

Thompson and Amy Lissiat mocks consumerist society, which is visible in the quote from the picturebook that caught our attention: “People want microwave-video-dvd-sms-internet-big-car-cost-more-than-yours [...] electronic-gigabyte-fastest- [...] machines”, which, according to Allan, “suggests the haste and excessive desires that characterize the urgency to consume” (166). In *The Empty City* (by Davis Meggarity and Jonathon Oxlade) and *In the City: Our Scrapbook of Souvenirs* (by Roland Harvey), readers are drawn into globalized cities where there is a proliferation of choice, while personal interactions with people are minimal, and the notions of time and space are deconstructed. In focus picturebooks, there are clear hints of nostalgia for the simplicity and innocence of the past.

This is one of the paradoxes of postmodern picturebooks, as Allan states in the conclusion. On the one hand, they resist conventional approaches, and, on the other, they adopt them readily. The conclusion of the book offers observations instead of drawing a definitive conclusion, in the manner of the genre which the book examines. The author predicts a bright future for the genre of picturebook, and, after reading this book, we could not agree more. This genre is more exciting today than ever before; it appeals to readers of all ages and offers many possibilities to engage with the texts.

Although the book is written in a strictly scholarly manner and uses sophisticated theoretical concepts, which can make it slightly difficult to understand for students and the general reader, it can still encourage such an audience to maintain its interest in children’s literature and picturebooks, as it reveals how complex and exciting they are. Besides, it can trigger interest in those on their verge of entering the realm of theory as novice researchers in pursuing picturebook research and in further exploring various aspects of postmodernism. From the point of view of picturebook scholarship, this book gives a fresh and inspiring perspective on contemporary picturebooks, which will certainly need to be taken into account in future studies in the field.

*Mateja Latin and Dina Alexandra Pavković*

## Robinson as Children’s Reading

**Andrew O’Malley. 2012. *Children’s Literature, Popular Culture, and Robinson Crusoe*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, xii + 195 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-27270-5**

Launching the series *Critical Approaches to Children’s Literature*, the Australian editors Kerry Mallan and Clare Bradford focus on “new and developing areas of children’s literature research as well as [on] bringing contemporary perspectives to historical texts”. Andrew O’Malley’s latest book dealing with historical reasons for which “*Robinson Crusoe* has featured most prominently and circulated most widely” (3) in the fields of children’s literature and popular culture certainly sheds new light on this classic work.

The book contains an introduction and five chapters (i.e. 158 pages of main text and 40 pages of notes and an index). Although it may seem that others have already said all that needs to be said about *Robinson Crusoe*, O’Malley’s particularly interesting and well argued study brings a fresh perspective to *Robinson* and gives it new impetus.

In the introduction, the author sets the framework for his study, drawing on research of the construction of modern childhood presented in his previous book *The Making of the Modern Child* (2003): in the late eighteenth-century England, elite culture defined itself in opposition to both popular culture and children's culture. The elite and the lettered started to view common people as foreign and exotic and at the same time saw children as different from themselves, as those that had to be "better understood in order to be better managed" (5). Since *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is imbued with and deeply marked by the culture both of children and the common people, O'Malley's choice of the novel as the subject of a case study to analyze how these two spheres of culture were formed and how they defined one another comes as no surprise.

The first chapter examines the ways in which *Robinson*, though written for adults, became a canonical work of children's literature. According to O'Malley, one of the reasons lies in the fact that *Robinson* corresponds to the pedagogical practices of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as they were explicitly presented in Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) and Rousseau's *Emil* (1762). Owing to the congruity between *Robinson's* theme and the aims of concurrent pedagogical practices, the book was widely present in contemporary children's literature, tailored to conform to the pedagogical principles of the time. O'Malley discusses the dominant pedagogical belief that children learn most effectively by example and emulation rather than by learning dry texts by heart. *Robinson Crusoe* was perfectly aligned with the educational principles promoting learning through direct experience, role-playing or learning through dialogues in which children would discover natural and moral truths by themselves. Comparing three adaptations of Defoe's text, *The New Robinson Crusoe* (orig. 1779) by Joachim Campe, *The Children's Island* (1800) by Madame de Genlis and *The Young Crusoe* (1829) by Barbara Hofland, the author points out the exact places where they depart from the original and thus elucidates the delicate points in Defoe's text that had to be modified in order for the story about Robinson to be turned into successful didactic reading. The main *aporia* in the approach to *Robinson Crusoe* is how to reconcile the text that inspires children to run away from authority and seek self-realization with the need to supervise and educate them. O'Malley's study will be particularly interesting for Croatian readers as it provides information about Campe's version of *Robinson Crusoe* that significantly contributed to the development of Croatian children's literature. Antun Vranić, who translated Campe's *Robinson* into the kaikavian dialect in 1796, hastened to emphasize in the preface the value of "pelda" (learning by example) as a didactic principle, thus confirming O'Malley's assertion about the links between pedagogy and the story of Robinson, links that were preserved in the Croatian translation as well.

The second chapter is dedicated to an analysis of robinsonades and abridged children's editions of *Robinson Crusoe*. The examination of the surrounding body of literature stemming from Defoe's original text enables us to analyze *Robinson Crusoe* not only within the post-colonial framework that considers it a paradigmatic colonial or a "profoundly masculinist" text, but also to perceive its "feminized register of the domestic story" (53) in addition to the obvious adventurous aspect of the story. As O'Malley puts it, the "stay on the island represents the *domestic* rather than the mercantile aspect of bourgeoisie life" (53). In the early nineteenth century, virtue was moved from the public sphere to the domestic

sphere, and the home became the basis that made it possible to expand colonization and to impose virtue on the Other, the uncivilized.

In the third chapter, O'Malley examines adaptations of the story about Robinson in chapbook versions. Contrary to theoretical studies that look at chapbook versions as impoverished and reduced narratives of Defoe's original work, O'Malley suggests that we approach them as narratives that correspond precisely to the needs and expectations of their readership. Well-read elite readers identified with the singular experience of the hero, his efforts to survive and his middle-class values of acquisition and accumulation. On the other hand, in often considerably distorted versions of narratives typical of chapbooks, plebeian readers found elements close to the narrow repertoire of themes present in other contemporary chapbook editions and focused mainly on the hero's finding a way out of his predicament by relying exclusively on good fortune and not on hard work and religious devotion. Such adapted chapbook versions found their way to children very easily, which made them potentially subversive. The undesirable link between children's readership and the chapbook is amusingly illustrated by O'Malley's account of the trajectory that a popular poem about Robinson Crusoe took from its first versions in chapbooks to its place in the nursery rhymes repertoire. To conclude, two ways in which *Robinson Crusoe* reached children are sketched: one is through didactic practices in the eighteenth century, and the other one, less controlled and less desirable, is through often dubious (from the viewpoint of the upper classes) versions in chapbooks.

In the fourth chapter, O'Malley analyzes theatre performances of *Robinson Crusoe* from the first pantomime in 1781 to today's Christmas pantos. In their beginning, these pantomimes were performed after the evening's main drama or comedy and consisted of two acts: the first act sought to depict faithfully the principal events in the story and the second consisted of a harlequinade. In *Robinson Crusoe* pantomimes, Friday becomes Harlequin and seduces Columbine. The second act is actually a parody of the first, more serious, act. Common people and children were irresistibly attracted to the world of harlequinades where everything is possible, where the authority of a serious narrative depicted in the first act is easily destroyed by a single motion of Harlequin's magic wand. The definitive taming of irreverent elements of harlequinades and their transformation into a version more suitable for children was completed with the passing of the *Theatrical Licensing Act* in 1848, when pantomimes were limited to the Christmas season. Therefore, at the start of the Victorian era, the celebration of Christmas underwent a transformation from less desirable holiday-season customs (excessive alcohol consumption, street festivities) into a holiday of the home and family in line with middle-class values. In these Christmas pantomimes of Robinson Crusoe, the hero's fate was "determined by the whims of fairies and elves rather than by his own choices, actions, and faith" (117). In sum, this chapter provides an account of how *Robinson Crusoe*, corresponding with and participating in social changes, underwent modifications and transformations that spilt over into the areas of popular culture and children's culture.

The fifth chapter examines the presence of the main protagonists of *Robinson Crusoe* in today's consumer culture, where they are displayed in various goods ranging from souvenirs and plates to computer games. O'Malley examines what kind of notions the selling of goods with Robinson's name attempts to create in the consumer's mind. "While

the appearance of Crusoe on toys [...] enacts the logic of adult perceptions of childhood, it must be remembered that toys are more than a site on which adults project nostalgic longings for lost childhood” (151). While they can control the production of toys, adults cannot have complete control over children’s play and the ways in which these toys are used in play (very often in ways not desired by adult authority).

While reading O’Malley’s book, I kept recalling a paragraph from the novel *Poletarci* [Fledgelings], written by a Croatian children’s author Josip Pavičić in 1937. The grandmother talks about her grandson Ilijica and the events that occurred prior to the Great War:

“Once – in an evil moment – he brought some book from his teacher, full of bits and pieces about faraway lands and wild people: a storm battered a ship at sea and all the crew got drowned but for one of them, who somehow managed to survive and came to that wild land and lived there in all manner of ways... My little one read it every day anew, he had read it, I guess, fifty times – I could see that the book did harm: the child would sleep like a log, but when he got dazzled by the book, he started to toss and turn and sigh until a small hour, and when he would finally fall asleep he would talk and yell in sleep. I grabbed the damned book and took it to the teacher, but it was too late: the poison remained in his blood and he was thinking only of how to go to faraway, wild lands when he grew up. And, you see, he grew up and left...”

A little later in the same monologue:

“The teacher told me that the book was written many years ago, and that the man who wrote it died long ago. And you see: the man died but the book remained, went over the world – and even after so many years its evil power was in place...”

*Robinson* talks about a desire to leave one’s own country and set off for remote lands. In the Croatian case this has a paradoxical twist: Robinson’s adventures have inspired young readers to satisfy their desire for unknown faraway countries. However, in the Croatian context, seeking to satisfy their desire for faraway places, many young lads, just like Ilijica, ended up in the black holes of mines across the ordered world from which Robinson fled.

Reading O’Malley’s attention-grabbing study, Croatian readers will inevitably be inspired to pursue the issues related to their reading experience, informed by the reception of *Robinson Crusoe* in our culture. The story about Robinson reached Croatian culture via the German transfers of J. H. Campe (in the late 18th century) and O. L. Heubner (in the 19th century). The first abridged versions of Defoe’s text in translation were published in the 1920s, when also the first picture books about Robinson appeared. The first longer edition of the book, considerably censored as all the parts of the text containing religious motifs were left out, was published in the series called *Pionirska knjižnica* [Pioneer Library] in 1954. Heavily censored and ideologically coloured, this edition was, apart from abridged versions, the only existing version up to the 2000s, when the first integral translations of *Robinson* into Croatian saw the light of day.

As O’Malley’s book approaches *Robinson Crusoe* through its secondary forms, such as pedagogical adaptations, adaptations for children, chapbook versions, theatre performances and its presence in consumer culture, it will probably inspire Croatian researchers of children’s literature to explore a particular secondary form that is characteristic of *Robinson’s* presence in Croatian culture. In Croatian literature, the ‘Robinsonian theme’ was present before the arrival of *Robinson*, and, even after, its appearance continued to

enjoy more popularity than *Robinson* itself. For example, the story of *Genoveve* exploits the Robinsonian theme in that its heroine leads a solitary life in the wilderness, physically isolated from other people. *Genoveve* was staged in Croatia as early as 1732, while Campe's *Robinson* was first published in Croatian in 1796. For another century, *Genoveve*, translated into Croatian from the German version by Christoph Schmidt, published in 1846, remained the most popular children's book in Croatia.

*Genoveve* had circulated in France since the mid-seventeenth century, and was extremely popular in the Netherlands and Germany. The theme of the hero's physical isolation from other human beings is present (most probably not only in Croatian literature) in a number of narratives, in some of them amalgamated with another, dominant theme. This prompts us to ask: can we look at robinsonades as much more than literary texts that derive directly from Defoe's text? Can we look at Defoe's text as an offshoot of the ancient theme that has intrigued writers' imagination since ancient times? If so, then the investigation of the circumstance of the popularity of Defoe's work must take into consideration the literary context and the pre-existing interest in this theme among the readership, which was aroused by a number of treatments of this theme prior to Defoe's. The factor of the preparedness of the readership should not be ignored if the pictures we expect to gain are to be satisfying.

This fundamental theme of children's literature has inspired sustained interest among Croatian researchers. Vladoje Dukat, Milan Crnković, Tihomir Engler and others with their studies on the wider context of *Robinson Crusoe*'s presence in Croatia have contributed to the exploration of the beginnings of children's literature in Croatia. O'Malley's book will certainly inspire Croatian researchers to pursue further such research.

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## Brand New Critical Essays on Harry Potter

**Cynthia J. Hallett & Peggy J. Huey, ed. 2012. *J.K. Rowling: Harry Potter*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. xii+206 pp. ISBN 987-0-230-00850-2**

The *New Casebook* series is published with the specific goal of providing readers, primarily students, with fresh thinking about already familiar and widely discussed texts and writers, in addition to encouraging them to extend their original ideas and responses to literary texts. In one of the recent books, Cynthia J. Hallett and Peggy J. Huey gathered thirteen "brand new essays" in order to provide insight into "the complete *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007) from a variety of critical angles and approaches" as the blurb on the back cover says.

Catching readers' attention just with their intriguing titles, each of the chapters provides new ways of reading the *Harry Potter* books on different levels. The issues of coming of age, race and gender, food, medicine, queer theory and occult elements, love and extratextual afterlife are eagerly discussed by the respective authors. The diversity of the topics and the diverse approaches to them within *Harry Potter*'s world are primarily due to the broad range of expertise of the contributors, ranging from teachers, university