

## Space, Place, Power and Play

**Maria Sachiko Cecire, Hannah Field, Kavita Mudan Finn and Malini Roy, eds. 2015. *Space and Place in Children's Literature, 1789 to the Present*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 250 pp. ISBN 978-1-4724-2054-1**

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The latest addition to the “Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present” series, the edited collection *Space and Place in Children's Literature, 1789 to the Present*, originated from a conference on place and space in children's literature held at Oxford University in 2009. As suggested by the title, the ten chapters that make up this thought-provoking volume study the intricate relationship between space/place and children's literature, by examining a series of case studies from different countries and socio-historical frames, ranging from established classics such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911) to contemporary books which (being unavailable in English translation) remain virtually unknown outside their country of origin. In addition to the usual scholarly front/back matter, such as notes on contributors and an index, the volume includes an introduction – penned by editors Maria Sachiko Cecire, Hannah Field, Kavita Mudan Finn and Malini Roy – and an epilogue by Philip Pullman (the printed version of his talk delivered at Oxford in April 2009).

The underlying premise presented in the introductory piece consists of two parts: on the one hand, children's literature is filled with special (often imaginary) spaces/places accessible only to children; on the other hand, childhood itself occupies a special space, one that adults typically try to define and control. Drawing on the writings of Yi-Fu Tuan, Gaston Bachelard, Michel de Certeau and Jan Huizinga, the editors identify the interplay between space and place, especially in relation to power and play, as the central focus of the collection. They then proceed to illustrate the said interplay by examining the echoes of Oxford in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books (1865, 1871), as well as the city's representations and roles in Pullman's series *His Dark Materials* (1995–2000) and the novella *Lyra's Oxford* (2003).

Exploring the places/spaces of childhood (literal, metaphorical, psychological, etc.) and the notion of childhood as space (together with the interrelated notions of “belonging and alienation, freedom and trauma, and the tangible and the esoteric” (5)) through a variety of theoretical and disciplinary lenses (philosophy, culture and childhood studies, visual analysis and cultural geography, to name but a few), the insightful and well-researched chapters successfully establish a cross-disciplinary dialogue and draw attention to children's literature as an important area within literary studies of space/place. The chapters are organised into four thematic sections, each of which opens with a brief introduction and a concise but helpful list of select sources.

The two essays in the first thematic section, “The Spaces Between Children and Adults”, discuss the relationship between children's spaces/places and adult power. Power is the key term in the contribution by Peter Hunt, which presents the possibility of determining whether or not a book can be considered children's literature by way of examining power (im)balance and relationships between inner and outer spaces. Hunt elaborates on this model via analyses of a series of well-known (children's?) novels, such as

Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* (1908) – which, according to Hunt, lacks “empathy with a childhood state” (30) – and the highly “child-oriented” (32) *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome (1930). Aneesh Barai's chapter is concerned with critically overlooked children's literature written by Sylvia Plath. In his reading of Plath's writings, informed by the semiotic theory of Julia Kristeva, Barai pays special attention to the maternal spaces of the bedroom and kitchen.

The second section, “Real-World Places”, brings together three essays which discuss the relationship between actual, extra-literary landscapes, and their representation in children's literature. Francesca Orestano explores the portrayal and significance of Naples – simultaneously constructed as an “exotic” locale and used to address domestic concerns – in Maria Edgeworth's short story “The Little Merchants” (1800). Renata Morresi studies Chicano/a picturebooks (especially the works of Irma Pérez, Juan Felipe Herrera, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Gary Soto) dealing with cross-cultural subjects, the cultural space of Chicanism, bilingualism and hybrid borderline spaces. Elzette Steenkamp is interested in the uses of South African landscapes in Jenny Robson's futuristic YA novel *Savannah 2116 AD* (2004). The novel is further used as a platform for an ecocritical discussion of the Western understanding of childhood as having a privileged (and highly romanticised) link with nature.

The third section, “Traversing the Imaginary”, is dedicated to explorations of fantasy spaces and imaginary worlds (inevitably based on “real-world spaces”) in children's literature. Maria Sachicko Cecire argues that C.S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) “integrates medieval elements, the legacy of early modern exploration, and the imperialist adventure narratives of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (112) to create an imaginary land which, although not explicitly linked to the British Empire, “largely echoes English landscape and culture” (114). Through a close reading of Elizabeth Knox's fantasy novels *Dreamhunter* (2005) and *Dreamquake* (2007), Ruth Feingold makes a strong case for the study of the relatively unexplored postcolonial children's fantasy, which, she claims, “stands at an important crossroads of literary geography, inviting a further probing of the multiple ways that identities – both individual and national – may be formulated through a negotiation of place” (130). Margot Stafford's study of the metaphorical landscape of the 10-volume educational series *Journeys through Bookland* edited by Charles H. Sylvester reveals “conflicting desires about childhood reading and child readers” (148) during the so-called Progressive Era in the United States.

In the fourth and final section, “Book Space”, the focus shifts from spaces within books to the spaces of the books themselves, particularly their materiality and paratextual elements. Hannah Field demonstrates how Victorian children's panoramas use time and space to create narrativised movement or progression, while Catherine Renaud focuses on the interplay between image and word in the picturebooks of Claude Ponti. Relying on the concepts of the paratext (Gérard Genette) and metafictional texts (Patricia Waugh), Renaud examines Ponti's paratextual jokes and games, his representations of houses, and uses of maps and metafictional spaces.

The chapters are bookended by Pullman's richly illustrated epilogue. Brief analyses and personal reflections on select illustrations serve as the basis for a discussion on the role and importance of images in creating literary spaces, and the so-called borderline which

Pullman defines as “the space that opens up between the private mind of the reader and the book they’re reading” (216).

Taken individually, the chapters in this stimulating volume deliver engaged and comprehensive discussions, provide innovative theoretical and methodological approaches, and offer fresh insights into studying children’s books. Taken together, they advance an exciting vein of children’s literature scholarship. As the editors themselves point out, the collection is by no means meant to be exhaustive; rather, its goal is to provide a model and impetus for future research. Offering a multifaceted discussion of its subject matter, this highly readable volume manages to get a serious scholarly conversation underway and create space for other researchers to fill in the inevitable gaps. Accessible in both content and style, *Space and Place in Children’s Literature, 1789 to the Present* will primarily be of use to students and scholars of children’s literature, cultural geography, and childhood studies, but is likely to draw the attention of researchers working in other fields as well.

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## Early Years, Languages and Picturebooks

**Sandie Mourão and Mónica Lourenço, eds. 2015. *Early Years Second Language Education: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge. 240 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-70527-1**

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*Early Years Second Language Education*, edited by Sandie Mourão and Mónica Lourenço, gives an overview of research in the field of early language education. It is based on the integration of theory, research and practice and mainly explores the language learning of children who are under 6 years old, especially L2 learning. A vast number of aspects affecting language learning are discussed through the chapters, such as teacher education, policymaking, international case studies, projects, code switching and language use, as is a variety of methodologies and approaches. This allows for a critical presentation of the benefits of starting learning a second language as early as possible. A wide range of geographical and other contexts is provided since there are contributors from several countries who share their interest in language education, which makes the reading of this book a rich experience.

Underestimating the necessity of special training for teachers of young learners is highlighted as one of the misconceptions of language-related decisions and programmes. Learning any language should not be seen merely as a school subject but as a dynamic process influenced by many factors, which prompted the researchers to examine wider contexts. Some practical guidelines are given for language learning and teaching at school and at home and they mainly support learning beyond strict curriculum frameworks. Methodologies covered by the majority of the research in *Early Years Second Language Education* rely on children’s curiosity and the role of learning through all five senses. Children’s knowledge of the world encourages them to use their whole linguistic repertoire when they are engaged at different levels. The main groundwork for the researchers in this book was to focus on children and their nature, which is seen as the basis for education.