

and conceptual positioning, and in-depth analyses of selected texts, this companion indeed re-conceptualises the field and presents not only new but also future directions of enquiry into children's literature research. Today, some of these future directions are inevitable parts of the field of children's literature research, which adds to the relevance of this companion for future reading and for the future itself.

One Story from Several Points of View

Perry Nodelman. 2017. *Alternating Narratives in Fiction for Young Readers: Twice Upon a Time*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. 258 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-50816-0.

Marita Pavlović

The book under review analyses youth fiction written from various perspectives and consists of nine chapters covering a wide array of topics. Writers of young adult fiction are becoming increasingly more comfortable with composing novels based on alternative narratives, which has proven to be a form that offers ample potential for experimentation with structure, perspective, and storytelling. Using the first and the third person, narrating in the past and the present, and presenting different characters' narratives all contribute to a more complex representation of characters and the groups they exemplify, the dynamics in which their relationships succeed or fail to develop, as well as the themes that such texts foreground. Overall, this type of narrative provides readers with an interesting reading experience, in which they are sometimes asked to piece together the story, suspend their judgement until all the evidence is found, and use a familiar or initial story as a schema for a more complex one that follows, encouraging them to discover how the characters will behave based on the limited knowledge they possess.

Despite the potential for variation and creativity in constructing stories and their presentation, such novels still regularly abide by some common young adult novel expectations, such as a happy ending that sees the characters coming together or their relationship improving, as well as providing a safe space for discussing the topics that concern them. However, Nodelman does not find that all such novels execute their goals successfully or at the same level of quality.

There are some basic concerns to be considered before approaching an in-depth analysis of novels with alternating narratives for young readers. Constructing a story using alternating narratives allows for the selection of perspectives to highlight or juxtapose, as well as for the selection of voiced characters, while respecting some well-established rules of youth literature. The reader is invited to reconstruct events based on the limited knowledge each character possesses, piecing together implications about the true version of events. The characters' understanding of events might vary significantly; they might be mistaken in their interpretation of them; they might knowingly suppress or misrepresent them; their voice might be silenced altogether; or a number of other devices might be employed. Perry Nodelman recognises and details many such devices and their implications, and begins the book by establishing that this is a very sophisticated form of writing, using the following phrase to describe it: "twice upon a time". Such narratives involve a more sophisticated

manner of reading which requires connecting and interpreting information from different sources and choosing which character to identify with.

The second chapter deals with the implications that novels written in this way have for the structure of the story and the experience of reading them. One of their more striking aspects is the difference between the reader's and the characters' comprehension of events, which can be used to highlight the characters' lack of awareness and how it influences their understanding of events and decision-making. This puts readers in an interesting position of watching someone else go through the process that the reader usually experiences – piecing together a story based on limited knowledge and distinguishing truth from falsehood. This process of piecing together the story is more frequently used in writing for an increasingly wider spectrum of audience, as younger readers have also been found to enjoy and rely on it in their earliest encounters with picturebooks. As an aid for young readers, authors employ typographical features, differences in the first and third person, as well as the present and past tense perspective in order to help them distinguish between focalised characters. In some novels, such devices bear no impact on the story and are used only to distinguish between characters, while elsewhere this suggests which character the reader should identify with, as the third person or the past tense may make other characters seem more distant in comparison, and their perspective and the group they represent fall into the background as a result.

In the third chapter, the author details an interesting phenomenon found in epistolary novels, where characters present their perspectives more deliberately through their writing and shape, and hedge it depending on who they expect will be reading their letters. This can make characters unreliable storytellers if their motives lead them to misrepresent themselves and the events they describe. This then leaves the reader of the novel in the dark as to the events of their lives and character, unable to find the final solution to the puzzle. This effect may be amplified by stories constructed as an exchange of letters where the writers are additionally limited by the knowledge available to them at the moment of writing. This form thus highlights their involvement in creating the story by allowing them to decide how to tell it.

In the fourth chapter, Nodelman argues that some novels are constructed as collages that consist of various sources of information. Epigraphs, newspaper clippings, and other sources serve as material that informs the reader without explicating connections or implications. In addition to merely piecing together a series of events, characters are sometimes faced with reconstructing their own identity by deciding which parts of the collage and whose perspectives and information define them. The fifth chapter presents readerly effects of alternating narratives. There are novels that rely on a schema or mapping process – using a simpler, familiar story as a schema for understanding the new, more complex, and unfamiliar one. We compare the knowledge we possess against the new information we come across to either fit it into the existing schema or map, or to change the map to include the new information. The initial story thus precedes the more complex one and serves as a tool for interpretation.

In chapter six, the author discusses how the aforementioned effects can be interpreted as depictions of a story in the form of a set of variations on a common theme. Exploring how

different characters react to the same problem allows the reader to draw conclusions about how the group each character exemplifies may act, react, and feel in such situations, in effect making the novel a case study of the groups its characters represent. This may be found in stories in which characters come together only at the very end and which can be interpreted as variations on the same series of events, which tends to make them seem less cohesive, while new and more complex variations may be implied through the interconnection of separate stories presented in alteration, thus offering a nexus of new implications.

Chapter seven deals with the ideologies that underlie the novels Nodelman discusses, which are mainstream, west-centred, and focused on childhood and young adulthood. Unsurprisingly, writers use alternating narratives to compare, make connections, or draw conclusions about the themes themselves. This invariably means that the author decides which ideology to propagate through the treatment of a certain character, their choices, and the execution of the plot. However, attention is also drawn to the fact that the existence of alternating narratives means that each character has their own unique point of view which deserves due consideration. When discussing the ideologies of selfhood, such books tend to consider core individuality or selfhood as something important and unaltering, suggesting that the character should discover, fight for, and establish their true self. One way of exemplifying this ideology is when authors portray two alternative versions of the same character, be it through their transformation or some parallel storyline in which two seemingly different characters are presented in parallel only to be revealed later to be different versions of the same character in two distinct storylines.

Connection and community, as well as a lack of them, are given separate focus in chapter eight. Following the conventions of the genre, establishing a connection between focalised characters is necessary to produce a happy ending. In doing so, characters are taken on a journey which requires them to overcome the circumstances of their background, origin, or conviction which isolate them. Nodelman shows how this sometimes clashes with ideas of individuality, suggesting that characters cannot be defined on the basis of the group they belong to. Chapter eight also discusses how war stories often fail to provide focalisation of the opposing side, thereby neglecting to confront the two sides of a given conflict and preventing dialogue. Conflict may function as a means of resolving characters' differences by creating a common enemy, and such a struggle may be presented through the eyes of characters who disagree with both sides of the conflict. Alternatively, a novel may put forward the premise that all differences between the main character and the "other" are superficial, leaving out any real discussion of problems that may arise from their conflict. Nodelman criticises novels that represent victims and victimisers in this way, as they downplay the act of violence in attempting to build a connection between the two characters and thus achieve a happy ending without resolving the acts of violence.

The final chapter deals with relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous North Americans. More specifically, it explores how characters learn to live in harmony with nature and appreciate different cultures and their values while presenting the problem of one culture being absorbed into the other. This raises the possibility of some form of cultural supremacy, wherein the indigenous culture is presented as dangerous, out of place, and ultimately narratively "conquered" by the dominant one. As a result, some writers are

unwilling to end their stories in a way that would result in Native American characters losing a part of their identity and culture. Instead, such novels end by connecting the main character to the indigenous community. Another issue they explore is the question of land rights, and Nodelman shows how writers have a tendency to claim the land for characters similar to themselves.

Nodelman has covered numerous topics using a considerable number of examples of youth fiction written in alternating narratives. The result is an informative, consistent, and easily understandable reading which may benefit literary researchers investigating trends in young adult novels, those who teach literature, those who write young adult fiction and are interested in the possibilities of the genre, as well as anyone researching how the youth is presented in contemporary young adult novels with regard to their position in society, the dynamics of relationship-building, or identity development. The broad spectrum of issues raised by such novels challenges its readers to approach their conclusions cautiously, thus offering a promising future for the genre itself, as well as for future research in this field.

On Becoming Molecular Children

Jane Newland. 2021. *Deleuze in Children's Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 192 pp. ISBN 978-1-4744-6667-7.

Nikola Novaković

Although the connection between Gilles Deleuze's philosophy and children's literature may seem tenuous at first, in the introduction to her book Jane Newland argues that such links not only exist but range from the explicit (such as the French philosopher's reliance on Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books in the elaboration of his theory of sense in *Logique du Sens* (1969)) to more subtle "glimpses of an interest in children's literature" (such as *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (1988–1989), a series of conversations between Deleuze and Claire Parnet in the form of an alphabet book) (1). But even beyond such meeting points, Newland argues that children's literature is "particularly attuned to Deleuzian thought" because, unlike other genres, it "forces us to consider the slippery idea of an implied child readership from the outset, and in doing so takes us into a Deleuzian looking-glass world of paradox and presumed binaries", such as the binary of apparently mutually exclusive terms of child and adult (2). Departing from this inherent paradox of the seeming impossibility of talking about "children's literature without talking about the adult who writes it [...] in juxtaposition to the child for whom it is essentially destined", Newland posits that to read Deleuze in children's literature is not to resolve such contradictions, but instead to "put the paradoxes inherent in it to use to negotiate new pathways through this looking-glass genre" (5). Two such pathways that Newland identifies, and to which the author repeatedly returns in the following chapters, are Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concepts of the molecular child (which "allows for the contiguity of childhood and adulthood" (6)) and the encounter or "the coming-together of reader and book" which, importantly, also involves what "passes between both parts of the encounter" while transforming both (6–7).

In chapter 2, "Pure Repetition and Aiôn", Newland presents a reading of various instances of repetition in two works: Eugène Ionesco's "absurdly repetitive picture book" (28)