocrite and plagiarist. His doctorate was in philosophy (not psychology or medicine), his views were often borrowed (without giving due credit), and he had little medical insight into the true causes and treatments for autistic children, although he directed the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago for more than twenty-five years. His authoritarian directorship was supplemented by his use of terror on students and staff as a means of control, and his often resorting to physical abuse of children. Another study, by Raines (2002) comes to his defence and attempts to justify his “autocratic” and disciplinarian ways because, in fact, “as the strongest person in the school, he commanded respect, inspired admiration” (Raines 414). Besides, “Bettelheim’s autocratic control modelled firmness for any superego capable of being reformed” (Raines 414). The most balanced biography is by Sutton (1996) who notes that his reputation suffered mainly because he had always maintained a secrecy about his “therapeutic methods: he had never clearly faced up to his use of violence” (Sutton 467).
general) has been Jack Zipes. Zipes (1979, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2008) has been instrumental in increasing awareness among readers and critics alike about the socio-cultural-political contexts of the origins and development of fairy tales – besides studying them from feminist, mythic and ideological points of view. Significantly, he was the first to indicate that the rise of the genre in seventeenth century Europe was a specifically bourgeois phenomenon:

> We must remember that the fairy tale for children originated in a period of absolutism when French culture was setting standards of *civilité* for the rest of Europe. Exquisite care was thus taken to cultivate a discourse on the civilisation process through the fairy tale for the benefit of well-raised children. In this regard, fairy tales for children were no different than the rest of the literature (fables, primers, picture books, sermons, didactic stories, etc.) which conveyed a model of the exemplary child that was to be borne in mind while reading. (Zipes *Subversion* 9).

Structuralist/Formalist studies have revealed several common elements in fairy stories irrespective of geographical location. Vladimir Propp (1895 –1970), the Russian Formalist, identified “31 basic functions and one hundred fifty ‘elements’ or ‘constituents’ that fairy tales incorporate. Functions involve a generalized action (such as departing or giving) whereas elements involve the particular features of the function, such as ‘Baba-Jaga gives Ivan a horse’ (four elements). These elements may differ in content and in imagery but all must be present in order for a fairy tale to be considered a fairy tale.” (Rich 13)

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25 Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson have made a similar morphological study of the folk tale and the fairy tale, identifying seven basic groups into which all fairy tales can be classified: Animal Tales, Fairy Tales, Religious Tales, Realistic Tales, Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Jokes and Anecdotes, and Formula Tales – further divided into several sub divisions.
Such critical works\textsuperscript{26} have been followed and supported/supplemented by many more with different perspectives. While they all make interesting reading, a detailed analysis of their content is beyond the scope of this study. Yet the growing interest in fairy stories reflects their postmodern relevance; in the fragmented world of today, the fairy tale, which flourished on differences, retains great potential as a vehicle of expression and narration. Moreover, the re-telling of fairy tales with postmodern twists and alterations in literature, animation films and Hollywood movies reaffirms the immortal nature of fairy stories.

**Broadsides and Chapbooks**

Fairy tales appeared in the written form after a long oral tradition. However, preceding any actual form of literature (solely) for children, were the broadsides and chapbooks which were sold by peddlers and "Chapmen" all over England in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Carpenter 105). Though popular with children, the subjects of the broadside ballads would have been considered quite unfit for children as they usually dealt with acts of violence or immorality. Their very titles (*A Mournful Ditty of the Lady Rosamound, King Henry the Second’s Concubine, The Careless Curate and the Bloudy Butcher (a Scandal from Chelmsfore in Which an Adulterous Priest Was Maimed by a Butcher)*, etc.) indicated that they contained matter that would not have been considered fit reading material by Puritans and Victorians alike\textsuperscript{27} (Carpenter 84).

\textsuperscript{26} Several other significant studies like Katherine Briggs’ *The Faeries in Tradition and Literature*, Thomas Knightley’s *Fairy Mythology* and Lewis Spence’s *British Fairy Origins* have contributed to a deeper understanding the Fairy Tale genre. A complete bibliography of the critical works on Fairy Tales would be superfluous in this dissertation and therefore I have mentioned and discussed only those that could be considered relevant to my primary argument.

\textsuperscript{27} No doubt, much more graphically violent are the cartoons, comics, and video games of today, sanctioned as appropriate entertainment for children, but not without factions of resistance in Western society even today.
Unlike the broadsides, the chapbooks, though full of vulgar and rough humour till the eighteenth century, began to recognize and cater to a largely young audience by the time their popularity waned in the nineteenth century. The popularity of chapbooks, soon inspired the Penny Dreadfuls in England (from the 1830s), and the Dime Novels in America (from 1860), at about the same time (Carpenter 399, 150). These were brazenly sensational in matter, till it became quite obvious that children were their most eager consumers; soon healthier reading was provided in the form of magazines – like *The Boy's Own Magazine* founded by Samuel Orchard Beeton – that were in circulation from 1855 to 1874. Apart from focusing blatantly only on boys as “children”, this was an experimental attempt to elevate the tastes of young boys and divert their minds away from Penny Dreadfuls. It, therefore, included in its pages, mathematical and philosophical questions among its pieces of biography, history and other miscellaneous titbits of knowledge. Following the demise of *The Boy's Own Magazine* in 1874, another more focused and spirited effort was made to combat the “corrupting” influences of the Penny Dreadfuls, in the form of the “BOP.” *The Boy's Own Paper*, which was first printed in 1879 (its last monthly issue was as late as 1967). Its success inspired other periodicals such as *The Boy's World* and they included pieces on outdoor sports, magic, puzzles and competitions.

By the mid-eighteenth century, there had begun a reaction against fairy stories and chapbooks, and in an attempt to discipline children, *Moral Tales*\(^{28}\) and *Temperance Stories* had begun to be published as the only official or appropriate literature for children. This change in attitude towards literature for children was one of the consequences of the rise of

\(^{28}\) Moral tales were also a reaction against the popularity of fairy tales. They were “didactic fictions, either short or novel-length, which were first written for children in the mid-18th century, and which by 1800 were the predominant genre in children’s books in England. Their subject-matter was usually domestic or rural and, though animals and inanimate objects were sometimes the heroes and narrators, anything fanciful was as far as possible avoided by the authors” (Carpenter 358). Temperance tales were the nineteenth century descendants of the moral tales with the same tone and purpose.
the middle class and a typically bourgeois ethic, which meant a conventional, smug, materialistic system of values.

The rise of the middle class was a result of several factors – particularly, a secure and wealthy government, colonization, mechanization and industrialisation. This, coupled with land reforms and burgeoning trade, brought about an “ease with which individuals could move up and down the social ladder” (Morgan 387). By the mid-eighteenth century, the middle class held a large portion of the country’s wealth because “movable goods in the form of industrial capital, personal wealth and trading balances were overwhelmingly owned by the broad mass of the middle class” (Morgan 390). The bourgeoisie were, thus, in a position to influence major cultural and political changes.

The puritans of the seventeenth century had believed – and had spread the belief – that children were, by instinct, sinful because of original sin, and thus needed to be prevented from engaging in sinful behaviour. With the infant mortality rate at about fifty per cent (Hardyment 8), parents were rarely hopeful of seeing their children survive, and the Puritans were, thus, more keen that the children be kept away from sinful behaviour for they must be pure before they passed away. A New England minister, John Hersey, commanded parents to

begin the work before they can run, before they can speak plainly or speak at all. Whatever pains it costs, conquer their stubbornness; break their wills if you will not damn the child. Therefore let a child from a year old be taught to fear the rod and cry softly. Make him do as bid if you whip him ten times running to do it (qtd. in Hardyment 8)

Thus most of the books – like the Courtesy Books – saw children as wild and unruly and provided lessons of instruction to discipline them. Books produced especially for children
until the end of the seventeenth century were nearly all schoolbooks or books of manners and morals. The Courtesy Books had emphasised civilised behaviour, but “as the Puritan influence grew, the stress fell more heavily on religion and morals” (Townsend 20). Thus, long before chapbooks and penny dreadfuls fell into the hands of children, since about 1475, The Babees Book was busy instructing children to become obedient slaves (or willing robots) to the rules and systems of their elders – although it had one saving grace: it was in rhyme.

The eighteenth century saw a drastic change in the perspective of children though its conclusion remained the same – that the child must be disciplined. Contrary to the seventeenth-century view that children were sinners who must have original sin thrashed out of them, by the mid-eighteenth century, a more sympathetic Puritanism saw children as innocents who would become sinners if not disciplined in time. Thus, the “Spare the rod and Spoil the Child” attitude continued to be perpetuated, although based on a starkly different foundation. This persisted through the Victorian age and writers like Charles Dickens (1812–1870) have vividly recorded, in fiction, the most disconcerting scenes of the child abuse and child labour that characterized the social reality of the times, in novels like David Copperfield (1850) and Oliver Twist (1838).

From all children the strictest submission to their parents’ will was required as of right, obedience to higher authority being held as essential and unquestionable within the home as in the larger world outside it. ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord!’ was an injunction as inviolable as ‘Wives obey your husbands.’ (Hibbert 112)

A vestige of the "children are evil" attitude can be seen in the following statement by Mrs. Sherwood (1775–1851), author of several popular books like Susan Gray and The History of the Fairchild Family: “All children are by nature evil, and while they have none but the natural evil principle to guide them, pious and prudent parents must check their naughty passions in any way that they have power, and force them into decent and proper behaviour and into what are called good habits” (qtd. in Cott xiii).

In America, The New England Primer (circa 1690) which was a compilation of catechisms and biblical ways of teaching the English alphabet, became the most popular schoolbook for children, up to 1886. Thus, books like the courtesy books, the moral tales and temperance tales, and the New England Primer30 were some of the attempts to combat the evil effects of chapbooks, penny dreadfuls and dime novels.

John Newbery

It was John Newbery (1713–67) who, for the first time, began to publish books in Britain solely for children. All his children’s books were tinged with some educational element, and of the 2,400 or so new books and editions he published between 1740 and 1800, only about 400 were for juvenile consumption. Newbery caught the “tide of increasingly leisured middle-class metropolitan life” and managed to “produce books suited both to the parents’ aspirations and the children’s taste” (Carpenter 375). His children’s books include The History of Goody Two Shoes (1765) and Giles Gingerbread (1764). Goody Two Shoes is a children’s story, and one of the most successful publications of John Newbery. The tale is

30 The New England Primer’s rhyme for the alphabet is still quite familiar to many readers and speakers of the English language:

In Adam’s fall
We sinned all.
about a little girl, Margery and her brother Tommy who are orphaned. Margery’s kindness, hard work and sincerity pay off and she finally becomes a Lady and is rewarded for her virtues. *Goody Two Shoes* was reprinted regularly until 1850 and sporadically in America in the twentieth century also. But, with the change in social attitudes over the years, the term *goody-two-shoes* has changed in connotation, and is today used colloquially to refer to a woman/girl of affected, exaggeratedly pious behaviour and an outdated, rigid morality. *Giles Gingerbread* is as moral and didactic a tale as *Goody Two Shoes*. It deals with how a little boy called Giles Gingerbread learns to read and is given lessons in religion, morality and sense.

Newbery was clearly influenced by the theories of John Locke (1632–1704), who believed that instruction is best combined with entertainment and that the child learns quickest when she is enjoying herself. His *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* laid the foundation for the Empirical school of English philosophy in 1690. In 1693, however, he published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and this almost immediately started influencing attitudes towards children and techniques of education. His suggestions were simple but emphatic: (1) Children must be allowed to play in the open, to develop robust health. (2) They should be given wholesome food but no preventive medicines. (3) Children should be allowed to sleep as much as they want. (4) Praise and shame must be used, rather than the rod, as instruments to inculcate self-discipline in children. (5) Reading should be introduced to a child as a form of amusement rather than a task (Carpenter 323).

Newbery was indeed the first self-conscious contributor to Children’s Literature as a demonstration of Locke’s theses, and in those forms in which we have it today. The eighteenth century, however, was also the age when the memoir-novel and the epistolary novel culminated in the rise of the omniscient third-person narrative of the modern novel as we know it today. This rise of the novel, which was fiction meant for adults, edged out the
tales and began to become the most popular genre of the eighteenth century, and of later years. "Once the novel, which broadly speaking was sophisticated fiction for adults, began to replace the tale, which was unsophisticated fiction for everybody, there was a logical gap for the children's book to enter" (Townsend 28–29).

The Novel

The novel was definitely a more demanding genre than the fairy tale or the didactic books of the past, and therefore, fit for an educated, adult audience. This was a change in focus. Earlier literature (the fairy tale, the folk tale, myths and legends etc) had been meant for a general audience. With the books of instruction and morality had come the recognition of children as a social group separate from adults. The novel widened this gap by catering to adults only, as a social group separate from children. But while the novel was for the leisure reading of adults, there was a lack of similar, sanctioned forms of literature purely for the amusement of children. Such literature emerged as an incidental consequence of novel writing. Three such novels – which were written for grown-ups, but ended up as children's favourites – changed the course of Children's Literature forever. Their unwitting writers were three of the most influential fiction writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, and Jonathan Swift.31

31 Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) is generally agreed to be one of the founders of the modern novel. His Pamela was actually intended for the instruction of adolescents, "published in order to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youths of both sexes" (as he declared on the title page of the first edition in 1740). Richardson, who had produced an edition of Aesop's Fables in 1739, should have known better than to expect children to eagerly read copious volumes of tedious letters, teaching them the rewards of being virtuous and preserving their virtue.
The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to That Which is to Come (1678), by John Bunyan (1628-88), was begun in 1676 during Bunyan's first term of imprisonment, and published on completion in 1678, after his second, shorter term in jail. The Pilgrim's Progress was not intended for children but was definitely more fun than Richardson's Pamela. It is a story with a progressive narrative, and is neither epistolary nor overtly pedantic like Pamela. It is an allegorical story of a dream seen by Christian, the narrator. Christian is a Puritan version of Everyman, the hero of the Medieval Morality Plays. Christian flees the City of Destruction with a burden on his back, and through several trials and tribulations, warlike adventures, battles with demons and giants, accompanied first by Faithful and later by Hopeful, reaches the Celestial City. The narrative contains places and characters with tell-tale names (such as Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Talkative, Mr. Hategood etc.) that make the allegory transparent.

Although it was never meant to be a book for children only, Bunyan himself acknowledged in his introduction to Part II that Part I had appealed to the “very children that do walk the streets” (Carpenter 412). By the nineteenth century, there were editions meant especially for children, much abridged, and simply told. As Ernest Baker remarks, “the child reads The Pilgrim’s Progress with its sequel, as a tale of adventure, of brave fighters, knights in armour, ogres, dragons, thrilling perils and hair-breadth escapes. The mature reader feels the deeper spell, the inner significances” (Baker 57).

The book is very easily comparable in structure and components to our idea of the conventional fairy tale. The story of a young man's quest for high achievement is the stuff of legends such as those of Theseus and Ulysses. The forest of the fairy tale is turned into the Valley of Humiliation or the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The evil stepmother, or ogre,

32 Bunyan was in prison for preaching without a license, from 1660 to 1672, and later again for a shorter term, in 1676.
appears as Appollyon, “The Destroyer,” and the Giant is retained as Giant Despair, who imprisons Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle. It is thus little wonder that children were as interested in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* as in the fairy tales. Besides, the story ended happily unlike the cautionary tale and like the fairy tale that the children so loved.

Daniel Defoe’s (1660–1731) novel, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner... Written by Himself* – better known by the name *Robinson Crusoe* – was first published in 1719. This was also a work intended for an adult readership, which grew to be more popular among children in its various abridged versions. *Robinson Crusoe* is based on the real experiences of one Alexander Selkirk, the son of a Scottish shoemaker. It deals with the efforts of Robinson Crusoe, a shipwrecked sailor, to adapt to a desert island and make for himself a tolerable existence there. Much of the novel describes the ingenious solutions he arrives at to make his life more comfortable. The children of educated and civilized England must have found this unusual use of ordinary things particularly interesting. This book had several admirers including Rousseau, Coleridge and Marx, but fell into controversy in the twentieth century. Particularly controversial were the role and portrayal of Friday, the black assistant of Robinson Crusoe. Friday is a “poor savage” who is rescued by Crusoe, and immediately accepts Crusoe as his master, and a kind of God. It is highly unlikely that the original book in all its length of 346 pages would have been read by most children of the day, or even in 1888, when it was voted the top favourite boy’s book in *Juvenile Literature As It Is* (Carpenter 458).

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33 Alexander Selkirk had run away to sea, and while on a voyage, “quarrelled with his captain, and was at his own request put ashore on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez, in 1704, and remained there till 1709, when he was rescued. Captain Woodes Rogers, his rescuer, published an account of what had happened” (Carpenter 458). Selkirk was interviewed by none other than Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) for his journal *The Guardian*, on the former’s arrival in England, in 1711 (ibid.).
The book sparked off a multiplicity of similar tales, to create sub-genre, known as the
*Robinsonnade*. The most popular of these offshoots were *The Swiss Family Robinson* (1812),
by J.D.Wyss and *Coral Island* (1858) by R. M. Ballantyne. *The Swiss Family Robinson* was
originally written by a Swiss Pastor, Johann David Wyss (1743–1818), and subsequently
much enlarged by translators and editors. The shipwreck theme is used but the lone Crusoe is
replaced by a family: a pastor, his wife, and four sons. Their later adventures are often used
by the author (through the pastor) to educate the readers (on the pretext of educating the
children of the pastor) in Natural History and the Physical Sciences.

R. M. Ballantyne (1825–94) was one of the most accomplished nineteenth-century writers
of Adventure Stories\(^{34}\). *Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858) was Ballantyne’s
*Robinsonnade*, about three young boys who are shipwrecked on a South Sea Island\(^{35}\). In the
novel, young Ralph Rover is shipwrecked with Jack Martin and Peterkin Gay, two other
young companions. They go through several adventures which include an escape from a
shark, and a fight between warring factions of cannibals. Ralph is kidnapped by a pirate and
ultimately returns. They are later imprisoned by natives on another island and finally rescued
by missionaries. The *Robinsonnade* has even found its way into the twentieth century in

\(^{34}\) R. M. Ballantyne came to be known as “the brave Mr. Ballantyne” with his tales of
escapades all over the world, and his dashing and charming personality. He later insisted on
researching his books from life, so as to achieve greater verisimilitude. Thus, for *Fighting the
Flames* (1867), he went out with the London fire brigade and was even given a medal for
attempting a rescue at an Edinburgh fire; for *Deep Down* (1868) he visited Cornwall and
made trips down a tin-mine; he wandered about the General Post Office disguised as a
detective for *Post Haste* (1880); he helped to drive the London-Edinburgh express, which
resulted in *The Iron Horse* (1871) (Carpenter 42-43). However, all his heroes fitted, and
helped considerably to perpetuate the manly or “macho” male stereotype. They are all
invariably broad-chested boys, who are quick to take up physical challenges, from which they
inevitably emerge successful.

\(^{35}\) Ballantyne had no real first-hand knowledge of Pacific Islands and took many of the
incidents from *The Island Home of the Young Cast-Aways* (1851) by the American writer
*James F. Bowman*, apart from borrowing the basic theme from Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. 
The starkly negative treatment and perspective in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), which is a reworking of *Coral Island*.

The third major contribution to children's literature in the eighteenth century came in 1726, when Jonathan Swift's (1667–1745) *Gulliver's Travels* was published. Again, although it was meant for adults, its abridged versions soon became so popular as to make it a children's classic. The novel narrates the exploits of Captain Gulliver in strange lands like Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbdubdrib and the country of the unpronounceable Houyhnhnms. Like Defoe's *Crusoe* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim* tale, it is a story of journeys into strange and unknown lands. Also like *Pilgrim's Progress*, it is an allegory—a political satire. Like the fairy tales, it deals with changes in size and their consequences and talks of giants and Lilliputians. Much of its political satire is communicated through quirks and exaggerations that are delightful to children. Young readers enjoy the work without the slightest awareness of socio-political undertones, although only the first two books are really well known. Afraid of persecution, Swift initially tried to conceal his authorship. For the same reason, he hid his satire by using allegorical representations of his views of the society, politics and history of his times. Thus the bickering of the Whigs and Tories is ridiculed in the quarrels between the Lilliputians in high-heeled shoes and those in low-heeled shoes. The wars over religion are shown as a conflict between those who open eggs at the big end and those who open them at the little end. But these incidents were so realistically and convincingly described as to be read equally at face value, as tales of strange people who live in strange lands. Besides, as in fairy tales, Gulliver always returns to human civilization after all his absurd and threatening encounters. The work soon found its way into the chapbooks and later into more respectable publishing ventures in the form of single-voyage abridgements—usually the voyage to Lilliput and/or Brobdingnag.
It may be pertinent to mention here that none of these fictions in its original form is by any means simple reading and is likely to try the patience of most twenty-first-century adult readers. The language would probably prove too heavy, the narrative progress often tedious and the length exasperating. The colloquial simplicity that pervades novel writing today would stand in stark contrast to some of their passages. Here is a passage from Swift:

At last I fixed upon a resolution, for which it is probable I may incur some censure, and not unjustly; for I confess I owe the preserving mine eyes, and consequently my liberty, to my own great rashness and want of experience: because, if I had then known the nature of princes and ministers, which I have since observed in many other courts, and their methods of treating criminals less obnoxious than myself; I should with great alacrity and readiness have submitted to so easy a punishment. But hurried on by the precipitancy of youth; and having his Imperial Majesty’s license to pay my attendance upon the Emperor of Blefuscu; I took this opportunity, before the three days were elapsed, to send a letter to my friend, the secretary, signifying my resolution of setting out that morning for Blefuscu, pursuant to the leave I got. (Swift 73)

Far more readable were the chapbooks that catered to general tastes for several centuries. While few chapbooks before the late eighteenth century were written or printed with children in mind, they can be credited with being the first sources of wholesome entertainment for children at the time. Chapbooks are also the precursors of the imaginative literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Boys’ fiction, girls’ fiction, sea-adventures and adventure stories are all descendants of Penny Dreadfuls which were offshoots of earlier chapbooks. While chapbooks were watered down versions of medieval tales, the adventures of the Penny Dreadfuls were usually modifications or descendants of the Robinson Crusoe story. “Adventure stories for children, especially boys, may be said to have
had precursors in the Medieval Romances, many of which were read by children in debased Chapbook form. The modern adventure story is descended directly from Robinson Crusoe . . . .” (Carpenter, 6).

**Stories for Boys or Girls**

*Boys’ Stories* proliferated in Britain from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. While *Girls’ Stories* found their origins in America, only towards the end of the nineteenth century. The former were heroic narratives full of wars, crime and school life episodes. Boys’ fiction included detective stories, adventure stories and school stories, all of which were immensely popular. Hundreds of these tales appeared in magazines published by companies like Harmsworth, Aldine, and the Emmet Brothers.

The Victorian age saw England at the peak of its prosperity, and the reasons for the incredible rise of successful boys’ magazines can be traced to the socio-political ethos of the period 1832–1900. The aggressive and muscular colonization of a large part of the world had created a British Empire. The Empire was to be perpetuated and controlled — and this favoured the breeding of patriotic citizens who put their queen and country before themselves. This, clubbed with the middle class dreams of material success, resulted in a firebrand, self-centred jingoism and the appreciation of chauvinistic qualities — such as physical strength, sporting achievement, feats of bravado and the stiff-upper-lip. The public school was considered the optimal institution where boys were cultivated into men.

Dr. Thomas Arnold’s (1795–1842) Rugby School36 was considered a great public school and Dr. Arnold himself was the object of admiration of most of his pupils. Boys’ magazines

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36 Dr. Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) is best remembered as the headmaster of *Rugby School* from 1828 to 1842, during which he reformed the school and established its name as a premier institute for boys. The attitude to how boys should behave is evident in the fact that
like *The Boy's Own Paper* (1879) were created by institutions like the Religious Tract Society and publishers like Harmsworth to combat the cheap and sensational “blood and thunder” magazines – the penny dreadfuls – then generally thought to be a corrupting influence on the young.

Boys’ magazines were not entirely responsible for the creation and maintenance of gender stereotypes. The stereotype was an effect of a kind of vicious circle that included government policy and the social attitudes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a whole. Firstly, formal education was entirely limited to boys until the nineteenth century. Before 1840, the education of those few girls who were given any formal instruction at all had been left to governesses and to teachers in schools where deportment was regarded as far more important than “mere” learning (Hibbert 112). It was an obvious consequence, then, that most of the voracious readers of chapbooks and penny dreadfuls were boys, simply because more boys could read and more boys were allowed to read. These were boys who, through education, had already been raised on stereotypical gender differences. This resulted in the popularity of the typically “boyish” adventure stories and stories of action and crime. The chapbooks and Penny Dreadfuls found a market that appeared individual in its tastes – the male juvenile market. This came as a confirmation of the sexist “boys will be boys” attitude which implied: this is what boys are attracted by (action, horror, violence and adventure) – therefore this is

the aggressive game of Rugby football originated there, in 1832; it can also be seen in graphic detail in Thomas Hughes’ (1822-96) novel *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857).

Hughes condemns the bullying prevalent in the schools of those days through the character of Harry Flashman, the school bully. But he “clearly advocated a form of what came to be known as ‘muscular Christianity’, which attempted to combine Christian principles with physical courage, self-reliance, love of sport, school loyalty, and patriotism, a mixture that had a great deal of impact on the public school ethos . . . And indeed there are few mentions in the novel, of any intellectual pursuits” (Carpenter 481). The novel is a useful resource if one wants to understand the brand of male chauvinism that pervaded the age and the literature of the time.
what they should be attracted to and boys’ stories are what boys should like. All this inevitably implied that girls would not, did not and should not like such boyish stuff, that they should prefer more refined, homely, sensitive and polite literature. However, educated girls were equally avid readers of the same literature. The *Juvenile Literature As It Is* (1888) poll showed that the favourite magazine of the girls was *The Girl's Own Paper* – but their second preference was not another girls’ magazine but *The Boy's Own Paper* (Carpenter 285)³⁷. Thus, what the boys’ and girls’ magazines did was to pick up existing sexist stereotypes and biases and reaffirm them, sanctify them and help perpetuate them.

*The Girl’s Own Paper* was founded in 1880, as a companion magazine to the *Boy’s Own Paper*. Its first edition dealt mainly with “feminine” topics such as fashion, sewing and cooking. Its contents, however, were aimed more at women than teenage girls – unlike *The Boy's Own Paper*, which was clearly meant for pre-sixteen-year-old boys. These magazines also created one other distinction in English Literature: the difference between the boy child and the girl child, which obviously resulted in literature written solely for the pleasure of girls as an individual group, with perhaps different tastes and needs. This (fairly twisted) recognition of differences in gender tastes preceded any such recognition in the adult genres. It was, in short, the first form of *respect* – in literature – that was shown to the female half of humankind which had been ignored till then as a category. At that point in time, any form of attention was a welcome beginning.

**The Novel of Adventure**

At this juncture, a brief survey of the development of boys’ and girls’ literature over the last two centuries may assist in providing a clearer appreciation of the radical nature of Lear’s

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³⁷ Incidentally, in the poll conducted by Edward Salmon’s *Juvenile Literature As it Is*, Lewis Carroll did not figure in the list of favourite authors for boys.
Nonsense works and Carroll’s *Alice* texts, in terms of their attitudes to the female child, and their non-gender-specific appeal.

The adventure novels of the nineteenth century owed much to the development of the Historical Novel by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). Historical adventures were stories set in a time before the author’s lifetime, usually with one or more characters who had really lived in that period, and often with references to facts and dates or events in history, to lend authenticity to the tale. America’s Walter Scott was James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851), who is most famous for his *Leather Stocking Tales* – a series of five novels, set on the American Frontier between 1740 and 1804. The most popular of the books *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), is set during the war of 1757 against the French. Cooper was influential in changing the image of American Indians from bloodthirsty savages to stoical, sagacious and humane peoples. This image, unfortunately, has turned into a stereotype which can still be seen in contemporary portrayals of American Indians in the U.S. media.

Historical adventure stories developed largely through the influence of the works of Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849) and the Gothic novels (macabre tales set in eerie castles, ruins etc.) of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Maria Edgeworth’s *Castle Rackrent* (1800) may be regarded as the first fully developed historical novel in English. The novel narrates, through the character of Thady Quirk, the lives of the members of three generations of the Rackrent family, to whom Quirk remains a faithful steward from beginning to end. Sir Walter Scott wrote prolifically, but only two of his historical romances, *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *Rob Roy* (1817) remain in the popular imagination. *Rob Roy* is set in the early years of eighteenth-century England, just before the Jacobite Rising of 1715. One of the heroes of the novel is *Rob Roy* McGregor, a Scotsman, based on the true historical character of the same name, who helps, in the novel, to defeat the evil Raleigh. Scott uses a similar technique in *Ivanhoe*, which became a very popular children’s classic. In *Ivanhoe*, Robin
Hood (of Locksley) and King Richard I himself, help to win the castle of the Norman Sir Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. It is a novel of jousts and combats, fulfilled and unrequited loves, wars and political intrigues. All of these are still famous themes for children and young adolescents in the West and recurrent themes of Hollywood films.

In France, something similar was being done by Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870), whose reputation rests chiefly on historical novels like *The Three Musketeers* (*Les Trois Mousquetaires*) and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (*Le Comte de Monte Cristo*) both published in 1844–45. Dumas wrote in France, but his romances were quickly translated and brought to England and are still quite popular today. *The Three Musketeers* is a historical romance set in the seventeenth century, and concerns the adventures of the Gascon d’Artagnan who joins the Musketeers during the rule of Louis XIII. He shares his adventures with the three Musketeers, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. Their duels, bravery, and wars reflect a staunch monarchism and are still favourites with children who find the swordplay and action exciting.

These historical romances dwindled into the jingoistic writings of Ballantyne and G. A. Henty (1832–1902), full of manly characters and didactic influences. In contrast to Ballantyne’s wide variety of plots and skill in narrative, Henty’s works were repetitive in content and structure. Most of his books have as hero, a boy of fifteen or sixteen (or sometimes a pair of brothers) unusually well-endowed in physique, manly skills, good hearts, and hot heads. Then, there occurs a great historical movement, an insurrection, or a war that engulfs the boy, and the lad, who starts off with boyish enthusiasm, matures into a responsible adult, ready to fight dangers and take on responsibilities. Henty’s works are full of class, gender and racial stereotypes. His most successful novels at the time were *With Clive in India* (1884), *Beric the Briton* (1893), *The Young Burglars* (1880) and *Under Drake’s Flag* (1883).
R. M. Ballantyne and W.H.G. Kingston (1814–1840) introduced into boys’ adventures the theme of the young Englishman who enters the wild after a comfortable life in civilization and comes back toughened by his experiences. Ballantyne wrote several adventure stories and 80 novels, of which the most well-known are *Coral Island* (1857), *The Gorilla Hunters* (1862) and *Black Ivory* (1873). William H.G. Kingston was an extremely prolific and successful writer of stories for boys, covering adventures on all continents, at sea, in history, at school, and elsewhere. His best known works are *Peter the Whaler* (1851) and *The Three Midshipmen* (1873), both about young teenage boys who go out to sea and after several adventures in foreign lands, return to England.

Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856–1925) extended this form’s success with his two most famous novels: *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887). *King Solomon’s Mines* is an adventure story from the first page to the last. It deals with the search for the younger brother of one Sir Henry Curtis (in South Africa) which leads Curtis and his friends to look for the legendary King Solomon’s Mines supposed to contain great treasures. In the quest, they pass through a desert, mountains, and forests; they encounter “Kukuana tribals” and a witch named “Gagool”. They finally return to England with enough treasure to make themselves rich. *She* was another sensational success. It was a tale about a 2,000-year-old queen called *Ayesha*, who had been preserved from death. This exotic fantasy was the precursor of several stories and novels that were based in the African jungles, taking advantage of the lack of awareness of African geography and cultures, and stretching possibilities to the limit.

Another path breaking jungle story was the tale of Mowgli (1894) – a part of the two volumes of short stories by Rudyard Kipling, called *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895). These stories are mostly set in India and concern animals and their interactions with Mowgli, a boy who was raised by wolves. These nineteenth-century stories of the wild were inspirations for, and culminated in, the character of *Tarzan* (1914 onwards) by Edgar
Rice Burroughs. *Tarzan* was the adult avatar of Mowgli, whose popularity extended to several Hollywood movies and American comic strips until the second half of the twentieth century.

No history of the adventure novel would be complete without a mention of Captain Frederick Marryat (1792–1848), the author of some of the most enjoyable nineteenth-century adventure stories like *Peter Simple* (1834), *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836), *Masterman Ready* (1841) and *The Children of the New Forest* (1847). Marryat was quite the adventurer himself, having served at sea from 1805 to 1820, and having participated in innumerable combats with the French and others. He was, in fact, the first writer of adventure stories who drew on personal experience as material for his novels. *Peter Simple*, for instance, is the tale of Peter, considered the dunce of his family, who proves himself at sea and eventually inherits a title. Similarly, *Mr. Midshipman Easy* is the story of Jack Easy, the son of a rich man, who goes to sea and has many exciting adventures. Both these novels, however, were written for a general readership, but became quite popular with children. Marryat decided to write specially for children, with *Masterman Ready*, which is a *Swiss-Family-Robinson* sort of version of *Robinson Crusoe*. The Seagrave family are stranded on an island with no one to help them but a weather-beaten old seaman, Masterman Ready; the Masterman dies at the end of the novel which is a pious and didactic one, unlike the former two novels which are full of oaths, swashbuckling encounters and even a matter-of-fact conversation about an illegitimate child (in *Mr. Midshipman Easy*).

However, the novelist who took the adventure novel to its peak was Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), with his novels *Treasure Island* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886), and *The Black Arrow* (1888). *The Black Arrow*, which was a historical adventure for boys, was set in the time of the Wars of the Roses. *Kidnapped* is a story of the Jacobite Rebellion; *Treasure Island* is set in the mid-eighteenth century and is a sea adventure inspired by the works of
Kingston and Ballantyne. *Treasure Island* was responsible for bringing together existing elements in boys' adventures to create the precursor of all pirate characters: *Long John Silver.* The narrator is young Jim Hawkins, who secures a map that shows the whereabouts of the treasure of Captain Flint. Jim and his companions and a marooned pirate, Ben Gunn, find the treasure after thwarting the attempts of the pirate Long John Silver to seize their ship and kill the party. The conniving Long John Silver is a charismatic and admirable figure. He is the real hero of the novel, with Jim Hawkins merely playing the role of an observer. It is perhaps for this reason that *Treasure Island* has maintained its popularity more with adults than children and it is “adult favour that has kept it very much alive” (Carpenter 543). These adventure stories led to the Moral Tale – both as a reaction and as a consequence. Moral tales were usually modern *fables* which usually ended with some advice or adage, that had already been justified in the tale itself. One such tale was Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies,* published in 1863 – two years before Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.* *The Water Babies* is a tale of fantasy (as is clear in its subtitle-*A Fairy Tale for a Land Baby*), but full of moral instruction. However, it will always be remembered as the first fantasy by an English author to become a children’s classic. Names like Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid and Mrs. Doadyoudwoudbedoneyby are clearly allegorical and reminiscent of *The Pilgrim’s Progress.* Tom’s journey to the “other-end-of-nowhere” to rescue Grimes, and his return home (i.e. heaven), may be viewed as another kind of pilgrimage. The water acts as a kind of purgatory for Tom, who, finally rid of all negative qualities like selfishness, can begin to visit heaven – the ultimate destination. The book had a social purpose as well, and its didacticism was not wasted as it led to a law against employing children as chimney sweeps within a year of its publication.

Girls’ stories have their own share of pioneering classics. The best known are the American novels: *Little Women* (1868), in four parts, by Louisa May Alcott (1832–88) and
the *Katy* novels by Susan Coolidge, a pseudonym of Sarah Chauncey Woolsey (1845–1905). *Little Women* describes a few months in the lives of the March sisters. Sixteen-year-old Meg is the belle of the family, very pretty and rather vain. Beth, who is thirteen, is very quiet and shy, but plays the piano excellently; twelve-year-old Amy (who draws very well) is still at school, but regards herself as “a most important person”. It is the character of fifteen-year-old Jo, however, which really marks the book. She is tall, thin, coltish and unfeminine. It is interesting to note that Jo is the alter-ego of the author herself, while the other characters of the March family are quite obviously based on the members of her real family. She herself confessed, in a journal entry, that she “never like(d) girls or knew many, except my sisters” (qtd. in Carpenter 321). *Little Women* is particularly outstanding for its portrayal of the tensions and delights of family life. But while it has its share of girlish fun, it is not entirely devoid of preaching. Several references are made to *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, as the sisters attempt to make themselves better girls.

Susan Coolidge’s *What Katy Did* (1872) is the story of Katy Carr, who lives in a small American town. It is a story of her moral and spiritual education. However, she is taught lessons which are somewhat too idealistic to be real. Louisa Alcott was averse to the stereotypical mindset towards women/girls and was herself quite a rebel in her views. She once wrote: “Girls write to ask who the little women marry, as if that was the only end and aim of a woman’s life. I won’t marry Jo to Laurie to please anyone” (qtd. in Sicherman 21). While Jo, in *Little Women* is an accepted equal of the sisters, Katy is shown to be unfeminine and unladylike and has to undergo “pain” to realize that her only true calling in life is to sacrifice, forget her own wishes and dreams, and be jovial and lively for the sake of the whole family.

Both novels had sequels. The sequel to *Little Women* was published in 1869 and was called *Little Women*, Part II in America, while in England it appeared under many names, but
finally, under the title *Good Wives* – a title which appears to stand in stark contrast to Alcott’s intentions. Susan Coolidge’s novel was followed by two sequels: *What Katy Did at School* (1873) and *What Katy Did Next* (1873). The sequels end in the “happily ever after” vein, with marriage. In *Little Women, Part II*, Meg marries John Brooke, Amy marries Laurie, Beth passes away, and Jo marries Professor Bhaer. In *What Katy Did Next*, Katy’s story concludes with her attachment to a young American naval officer. These novels, for the first time, addressed girls directly and were the first realistic representations of the conflicts, dreams, joys and sorrows of the adolescent female child, and will be surely remembered for this. But, at the same time, they presented women mainly as patriarchal preconceptions wished to see them. Women are shown to be perfectly and blissfully happy in domestic chores and as the self sacrificing members of the family which they help to keep free from discord or misfortune.

The stark difference between boys’ stories and girls’ stories has several obvious implications. They define – or repeat in narrative – what boys are and what girls are. “Girlish” boys are to be banged into manly shape in the public schools and “boyish” girls are the bane of their families and have to undergo a change of nature through moral and spiritual development. Being aimed at juvenile readers, these spoke for socially imposed gender characteristics; being aimed at teenage readers, they wielded great power and influenced generations of youngsters who, while undergoing biological changes, were being instructed, subtly, as to their future social roles. The fairy stories of old were not without their stereotypes but they also had female characters like Goldilocks (who went to play in a forest) or Little Red Riding Hood (who was sent by her mother into a wood). The magazines of the nineteenth century, and novels such as the above, established and perpetuated a distinction between girl-behaviour and boy-behaviour, which was less stark than the fairy stories.
In Britain the Girls' Story began to establish itself as a popular genre in the 1880s. The girls' school story was virtually created by L.T. Meade (1854–1914). Elizabeth (Lillie) Thomasina Meade wrote more than 300 books under the pseudonym L. T. Meade. However, neither Meade, nor other writers of girls’ stories gave any real support to the movement for female emancipation which was a burning topic of the time. Higher education and even earning an income were preludes to married domesticity for all the girl characters in their stories. Besides, there was an unwritten law that prohibited the portrayal of any romantic love between the sexes in such stories. Where romantic content was debarred, adventure (for boys) and domesticity (for girls) stepped in. These stories merely reflected the fact that the future of bourgeois girls and boys was fixed and taken for granted in the Victorian Age:

Many middle-class Victorian children, particularly boys, shared their parents’ interests in the Empire, expecting to work there when they left school, in commerce, the armed forces or as public servants. (Girls would expect to become the loyal companions and helpmates of their husbands according to the conventions of the age, of course). (Butts 342)

The first break from the prim-and-proper young ladies of girls’ stories was the work of the British author, Angela Brazil. Angela Brazil’s (1869 – 1947) stories were about a “racy, healthy, hearty, well-grown set of twentieth century schoolgirls” (Sage 274) and the dialogue was characterized by the slang that pervaded the language of contemporary schoolgirls. This process continued till the period between the two wars, when girls’ magazines like The School Friend (1919–40), with the Bessie Bunter stories made their appearance. In the 1930s, the Pony Story and the Career Novel appeared. The pony story was a descendant of Black Beauty (1877), and usually described how the heroine, usually a tomboy on the verge of adolescence, who dresses in a shirt, shorts and sandshoes, acquires a broken down pony but
rejuvenates it with loving care. The career novels dealt with women working, or succeeding in sports, nursing, the film industry, etc., but were actually masks for romantic stories.

The boys’ and girls’ magazines ran on their saleability and faded away by the latter half of the twentieth century, when more discerning attitudes had developed and stereotypes were being questioned vehemently. As the sales dipped, the stories faded.

Overview

This brief outline of the development of Children’s Literature is in several ways an injustice to the wealth and depth of material that has been offered to children over the past two centuries. Yet, from this historical overview certain facts emerge: (a) that literature for children has changed in form and content with corresponding political and social changes, (b) that Children’s Literature (like any other form of literature) has, thus, inevitably incorporated the prevalent preferences and biases, likes and dislikes, and ideologies of the time in which each work has been written, and (c) that many of these pernicious elements have been quite eliminated by the end of the twentieth century, and replaced by other elements which foster a more progressive outlook to the world and its inhabitants — although there still is much room for change. One particular branch of children’s literature, however, seems to have managed to purge itself of all prejudice from its inception: the genre of Nonsense.

This dissertation focuses on the works of the Victorian writers Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. I am, therefore, compelled to terminate my historical review of Children’s Literature here. The purpose of this chapter has been to show the radical nature of the Carroll’s and Lear’s works — to throw into relief Nonsense literature by juxtaposing it with contemporary

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38 Children’s Literature has reached its zenith with the exponential spread of literacy in the twentieth century and the works of immensely popular authors like Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl and J. K. Rowling. Unfortunately, a study of these exceptional authors is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
trends in writing during the Victorian Age. In an age when stereotypes were the norm – both in society as well as literature – it is remarkable that Carroll wrote an *adventure* novel about a *female* (not just one novel but two). In an age when jingoism, didacticism and protocol were customary, it is significant that Lear wrote poems and stories with *absolutely no* nationalistic overtones (or undertones, for that matter), about characters that broke all rules of propriety and represented *no gender stereotypes* whatsoever. A study of this revolutionary genre – its nature, cause and development – follows in the next chapter.