

rather than enlighten, there are definitely gems in this collection which are a valuable contribution to scholarship on the Spanish Civil War.

Vjeran Pavlaković

Social Inequality in Children's Books

Angela E. Hubler, ed. 2014. *Little Red Readings: Historical Materialist Perspectives on Children's Literature*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi. 304 pp. ISBN 978-1-61703-987-4

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Children's literature is not only not immune to traditional norms and customs of literary creation, promotion and reception, but it is at times – due to pressures from a typically white, middle-class readership – even more rigid and traditional than the mainstream. Publishers tend to produce only books that will make a profit, while editors often guide authors to devise plots and characters that correspond with common notions of a white urban readership and promote the capitalist social system and its values. Children's books are merchandise which is bought and sold, and as such cannot exist without the middle (and upper) class that purchases it. This fact, as individual authors included in the edited volume under review claim, is often neglected by literary scholars.

Volume editor Angela E. Hubler has therefore brought together thirteen contributions which examine individual aspects and themes that appear (or should appear) in children's literature through the lens of Marxist theory, with special emphasis on representations of social inequalities (in the sense of materialism, race, class or gender) and their (inter) relations with the dominant capitalist social system.

In the introductory piece, the editor provides an overview of possible approaches to children's literature from the point of view of historical materialism, with special focus on issues of ideology, idealism, feminism and forming the canon, which undermines the possibility of readers' resistance and social action.

In "Class/ic Aggression in Children's Literature", Mervyn Nicholson examines the position of children within contemporary capitalist society: on the one hand, children are perceived as "property", while, on the other hand, capitalism is "inherently hostile towards children" (3). Class relations in children's literature mirror typical capitalist relations in which those who work are seen as less worthy than those who manage.

In "Shopping Like It's 1899", Anastasia Ulanowicz discusses the series of books *Gossip Girl* (which also inspired the popular TV series of the same name) as a platform for promoting various products which the characters on the show use. In the series, the plot, the psychological development of the characters or social agendas are nowhere near as important as promoting consumerism.

In "Precious Medals", Carl F. Miller provides an overview of books which won various prestigious awards and analyses their relationship to different social problems and class (and other) inequalities.

Mary Poppins is the topic of Sharon Smulders' "We Are All One". The author examines the roots of the novel in old Irish folklore and Eastern philosophies and mysticism, which serve to subvert the dominant social structures and hierarchies of pre-war Britain.

In her contribution titled “Solidarity of Times Past”, Cynthia Anne McLeod analyses several novels which deal with child labour and its relationship with unionisation during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th-century. While contemporary novels portray union leaders as bullies bent on intimidation, earlier novels present them as victims of repression.

Poverty as an aesthetic symbol in the picturebooks of Eva Bunting is the topic of Daniel D. Hade and Heidi M. Brush’s “The Disorders of Its Own Identity”. According to the authors, E. Bunting’s message is inherently conservative and relies on passive techniques such as hope and faith in providence as a means of escape from poverty and repression, while simultaneously discouraging the reader from any form of rebellion or immediate social action.

In “The Young Socialist”, Jane Rosen analyses the journal of the same name, published between 1901 and 1926, that is, until the crucial change within the British radical movement following the failed general strike. The development of the social movement towards the end of the 19th century prompted reflection on the education of working class children with the aim of creating obedient workers, while socialist leaders tried to develop schools, courses and publications that would provide children with alternative modes of education.

In “Girls’ Literature by German Writers in Exile (1933–1945)” Jana Mikota discusses authors who fled abroad after the Nazi government rose to power in Germany in 1933 and contributed through their work to the battle against Fascism, or to the pacifist movement. Mikota focuses especially on literature aimed at girls and on determining whether or not these works succeeded in their attempt to uncover the foundations of the Nazi regime.

Naomi Wood’s “Different Tales and Different Lives” is concerned with children’s literature as a form of political activism in the Indian federal state of Andhra Pradesh. The author highlights the need to re-examine individual routine modes of thinking, such as the notion that school is always a better and more appropriate environment for children than a working place (regardless of what that working place is actually like), since work does not necessarily deprive children of their rights.

“A Multicultural History of Children’s Films” is an article in which Ian Wojcik-Andrews attempts to define the multicultural children’s film and provides an overview of existing theoretical bases of this aspect of production for children. The author analyses individual films (from as far apart as 1919 and 2010) from the perspectives of Marxist and postcolonial literary theory.

In “Bloodthirsty Little Brats; or, The Child’s Desire for Biblical Violence”, Roland Boer reflects on the fact that out of all the stories in the Bible, children are most attracted to those which are bloodthirsty and full of violence. The author does not consider children to be either essentially evil or angels, nor does he perceive them as *tabulae rasae* onto which anyone can write their own view of the world. Further, the author claims that, in themselves, these texts are not a call to action, nor do they make readers insensitive to violence.

Utopian and anti-utopian books for children are the topic of “Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Lois Lowry’s and Suzanne Collins’s Dystopian Fiction” by Angela E. Hubler. The aforementioned books are primarily the result of a Cold-War world division and the provocation of fear of collectivism. Such works promote the values of individualism and freedom. The author analyses the works of two authors (Suzanne Collins and Lois Lowry) from the perspective of Marxist materialism and concludes that while both of them create

anti-utopian worlds, the books of L. Lowry remain essentially anti-utopian as they do not predict the possibility of change, while those of S. Collins offer readers hope that the collective action of ordinary people can create a better society.

In the volume's final contribution, "Ursula Le Guin's Powers as Radical Fantasy", Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak analyses the third novel in U. Le Guin's series *The Annals of the Western Shore* (2004–2007), viewing it as a representative of so-called radical fantasy. The author concludes that even though radical fantasy need not be any more subversive than other cultural forms, it can still enable young readers to oppose contemporary forms of domination and exploitation through radical political subjectivity.

The fourteen contributions (including the introduction) presented above use new approaches to the problem of social inequality to pose important questions about the nature and purpose of children's and young adult literature, as well as the possibilities of resistance to both the commercialisation of literature, and traditional and routine modes of thinking. The volume is therefore a valuable contribution to literary theory which may prompt readers to re-examine their own attitudes, or direct them towards literary and theoretical orientations and works which they have previously ignored or found to be insufficiently worthy of their attention.

Krunoslav Mikulan (translated by Nada Kujundžić)

From Plaything to Player

Virginie Iché. 2015. *L'esthétique du jeu dans les Alice de Lewis Carroll*. Paris: L'Harmattan. 260 pp. ISBN 978-2-343-07927-1

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Virginie Iché rightly starts her study of play in the works of Lewis Carroll (Aesthetics of Play in Lewis Carroll's *Alices*) from Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's fascination for games and playing as evidenced by his life and especially his literary work. To Carroll, everything could be a stimulus for play: objects, but also words, phrases and letters, as long as you "learn to look at all things / with a sort of mental squint" (Carroll, L. *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems*, 1869). In her book, Iché examines the function of play in Carroll's *Alice* stories and the role the reader can have.

The first part of the book is dedicated to play as a structural element in the *Alice* stories. In order to get a grip on the concept of play, Iché relies on ground-breaking scholars in the field of play studies, especially Émile Benveniste, Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois. All three view game as an activity that is at the same time characterised by freedom and by rules. In Iché's approach to play, the concept of *légaliberté* (borrowed from Colas Duflo) plays a central role, emphasising the overlap between freedom and restriction or guidance. Further on, she elaborates on the concepts of *paideia* and *ludus*, coined by Caillois, as poles between which the game is played: on the one hand the need for clear rules and on the other for playfulness, creativity and improvisation. The tension between these two runs like a thread through Iché's study, making it coherent and clearly focused.

In the first chapter of part one, Iché tries to give a complete overview of all the games, toys and objects of play in Carroll's classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through*