

In an amusing and penetrating bonus chapter, “Pooh, Poohing, and Other Verbal Time Bombs”, Nicholas Tucker explores the possible reasons behind the fact that the (originally unintended) scatological meaning which has become attached to Pooh’s name has not provoked attempts at modification of Milne’s text. Starting from this problem, Tucker embarks on an exploration of double entendres in the history of children’s literature, investigating works that have received revisions or alterations over their publication history, as well as those that have either ceased to be published or, as in the case of the *Pooh* books, have been preserved in their original form despite the suggestive extra meaning. Tucker’s research suggests several potential reasons behind “the persistence of genuine double entendres from the past [...] well into modern times” (207), such as hesitation on the part of editors to alienate respected authors or the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance, ultimately arguing that the most salient reason currently lies in the changing attitudes to the discussion of taboos, reflected in the modern trend of including double entendres in contemporary texts in general and speaking openly about formerly unseemly subjects (such as excrement) in children’s literature in particular.

As evident from the above outline of the chapters of *Positioning Pooh*, the volume succeeds in its aim of “present[ing] a central argument that the Pooh stories remain relevant for readers in a posthuman, information-centric, media-saturated, globalized age because of the ways in which they destabilize social certainties on all levels – linguistic, ontological, legal, narrative, political, and so on” (xii). The essays collected here will be useful to anyone interested in or performing research within any of the above fields, both inside and outside the frame of A.A. Milne’s books and children’s literature in general. For those among us who have long been absent from the Hundred Acre Wood or have even made the error of aligning ourselves with the view that these were “simplistic and datedly nostalgic” (x) stories, the publication of *Positioning Pooh* sends out an urgent invitation to reconsider, return, and observe that enchanted place through a new set of theoretical lenses.

A Bookish Feast

Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard. 2020. *Table Lands: Food in Children’s Literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 215 pp. ISBN 978-14-9682-835-4.

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Table Lands, a collection of essays on the function of food in children’s literature, brings together articles written by Kara K. Keeling and Scott T. Pollard, both from the Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia, USA. In their own words, the authors “intend *Table Lands* to be a broad survey of food’s function in children’s texts, showing how comprehending the sociocultural contexts of food reveals fundamental understandings of the child and children’s agency and enriches the interpretation of such texts” (6). And it is certainly a broad look at the subject, covering a diverse pool of authors, from classic writers such as Beatrix Potter, Maurice Sendak, and A.A. Milne to more contemporary novelists such as Francesca Lia Block and Rita Williams-Garcia. The book consists of ten chapters, each focused on a specific role played by food in children’s literature, using an

equally broad range of methodological approaches and frequently moving beyond literary criticism to employ a wider range of useful disciplines, such as refugee studies, culinary history, scholarship on cookbooks, and political history. The introductory chapter provides a useful overview of existing research on food in children's literature, while the book also comes equipped with notes and a detailed index.

The first chapter beyond the introduction, "American Children's Cookbooks as Scenes of Instruction: Tracking Historical Shifts of Work, Play, Pleasure, and Memory", traces the changes in children's cookbooks regarding children's agency, the role of children as cooks within the family, domestic ideologies, the purpose of developing cooking skills, and the process of passing on the cultural traditions of food between generations. The authors show how two earlier examples of American cookbooks published for children (Elizabeth Stansbury Kirkland's *Six Little Cooks, or, Aunt Jane's Cooking Class* [1877] and Clara Ingram Judson's *Cooking Without Mother's Help* [1920]) reinforce the idea of girlhood that involves developing cooking skills in order to serve others. This concept of a devoted homemaker as an "angel of the house" (15) was in this period closely connected to writing, as girls were encouraged to write down recipes in their own recipe books, which they would eventually pass on to their own children or young relatives. While such early examples of cookbooks for children foster the idea of a "girl child as a nascent autonomous being who has internalized women's skills and roles and then can act on them" (16), the authors illustrate how the situation changed after World War II when cookbooks for children (including those aimed at boys), which "presented more novelty food than real meals" (20), relied on convenience foods such as frozen and canned goods, and did not encourage writing down recipes. This approach largely diminished the agency of the child cook, encouraged play and egoistic pleasure instead of work, and often rested on reinforcing gender stereotypes, with the result of creating "cultural erosion of long-prized kitchen knowledge and skills" (25). On the other hand, the authors posit that certain cookbooks for children from the turn of the millennium and from the contemporary period (such as those by Mollie Katzen and Alice Waters) offer "a significant paradigm shift from the fifties' era cookbooks: a resurfacing of complexity, an increased valuation of child agency, and an ideology of fresh, sustainable, organic, healthy foods that are defined as attractive to children" (26).

In "Puddings and Pies: Meat Pastries in the Tales of Beatrix Potter", the authors identify a variety of meanings that popular British meat puddings and pies assume in such works as *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* (1908) and *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan* (1905). As the stories of Beatrix Potter frequently incorporate food preparation, cooking, and kitchen utensils and accessories, and as different types of food are seen as distinctive cultural signifiers within the Victorian and Edwardian worlds of Potter's tales, her work is here considered as a site for the exploration of social and class distinctions, conflicts, and aspirations. Having first positioned the pudding as a typically middle-class meal (although it was valued by both the upper and the lower classes in Edwardian England), the authors convincingly show how the lowly status of the rats in *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* and their failed attempt to mimic middle-class tastes by preparing a pudding using limited resources in difficult conditions reflect the difficulty of those living in extreme poverty in Potter's time

to accomplish similar culinary tasks. In other words, the pudding did not “translate down the English social scale very easily or effectively” (40). In Potter’s employment of meat pies, the authors again recognise commentary on the social world. On the one hand, pie is seen as a civilised disguise of meat consumption, which is particularly appropriate for Potter’s tales, which, although “so often stereotyped as cozy, hide their violence the way pies hide meat, wrapping the violence in the pie shell of civilized cooking” (44). On the other hand, in stories such as *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan*, Potter uses the British meal of tea, which was commonly seen as an opportunity to display abundance and strengthen bonds, but then reworks it in a way that reveals the undercurrents of social hypocrisy. By examining these two seemingly innocent examples of meat pastries, the authors show how Potter “reveals the complexities of the real world within her stories: she acknowledges the hidden violence of social relations, the less than genteel poverty of some part of the population, and the threats that the powerful exercise over those with less power” (50).

“A Little Smackerel of Something’: Food and the *Künstlerroman* in the Winnie-the-Pooh books” offers a reading of Pooh’s development as a poet as firmly linked to food and sociability. In contrast to interpretations of Pooh’s consumption as mere greed, the authors find that “food in company is frequently linked to [Pooh’s] practice and performance of poetry” (53). The chapter analyses such scenes of shared meals as Christopher Robin’s celebratory banquet for Pooh, Pooh’s struggles with obtaining honey with the help of Christopher Robin, Pooh getting stuck in a hole after overindulging in honey, the search for Tigger’s meal, and Piglet’s heroic act that culminates in Pooh’s recitation of an epic poem. All such instances connect adventure with food and companionship, which is also shown to involve “another pleasure of the mouth, the enjoyment of language through conversation and poetry” (63). “Food of the Woods and Plains: Two Visions of Food, Culture, Land, and History in Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Little House Books and Louise Erdrich’s Birchbark Series” brings together two “complementary journey narratives of expansion and displacement” (65): on the one hand, Ingalls Wilder’s tales of settlement on the frontier, and, on the other, Erdrich’s recreation of the indigenous people’s forced removal from their ancestral lands. The chapter highlights three interconnected configurations of food and its functions in both series: firstly, how the depiction of food speaks about the material lives of the members of European American settlers and Native Americans; secondly, how the gathering, preparation, and consumption of food reflects the traditions of both groups and their cultural values; and, thirdly, how the representation of food and its preparation illuminates the cultural values of Ingalls Wilder and Erdrich. The chapter entitled “A Profound Love for Luscious Things’: Food as Symbolism and History in Maurice Sendak’s *In the Night Kitchen*” examines Sendak’s classic by juxtaposing the author’s own personal history with food with the broader context of Jewish immigrant experience and Jewish American foods. The authors show how Sendak moved from the “assimilationist approach” (93) of *Where the Wild Things Are*, in which Jewish identity is obscured, to a freer acknowledgment of his Jewish roots in *In the Night Kitchen*, with Mickey’s movement towards maturity and empowerment reflecting the journey of American Jewish foods “from enclave to mainstream” (95). The chapter identifies the picturebook’s references to Sendak’s (food-related) childhood memories and personal relations while paying special attention to Jewish symbolism as evidence of Sendak’s “pattern of aesthetic coding of cultural memory” (105).

The next chapter, “Dangerous Angels: The Weetzie Bat Books: Food, Place, and Sparkly Glam Slinkster Cool Vegetarianism in Los Angeles”, traces the shifting functions of food in Francesca Lia Block’s series of Weetzie Bat books. The authors show how Block initially uses food to illustrate the history of Los Angeles, employing it “as a lens into a particular, circumscribed place” stretching “from the foothills of north Hollywood and south to downtown” (108). Moving on from this “nostalgic invocation” (111) of now absent places related to the selling, preparation, and consumption of food, Block later focuses on the food that Weetzie prepares at home for her family, with a specific “food philosophy” (112) emerging from this process: Weetzie embraces vegetarianism and uses healthy food “as a means of comfort and healing, helping her friends and family when they are in distress” (112). When the emphasis in later books switches to Weetzie’s stepdaughter Witch Baby, food assumes new functions as the character develops an eating disorder, slipping in and out of anorexia. The authors convincingly show the centrality of food as signifier in Block’s novels as it moves from a close connection to place and nostalgia to a shift towards home cooking and vegetarian food that often functions as a restorative, even therapeutic measure for various experimentations with both unhealthy food and unhealthy behaviour, therefore providing “physical, emotional, ethical, and intellectual support” (121).

“*Ratatouille* and Restaurants: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Rat” provides an analysis of the popular Disney/Pixar film as a *Künstlerroman* which tells the tale of the development of Remy, a young rat, from a creature totally determined by the vermin signifier to a chef who is creative, managerial, and aware of his audience of consumers. The chapter explores the film’s unsettling of a variety of borders (human/animal, uncivilised/civilised, rural/urban, centre/margin, etc.) through Remy’s engagement with food and the role of a creative chef, employing the history of haute cuisine, restaurant culture, and human-rat relationship in order to “situate this story of alterity, talent, opportunity, and self-actualization” (9). Despite Remy’s success as chef in the human world and his skilful navigation across the human/vermin border, the authors emphasise that the film ultimately avoids a utopian resolution and an entirely egalitarian vision. Instead, they find that *Ratatouille* offers a vision of a place (the restaurant) which ensures “a space for ethical inquiry to engage in possibilities” (143), a space within which it is possible to rethink how “two categories of being that seem antithetical” can coexist in a mutually beneficial symbiosis, with food serving as inspiration and motivation for structuring a more egalitarian world.

The penultimate chapter, “‘Beating Eggs Never Makes the Evening News’: Politics and Kitchens in Rita Williams-Garcia’s *One Crazy Summer* and Its Sequels”, analyses the function of food in each of the books from Williams-Garcia’s trilogy, moving backwards from *Gone Crazy in Alabama* (2015) to *P.S. Be Eleven* (2013), and finally to *One Crazy Summer* (2010). The chapter reveals that food plays a vital role in how the child characters (Delphine and her sisters) explore their African American heritage and negotiate the racial and racist limitations imposed on the communities they find themselves part of and, furthermore, how they engage in self-definition and redefinition when confronted with a variety of female models, both conservative and non-conformist. The readings presented here show how foods and foodways are closely tied to both novels’ depiction of the interrelatedness of food, culture, and food culture (particularly from the perspective of African American history,

as well as the history of and distinctions between “soul food” and “country food” [149-150]) and the possibilities for radical change (specifically in relation to the activities of the Black Panthers, such as their Free Breakfast Program), thus illustrating the political power of food and what this can mean for female discovery of different paths toward womanhood.

The final chapter in the book, “Refugee Narratives, Cuisine Clash: The Case of Thanhha Lai’s *Inside Out & Back Again*”, examines the significance of food in Lai’s 2011 novel about Vietnamese refugees who escape their homeland and reach the United States. Turning away from narratives that employ “reductive stereotypes of refugees facing intolerant Americans” in order to illustrate the difficulties of integration “but without exploring the historical, ideological, or material complexities on either side of the conflict” (167), Lai’s novel is here read as a portrayal of authentic refugee experience that often involves the protagonist’s engagement with food in the depiction of both her attempts at adaptation and maintenance of her original identity. Food is analysed as a means of retaining “a diasporic, transnational identity” (168), but without avoiding the attendant feelings of alienation and even abjection in a new environment with its own new foods and foodways. Refugees’ preparation of certain foods and the practice of traditional foodways in a strange, new land is shown to “provide comfort in recreating traditions”, while the adaptation to new conditions while preserving a link to the past creates “a bridged sense of personal and national identity”, therefore disrupting reductive narratives of rescue, gratitude, and hospitality (178).

As illustrated by a recent conference on food in children’s literature, organised in 2021 in Venice, Italy, at the Università Ca’ Foscari, the multitude of functions that food can assume in children’s literature holds an inexhaustible potential for research. *Table Lands* confirms such an assessment, showing how an interdisciplinary lens tuned to culinary and dietary complexities can provide fascinating insights into the tastes, ingredients, and dishes of the literary worlds we consume, as well as what and how the foods they depict can signify. If the proof is in the pudding, then Keeling and Pollard’s rich array of readings of puddings, pies, bagels, hotdogs, milkshakes, wines, vegetables, and Mickey cakes (among many other foods and drinks) and their symbolism and importance within familial, sexual, historical, cultural, and political structures and experiences certainly proves how rewarding and insightful such an approach can be.

Životopis kao putopis – putovanje kao književnost

Radovan Tadej, Vjekoslava Jurdana. 2021. *Putovima Pavla Vidasa: O životu, putovanju i pisanju jednog iseljenika*. Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnosti; Škrlevo: Katedra Čakavskog sabora „Bakarskoga kraja“. 299 str. ISBN 978-953-6028-49-8.

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Knjiga *Putovima Pavla Vidasa: O životu, putovanju i pisanju jednog iseljenika* Radovana Tadeja i Vjekoslave Jurdane dokazuje još jednom da je autobiografija kao žanr početkom ovoga stoljeća na vrhuncu interesa i publike i kritičke recepcije. Radi se o višeslojnoj publikaciji koja prvi put pred hrvatsku javnost donosi autentični, integralni rukopis