

**THE CHILD AND THE BOOK:  
IMAGINING CHILDHOOD READING IN ANGLO-AMERICA, 1899-1936**

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This study examines four metaphors for the child/book relationship that circulated in Anglo-America in the early decades of the twentieth-century. These metaphors – Book Magic, Bookland, Book Friend, and Book House -- are found in texts designed for children and aim to describe and prescribe the value of childhood reading. They also serve as a means for understanding the aspirations and anxieties associated with childhood reading at this time. These metaphors reveal complex understandings of the child reader as well as the cultural significances of the book as object and as ideal. They also reveal how forces such as adult nostalgia, education, imperialism, sentimentalism, and aestheticism helped shape the child/book relationship and understandings of what could be gained from childhood reading. These metaphors span the literary cultures of the Britain, United States, and Canada, and are found in the works of children's fantasy by E. Nesbit, a home library for children entitled *Journeys through Bookland*, three series for girls by L.M. Montgomery, and the children's book set *My Book House*. What links these metaphors is a cosmopolitan ideal that the child/book relationship can provide unity and tradition and it that has the power to combat the perceived problems of modernity. This study argues that 1899-1936 marks a time of great ambition for childhood reading: when it is viewed as having significant influence upon the child's development, upon the adult, as well as upon the future of society. Many of these metaphors endure for child readers well beyond 1936, but their goals and far-reaching intentions are tempered.

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## PREFACE

One does not complete a PhD without the wisdom, generosity, enthusiasm, patience, criticism, and support of many people. I am no exception. My list is long and varied, and consists of teachers, colleagues, students, friends and family members in places such as Saint John, NB, Halifax, NS, Kansas City, MO, and Pittsburgh PA. Thank you for helping me in more ways than I can begin to name.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The books we read when we are children make a deep impression. The mind is plastic then, and takes the impress readily. The imagination is awake; the sense of wonder is alive; and life is full of surprises. Books come to us then as a kind of talisman, an open sesame to a new world. Walter Mursell, 1914

How vital is the problem of children's reading, how significant the manner in which it is being handled. Montrose J. Moses, 1907

In 1891, Mrs. E.M. Field published *The Child and His Book: Some Account of the History and Progress of Children's Literature*. In the decades that followed the publication of Field's book, many texts borrowed her title "The Child and the Book" or "The Book and the Child" for essays, articles, and books discussing the whos, whens, whats, hows, and whys of childhood reading. Between 1892 and 1930, such texts appeared in magazines as diverse as *The Delineator*, *Public Libraries*, *Home Progress*, *Harper's Weekly*, and *Elementary School Teacher*. The title was also used for books written by a range of experts including literary critics, librarians, teachers, and parents as concern for the relationship between child and the book spanned literary culture, education, childrearing, and librarianship. There is something so stark and simple about the image. There is a child. There is a book. They are joined by a single 'and.' And yet, that so

many texts by so many experts from so many fields tackle the subject suggests the relationship between the child and the book was anything but simple. Indeed, the child and the book were imagined, understood, described, and idealized in a variety of ways, and inevitably how this relationship was described, encouraged, or prescribed became complicated, multi-faceted, and ideological.

This study is an attempt to understand the kinds of relationships that were imagined between the child and the book in the early decades of the twentieth century in the Anglo-American world through an analysis of four metaphors that were used to describe and encourage childhood reading. These four metaphors for childhood reading - Book Magic, Book Friend, Bookland, and Book House - were circulated through imaginary and educational texts written for adult and child readers. Discussions about the child /book relationship often are described using metaphorical language, and these images aim to delight, in part, to capture the enjoyment of books and to encourage in children a love of reading. There is an ever-present belief that childhood reading is the most fun, the most pleasurable, and the most engrossing experience of books in a reader's lifetime. But beyond the message that 'reading is fun,' these metaphors are more complex. They are shaped by a variety of forces and desires including adult nostalgia, a changing literary culture, educational goals, and hopes and fears about the modern world. What is apparent is that the relationship between the child and the book takes on immense significance in this period; it is viewed as affecting a child's moral and spiritual development as well as having repercussions for adults and for the future of society.

This study covers the years between 1899 and 1936 and spans Britain, United States, and Canada. The dates mark the earliest and latest example of a book metaphor examined in this study. It begins with E. Nesbit's 1899 short story "A Book of Beasts" and ends with *Anne of*

*Windy Poplars*, one of the last books written in the *Anne of Green Gables* series by L.M. Montgomery. The period between these two publication marks widespread interest in childhood reading and ambitious beliefs about its potential impact upon the world. This period also marks significant changes in children's literature and childhood reading as the publication of children's literature expands, children's rooms are established in libraries, and children's books are specifically edited and reviewed by a set of individuals who became established as experts in the field of children's literature. While Nesbit's concept of Book Magic was first introduced in 1899, it is impossible to understand these book metaphors without understanding the literary culture of the 1880s and 1890s. This is a turbulent period in literary culture, one that is defined by a variety of technological, pedagogical, and cultural changes that impact adult readers as well as child readers. Indeed, this study assumes that ways of understanding and imagining the child/book relationship are always wrapped up with anxieties and fears associated with adult/book relationships.

In many ways, this study of childhood reading qualifies as a 'bookish history,' a term borrowed from a recent collection of essays of the same name. The editors of the collection claim a bookish history aims to examine "the enterprise of literary history at the intersection of book history, cultural history, and literary studies" (Ferris and Keen 8). Likewise, this study brings together book history, textual analysis, historical background, and cultural forces. A bookish history provides the best description of how to access and understand the variety of forces which shaped the child/book relationship at this time.

Children's literature has a rich field of scholarship and interest in how to teach children to read has long been a part of education, but theories about the ideals and histories of childhood reading have been neglected. In fact, even in histories of reading, the practices of childhood

reading are often treated as obvious or uncomplicated. For instance, an article examining the concept of book-love in Romantic literary culture describes how “repeatedly, early nineteenth-century memoirists and essayists make us privy to the size, look and feel of books they loved (notably in childhood) or to the place of their reading, eliding or subordinating the texts that were being read” (Ferris 112). While Ina Ferris finds these descriptions important to her study, the fact that they are associated with childhood reading is a mere aside. Or in an essay such as “Children, Adults, and Reading at the Turn of the Century,” which specifically aims to historicize children’s reading at this time, Anne Scott MacLeod argues, “children of the time read, *as children always do*, whatever they can get their hands on, mixing levels and qualities extending without prejudice” (italics added 116). MacLeod assumes that children’s reading is always the same, even if the reading material changes. In both cases, the childhood reading practices remain untheorized or unremarkable. One recent exception is *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (2008) by Seth Lerer which studies the figuration of the child reader from Ancient Greece to the present.

That metaphors have been used to describe and encourage reading childhood reading has been recognized by scholars of children’s librarianship (MacDowell, Eddy). They have noted how children’s librarians, as well as reviewers and educators, employed metaphors such as ladders and roads in their discussions of childhood reading. These metaphors were intended to encourage and value childhood reading, although Jaclyn Eddy complains they were too vague obscuring the criteria upon which judgments were based (11). Indeed, this study of book metaphors has its roots in a set of plays written by librarians to promote Children’s Book Week in the 1920s and 1930s. With titles such as “Books Alive,” “Friends in Bookland,” “What the Books told the Children,” the plays promote reading through dramatizations about what happens

when books and children meet; they are attempts to bring the child/book relationship to life. Part of this study was prompted by a desire to understand where these kinds of metaphors come from and how they shape reading for children. What I have discovered is that these metaphors did not originate in the library plays. In a way, the library is the end of the road for many of these child/book metaphors. Prior to becoming the fodder for library plays, these ways of imagining the child/book relationship had a longer and more nuanced history, which ties them to a range of ideas and concepts including the history of civilization, aestheticism, imperialism, and sentimentalism. By unpacking some of the complexities and ideals, which underlie these metaphors, I hope to provide more nuance to understandings of childhood reading at the beginning of the twentieth century. Childhood reading is never unremarkable or fixed, but rather the practices and ideals associated with it are always changing in response and reaction to a variety of outside forces.

These bookish histories will rely on the concept of cosmopolitanism as a means for analyzing and unpacking the conflicting ideologies, sentiments, and practices associated with the child and the book at this time. Cosmopolitanism is a sentiment or way of viewing humanity, often posited in opposition to patriotism; it values connections among all peoples across time and space, while still recognizing difference. Reading literature is often linked to the development of a cosmopolitan viewpoint. As literary scholars have shown over the last ten years in studies of American regionalism, utopianism, and middlebrow women's writing, cosmopolitanism is an important and generative concept for understanding the literary culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and this applies to children's literature and childhood reading as well. The concept of cosmopolitanism is particularly relevant since both 'the child' and 'the book' can

be understood to be cosmopolitan in some way. The child is viewed as having identity in flux, a powerful imagination, and a connection to a primitive nature, all qualities which contribute to it being viewed as a cosmopolitan figure. Likewise, the book is at times a commodity that crosses borders and boundaries, an ideal that transcends time and space, and a universal symbol for humanity.

### **1.1 WHY COSMOPOLITANISM?**

From the 1880s leading up to the WWI, the concept of cosmopolitanism permeated Anglo-American culture in a variety of ways. Cosmopolitanism became a means for describing a variety of practices, opinions, and ideals in response to a world that appeared to be increasingly growing smaller and more interconnected. There are many cosmopolitanisms at work and the term cosmopolitan is used to describe people, styles, attitudes, and commodities. Cosmopolitan is rich with meanings and associations: it can be used to describe something or someone international, artistic, credentialed, detached, disinterested, touristy, imperialistic, sophisticated, inclusive, or unaffiliated. As that list suggests, there are a number of inherent tensions at work within the concept of cosmopolitanism. Some of the roots of these tensions can be found within the ideal philosophy of Kant and the historical materialism of Marx. Kant's essay "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" put forth cosmopolitanism as the inevitable and desired end of politics. Kant's "universal cosmopolitan existence" refers to nothing less than the regulative idea of a perfect civil union of mankind" (Cheah 23) and would eventually be understood by all as "the highest purpose of nature" for man. (Malcolmson 236-7). Likewise, Marx hoped that the proletariat revolution might lead to the creation of "a universal class

transcending boundaries” (Cheah 10). At the same time, Marx also expressed concern that “cosmopolitanism is realized as exploitation on a world scale through international commerce and the establishment of a global mode of production” (Cheah 26). The fears associated with the concept of cosmopolitanism are usually connected to detachment: that it can be an expression of a vague love of humanity, but one that does not require any action or commitment. Another fear is that it might lead to the spread of multi-national companies with allegiances to no one.

To be a cosmopolitan is often represented as an elite position and one that can be chosen; however, in recent years, scholars from various disciplines have begun to trouble that understanding of cosmopolitanism and instead have focused on the ways in which cosmopolitanism is imposed on people, how “cosmopolitanism . . . is a quality that can be acquired accidentally or purposely by people in or out of power” (Lutz 28). In this vein, cosmopolitanism becomes associated with colonialism as members of a colonial society have culture from outside imposed upon them at the same time they are presumed to lack a national identity. Likewise, cosmopolitan has become applied to practices that are not ones of distinction and elitism, but rather are ones of hybridity and indiscrimination. Again in both new scenarios, detachment is important. People in colonial societies are understood to be detached from any real political affiliation that represents them. They have no choice but to be cosmopolitan members of society. Cosmopolitan samplers of art are not attached to any aesthetic or ideal but rather view everything with equal interest.

Within the realm of literature, the concept of cosmopolitanism functions in a variety of ways as well. Literature is seen at times as representing a cosmopolitan ideal as books and reading are simple ways of transcending space and time, of connecting all cultures into one tradition, of imagining enduring universals; that regardless of nation, all literatures should aspire

to be cosmopolitan in style, quality, and matter; that there should be one cosmopolitan tradition uniting literature from all nations. At the end of the nineteenth century, this ideal became more palpable as books and magazines traveled around the world and crossed national boundaries allowing for a shared knowledge of literature in places around the globe. One writer, in a 1901 article in *The Literary World*, describes this new literary landscape:

The century which has now commenced promises to be a century of vastly increased discourse between the nations of the world. At present the literature of every country seem to be at a low ebb, between two worlds, one dead and the other waiting to be born. We hope we shall speedily have to read signs of new birth in all countries whose literature have influenced our own in the past, and still more that we may produce writers of such transcendent originality that we may be able to repay the influence with interest. The Literary Cosmopolis is a Novgorod or Leipzig fair, to which the merchant of ideas of every nation should bring their wares for comparison and exchange (“Literature in the Nineteenth-Century” 41).

This passage brings together the highs and lows associated with a cosmopolitan literary culture. It reveres the ideals of ‘influence of the past’ and a ‘transcendent originality’ while at the same time turning writers into ‘merchants of ideas’ and works of literature into ‘wares for comparison and exchange.’ This is an aspect of cosmopolitanism that many writers and critics feared: that to celebrate a cosmopolitan literature was really to promote books that would sell in an international literary marketplace and not books that have enduring quality or artistry.

The promotion of a cosmopolitan literature was also believed to be a threat to national literatures. The British critic Leslie Stephen complains in his article “The Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature”

(1899) that literary cosmopolitanism is a fad, a trend that celebrates what is vulgar. He worried that as national literatures become more and more alike, they will lose the qualities which made them distinct and truly artistic (391). Meanwhile, in North America, promoting cosmopolitan ideals in literature was often seen as enslavement to the past that was choking the development of national literatures.

Many of the ideals associated with literary cosmopolitanism that were circulated in the 1880s and 1890s live on in the shaping of the child/book relationship in the early twentieth century. Indeed cosmopolitanism continued to be an important concept for understanding children's literature long after WWI, when for the most part, the myriad of cosmopolitanisms disappeared from most of public discourse. Nevertheless, the concept of cosmopolitanism continued to impact understandings of childhood reading both implicitly and explicitly. It can be found in the desire to create a history and tradition of children's literature that stretches back to the dawn of civilization. It is apparent in the memories of childhood by adults who romanticize it as a time of reading indiscriminately, before concerns about culture or taste or quality are imposed. It is part of the narrative of the child reader progressing from a lack of discrimination in reading material to a discriminate and elite taste in literature. It is also part of the story of childhood reading that views it as a progression from primitivism to national citizenry. And, perhaps mostly importantly of all, the concept of cosmopolitanism remains linked to childhood reading because of the importance of the imagination, a faculty that is often deemed cosmopolitan for the way it allows a reader to transcend the boundaries of time and space and to be a citizen of the world.

## 1.2 WHO IS ‘THE CHILD’?

In all discussions of the “child and the book,” there is a child, of course. But who the child is or, perhaps more appropriately, what the child is has great impact on how childhood reading is imagined. Scholars of children’s literature and childhood who study the early twentieth century see the child figure to be defined in a variety of overlapping ways during this period. The child is the Romantic child figure, drawn from Wordsworth’s “Ode Intimations on Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,” whose innocence and connection with nature can redeem the adult (Carpenter; Coveney). There is the updated romantic child or Romantic child in modern dress who still has a redeeming innocence beneath its more acculturated exterior (Moss). There is the Edwardian child who inhabits a golden age of agency and autonomy that will disappear and forever be missed by adults (Petzgold; Gavin & Humphries). There is the scientific child, formed by the new field of child psychology, who is a locus of study and a source of data about childhood and how to influence the development of children (Blackford). And finally, there is the modern child, an amalgamation of many of these other figures, who had a connection to a primitive past and can lead to a better future (Higonnet; Latour). All of these figures of the child are connected with adult desires, and so the way childhood reading is imagined must always be understood as having an adult agenda.

Even a treatise such as *Children’s Books and Reading* by librarian Montrose J. Moses published in 1907 acknowledges that there is always a particular figure of the child at work in all discussions of childhood reading. It is what Moses describes as “the bogey image of a theoretical or sociological or educational child” (3). Moses goes on to describe how children are often understood according to a theory, what he calls “the machinery of “The Child”” (4) and goes on to outline versions that have existed in the past. Moses argues, Dr. Isaac Watts shaped

one; J. J. Rousseau another; the Edgeworths still another; and now the psychologists' framework of childhood, more subtle, more scientific, more interesting, threatens us everywhere (4).

Moses's 'simple' solution to all this 'machinery' is for parents and librarians to "choose the human model above all else" (5).

Currently within the fields of childhood studies and children's literature, issues such as 'how to know the child' and "what can be known about the child' are important theoretical questions. Influential texts such as Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1985) and Karin Leznik-Oberstein's *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (1996) are grounded in the idea that the child is unknowable, always a figure that is imagined and shaped according to the needs and desires of adults. Although such theoretical concerns seem tied to postmodernism, scholars at the turn-of-the-twentieth century were alarmed about them as well. Professionals from various fields believed that the child differed significantly from the adult. Likewise, there was a widespread assumption that understanding the child better could have an important impact upon the adult (Blackford 370).

How to understand and access the child posed problems and resulted in two main methods. The first was through memory. By recalling one's own childhood experiences, an adult could discover insight into the lives of children. Writers of children's literature became viewed as experts on children (Bavidge 126), a position adopted by E. Nesbit in the opening chapter of her discussion of children's education and play *Wings and the Child* (1913). She claims she has no special knowledge of children,

nothing that cannot be known by any one who will go to the only fount of knowledge, experience. And by experience I do not mean scientific experience,

that is the record results of experiments, the tabulated knowledge wrung from observation; I mean personal experience, that is to say, memory . . . The only key to [the inner mysteries of a child's soul] is in knowledge, the knowledge of what you yourself felt when you were good and little and a child (3).

The second means of accessing the child was through scientific study, what became known as the child study movement. Influenced by the ideas of Herbert Spencer and furthered in the United States through the work of G. Stanley Hall, the child study movement aimed to “gather factual data about ‘the nature of the child’ including a wide variety of statistical information about children’s growth, development, preferences, and propensities (quoted in MacDowell 187). To varying degrees, the writers, editors, and librarians who were influential in shaping the culture of childhood reading were suspicious of the child-study movement. Writers such as Nesbit were downright dismissive. Librarians, however, tended to take a more measured approach to what the child study movement could yield and were able to use their findings to bolster their own work in guiding children’s reading. They even borrowed some of the methods of the child study movement such as survey-taking. (MacDowell 191). As is evident in the passage that was quoted from Moses, while the scientific child was a seductive model, it was also viewed as dangerous. It was seductive in the sense that it seemed to be grounded in reliable hard facts and data of scientific methods. It was dangerous, however, because it reduced the child to what could be studied scientifically, which somehow limited or ignored less quantifiable aspects of the child’s spirit or soul such as imagination.

Regardless of how the child was defined or how it was believed to be understood, the child’s imagination was a focus of concern for all the professionals discussing, analyzing, and studying the child in the early twentieth-century. The child’s imagination was assumed to be

powerful, which, depending upon the source, was a faculty that should be cultivated, or guided, or squashed. The processes of cultivating, guiding, or squashing were believed to be facilitated through the act of reading. For writers of children's literature such as Nesbit and Montgomery, the imagination was vital to spiritual development and life's enjoyment, and reading offered a means for feeding and developing it. For an educator such as Charles H. Sylvester, who edited *Journeys through Bookland*, imagination requires the right guidance for it to develop into a useful faculty. The child-study movement researchers recognized the child's imagination as powerful, but they worried more about its potentially detrimental effects; most worrisome was that it would lead to a delusional view of the world. For these reasons, they discouraged the reading of fairy tales and other sources of fancy and instead advocated for children to read material that was more clearly useful and applicable to daily life.

This focus on the child's imagination is connected with another important widespread assumption about the child at this time, which viewed the child's mind as similar to that of primitive man. This assumption goes back to the Romantic image of childhood as the innocent or uncivilized figure, but by the late nineteenth-century, this romanticism had become linked with evolutionary theory and became an established concept in a variety of fields of knowledge including biology, anthropology, folklore studies, child psychology, pedagogy, and literature. The result is that it influenced several ideas and arguments about childhood reading, including the theory of recapitulation that permeated works of Romance for boys (or boyish men) published in the 1880s and 1890s. In addition, it is part of the discourse surrounding the revitalization of storytelling as an age-old art form that appeals to the child's mind. It can be found in the sense of the child's imagination as a source of ingenuity and way of seeing the world unclouded by reason and science. In fact, it is imagination and its perceived connection to

primitivism that makes the child a cosmopolitan and an important figure in the bridging of the past with the future. Imagination is viewed as having the potential to keep the past alive while at the same time leading to the ingenuity which will shape the future. As fears emerged about modernity as erasing the past and leading to an ugly, mechanized, materialist future, the figure of the child and his or her imagination became increasingly important for bridging that gap.

### 1.3 WHAT IS ‘THE BOOK’?

The child is only one side of this relationship, however. The other is the book, which is equally important. To suggest that the book plays an important role in childhood reading may seem like an obvious statement, since reading has typically been assumed to require a book of some kind. That said, part of my argument is that to understand childhood reading at this period requires interest in not just the content but in the object itself. The book figured prominently in understandings of childhood reading, as is reflected in the metaphors of Book Magic, Bookland, Book Friend, and Book House. Kate Douglas Wiggin (1856-1923), author of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* and an active member of the kindergarten movement in the United States, is credited with saying that, for the child, the book is always a fact and an ideal (quoted in Moses 17). Wiggin’s observations begin to open up the complexity of the book’s role in childhood reading.

According to Ina Ferris, book metaphors have changed over time. She argues that prior to the eighteenth-century, the book “was a symbol that had the power to organize an idea such as the Book of History or the Book of Nature” so that the image of the book “made something complex readable” (115). According to her argument, book metaphors began to change as print

became more common in people's lives, so "the "book-object rather than the book-ideal [became] the source of metaphor" (Ferris 115). For example, a book companion referred to the friendly presence of a material book. I would argue that book metaphors changed again in the early twentieth century as they began to be used in relation to childhood reading. They combine both aspects of a book: the book-as-object and the book-as-ideal. Indeed, in some cases, what makes the child reader so special is his or her ability to interact and read both aspects of the book.

The materiality of the book and its material presence in people's lives has been important for shaping reading habits. The form of the book, its accessibility, and its design are all important for shaping and influencing how the book is valued and how readers read. Ferris argues that book metaphors changed when the book became a more common part of daily life, a development she equates with the early nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the presence of the book is perceived to have changed again as the number of available books increased dramatically. Due to changes in printing technology, publishing laws, education, and reading during the late nineteenth-century, a sharp increase in reading material became available to the public. By the 1890s, a widespread belief through literary culture was the idea that there are a lot of books, so many books, all kinds of books, an endless number of books, books, books. And with this increase in books, the book's value was destabilized and a range of questions emerged about reading and literature: What books matter? Do 'cheap books' denigrate the value of literature? Is the book a mere consumer commodity? What makes a book have lasting permanence? The rise of the critic, the creation of a canon, the development of English

as an academic discipline, and the division of readers into highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow are just a few of the outcomes of this period and they all, in their own way, attempt to organize, control, and discipline this world of extensive reading material.

Concern about the abundance of books becomes part of the discourse surrounding childhood reading as well. More books were being published for children, more books were being marketed as commodities for children, and more forms of children's books were being created, everything from the 'cheap' penny dreadfuls and dime novels to the beautifully bound and illustrated editions of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verse* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. In many ways, the same questions that critics were asking about books in adult literary culture were being asked about children's literature as well, although children's literature posed special concerns.

In her article "Victorian Horizons: The Reception of Children's Books in England and America, 1880-1900," Anne H. Lundin studied the reviews and discussions of children's literature in a long list of periodicals. The result is a list of eight 'horizons' or 'positions' which she claims dominated discussions of children's literature in this twenty year period. Among the 'horizons' Lundin identifies, four important influences upon how the child/book relationship comes to be imagined in the early decades of the twentieth century. They are the treatment of children's books as commodities, the elevation of children's books as works of art, attention to the historiography of children's literature, and anxiety about the changing character of children's literature (Lundin 31). The first two emphasize how the book's materiality has always been important in discussions of childhood reading and illustrate two extremes. According to Lundin, the child's book was always connected to commodity culture since it had to be purchased by an adult; also, it became linked to the "gift book" industry, since the majority of new books for

children were published in the month before Christmas (Lundin 35). In contrast to its status as a commodity, the child's book was also elevated to an object d'art in the same period. Many of the qualities of the aestheticism's book beautiful movement were used in the production of children's books leading to finely bound, illustrated, and decorated volumes. The next two horizons are also linked as the desire to trace a history of children's literature was attached to the anxiety of creating a canon for the future. Lundin notes that many histories of children's books began to appear in the periodical press and they tended to argue that books from earlier eras were "more wholesome, and less corrupted by the marketplace" (51). The anxiety about the future of children's books was related to a sense of overabundance in choices and qualities and in the absence of a clear didactic purpose for children's literature. For centuries, childhood reading had been used for moral and didactic purposes, primarily aimed at teaching children their ABCs and good moral lessons. But by the late nineteenth century, the aims and functions of childhood reading were in flux. The result, according to Lundin, was a variety of guides and lists for parents to use in selecting their children's' books. Lundin's article is valuable for its breadth. It also outlines the kinds of issues associated with childhood reading that move from the periodical press of the 1880s and 1890s into the book metaphors of the early twentieth-century. These metaphors, woven by writers and educators, are directed to children and aim to teach them about the value of reading and the purpose of books.

The book metaphors under scrutiny in this study are found in twentieth-century texts, beginning with Nesbit's novels; however, their representations and arguments about reading cannot be understood without the context of the literary culture of the 1880s and 1890s. Some of the concerns about children's literature that Lundin identifies are ones that the book metaphors

aim to address or resolve. These metaphors do provide a purpose for childhood reading. They offer ways of understanding a tradition of children's literature. Childhood reading becomes a place for shaping the future of children and also for shaping the future of reading.

#### **1.4 THE LIBRARY: THE CENTER OF THE CHILD/BOOK RELATIONSHIP**

In many ways, to study the child/book relationship is to study the library, since it is the means through which the material book and the child reader are brought together. Different versions of what constitutes a library influences the ways a library is believed to foster childhood reading. There is the family library, the child's library, and the public library, all of which became powerful forces in shaping how childhood reading was imagined as well as how encounters between the child and the book were shaped.

The family library refers to whatever assortment of books a family might own. Such a library might consist of one bookshelf or it could fill an entire room. In essays by writers and critics about their own childhood reading, the family library is often described as consisting of an odd mixture of books, what a family might have accumulated over the years, with most of the volumes intended for adult readers. In articles about childhood reading written at the end of the nineteenth-century, the family library is described as something from the past and is used to describe the collection of books and the kinds of reading a child did before the explosion of available books. In this way, it becomes idealized and romanticized for the ways it opened up reading for the child. Memories abound of the child who was once let loose to read through such a library however he or she chose, and how it led to a love of reading. The most-oft cited example of this introduction to reading is the story Charles Lamb tells about his sister Bridget

Elia, which Agnes Repplier includes in her 1895 article entitled “What Children Read.” She quotes Lamb’s description of how his sister “was tumbled by accident or design into a spacious closet of good old English books, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage.” He avers, “Had I twenty girls they should be brought up exactly in this fashion” (Repplier 75).

In “What Shall Children Read?,” Kate Douglas Wiggin also makes use of Lamb’s description saying how she “was simply tumbled in among [the family books] and left to browse in accordance with Charles Lamb’s whimsical plan for Bridget Elia” (357). She lovingly recalls the “walnut bookcase hanging on the wall of the family sitting-room. It had only three shelves, but all the mysteries of love and life and death were in the score of well-worn volumes.”

Wiggin argues it did not matter that the “rows of shabby and incongruous volumes” were not intended for children. She writes

If the hay was thrown so high in the rack that they could not pluck a single straw without stretching up for it, why the hay was generally worth stretching for, and was perhaps, quite as healthful as the sweet and easily digested nursery porridge some people adopt as exclusive diet for their darlings nowadays (358).

In these memories of learning to read in the family library, two main concerns about the current childhood reading emerge. The first is in relation to the perceived quality of the reading material. The second is the level of guidance children receive.

The family library harkens back to a time when books were not as plentiful and when fewer books for children were produced. Beginning in the 1880s, for the first time, a child could grow up and read books that were intended for children and adolescents. The question for cultural critics such as Repplier and Wiggin is whether or not such a ‘diet’ of reading can

produce greatness. If reading shapes whom the adult becomes, what is the outcome of only reading children's material? Many connections are made between what famous men read in their youth and what they consequently achieved in adulthood. In her essay "What Children Read," Repplier lists the childhood reading of famous men including Sir Walter Scott, Jeremy Bentham, and John Ruskin, to name just a few. Scott began reading Shakespeare and Spenser at the age of eight, Bentham sat up all night reading Rapin's history, and Ruskin read the *Iliad* avidly. The argument is that the great work these men produced can be linked directly to what they read as children, and they were not reading children's books. It is uncertain for Repplier and Douglas Wiggins if reading children's literature exclusively, a diet of 'digested nursery porridge' will foster great minds and great works.

The other concern that emerges from memories of growing up reading in the family library is that children are not given enough freedom to explore books on their own. Letting a child loose in the family library to read as he or she wished offered freedom within a controlled environment, since all the books were already vetted as appropriate or they would not be on the shelf. Such freedom still allowed the child a sense of discovery as he or she was allowed to choose which books to read, in whatever order, according to his or her own criteria. To wander through a family library was a safe adventure. With so many new choices available to children in so many places, letting them make their own choices was potentially dangerous. The questions then became how much guidance is needed and how much intervention is stifling to development of a child's own love of reading.

Both Repplier and Wiggins wrote articles worrying about the future of childhood reading in the 1890s. By the twentieth century, one solution was to replace the family library with the child's library, which combines some of the ideals of the family library of the past with the

variety of reading material available for children in the present. The child's library is not a bookshelf that is shared by all members of the family; instead, it is one that contains books designed for and owned by the child reader. Book ownership was viewed as important in helping child readers grow up to love and appreciate good books. Many of the articles that discuss "the child and the book" focus on helping parents make good selections for the child's personal library.<sup>1</sup> Entire book sets were designed specifically for children with this purpose in mind: to give the child its own library and the illusion that he or she could be like Bridget Elia and wander through a wide variety of readings. Called home libraries, these sets offered readers several volumes of reading material with the guarantee that it could introduce children to the best reading material available. These home libraries were intended to last through a child's maturation, and so they include everything from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare's plays. Two of these home libraries, *Journeys through Bookland* (1909) and *My Book House* (1920), will be studied in upcoming chapters to understand how they imagined and guided the child/book relationship.

Finally, this is the period of the rise and expansion of the public library, and most importantly, the introduction of the children's room. The first reading room for children was established in 1887 in Rhode Island. In 1890 the Pratt Institute introduced its first course in children's librarianship, and by the mid-1890s, children's librarianship became part of the culture of the library in the United States (Marcus 64). By the turn of the twentieth century, librarians began establishing themselves as important figures in the development of childhood reading. Librarians began publishing books advising parents on how to guide their children's reading as well as producing book lists for girls and boys. By the 1930s, children's librarians were the established experts in children's literature. Figures such as Anne Carroll Moore who ran the

children's room at the New York Public Library and wrote reviews of children's literature for the *Bookman* and *New York Herald Tribune* were crucial for shaping ideas about childhood reading. These librarians believed in literature's noble qualities and wanted children to learn to love books and reading. Yet they believed that children's reading must be guided and monitored. There were too many dangers in letting a child make independent selections.

This study explores four different metaphors for the child/book relationship; two of these metaphors originated in the works of children's literature and another two metaphors were used in organizing home libraries for children. The first chapter appraises Book Magic and is based on the novels of Nesbit, in particular her later works written between 1908 and 1913. In these fantasies, Nesbit attempts to represent and imagine what it means to be a child reader in an extensive world of books. At the same time, she argues that the child and the book create magic together, magic that can be powerful for adults and for the future. The second chapter analyzes *Journeys through Bookland*, a home library published in 1909 and edited by Charles H. Sylvester. Using imaginative geography to create a comprehensive vision of literature, Sylvester employs imperialistic imagery to train readers to find in books both boyish adventure and mastery of the modern world. The third chapter moves away from extensive reading to intensive reading and the metaphor of Book Friendship. It examines three series for girls written by Montgomery between 1908 and 1933 to understand how an emotional attachment with books could foster self culture and a cosmopolitan sympathy. Finally, the last chapter explores another home library, the *My Book House* series, which was first published in Chicago in 1920. Designed to offer child readers an aesthetic experience, Olive Beaupre Miller's series signals a change in the childhood reading as taste and discrimination become increasingly important goals for

childhood readers. In each case, the child/book relationship is imagined in a way that is intended to help children become good readers, and also to ensure that their reading will somehow will make the modern world a better place.

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## 2.0 E. NESBIT'S BOOK MAGIC

In 1974 Marcus Crouch wrote in *The Nesbit Tradition* of Edith Nesbit that “No writer for children today is free of debt to this remarkable woman” (16). Julia Briggs opens the forward to her biography, *A Woman of Passion*, by averring that Nesbit “is the first modern writer for children” (xi). Crouch believes a tradition of children’s novels including family comedies and adventures in the past can be traced back to her (Crouch 22). Briggs sees Nesbit’s way of mixing the magic with the everyday as highly influential on later writers (Briggs 77). Writers such as C.S. Lewis, Edward Eager, and J.K. Rowling have all paid homage to Nesbit’s work (Chaston; Nicolson). Even critics who dislike Nesbit do not deny her influence. In *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature*, Humphrey Carpenter grudgingly includes Nesbit with influential writers, even though he refers to her as a producer of hack-work (137) and complains that she is responsible for the focus on middle class protagonists in English fiction that lasted until the 1950s (128). Along with Crouch and Briggs, I believe Nesbit’s books to have been an influential force not only in how children’s literature has been written but also in how childhood reading has been imagined and understood. Through her novels for children, Nesbit created a version of childhood reading that accounts for what it means to be a child reader

in a worldful of books. She also presents reading as a powerful force in the lives of the child and upon the future of society. Her image of the child/book relationship can be best described as “Book Magic.”

Nesbit was a prolific writer throughout her career that began in 1885, but she is best known for the thirteen children’s novels she wrote between 1899 and 1913. These novels begin as domestic stories describing the adventures of a family of children. As her career progressed, her books move more into the realm of fantasy as the children begin to encounter magical creatures, travel through time, and visit fantastical realms. The act of reading and knowledge of books is at the centre of many of Nesbit’s plots. Her children are cosmopolitan readers, well-versed in a range of authors and genres, and they draw upon this knowledge when interpreting events and deciding upon how to act in various scenarios. Her children have grown up part of an extensive reading culture where a wealth of reading material is available in newspapers and periodicals, at railway stalls, and from lending libraries. *The Treasure Seekers* has been described as “above all a book about books” (Briggs 187). The story describes how the Bastable children attempt to find treasure according to the plots of popular novels such as mysteries, adventure stories, and sentimental stories, which tends to get them into trouble. Although reading plays an important role in all of Nesbit’s books for children, Book Magic is most apparent in her later, more fantastical novels: *The House of Arden* (1908), *Harding’s Luck* (1909), *The Magic City* (1910), *The Wonderful Garden* (1911), and *Wet Magic* (1913). In these stories, books are mystical objects with the power to lead child readers into history, myth, or alternative worlds. The child reader is able to enter the realm of the book through its powerful imagination. A material book makes this leap possible, but what the children discover through the book is access

to *The Book of the World*. Nesbit grants the book power and force as a universal and enduring symbol and casts the child as its best reader. Together they can produce magic and meaning.

Although the *House of Arden* did not appear until 1908, Nesbit's interest in Book Magic predates it. As Julia Briggs notes, "all Edith's children's stories are preoccupied with the effect of reading on the child, even though only a small number of them actually allow books as objects, with their contents, to be reified and figure significantly in the narrative. Curiously, this process occurs most often at the beginning . . . and at the end . . . of her career as a successful writer for children" (327). One such early story that illustrates Book Magic is "The Book of Beasts," which appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in 1899, and was then later included in the collection *The Book of Dragons* (1899). In the tale, a regular boy named Lionel discovers he has been crowned king. He takes over for his great grandfather, who is described as "a strange man: a very good king . . . but he had his faults – he was fond of books" (5). Over the years, the grandfather, who was a wizard as well as a king, traded his gold and jewels for books and amassed an impressive library. Like his ancestor, Lionel shows an affinity for books (which worries his advisors), and when he discovers his grandfather's library, he is amazed and exclaims, "What a worldful of books!" (6). Among the volumes, Lionel is attracted to one in particular, "The Book of Beasts." In part, he cannot resist its appearance: "It had gold patterns on the brown leather, and gold clasps with turquoises and rubies in the twists of them, and gold corners, so that the leather should not wear out too quickly" (7). When he opens the book, whatever animal appears on the page comes to life and exits from the pages. Lionel is delighted when a butterfly and bird of paradise emerge, but trouble starts when a dragon materializes and begins terrorizing the kingdom and eating many of its citizens. Lionel tries to solve the problem by releasing other beasts, but this tactic fails. Eventually Lionel, with the help of a hippogriff,

tricks the dragon back into the book. Before re-entering, the dragon coughs up all the people he has eaten, since the book must remain unchanged. The book remains immutable, but its presence and content have the power to change the world into which it enters. The story sets up important themes of Book Magic: the significance of a book's materiality, the unknown and expected powers a book can have, and the importance of fighting books with books or the lesson that reading more books is the only means to overcome or outsmart the force of books.

Nesbit's ideas and concerns about childhood reading emerge out of the literary culture of the 1880s and 1890s. Nesbit began her writing career in the 1880s in order to support her new family. Her literary aspirations were to be a poet, but she worked tirelessly writing poems, verses, stories, novels, and children's pieces for periodicals and anthologies in the years leading up to 1900. She finally gained widespread success with the publication of *The Story of the Treasureseekers* in 1899, pieces of which had been published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1895. Over the course of her career, she worked with a variety of publishers and editors. Through her involvement with the Fabian Society and through correspondences, Nesbit was acquainted with a variety of literary figures including George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Richard Le Gallienne, and Oscar Wilde. Through her career and her politics, Nesbit was deeply immersed in the literary scene and would have been aware of the growths, shifts, and debates within the literary marketplace. Her novels about children show an awareness of the range of books available to children, the fears associated with children reading too many books, the shifting purpose of didacticism in children's literature, and the debates regarding the role of fairy tales in a child's life. Her own fears about reading are not associated with children reading too much or reading the wrong books. Instead, reading is always a creative and vital act that fosters the imagination.

Whatever potential dangers or risks might be associated with reading were outweighed by its gains.

As Nesbit moved into fantasy, the act of childhood reading takes on greater significance and her representation of books and reading changes. Instead of being based upon reading the children have already done, these stories are set in motion when the children discover unread or long-lost books. As with “The Book of Beasts,” these stories begin when the children discover a particular volume or the contents of an old library, or both. The books contain magical knowledge, or become magical objects, or even release magic into the world. The child readers must learn how to use and manage this magic in ways that are positive and creative. Books become ways of entering the past, of changing the future, of entering magical realms, of seeing book characters come alive. In these stories, the child is imaginative, but books expand the imagination so that together the child and the book can lead to new discoveries and new possibilities.

In her text on Nesbit’s life and work, Anthea Bell complained that in Nesbit’s later fantasies,

the strain of thinking up plots does begin to show. If her children got into difficulties, she would cut the knot of the story by bringing characters out of books by magic to dispose of any enemies. She uses this trick in both *The Magic City* and *Wet Magic*, and the scene at the end of *Harding’s Luck* (Bell 117).

The scenes that Bell reads as evidence of Nesbit’s waning artistry are precisely the scenes that illustrate the concept of Book Magic and how it functions in Nesbit’s fiction. They are the scenes that attempt to bring to life what happens when the child and the book interact. They imagine the way a child’s world is formed by books, the kind of meaning that resides in the books for

children, and how the child's imagination and the magical book are a powerful combination that can have a wide influence.

For the most part, Nesbit's later fantasies have garnered little scholarly attention, in part perhaps because like Bell, many scholars view them as less successful than her early children's novels. Often when books such as the *Magic City* and *Wet Magic* are discussed it is according to the methodologies of intertextuality and metafiction. In "Writing the Reader: The Literary Child beyond the Book" Claudia Nelson explores how children's works of fiction that include fictional characters and settings from other books define the value of reading and the child-book relationship. Nelson places Nesbit's *Wet Magic* as the earliest example in a list of such books by authors Edward Eager, Jim Strangelove, and Cornelia Funke that extends over the twentieth century. Nelson concludes that these books can be understood, quite simply, as saying "reading is fun" (233). They also, according to Nelson's argument, suggest reading provides a means of escape from adult hegemony, a subversive act which "emancipates the child through the calling into question of the storytelling process" (230). In a later article entitled "The Critical Reader in Children's Metafiction," Jim Sutliff Sanders questions the conclusion that Nelson and other scholars have reached about the "subversive possibilities" of metafiction. In part, Sanders points out that these books always reinforce the relationship with books as positive, that "there is solace and empowerment that comes from relationships with books" (352). For Sanders, such representations of reading are "didactic and, even propagandistic" (354), which are not qualities that encourage subversion. Instead of seeing metafiction as leading to subversive reading, Sanders charts how it might encourage a reader to become a critical reader.

Both Nelson's and Sanders's discussions of metafiction are valuable for examining Nesbit's incorporation of books into her fiction, her messages about the purpose of reading, and what reading metafiction might teach child readers about literature. A focus on intertextuality provides valuable insights into Nesbit's texts and their goals for the child reader; however, it does not historicize the reading practices represented and it focuses primarily on content. Such an approach fails to account for the book as an object or an ideal. In order to understand how Nesbit imagines childhood reading and its purposes, the book as both an object and a symbol are crucial.

## 2.1 NESBIT'S CHILD READER

Nesbit is often referred to as a "quintessential Edwardian children's author" (Bavidge 125), a designation which tends to come with a variety of ideas about how she represents the figure of the child and the themes at work in her book. Her status as an Edwardian links Nesbit with other writers such as J.M. Barrie, A.A. Milne, and Kenneth Grahame, who have been credited with creating an Arcadian vision of the England of childhood. Dietzer Petzold claims Edwardian writers such as Nesbit saw "the child's extraordinary ability to become absorbed in a world of make-believe seems to be the most important aspect of childhood, the crowning accomplishment of the child, an object of nostalgia and envy" (33). The introduction to a recent collection of essays entitled *Childhood in Edwardian Literature* lists four recurring aspects of childhood found in Edwardian children's literature: a sense of adult loss and longing in connection to childhood, the centrality of the child at play in the home or garden, society's view of what children need or should be, and the child's connection with savagery and the pagan (Gavin &

Humphries 5). The Edwardian period also saw an increased interest in children's development and welfare, and the Edwardian writer of children's fiction became viewed as a sort of expert upon childhood, a role Jenny Bavidge argues Nesbit adopted (125).

My purpose is not to dismiss these analyses or to claim that Nesbit was not an Edwardian writer. Many of the traits identified as Edwardian can be found in Nesbit's novels. Her views on the child, in particular the experience of childhood reading, are idealistic and nostalgic. Likewise, paganism does emerge in her novels about England and English history. There is something very English about her depictions of ancestral homes and wonderful gardens, scenes that Noel Coward was revisiting in 1956 when he wrote in praise of Nesbit's "extraordinary power of describing hot summer days in England in the beginning years of the century" (quoted in Briggs 404). At the same time, her designation as an Edwardian writer has obscured ways in which her fiction might be viewed as modernist, a move that recent scholarship of Nesbit's work have begun to challenge (Smith; Anderson). She does celebrate and praise certain aspects of the past but in ways that can help with the creation of the future. Placing Nesbit within the context of modernism shifts the focus of her work away from nostalgia for a lost past and instead positions her representation of childhood reading within the complexity of the modern world. For Nesbit, childhood reading is the means for bridging this gap. The book is an object of the past and the child, through imagination, can glean the book's value and ideals, which can then be used in the future. The child/book relationship serves broad and important purposes: it is a means of fostering imagination, beauty, citizenship, and it provides a defense against what Nesbit considers to be the increasing ugliness of the modern world.

What equips the child reader to participate in *Book Magic* is the imagination, a faculty that allows the child the ability to still believe impossible ideas and not to rely solely on

empirical facts. The valorization of the child reader is a rejection of the professional, scholarly, disinterested approach of the adult readers and is a means of recuperating reading and literature in the midst of mass production. Nesbit writes most extensively about how she understands the imagination about in her book nonfiction treatise on childhood, *The Wings of the Child*:

Of the immeasurable value of imagination as a means to the development of the loveliest virtues, to the uprooting of the ugliest and meanest sins, there is here no space to speak. But the gain in sheer happiness is more quickly set forth.

Imagination, duly fostered and trained, is to the work of visible wonder and beauty what inner light is to the Japanese lantern. It transfigures everything into a glory that is only not magic to use because we know Who kindled the inner light, Who set up for us the splendid lantern of this world (26).

For Nesbit, the imagination does not only open up a child to beauty, but it is a moral faculty that can teach a child the difference between right and wrong, good and bad.

The continued exercise of imagination, the continual preening and flight of the wings of the soul. You cannot order your life by that Divine precept without a hundred times a day asking yourself, “How should I like that, if I were not myself?” without continually putting yourself, imaginatively, in some one else’s place (70).

The imagination is what lets the child have wonderful adventures through its reading. At the same time, adventures through reading also help the child to develop its moral character. In all of her later stories, the children enter another realm or world through a book, but once there, they are challenged in ways that lead them to become better people: less quarrelsome, less selfish, more courageous, or more forgiving.

## 2.2 THE MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL BOOK

From *The House of Arden* (1908) onward, all of Nesbit's stories are connected with a particular book, the contents of a library, or a structure built out of books. Physical descriptions of books appear throughout Nesbit's texts, and a book's appearance and materiality can enchant a reader. Bindings, paper, cover art, typography are often described. There are books bound in leather, decorated with jewels, edged in gold, locked with clasps. As was true for Lionel in "The Book of Beasts," often the book's appearance is what initiates the children's adventures. Among the piles and piles of books in the Arden library, Edred and Elfrida are attracted to one in particular: "a great white book that had on its cover a shelf printed in gold with squares and little spots on it, and a gold pig standing on the top of the shelf and on the back." The book proves to be "The History of the Ardens of Arden," a perfect place to begin their treasure hunt. Likewise Caroline, Charles, and Charlotte, the three Cs in *The Wonderful Garden*, automatically recognize *The Language of Flowers* as a special book because it was "a small, thin book bound in red, with little hard raised spots like pin-heads all over it" (2). Later it is noted how it has "a wreath of gold forget-me-nots outside it encircling the words *Language of Flowers*" (5).

As books became increasingly common and commoditized in 1880s and 1890s culture, one response was to reverence the style, materials and production of books in the past. This was an attitude associated William Morris and the Arts & Crafts society who promoted the book beautiful. Morris began collecting rare books, then lecturing to the Arts and Crafts society about the book beautiful, before founding the Kelmscott Press in 1891. Morris aimed to create books that showed artisanship by recreating the methods and materials used to create books in those early periods (Miller 481). Nesbit's fiction also shows an interest in old books, but she is more

interesting in bringing them back to life than in recreating them as physical artifacts. At the same time she aims to recuperate old books, she is also re-visiting ways books functioned as symbols in the Middle Ages. While Morris celebrates the medieval book as the book beautiful, Nesbit also values the medieval book for its symbolic nature.

According to one medieval scholar, in the Middle Ages, “the book and the reading process were considered enigmatic and mysterious, powerful and seductive, informative and revealing, dangerous and promising,” (Classen 63), a description that fits with Nesbit’s representation of reading as well. In a chapter titled “The Book as Symbol” in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Ernst Robert Curtius traces the symbol of the book from its origins in Egypt and the Near East to the development of the printing press. He notes how concepts such as The Book of Nature, The Book of the World, The Book of Memory, and The Book of History were valuable for understanding life relations, whether it is was relationship with divinity, humanity, nature, or the past. They made, as Ina Ferris describes it, “complex ideas readable” (115). Curtius provides some illuminating examples of how this image was developed: how books were described as the “showing forth of the inner word” (321) and how the whole world was a book or a library “in which the pages are turned with our feet” (322). According to Curtius, the book as symbol ceases to be as powerful with the advent of the printing press. Once the sacred and unique quality of the codex was usurped by mass production, so too the value and richness of the book symbol was lost. My argument, however, is that the richness of the book-as-symbol reemerges in the shaping of children’s reading in the early twentieth century. Book Magic is a way of describing the life relations between the child and the book, how its material

forms can lead to an understanding of divinity, beauty, and other enduring qualities of being human. Thus, Nesbit still grants the book power as a force and a symbol and casts the child as its best reader; together they produce magic and meaning.

Just as there are old books to discover, Nesbit's children also have access to impressive home libraries, many of which are full of old books. Some of these libraries are part of manor homes, old castles, or crumbling ancestral houses. They are ripe for adventure. Mabel in *The Enchanted Castle* loves the library. She tells her new friends, "Oh, it's such a jolly room – such a queer smell, like boots, and old leather books sort of powdery at the edges (61). In *The House of Arden*, Edred and Elfrida find the library in their old ancestral home Arden house:

It was a very large room and there were no pictures at all. Nothing but books and books and books, bound in yellow leather. Books from ceiling to floor, shelves of books between the windows and over the mantelpiece – hundreds and thousands of books (25).

Likewise in the short story "The Town in the Library" and novel *The Magic City*, children have access to vast libraries of books, which they then use to build their own little cities.

While the majority of Nesbit's children find books within beautiful, old libraries she does acknowledge that at the beginning of the twentieth century, books are available in many other locations and appear in forms without ornate bindings or heavy clasps. Books can be found at a train bookstall, "yellow-covered books with pictures outside that are so badly printed; and you get them for fourpence-halfpenny" (*The Treasure Seekers* 32). Dickie in *Harding's Luck* is poor but loves to read, so his teacher gives him several paperbacked books, including one that is half backed and another which has no back at all (8). But even such books, which might appear cheap and disposable, have powers. Nesbit shows a certain ambivalence toward these mass-

produced books. They certainly are not the gateways into magic in her stories. At the same time, they do provide a reader such as Dickie with much-desired material that he uses for his own improvement and imagination. Indeed, the cheap book is not what is most dangerous for the child reader; rather, what threatens the child reader much more is the didactic or educational book.

Not only are there many books in Nesbit's fiction, but there are many references to specific books and writers. Well-known didactic texts are often mentioned with derision. In particular, *Eric, Little by Little* by Frank W. Farrar becomes Nesbit's standard reference for overly moralistic books for children. Published in 1858, the book is about a boy's moral struggles at school. By the end of the nineteenth century, Farrar's book had become a symbol for religious earnestness and joylessness associated with a lot of children's fiction. Nesbit's characters describe it as "impossible to read" (*Wet Magic* 17) and Rupert in *The Wonderful Garden* "stopped his ears with his fingers rather than listen to" (177) Mrs. Wilmington read aloud from her copy. Meanwhile "ripping" is the adjective reserved for books the children love, ones that are full of adventure and fun, such as *The Last Cruise of the Teal* by Leigh Ray or anything written by Rudyard Kipling.

Nesbit's children inhabit a world of many, many books, and to read Nesbit is to be always in the middle of a vast library, running between various shelves. Nesbit's 'worldful of books' is the representation of extensive reading. For all the ways that Nesbit's books are literary and bookish, there are few direct quotations. Her texts are allusive in a referential way, but rarely do direct quotations appear. The Bastable brothers use the line "good hunting" from Kipling's *Just So Stories* as code and a line from Milton's poetry is recited, drawing forth the

mermaid in *Wet Magic*; however, for books that are so overtly literary as Nesbit's, the direct quotations are rare. Instead the references are to specific kinds of books and genres: detective stories, adventure books, or fairy tales, or well-known characters. This appeal to the generic suggests that extensive reading, as opposed to selective and instructed reading, should not be dismissed as less meaningful.

With few exceptions in Nesbit's books, adult readers get it wrong. They misunderstand the book's power and the child's relationship with a book. Their own reading lacks finesse. Older female characters such as Aunt Enid in *Wet Magic* and Mrs. Wilmington, the housekeeper in *The Wonderful Garden*, give children didactic books to read. Mrs. Wilmington lacks imagination, which her bookshelf reveals. The children find her bedroom to be full of Victorian remnants: "antimacassars, china ornaments, and cheerfully-bound copies of the poets – the kind that are given for birthday presents and prizes, beautiful outside, and inside very small print on thin paper that lets the printing on the other side show through" (60). If a matronly character is not passing off moral material then she is reading silly romances. Mabel of *The Enchanted Castle* is confident her aunt will be fooled by a melodramatic letter she has written since her aunt is "always reading novelettes" (61). Many of the men are scholars but too serious and weighted down by their learning to appreciate the worlds that they study. They write dry, scholarly works on subjects the children come to understand better through their adventures. Later, the children help the scholars to create more successful works. With few exceptions, children are the superior readers. The only failing on the part of the child reader is if he or she does not read enough, but put a child into contact with a book, and generally magic ensues.

The message of her books is that magic, which was once apparent in the world, still exists but generally goes unrecognized. This oversight is usually blamed on scientific and technological advances. In the 1904 story “The Ring and the Lamp,” the narrator begins by addressing the reader:

You must have wondered what has become of all the interesting things you read about in fairy tales – the shoes of swiftness, and the sword of sharpness, and the cloak that made its wearer invisible and things like that. Well the fact is all these things are still in the world, hidden about somewhere, only people are so busy with new inventions, wireless telegraphs and x-rays and things like that, that they don’t trouble anymore to look for the really interesting things.

A similar idea is expressed in *The Enchanted Castle*, where it is explained that magic “went out when people began to have steam-engines . . . and newspapers, and telephones and wireless telegraphing” (17). For adults, technology and science have replaced magic, which is a loss for adults and threatens the future of society.

This division between a once magic world and a world where magic no longer seems to exist is discussed at most length in *The Enchanted Castle* (1907), a book Briggs marks as a shift in Nesbit’s writing (226). In this book and the ones that follow, Nesbit sheds some of the comedic and episodic qualities which characterized the Bastable and the Psaamead trilogies as her work became more mysterious, more complex, and eventually more fantastical. As the children in *The Enchanted Castle* move between magic and reality, the narrator often comments on what divides these two realms. Reality is compared to “another world, that had covered up and hidden the old world as a carpet covers a floor. The floor was there all right, underneath, but what he [Gerald] walked on was the carpet that covered it – and that carpet was drenched in

magic” (84). In a later passage, magic is a “curtain, thin as gossamer, strong as iron, that hangs for ever between the world of magic and the world that seems to us to be real” (202). The ability to contact this magic is decreasing; indeed, the places where it can be accessed “grow fewer every year” (84). Nesbit’s children are often fortunate in that they find these places: enchanted castles, ancestral homes, wonderful gardens. However, their ability to see and enjoy this magic is almost always shaped by their reading and mediated by a book. In part, this is because in Nesbit’s world, nothing predates the Book. One material volume can offer access to The Book of the World, the Book of Memory, or the Book of History, universal repositories where beauty, inspiration, and eternal virtues are inscribed. Nesbit’s ‘worldful of books’ provide access to symbols such as The Book of the World. The Book symbolizes all that is eternal and divine, beautiful and cosmopolitan, but such values are in jeopardy of being forgotten. In her later novels, Nesbit represent books as not solely contents to be read and enjoyed or rejected, but rather forces in shaping lives and worlds. The children must not only read – although they do read – but they also must recognize how the Book shapes their lives and adventures.

### **2.3 ADVENTURES IN THE BOOK OF HISTORY**

According to Julia Briggs’s biography, Oswald Barron, a friend, first introduced Nesbit to history as a magical and fruitful subject. Barron “taught Nesbit to feel the imaginative appeal of history, the mysterious glamour of what is continuously changing and being lost, and try to understand it from the inside” (182). Like some of her contemporaries, most notably Kipling, Nesbit turned to British history as a source of adventure and meaning. This development in Edwardian children’s writing has been called the search for “a magical, mythical sense of ‘real’

England” (Gavin and Humphries 11). The results are *House of Arden* and *Harding’s Luck*, where English history becomes the scene for adventure and treasure hunting. *The House of Arden* opens with a description of the formerly great, now fallen Arden family and their crumbling ancestral home where once upon a time, kings visited, battles were fought, and treasures were hidden. When the young Edred is deemed the new Lord of Arden, he and his sister Elfrida set out to find the lost Arden treasure in hopes of restoring Arden castle to its original glory. With the help of a magical creature called the Mouldiwarp, the children travel back in time to find the treasure by re-visiting Arden at different periods in history

In his article, “Pagan Papers: History, Mysticism, and Edwardian Childhood,” Paul March-Russell studies Edwardian children’s fiction and its representation of English history. He argues that in texts such as *The House of Arden* and *Kipling’s Puck of Pook’s Hill*, “history became a form of child’s play” (March-Russell 31). This literary development is often viewed as part of the Edwardian retreat from empire to “little Britain,” the desire to return to some sense of true Englishness. According to March-Russell, “Reading becomes a key with which to enter its [history’s] hidden meanings. Reading, by extension, is conjoined with a sense of the magical and imaginative” (32). But in his argument, March-Russell contends that while Kipling works to reinforce the English identity, Nesbit’s fiction does not since “Kipling offers an image of the nation-state bolstered by a mythic sense of cultural identity. Nesbit’s use of magic throws this vision into doubt” (35). Like March-Russell, I believe Nesbit’s texts do not aim to reinforce an English cultural identity, in part because history proves to an unstable concept in her representation, where much depends upon what book is read and how the story is told.

History, what it is, and its value come under scrutiny in the *House of Arden* as the children constantly question what kind of story they are participating in. History as they know it from school is a dull, dry subject. The following describes how Edred and Elfrida

learned reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, spelling, history, and useful knowledge, all of which they hated quite impartially, which means they hated the whole lot – one thing as much as another. The only part of lessons they liked was the home-work when, if Aunt Edith had time to help them, geography became like adventures, history like story-books (5).

Like Aunt Edith, Nesbit aims to transform history into a story and gives it meaning and purpose. She articulates this well in the introduction to *Children's Stories from English History* (1910), a collection of stories about important figures in English history. Nesbit explains:

When I was very, very little, I hated history more than all my other lessons put together, because I had to learn it out of a horrid little book, called somebody's "Outlines of English History"; and it seemed to be all the names of the kings and the dates of battles, and, believing it to be nothing else, I hated it accordingly. I hope you do not think anything so foolish, because, really, history is a story, a story of things that happened to real live people in our England years ago; and the things that are happening here and now, and that are put in the newspapers, will be history for little children one of these days. The people in those old times were the same kind of people who live now.

In school and through academic study, history has been turned into a dull subject, drained of magic and vitality and turned into facts and figures. Her critique of history is part of Nesbit's

larger problem with modern education in general. The purpose of history should not be the teaching of facts and figures but instead should inspire the child. As she writes in *Wings and the Child*, “Education which teaches a man everything but how to live to the glory of God and the service of man is not Education, but only instruction; and it is the fruit of the tree, not of Life, but of Death (104).

In *The House of Arden*, the Mouldiwarp challenges what the children think history is. When Edred and Elfrida meet the Mouldiwarp, he refers to himself as a fairy tale creature. When Edred resists the idea of being part of a fairy tale, the Mouldiwarp states, “Why, in a fairy tale for sure, said the mole. Wherever to goodness else on earth do you suppose you to be?” (33). When Edred gives the literal answer, “on Arden Knoll,” the mole counters, “An’ aint that in a fairy tale?” (33). Later, on their first adventure in the past, Edred insists that they are not in history, but “We’re at Arden” (62). Elfrida responds by saying “We *are* in history” (62). At other times they observe that they have never known “such a place as history for adventures to happen” or even that “history’s all lies” (276). The result is to leave history in unsettled form.

History can be a source for stories and adventures, but Nesbit’s stories convey an unusual sense that knowing or reading about history can also be dangerous. This is particularly true for Elfrida who is at times frustrated and relieved by her lack of knowledge of dates and historical events (a state which is often blamed on school and on the fact that one never gets very far in the textbook). When they find themselves in 1807 amidst fear of an attack from Napoleon, Elfrida wishes more than ever that she knew more about the later chapters of the history book. She wonders, “Did Boney land in England on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, 1807?” (84). When they arrive in the time of James I, she does know history and observes that it is Guy Fawkes Day. Her knowledge of the gunpowder plot before it happens lands her and her family in the Tower of London, “a

disaster caused by her knowing too much history. That is why she is careful to make sure that no misfortunate shall ever happen on *that* account” (164) Even when she meets Anne Boleyn, she wishes “I didn’t know so much history . . . it’s dreadful to know that her head - -” (275) To a certain extent, the knowledge she has gained in school about history has only hurt her.

Books matter to history. While modern works such as the textbook Nesbit was given in school can ruin the pleasure of history, old books can keep a real history alive. The first account Nesbit gives in *Children’s Stories from English History* (1910) is of Alfred I, and great emphasis is placed upon the development of his literacy. Unlike his older brothers, Alfred loved to sit and listen to his mother read stories and poems from a special book. When he grew older, he was the only one of his brothers to learn to read hence he inherited this special volume. In Nesbit’s account, all of Alfred’s success, wisdom, and great deeds can be traced back to his mother’s book. His greatest achievement, according to Nesbit, was the writing of the first history of England. She notes:

He did many good and wise things, but the best and wisest thing he ever did was to begin to write the History of England. There had been English poems before this, but no English stories that were not written in poetry. So that Alfred’s book was the first of all the thousands and thousands of English books that you see on the shelves of the big libraries.

Poetry is oral, preliterate, unstable, and what Alfred provides is a lasting record. He also made it easier for people to learn to read and to have access to the power of books, a lesson which stemmed from his own childhood.

Edred and Elfrida begin their search for the spell they need in the Arden library, where among numerous volumes, they try to locate the one book that might help them. They eventually find *The History of Ardens of Arden*, where tucked inside is the magic spell written on a slip of paper, which leads them to the Mouldiwarp, who can help them travel back in time. This book appears again and again throughout the story. In between time travel, Edred and Elfrida read the book aloud to each other, learning about the past. When they develop photographs of the castle (after having taken their Brownie camera back in time) to use when they restore the castle, they stash the pictures inside the book. In this way, the book is not only a guide for the children into the past, but one to which they can contribute as they build the future.

While *The House of Arden* is told primarily from the perspective of Edred and Elfrida and concerns the search for the treasure of Arden House, the sequel *Harding's Luck* is about their cousin Dickie Harding. Dickie, or Cousin Richard, also appears in the *House of Arden*; likewise his cousins appear as part of *Harding's Luck*, since their fates are linked across time and space. *Harding's Luck* concerns the search for the true heir of Arden House. It is during *Harding's Luck* that Nesbit introduces a pageant of book characters, and the scene provides insight into the cosmopolitan ideals underpinning her vision of Book Magic. The Book of History includes English history, but it also includes much more. Her child readers may be accessing the mythic and magical past, and through this they learn about universal human qualities and cosmopolitan citizenship. It serves to teach the more universal lesson: "Men die. Man does not. Times fly. Time flies not" (*Harding's Luck* 73).

The scene including the pageant of book characters occurs after Dickie has been kidnapped and Edred and Elfrida turn to the Mouldiwarp for help, which leads them to ask for help from the Great Mouldiestwarp, the mole who oversees all magic. When Edred and Elfrida

come before the Great Mouldiestwarp to ask for help in finding their cousin Dickie, they enter the magical realm and find

a great white hall with avenues of tall pillars stretching in every direction as far as you could see. The hall was crowded with people dressed in costumes of all countries and ages – Chinamen, Indians, Crusaders in armor, powdered ladies, doubleted gentlemen, Cavaliers in curls, Turks in turbans, Arabs, monks, abbesses, jesters, grandees with ruffs round their necks and savages with kilts of thatch (258).

The magic world is imagined as a complicated cosmopolitan space, one that includes citizens from around the world and from different eras, and yet is presided over by an English representative.

The Great Mouldiestwarp tells Edred that in order to save Dickie he must perform a noble deed, one that requires him to sacrifice his future title. As he tells Edred, “Be One of us Edred. Be one of us” (264). Upon exiting the hall, Edred studies the crowd again and realizes what the Great Mouldiestwarp is telling him. When he looks at the crowd gathered

He knew them all. Joan of Arc and Peter the Hermit, Hereward and Drake, Elsie whose brothers were swans, St. George who killed the dragon, Blondel who sang to his king in prison, Lady Nithsdale who brought her husband safe out of the cruel Tower. There were captains who went down with their ships, generals who died fighting with forlorn hopes, patriots, kings, nuns, monks, men, women, and children – all with that light in their eyes which brightens with the splendor the dreams of men (264).

He is surrounded by characters drawn without distinction from literature and history, who like Edred, were required to perform noble deeds and are remembered for their sacrifice and bravery. Such acts do not just happen in books nor do they only belong in the past. On some of their previous adventures, Edred and Elfrida encountered famous people such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Anne Boleyn, but always within the proper historical context. What makes this particular scene different is how so many characters are brought together to represent a pageant of history and literature, which serves to inspire Edred. The characters in this scene do not speak or provide any movement in the plot; instead, they are the silent backdrop to all books made visible.

Like children in Nesbit's other novels, Edred can be understood as having to behave like a character from a book. In all her novels, the characters often compare what they see or experience to a book. Oswald Bastable borrows Kipling's style to end a chapter; Gerald in *The Enchanted Castle* tends to "talk like a book"; and even Elfrida at one points says she feels like a detective in a book. But unlike when Oswald or Gerald imitates books, there is a weightiness and gravity to Edred's role. Those earlier incidents are somewhat humourous, poking fun at a naïve childhood perspective and the distance between book behaviour and real life. But for Edred, to act like a hero or heroine from literature or history is not an amusing attempt to apply some kind of fabricated book logic to the real world. Instead it is to recognize there is a Book of History which that is timeless and enduring and where inspiration lies. What is written in the book is what endures. This timeless pageant of history exists whether or not readers recognize it or not. By drawing on its inspiration, Edred can help keep knowledge of it alive at the same time as he can use it to help the future of his family

## 2.4 THE MAGIC CITY AND THE BOOK OF THE IMAGINATION

Of all of Nesbit's stories, *The Magic City* (1910) is arguably her most modernist work and her most positive representation of the influence of childhood reading. The story moves Nesbit's writing deeper into the genre of fantasy as it illustrates how the imagination works and is in part shaped by material, creative, and cultural forces of books. The story draws on her experience of building play cities out of household items such as books, blocks, and dishes, but it also exemplifies bricolage, a form of play and construction that is credited to the modern child. Celebrated by Walter Benjamin in "Old Forgotten Children's Books," bricolage is described as "children's way of shaping a 'small world' by working across media 'in a new intuitive relationship' – a kind of recipe for Modernist experimentation" (quoted in Higonnet 95). Because books are so crucial to the cities her children build, the idea of bricolage also becomes a useful means for understanding childhood reading – as an assembly of a range of texts to create something new.

*The Magic City* (1910) tweaks and develops an idea that she first introduced in the short story "The Town in the Library" (1901). In the original short story, Rosamond and Fabian are left home on Christmas Eve while their mother delivers packages to the poor. The children are bored and curious, especially since their mother has explicitly warned them against opening the top two drawers of the library desk. To pass the time, they begin to build a town using what is available: a desk drawer, blocks, toys, and since they are located in the library, books. It describes how

They got Shakespeare in fourteen volumes, and *Rollin's Ancient History* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and the *Beauties of Literature* in fifty-six fat volumes, and they built not only a castle, but a town – and a big town (12).

Many works of serious literature go into creating this town. The books they choose are important and determine the town's structure, appearance, and even its atmosphere.

Upon its completion, the children walk up the steps, which they have built from volumes of *The Spectator*, *Rambler*, *Observer*, and *Tatler*, and magically go in. They find themselves within the walls of a town, and located in the town is a house just like their own house, with a library inside it just like their library, containing a town built out of blocks and books just like the town they had built. Only when they look outside the windows and see that the walls are made of the *Encyclopedia* and the *Biographical Dictionary* are they certain that they are not in their real house. They realize they are “in a town built in a library in a house in a town built in a library in a house in a town called London” (24). Populated by toy soldiers who have transformed into a fearsome military, the children feel vulnerable and wish to escape. As they did before, Fabian and Rosamond decide to enter the town in the library in the room, which leads them into another town with another house with another library with another town built in it, setting up the endless possibility of going deeper and deeper into towns in libraries in houses in towns.

Although the town is the children's creation, they do not control it, and there is something menacing about it once they enter. They are at a disadvantage in this world and need the help of a red soldier to figure out how to escape. The books do not come alive in this story. Toy soldiers and a wound-up mouse can create trouble or provide help to the children; nevertheless, the books contribute to the town's imposing atmosphere. Many of the books the children used in the construction are weighty tomes, books filled with important literary and historical information, which seem to wield authority over the children and whether or not they children have ever read any of them appears doubtful. The children fear they could be lost in the

books forever, that there is no end to the towns in libraries in houses. As Briggs describes, they are “trapped in an apparently infinite regress of towns and libraries, in a startling modern image of the endlessly mirroring series of literature, imagination, and experience” (327). This is Nesbit’s most frightening representation of what it means to be a child reader in an extensive world of books. The children come across as powerless as their imagination and agency is stifled by an atmosphere of imposing books.

In *The Magic City*, Nesbit further animates the world of the imagination, describing what a world built out of books might be like, while also giving the children greater agency to maneuver and manipulate the books to their advantage. In the nine years between the two tales, Nesbit’s ideas about extensive reading seem to have changed as she imagines a way that it can be less frightening, and even empowering, to be trapped in a world of books. As in “The Town in the Library,” books comprise much of the magic city’s architecture, but, in a new twist, their contents can escape, releasing people, animals, geography, and even weather, which then can transform the city. Although there are many dangers the children must face, they are less fearful than Rosamund and Fabian were. As in the short story, through a set of magical circumstances, two children, Philip and Lucy, find themselves inside the city they built and learn they must help deliver it from the Pretenderette who wishes to destroy it. The Pretenderette turns out to be Lucy’s nurse, who also has found entry into the world. The children’s knowledge of books helps them as they complete Herculean labours and delivers the city from the Pretenderette.

The city is built when Philip finds himself all alone, except for servants, at the Grange, the home of his sister’s new husband. After constructing a building out of blocks in the nursery, Phillip decides it looks too much like a factory, rejecting manufactured toys which limit his creativity. He relocates to the drawing room that offers more interesting building materials.

Although he does not build in the library, he makes extensive use of offerings, choosing volumes for practical and aesthetic purposes. The narrator explains how Philip “brought up twenty-seven volumes bound in white vellum with marbled boards, a set of Shakespeare, ten volumes in green morocco. These made pillars and cloisters, dark, mysterious, and attractive” (10). Besides books, Philip also uses dominos, cotton reels, cake tins, fingers bowls, lids from kettles, and coffee pots. After completing one city, he builds another and joins the two together with a bridge made out of a yardstick. This hodgepodge of materials is important and emphasizes the creativity and the extent to which this city is a form of bricolage. Phillip inhabits not only a world of many books, but also of many materials things, which he re-imagines and re-animates in a new ways.

Although Philip is responsible for creating the magic city and it is the product of his imagination, the city proves to have a history and existence that is larger than him. To visit it is not to travel back in time, but rather to travel to another space that exists contemporaneous with and independent of the human world. It includes all the items that Philip used in building the city as well as all the cities he has built in the past, and it contains much, much more. It proves to be as cosmopolitan and varied as the Great Mouldiestwarp’s palace. When the children first enter they notice the crowd:

There were men and women and children in every sort of dress. Italian, Spanish, Russian; French peasants in blue blouses and wooden shoes, workmen in the dress of English working people wore a hundred years ago. Norwegians, Swedes, Swiss, Turks, Greeks, Indians, Arabians, Chinese, Japanese, besides Red Indians in dresses of skins, and Scots in kilts and sporrans (28).

There is no explanation as to how or why this crowd is there. While certain figures and animals, such as Noah correspond to toys Philip used in the construction, he is not responsible for

populating it with such a motley array of people. But the realm of the imagination and a world created out of books is inevitably wider and more varied than any one person can dream on his or her own.

On a few occasions in Polistopolis's history, books have accidentally been opened, spilling their contents into the city. Borrowing from the plot of her earlier story "Book of Beasts," Nesbit once again has exotic animals escape from a book, although it takes more effort to open the book when it is part of a wall. One person cannot accomplish it alone. As Noah from the Ark, one of the city's inhabitants, explains,

Many years ago, in repairing some of the buildings, the masons removed the supports of one of the books which are part of the architecture. The book fell. It fell open, and out came the Hippogriff. Then they saw something struggling under the next page and lifted it, and out came a megatherium. So they shut the book and built it into the wall (117).

Tampering with the books can have unexpected, even dangerous consequences. For the most part, these beasts have not troubled the citizens. At the same time, the escaped contents of books can also be a boon for the city. The weather in Polistopolis is due to a book of poetry, which was missing a back cover. Again Noah explains to the children:

We got a lot out of that page, rain and sun and sky and clouds, mountains, gardens, roses, lilies, flowers in general, "blossoms of delight" they were called in the book and trees and the sea, and the desert and silver and iron (117).

This is an interesting renegotiation of the nature and art relationship that Anita Moss describes as

part of the late nineteenth-century Romantics vision of nature as art (231). Instead of art being inspired by nature, the natural elements in Polistopolis are the product of words, just another example of the book's primacy in Nesbit's world.

The magic of books and their power to influence and transform the imagination is evident throughout the story, but so is the value of the reader's manipulation and interpretation of books. In order to deliver the city, Philip and Lucy must complete several labours, and many of them are related to problems caused by the escaped contents of books. They must slay the dragon that fled from the *Book of Beasts* and help the "Happy Island Dwellers by the Sea" who accidentally emerged from a book and who do not live on an island nor by the sea. But it is when they must find a way to keep the Great Sloth "awake and busy" (161) that Philip and Lucy must rely on their knowledge of books to help them.

The Great Sloth is yet another animal who escaped from *The Book of Beasts* and headed to a land north of the city known as Briskford. Once there, through his laziness, he transformed the bustling, fertile, rich land into a wasteland that was renamed Somnolentia. To reach this land, Philip and Lucy must travel by boat up a river, but as their journey progresses, their parrot companion realizes something is wrong and that the river has changed course. The only possible explanation for such a change is that someone has opened a book and released a new topography. Fortunately, Philip recognizes where the new river comes from, a book titled *The Last Cruise of the Teal*. He tells his companions, "It's a ripping book and I used it for the roof of the outer court of the Hall of Justice" (171). When the geography changes again, it is Lucy who recognizes the text, which was also used in building the justice hall. When the river deposits them into a domed area, Lucy also knows from *The Arabian Nights* how to escape through a trap door in the roof. Without that knowledge or books, they would never have known what to do or

where to go. People are at the mercy of books, and only by reading them can a person have any power to use books rather than be potential victims of the magic. The children need to be familiar with a wide range of books since the world is made out of all of them: ripping adventure stories, travelogues, fairy tales, history books, geography texts, and so on. Their reading resembles the construction of the city, the cobbling together of a variety of books and ideas in order to create something new and beautiful.

The final faceoff between deliverer and destroyer for control of the city is not waged between Philip and the Pretenderette; rather, it is fought by Julius Caesar and the Ancient Gauls, historical figures pulled from books. Again, to return to Anthea Bell's evaluation, this is another example of Nesbit's late-career laziness, a tactic that lessens the drama of the conclusion.

Although most of Philip's challenges in the Polistopolis have been to solve the problems there, they have also been ways of addressing the problems and fears in his own life. It is in the magic city that he resolves his conflict with Lucy, faces off against the mean nurse, and reconciles with his sister Helen and accepts their new home life. Phillip's reliance on historical characters to fight the final battle demonstrates he has learned how to use knowledge and education.

Upon returning to the city, the children discover the Pretenderette has tricked the citizens into opening a book and releasing the Sequani and Aedui, barbarian tribes Caesar battled and defeated. Lucy takes responsibility for this development, since she recalls telling her former Nurse about these warriors. This suggests an inherent weakness in their opponent. Although she is clever to remember the story, she is not a reader herself and, therefore, does not have the same extensive knowledge of books that the children have. In order to combat the Pretenderette's forces, Philip, with the help of twenty men, lifts the cover off of *De Belloc Gallico*, Caesar's own account of the Gallic wars that often used in Latin instruction, and calls forth Caesar.

The scene is striking for the way the characters exiting the book resemble bringing people back from the dead. Three times Nesbit compares the open book to a marble tomb. The first is when Caesar comes from “the space below the slab, as it were from a marble tomb” (195). It appears again when the soldiers exit: “suddenly, and out of it, as out of an open marble tomb, came long lines of silent armed men” (195), and finally when the defeated Gauls flee back to the safety of the book: “The great marble-covered book that looked like a marble tomb was still open, its cover and fifteen leaves propped open . . . into that open book leapt the first barbarians” (200). Written into serious books and left unread, history is lifeless. History contained in books is not as dull or lifeless as the library and schoolmaster would have one believe. The book ceases to be a dry academic means for studying a dead language, and instead it becomes a vibrant tale that can address good versus evil.

After the battle, once Caesar’s army and foes have all “plunged headlong into the open book” (200), Caesar assures Lucy no one was hurt since “it was necessary to get every man back into the book just as he left it, or what would the schoolmasters have done?” (200). The outcome of the battle was predetermined, since it could not differ from what was already written. The book cannot change; however, what can change is the reader, in this case, Philip. After he calls Caesar forth, the Roman emperor says to the boy: “You have often tried to master Caesar and always failed. Now you shall be no more ashamed of that failure, for you shall see Caesar’s power” (201). Seeing the book alive in his imagination, Philip is now able to understand its value.

In 1912 Nesbit brought her art to life and constructed a version of a magic city for the Children’s Welfare Exposition in London. That same year, she published *Wings and the Children or The Building of Magic Cities*, a treatise on her ideas about childhood, education,

imagination, beauty, and citizenship. Among the chapters are several dedicated to the subject of building magic cities in response to what she claimed were readers' demands for the information. The chapters are quite detailed, giving photographs of potential building materials, and books are an important part of this process. Book Magic is not just in books, but it can be enjoyed by real children too. As Nesbit explains, "The only magic in the city is the magic of imagination, which is, after all, the best magic in the world (143).

## 2.5 MAGIC BOOKS AND THE BOOK OF NATURE

*The Wonderful Garden*, like many of Nesbit's novels, features books quite prominently, and in fact, the entire plot depends upon some books, or as the narrator explains in the first chapter, a "book was the beginning of this story, or at least, if it wasn't that book, it was the other book" (3). The first book is *The Language of Flowers*, a gift eleven-year-old Caroline receives on her birthday in the first chapter. The second book is a book of magic the children discover that once belonged to an ancestress who was believed to be a witch. In the story, the three Cs, Caroline, Charles and Charlotte, use these books to solve problems through magical means, although it is never entirely clear if magic is responsible or if the children's belief in magic is enough to make it seem as though something magical has happened.

Magic books and making magic is at the centre of the plot of *The Wonderful Garden*. The first book that inspires their magic is *The Language of Flowers*, a gift from Miss Peckitt, the dressmaker. It had been hers as a child and her mothers before her. The book describes what each flower symbolizes or means, and the children use this information to create bouquets to express their thoughts and feelings. In the beginning, they use it to simply say thank you or ask

for forgiveness, but as they dabble more and more with magic, they start to use flowers for more magical purposes. The book and its content are not magical book per se, but are posited as offering old and forgotten lore, full of neglected mythic knowledge. When Great Uncle Charles reads it, he notes in his dry scholarly way: “Never did the florographist select from cunning nature’s wondrous field a more appropriate interpreter of man’s innermost passion than when he chose the arbor vitae to formulate the significance, ‘Live for me.’” (382). Packed within the book is valuable knowledge on how to live a meaningful life.

The other important book, or books, in the story are books of magic that once belonged to Dame Eleanour. When they are sent to live with their great-uncle for the summer, he shows them a portrait of an ancestress who was burned as a witch. In the painting, she is holding her books of magic, which the Uncle admits to having searched for without success. The children decide to adopt this search and are eventually successful in locating them. The first book turns up after the children rearrange the dining room bookshelves according to colour. This annoys the housekeeper, Mrs. Wilmington, who immediately puts them back in the proper order. She forgets to replace one volume: “*Shadoxhurst on Thessalonians*, a dull large book” (50), which apparently has gone unread for years. When Charles pick up *Thessalonians*, the cover comes off, and inside they discover another book, a book which resembles the one in the painting of Eleanour. Written in Latin, they seek a clergyman’s help to read it, and they learn it is a book of magic spells. He reads one to them, instructions on how to use fern seed to gain the power to see invisible things, which they try later that night with mixed success. Eleanour’s second book of magic is likewise hidden within another book; this time it is Pope’s translation of the *Iliad*. Written in old English, where “s” is shaped like “f”, the children are able to decipher that it is a

book of potions. Upon its discovery, Caroline concludes: “Now we’ve got all three. The spells, and the medicine, and the *Language Of*. And what one won’t do, the other will” (195). Armed with the books, the children begin to work their magic.

In contrast to the children, Great Uncle Charles is a scholar studying a branch of magic and aiming to produce an academic work tentatively titled “A Brief Consideration of the Psychological and Physiological Part Played by Suggestion in So-Called Magic” (28). The children are critical of the title since it sounds as though he does not believe in magic. Of course, his dry and scholarly title aptly describes the many magical adventures in *The Wonderful Garden*, albeit in a way that strips them of fun or value. While the Uncle and his friend the clergyman discuss a range of subjects such as ‘the golden bough,’ ‘myths,’ and ‘folk-lore,’ the children do not pay much attention (157). The irony, of course, is that while the adults can do little more than discuss these topics theoretically, the children are experiencing and making use of such forms of knowledge. In the end, the Uncle learns and benefits from the children’s play. In this way, Nesbit’s plot fits within the works of children’s literature where the adult is renewed by the children’s energies.

Throughout various challenges and adventures, the children use these three books to create or gain their desires. Using and adapting what they discover in the books, they create an herbal tea in hopes of influencing their uncle’s decision, make a poultice out of roses to fight illness, and create the perfect bouquet to inspire largesse in a baron. Whenever they have a problem or goal, Caroline fetches *The Language of Flowers*, and they head to the garden to “take the herbs that seem mostly likely to make a person do what you want.” (161). The garden itself proves to be a secretive, magical, and beautiful place, another connection to the past. It can only be reached through a secret passageway, and its plants and flowers are perfect: “There was

nowhere an imperfect leaf, a deformed bud, or misshapen flower. Every plant grew . . .with an extraordinary evenness.” (41). When the children compliment the gardener on his work, he claims there “seems as if there was a blessing on the place” (42). Etched on a stone wall in the garden is “Here be Dreames 1589 Respice Finem,” a Latin phrase that can be translated as “Behold the End” or “Consider the Outcome.” There is a sense the garden too is magical or blessed with some kind of mystical power, perhaps growing special specimens of flora and fauna that aid in the making of magic. Here is the Book of Nature made visible.

As the children begin to use *The Language of Flowers* to give meaning-filled bouquets to different people and to employ the other books to cast spells and make potions, the garden with its beautiful samples becomes an important source. In each case, their desired goal is accomplished. The children for the most part believe magic is responsible, although the outcomes could easily be credited to more prosaic causes. Nevertheless, as Caroline argues, “We did what it said in the book, and it happened like it said in the book it would happen. I believe you could manage everything with spell is if you only knew the proper ones” (174). In many ways, *The Wonderful Garden* shows how books in a realistic setting can be magical – how they can open up new ways of seeing and experiencing, how they are full of forgotten knowledge and folklore, and how they can turn ordinary events into extraordinary ones. For the most part, nothing truly supernatural occurs in the novel: no books come alive, no magic creature appears and no journeys into other lands are made, with the one possible exception of when the children interact with the ghost of Dame Eleanour. Through special preparation and consultation with their magical tomes, the children conjure their ancestress to speak. She praises how the children have used her magic:

I have come to you because you have believed in the old and beautiful things.

You sought for my books and found them; also you have tried to use the magic spells to help the poor and needy, and to reconcile them who are at strife (393).

The magic of books is not simply hocus pocus but has the power to wield good in the world.

Books, as material items and as content, are the primary items for feeding and fostering imagination, in part because the world is a written text. Even nature is a book to be read and interpreted. Of all her children's novels, *The Wonderful Garden* attempts to capture most realistically how reading and books can be magical. In particular, how books provide a means to connect with the past and older, more mystical forms of knowledge, which can be used to form a better future.

Like most of Nesbit's other stories, *The Wonderful Garden* was serialized in *The Strand* between January and September 1911. The illustrator for most of her work was H. R. Millar, and in one of his initial illustrations for *The Wonderful Garden* he depicts the three Cs absorbed in reading. All three of them are knelt on the floor with their arms resting on an ottoman as they study different books intently. Various splayed volumes litter the floor around them. In the background, their Aunt Emmeline peers in the doorway, but the children are completely oblivious to her. The caption for the picture states "There was a good deal of whispered talk and mystery." The illustration, in many ways, is representative of Nesbit's child reader, absorbed in 'a worldful of books' and in contact with mysteries and knowledge that are invisible to the adult.

## 2.6 WET MAGIC AND THE BOOK OF FAERIE

Nesbit's final novel for children is *Wet Magic*, which arguably brings all her arguments about books and reading and children together, as it dramatizes the value of fantasy for understanding reading and the world. Fairy tales were often considered the products of a preliterate society; works that predate the written word and the book, belonging to a world where orality was still predominate. They were also considered controversial reading for children in the early twentieth-century since their effects upon the imagination were possibly damaging. Unsurprisingly, this is not a position Nesbit shared. In *Wet Magic*, her fairy tale space of merworld, while ancient, still exists and is as shaped by books as any other modern space, suggesting there is no land before or beyond the book. In the novel, a family of four children, Francis, Mavis, Kathleen, and Bernard rescue a mermaid and then accompany her to Merland, where they become embroiled in a war between the Merfolk and the Underfolk.

The children discover they are able to call forth a mermaid through the recitation of lines from John Milton's poem "Sabrina Fair," which they know as it is printed under a picture in their nursery. When they recite the lines, a mermaid appears, although initially it is a tiny mermaid in a little tank. It takes a while for the children to agree that they are, indeed, summoning a real mermaid. Again in *Wet Magic*, part of what is required of the children is faith, that if you act as though there is magic and do not question it, then it will come true. This is a lesson they have learned from books. As Mavis says to her doubting brother, "When do you find people in books going on like that? They just say, This is magic!" and behave as if it was" (27).

The children rescue a mermaid from a circus who then invites them to come visit her world. The children have trepidations, except for Kathleen, the youngest. The children's response to the mermaid is shaped in part by their reading. Bernard, in general, is the doubter of

the group, but Francis, Mavis, and Kathleen all have varying ideas about mermaids based upon their most recent literary experience of them. Francis is reminded of Heinrich Heine's poem of the Lorelei and sees the mermaid as a siren with a face such as the "Lady of the Rhine [might] have looked to the "sailor in the skiff" (76). Mavis recalls *Undine* and tries "not to think that there was any lack of soul in the mermaid's kind eyes" (76). But Kathleen who by another coincidence had just read "The Forsaken Merman" is not concerned. Trusting the mermaid implicitly, Kathleen dives in, and the other children have no choice but to follow as well.

In order to reach the merkingdom, it is necessary to swim through a cavern that is built entirely out of books. As the mermaid explains,

This is the Cave of Learning, you know, very dark at the beginning and getting lighter and lighter as you get nearer to the golden door. All these rocks are made of books really, and they exude learning from every crack. We cover them up with anemones and seaweed and pretty things as well as we can, but the learning will leak out (83).

Once again in Nesbit's imagination, the natural world does not predate the book, but instead natural elements are used to decorate and disguise the books. There is a palpable oppressiveness to the Cave of Learning, what the mermaid describes as "Education." Once books are read, they are unlocked and whatever is inside them can escape, regardless of whether it is good or bad. This fairy tale world is literate, but there is a sense that literacy is not necessarily a positive development. The Mermaid warns the children, "We have to be careful . . . because of the people in the books. They are always trying to get out of the books that the cave is made of; and some of them are very undesirable characters" (84). Reading is what grants the books power and once they are unlocked, it can not be undone. The mermaid continues: "That's the worst of

Education. We've all read such an awful lot, and that unlocks the books" (84). As in the story about Rosamond and Fabian's town, this structure built of books has a threatening quality to it, but the mermaid identifies what remained unspoken in "The Town in The Library," which is that education is to blame for the atmosphere. In this way, ignorance is valued by the merpeople as an effective means for battling books. Porpoises guard the entrance since they have not read anything and are less at risk from the books' ideas.

The mermaid identifies whom she considers to be the bad Book People. They include characters such as Eric, Little by Little, and Aunt Fortune from moralizing tales and stories as well as bad characters from good books such as Mr. Murdstone and Uriah Heep from Dickens's novels and Caliban and Iago from the plays of Shakespeare. The suggestion is that even good reading comes with bad influences. There is no way to avoid something bad in books. The mermaid assumes the children are familiar with the bad Book People from moralizing tales and stories, but that they do not know the bad Book People from history, such as John Knox, Machiavelli, Don Diego, Tipoo Sahib and Sally Brass, which proves to be a fair assumption.

While the children are visiting, they cause a war to break out between the Merfolk and the Underfolk. One of tactics the Underfolk use to defeat the Merfolk is to release bad Book People. This is an effective strategy because the Book People's goal is "destroying any beautiful thing they happen[ed] to find" since they hate beauty and happiness" (98). The children are put on the front lines along with the porpoises to stop the Book People. Ignorance is the best defense, since as the mermaid explains to them, as long as they can say "I never heard of you" to a Book Person, they are powerless; indeed, those words are "like a deadly sword" to them. Eventually the children slip up, and the Book People gain entry. The door opened and "it

revealed the crowd that stood without – cruel faces, stupid faces, crafty faces, sullen faces, angry faces” (102). These are the kinds of people who can be found in all sorts of books, as in life.

The children lose consciousness when the Book People attack them. Once they reawake, the children realize that the only way to fight the bad Book People is by releasing good Book People, to fight books with books. All the children must do is tap on the back of the books “which are books’ front doors” and call forth a character. The narrator writes:

You can guess the sort of books at which they knocked – Kingsley and Shakespeare and Marryat and Dickens, Miss Alcott and Mrs. Ewing, Hans Andersen and Stevenson, and Mayne Reid. Quentin Durward and Laurie were the first to come out, then Hereward and Amyas and Will Cary, David Copperfield, Rob Roy, Ivanhoe, Caesar and Anthony, Coriolanus and Othello; but you can make the list for yourselves (124).

In addressing the reader at the end, the narrator assumes that any number of good Book people exists and that any reader might come up with his or her own list.

As in *The Magic City*, the scene unfolds like a zombie movie. Instead of the undead emerging from coffins, the image is of the book people being freed from beneath the covers of books. The children’s plan works. Once the battle is fought and the good Book People triumph, the children are left with a lasting impression.

The fight was over, the Book People had gone back into their books, and it was almost as though they had never left them – not quite, for the children have seen the faces of the heroes, and the books where those lived could never again now be the same to them. All books indeed would now have an interest far above any

they had ever held before – for any of these people might be found in a any book.  
You never knew (126).

Although Bell views this incident as proof of Nesbit’s weak plots in later years, in fact it is an attempt to animate her ideas and beliefs about books and reading. The battle between the good and bad Book People in Merland brings to life the battle that was raging earlier in the novel between Aunt Enid and the children about what to read on the train. Aunt Enid, who is not really their aunt, is not a sympathetic character nor does she understand or appreciate children. She is a living example of a bad Book Person. On the train trip to the seaside, she provides the children with reading material,

*Eric, or Little by Little, Elise, Or like a Little Candle, Brave Bessie, and Ingenious Isabel* had been dealt out as though they were cards for a game... They had been a great bother to carry, and were impossible to read. Kathleen and Bernard preferred looking out of the windows, and the two elder ones tried to read the paper left by the lady (17).

The children do not read the didactic books Aunt Enid gives them. What on the train was a child’s thwarting of adult authority becomes a war between good and evil, or at the very least, between happiness and misery, between beauty and ugliness in Merland. Adults do not recognize magic and do not understand the power of books. This ignorance of books results in certain adults becoming bad Book People, who, like the bad Book People who fight in Merland, try to destroy what is good and beautiful.

The outcome of the battle between the merfolk and the underfolk is not only important for these underwater creatures, but for the human world as well, since the merfolk are responsible for all the waters. The mermaid explains, “We have to keep the rivers flowing . . . the

earthly rivers . . . and to see to the rain and snow taps, and to attend to the tides and whirlpools, and open the cages where the winds are kept” (94). By looking in a pool, the children can see what the mermaid is doing for the world, as though watching cinematograph:

They saw the Red Indians building their wigwams by the great rivers . . . they saw brown men setting their fish traps by the Nile, and brown girls sending out little golden-lighted love-ships on the Ganges. They saw the storm splendor of the St. Laurence, and the Medway’s pastoral peace. . . They saw women washing clothes in the Seine, and boys sailing boats on the Serpentine . . . They saw Niagara and the Zambesi falls (94-5).

Again, Nesbit inserts a cosmopolitan image into *Wet Magic*, this time a geographic scene that brings together the waters from around the world. To squash or forget the Book of Faerie comes at great peril to humanity.

## **2.7 CHILDHOOD READING AS BOOK MAGIC**

In *The Wings of the Child*, Nesbit’s nonfiction work on the nature of childhood, she discusses child’s play, its imagination, its sense of beauty, and so on. At one point, she turns to childhood reading and writes

Of books for little children there are plenty – not fine literature, it is true – but harmless. As the child grows older he will want more books, and different books – and if you insist on personally conducting him on his grand tour through literature he will probably miss a good many places that he would like to go. For a child from ten onwards it is no bad thing to give the run of a good general library.

When he has exhausted the story books he will read the ballads, the histories and the travels, and may even nibble at science poetry, or philosophy. I myself at that age of thirteen, browsed contentedly in such a library – where Percy’s anecdotes in thirty-nine volumes or so divided my attention with Hume, Locke, and Berkeley. I even read Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and was none the worse for it. It is astonishing how little harm comes to children through books. Unless they have been taught by servants’ chatter how to look for the “harm,” they do not find it (90-1).

Nesbit’s description of childhood reading is rather commonplace. It repeats many familiar ideas: the harmlessness of most books, the child’s desire to read widely, and a swipe at servants who apparently still view books according old-fashioned mores. For a woman who wrote such exciting and powerful descriptions of the child/book relationship, this representation of reading is unremarkable and lacks much of her usual Book Magic; however, Book Magic cannot be described easily in nonfiction prose. To describe the relationship between the child and the book as she idealized it requires fantasy. It was her best means for representing the kind of magic that is possible when the child and the book interact.

Of all the book metaphors that circulate in the early decades of the twentieth century, Nesbit’s representation of Book Magic is the most influential. In a way, this is because she is the first imaginative writer to use her fiction to represent childhood reading in an extensive world of books. She not only represents it but she makes it fun, turning reading into a fantastical adventure. At the same time, Book Magic is based upon the concept of cosmopolitanism at its most ideal – that there is one Book that contains all books, all histories, all stories from all places

and times, all available to the child. Once the child is able to see and understand the cosmopolitan nature of existence, he or she will be able to help create a better future.

Traces of Nesbit's work will appear throughout this study as adapted forms of book magic will reappear in works of children's fiction by Frank Baum and Hildegard Hawthorne and in the language of librarians hoping to inspire children to open a book and embark upon a magical adventure. Nesbit's reputation as an Edwardian writer has in many ways obscured her cosmopolitan vision of childhood reading and her influence on readers outside of England.

Although she is now seen as an English writer, the stories she published in *The Strand* travelled far beyond the borders of England.<sup>2</sup> Where her stories went, so too travelled Book Magic.

### 3.0 READING JOURNEYS THROUGH BOOKLANDS

Between 1896 and the 1930s, the term Bookland began to appear in book reviews, reading memoirs, educational texts, and works of children's literature. In Bookland, literary culture is imagined as a geography, which can then be used to describe, encourage, combat, or prescribe a range of reading practices. It also provides a means for addressing concerns and anxieties about literary culture: concerns about an overabundance of books, the transience of reading material, a perceived loss in value of books, and the need for guidance in a market of overwhelming choice. Bookland captures the kind of literary cosmopolis that literary and book culture had become by the 1890s a world of many books, in many forms, by many authors, from many parts of the world.

This chapter will examine many of those texts but will focus primarily on the home library set designed for children entitled *Journeys through Bookland*. Published in 1909 and edited by Charles H. Sylvester, *Journeys through Bookland* is valuable for understanding how geography of books provided a totalizing vision of the child/book relationship. Examining versions of Bookland that precede Sylvester's book set that appeared in the periodical press and in works of bibliophilism make visible the ways that anxieties and pleasures associated with adult reading influenced how childhood reading was shaped. Likewise, a look at a later version

of Bookland in the children's novel *Girls in Bookland* by Hildegard Hawthorne illustrates how quickly the desires and discourses surrounding childhood reading changed. Bookland is a suggestive and plastic image that lends itself to a variety of stories about reading, stories that can describe relationships between the adult and books as well as those between the child and the book. In part what makes Bookland such a generative image is how it can be imagined in so many ways. The idea of land can signal many images: open terrain, a bordered country, a mapped continent, the entire world, or a place of fantasy. Just as Bookland allows for various topographies and formations, the means of travel through this land are varied meaning that the reader can wander, roam, meander, trek, journey, or climb, depending upon the landscape and the goals in traversing it.

Bookland can be understood as a version of “imaginative geography,” which is the use of cartography and topography to describe and represent the workings of the mind, imagination, or feelings. One of the more famous examples is the map of sentiment created by Madame de Scudery known as *Carte de Pays Tendre*. Created in 1654 in the world of seventeenth century French literary salons, the document is described as turning “intersubjectivity into a map by which one might navigate interpersonal relations and locate women's position in love and society” (Bruno 223). From the same era as Scudery's map are other more specific attempts to map literature such as *Carte de la bataille des romans* (1659), a map of the war of novels, and *Histoire poetique de la guerre nouvellement declaree entre les Anciens et les Modernes* (1688) (Bruno 228-9). Even today, cartographical and geographical imagery is frequently used to describe mental processes, although they are more often referred to as “cognitive” rather than

“imaginary” mapping. No physical maps of Bookland exist (that I have discovered); however, what makes Bookland peculiar in the history of imaginative geography is how Bookland is both inspired by and imagined first and foremost in relation to the material book.

Bookland is rooted in the material presence of books, and what all versions of Bookland share is a sense is that there is an overwhelming abundance of books and that a map is the best means for understanding or controlling this mass of material. Depending upon who is imagining Bookland, the presence of such a wide selection of books is viewed as problematic, exciting, pleasurable, worrisome, or fanciful. This concern about the material book means that besides a geography consisting of imaginary and literary locations, Bookland comprehends material sites and practices as well. Book shops, libraries, and bookshelves feature prominently in Bookland as do the acts of book design and book buying. In Bookland, the book is always both a fact and an ideal.

Trends in nineteenth-century cartography and understandings of geography also impact how Bookland is imagined, and two discussions of maps provide insight into the potential and limits of this bookish space. The first is *Treasure Island*. The second is the imperial race to colonize and map the globe. They represent two different pulls which can be found in Bookland as well: the first is romantic, and the latter is masterful.

*Treasure Island*, published in book form in 1883, includes a memorable sketch of an island resembling “a fat dragon standing up” (Stevenson 37), an image that taps into nostalgia and romance for a time when the world was still open for exploration. According to a legend spun by Stevenson in his essay “My First Book,” the drawing of the map preceded the narrative. As Stevenson tells it, he drew the map for his stepson; this in turn inspired the beloved story of the search for pirate gold. The map becomes a spark for the imagination, offering up several

possible stories and scenarios. As the novel's young hero Jim Hawkins pores over the map, he muses,

Full of sea-dreams and the most charming anticipations of strange islands and adventures. I brooded by the hour together over the map, all the details of which I well remembered. Sitting by the fire in the housekeeper's room, I approached that island by my fancy, from every possible direction; I explored every acre of its surface; I climbed a thousand times to that tall hill they called the Spy-Glass, and from the top enjoyed the most wonderful and changing prospects. (37)

Like the map, Bookland itself offers similar promises. While Stevenson's map taps into the fancy that unknown places can create, cartography at the end of the nineteenth-century was anything but fanciful; instead, it was an imperialistic science designed to aid in the acquisition of power and political control. As Matthew H. Edney describes in his essay, "The Irony of Imperial Mapping," "For the public of late nineteenth-century Britain, maps instilled a sense of glory and mighty purpose, of explorers seeking truth, of the power of Europeans to move about the world with impunity" (33).

Writing in the 1930s, in his essay "Maps Actual and Imaginary" Walter de la Mare frames these two pulls in cartography in a slightly different way between maps that are imaginative and suggestive versus those that are scientific and knowledge-based. He adopts an elegiac tone for maps such as Stevenson created in *Treasure Island*, the sort of whimsical document with "beautiful roses, the brilliant banners above the tiny miniatures cities, the winds and half winds and quarter winds, in black and green and carmine" (336). He contrasts this with maps that are deemed dullish documents, representations of things as they are. According to de

la Mare, driving “back the frontiers of *terra incognita* only . . . succeed in cramping the fancy. For it is in the vaguely dreamed of and in the wholly unknown that the imagination takes its ease and delight” (335). In terms of reading, these maps parallel the differences between a reader reading as he likes, what de la Mare deems “following his fine fancy” to produce an idiosyncratic map of his wanderings as a reader versus a mapped world such as that is thrust on “schoolboys, would-be bachelors of arts, subscribers to lending libraries, tea-table men and reviewers” (339). The texts about Bookland can be seen as representing both the hopes and fears de la Mare had about reading.

While de la Mare offers a valuable description of the imaginary map, anthropologist Tim Ingold gives another way of understanding the difference between romantic maps and scientific ones. Ingold distinguishes between the acts of mapmaking and mapping. Mapmaking is the scientific work of collecting specific data used to represent an area from the so-called bird’s eye view. Such maps are static and give the impression of permanence. Mapping results in a finished product. Mapping, on the other hand, is a process; it is the gathering of knowledge about the environment that occurs as one moves through the landscape. The difference between mapmaking and mapping is the difference between the cartographer’s map and the imaginary map. For Ingold, these latter maps, the imaginary ones, are a better representation of how humans learn to perceive and navigate in an environment. Such maps are never inscribed because they are always changing. Ingold studies “real” geography, and yet differentiation between mapmaking versus mapping is useful for thinking about the ways bookland is imagined and understood. A reader’s map of bookland may be always shifting; however, the bookland can also be a mapped space which leaves no room for the reader to wander or explore.

### 3.1 THE BOOKLAND OF BOOKMEN AND BIBLIOPHIES

Bookland does not originate in literary culture; instead, as the *OED* defines it, bookland is a legal term with medieval roots which refers to land that is chartered. To have land recorded in the books meant it belonged to someone. Its first appearance in literary culture is in 1896 in a series of articles in the *Idler* by Richard Le Gallienne. Titled “Wanderings in Bookland,” these monthly columns provide an overview of the new books available, which is a challenge for the reviewer, as Le Gallienne claims there is no end of books. There are endless books: books on all subjects, books by writers from around the world, books in various formats and editions, what Le Gallienne describes as the “chaos of fiction, fact and . . . various combinations of both which go to the making of literature” (9: 446). Anxieties over how to control, organize, or distinguish literature in the midst of so many books concerned many writers and critics at the end of the nineteenth-century. A full page advertisement that ran for the Standard’s ‘Library of Famous Literature’ describes the situation in the follow manner:

The bookmen of the present may be divided into roughly two classes. One camp is composed of those who deplore the enormous increase of books, the other camp of those who welcome that increase. Never before were there so many publications, never before so many to read them . . . All agree that it needs discipline and training (quoted in Hammond 8-9).

Le Gallienne does not necessarily welcome the increase in books, but he does turn such excess into a challenge, into an opportunity for adventure, by imagining the immense selection of books as Bookland.

Le Gallienne writes in the first person and sets himself up as performing an unenviable task. In one column, he describes “survey[ing] the appalling pile of novels which (a veritable boa-constrictor’s meal!) I have to absorb and give forth again as criticism” (9: 719). The American periodical *Overland Monthly* presents a similar feeling in the banner illustration for the column “In the Realm of Bookland.” Running at the top of the page, it depicts a harried, disheveled woman at a desk, surrounded by a mess of books: on the floor, on the shelves, some open, some not, giving a sense of the overwhelming task of book reviewing. For the reviewer, faced with the task of reading and reviewing an endless stream of new publications, there is a sense of futility as books will come and books will go. Le Gallienne begins one article by noting, “By the time the words I am about to write come to be read, the books I am about to praise may have given place to Heaven knows what literary excitements” (9: 113). In this way, Bookland becomes an endless terrain that can never be crossed or fully mapped because its area never stops expanding.

Le Gallienne includes a wide variety of books in his columns: he reviews books of fiction, poetry, travel, cookery, and biography by British, Irish, American, Australian, and Canadian authors and includes several illustrations from the volumes he discusses. To tackle the task of choosing what books to review, Le Gallienne takes on the role of explorer such as might be found in an imperial romance. As a reviewer, the best he can do is describe some “landmarks” or “sites” he happens to encounter. Bookland becomes a difficult terrain, a dark space on the map of a colony, an unmapped area where a reader must explore or risk getting lost. The image allows for Bookland to provide two kinds of adventure. It represents the imaginative transport into exotic locations as well as the adventure of choosing a book to purchase in the midst of immense choice. When discussing *In Haunts of Wild Game*, Le Gallienne notes the reader is a hunter too,

but book-hunting “is safer” (9: 453) than hunting lions and leopards on the African savannahs. In his review of Mr. E. Clairmonte’s *The Africander, A Plain Tale of Colonial Life*, he writes:

I have read his vivid, unaffected picture of life in South Africa with an enthralled interest, and have been within an ace of leaving pen and ink and going out to South Africa – to buy land at nine-pence an acre. For doesn’t Mr. Clairmonte say in conclusion that “it is a great country with a great future, and there is *space to spare* for intelligent men” (italics in the original, 9: 726-7).

Although the British Empire had begun to wane and historian Frederick Jackson Turner had already deemed the American frontier closed in 1890, the image of colonial land as offering “space to spare” still held power in the popular imaginary.

Le Gallienne takes a somewhat phlegmatic approach to this expansive and ever-expanding world of books through his articles on Bookland. By creating a geographical metaphor, Le Gallienne offers his readers a means for making sense of, and even enjoying, an expansive literary marketplace. Nicolas Daly has made a similar argument about the genre of the imperial romance. Texts such as H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* and *She* have often been interpreted as Gothic literature expressing anxiety about the empire; instead, Daly argues that these novels gave readers a means for understanding the changing world in which they lived. For instance, stories of colonial treasure hunt can be read as a means for imagining the relations between the civilized world and imperial space (Daly 53). In the same way, Le Gallienne adopts the images of empire and appropriates qualities of the imperial romance to create a narrative about reading that gives readers a means for imagining the landscape of books and overcoming some of the anxieties associated with it.

In coining Bookland, Le Gallienne creates a name for the literary landscape which is then adopted by other writers including bibliophiles. Emily Jenkins argues that beginning in the 1890s the popularity of book collecting led to the publication of a variety of books about books, what she calls “a rash of confessions, memoirs, and handbooks written by avid collectors” (Jenkins 225). In these volumes, Bookland becomes a popular term as evidenced by such titles as *Saunters in Bookland with Gleanings By the Way* (1899), *Highways in Bookland* (1906), *The Pleasures of Bookland* (1914), and *Treasure-trove in Bookland* (1931). While these texts borrow Le Gallienne’s term for the literary landscape, they do not use the imagery and narrative arc of imperial romances. Instead, these books might best be described as travel memoirs. They make no pretension to be serious works of literary criticism but are descriptions of the idiosyncratic course or route a booklover has taken through the wide expanse of reading material that makes up Bookland, where the travel is always pleasurable, leisurely and unplanned. As in Le Gallienne’s articles for the *Idler*, these books represent Bookland as an uncharted terrain which offers a reader a range of possibilities; unlike Le Gallienne’s Bookland, this space is free from anxiety and promises great enjoyment. The way one traverses this space is up to the reader, but the pace is often lackadaisical and meandering, a kind of mapping instead of mapmaking. Written by booksellers, librarians, book collectors, and book lovers, these texts revel in material qualities of the book: its binding, typography, and illustrations; the places where books are to be found: bookshops, libraries, bookshelves; and the pleasure in how one finds, discovers, or happens upon a book, whether through serendipity, by recommendation, or through reading itself. This pleasure in the materiality of the book does not diminish or overshadow the other pleasures associated with reading. On the contrary, the size and shape of the volume or the location where it is read only enhances or accentuates the enjoyment of the ideas, stories, and

information a book can give. Bookland is both a way of naming physical sites associated with books and reading and the places, literary, imaginary, or spiritual, where a book can take you.

One such travel memoir is Walter Mursell's *Byways in Bookland: Confessions and Digressions*, published in 1914. Throughout the book, Mursell mentions various sensory, material, and consumer pleasures associated with the book. He claims, "I was born reading a Book Catalogue, and life really began for me when I purchased my first book with my own money" (1). He praises living in the age of the pocket volume, which he can carry with him "on a railway journey, on a cycle ride, or on a country ramble" (65) and he writes in great detail about the importance bookshops have played in his development and enjoyment as a reader, describing how "the sight of them and the smell of them are alike delectable" (2). Mursell adopts the language of romance to describe wandering about in one particular dusty and crowded secondhand shop. Romance has been defined as "the merging of commonplace experience and the world of exotic dream" (Schiek 29), which encapsulates Bookland well, as an idea mixing the everydayness of reading books with the exotic adventures they can provide. He recalls,

There is an extraordinary fascination to a bookman in dipping into all sorts of volumes in such a place as this. It is like setting forth upon an adventure, or going out to meet the mistress of one's heart. You can never tell what treasure you may light upon, or what new surprise may break from the familiar pages of some favourite, well beloved (8).

While Mursell recollects bookshops and particular editions in some detail, he also describes Bookland as a kind of interior geography, showing how books have inspired or been part of his emotional and spiritual journey through life. At times, Mursell borrows from *Psalm 23* to name the books that he associates with certain moods and states of mind. The Chapter "By Still

Waters” is dedicated to books suitable for a “meditative frame of mind” such as *A Little Book of Life and Death*, which he deems “a book of consolation” and in “The Valley of Twilight,” in which he discusses

a class of books of a pensive and reflective kind to which I have always been very strongly drawn. One grows to love them for their suggestiveness. They are continually opening up vistas of thought in one's own mind, awakening slumbering memories, reviving old associations (81).

In that way Bookland is also a terrain of the spirit, a journey through the “spaces of life” where books are part of one’s intellectual and emotional journey.

Mursell’s version of Bookland is expansive: a terrain consisting of material locations and imaginative locales, as well as a reader’s interior spaces. In his chapters that cover particular authors, moods, genres, and experiences, he captures the complexity and multiplicity of reading experiences that an image such as Bookland can encompass. Mursell’s discussion of childhood reading is a familiar one in that he gives provides the well-known evolution of reading indiscriminately en route to become a more discerning reader. He argues that

the books we read when we are children make a deep impression. The mind is plastic then, and takes the impress readily. The imagination is awake ; the sense of wonder is alive ; and life is full of surprises. Books come to us then as a kind of talisman, an open sesame to a new world (11).

For Mursell, childhood reading is just one aspect of this journey, just one byway in the life of a reader, and while in some ways, he privileges the child’s experience, the pleasures and purposes of books extend beyond these years. While the novelty of childhood reading is inevitably lost, the pleasures associated with reading do not end with adulthood. Indeed, the two last chapters of

his book celebrate writers who, Mursell claims, provide enjoyment for all ages: Dickens and Stevenson, who he dubs the “Great Heart” and the “Peter Pan” of Bookland, respectively.

Bookland as it is shaped by book reviewers and bibliophiles promises excitement for the adult reader. Although a reviewer such as Le Gallienne and an avowed book-lover as Mursell frame the possibilities and pleasure of overwhelming numbers of books in different ways, they both find value in imagining the literary marketplace as a landscape. While Le Gallienne recognizes the fears and anxieties that such an abundant amount of book creates, he does not bemoan a loss of permanence or value. Rather, he finds a way to imagine the literary marketplace so that it offers the same albeit safer possibilities and pleasures that the empire was imagined to hold. For Mursell, there are no anxieties; instead, as the landscape expands, it only extends the kinds of reading practices and pleasures available to the book-lover. In neither example is Bookland imagined as a means of controlling or disciplining readers.

### **3.2 MAPPED READING IN *JOURNEYS THROUGH BOOKLAND***

In *Journeys through Bookland*, a ten volume set of books designed to provide reading material to span a child’s life from preschool to adulthood, Bookland becomes represented as a very different space with different goals and purposes. *Journeys through Bookland*, which was published in 1909 and edited by Charles H. Sylvester, is one of the many home libraries that were created during the early twentieth century. The most famous example is *Dr. Eliot’s Five-Foot Bookshelf*, later known as *Harvard Classics*, created by Harvard’s Charles Eliot which was

designed to be a “portable university” (Kirsch). Home libraries for children aimed to give a comprehensive course in literature for the child and to provide the family with an impressive set of books.<sup>3</sup>

Sylvester’s Bookland is also shaped by the anxieties associated with such a large selection of reading material, although he is primarily concerned with its effects on child readers. As the marketplace expanded, the selection of books for children also grew. As early as 1892, Mrs. Fields in *The Child and His Book* worries about what the increase in children’s reading material will mean for children. She writes,

so enormous [was] the ever-increasing flood of books poured forth for their [children’s] benefit, that the elders of our own generation at times watch it with something like dismay. The father who looks at his children’s *embraras de richesse* of dainty volumes, bound, illustrated, decorated with more taste and skill than many a classic of his own youth, sees also how lightly these are turned over, glanced at, put aside on shelves already full (2).

If excessive selection and a seeming transience of books were anxiety-producing for adult buyers and readers, publication of books for children was also seen as having increased and led to problems in determining what children should and should not read. While it might be unfortunate for an adult reader to make a poor book choice, from the perspective of Mrs. Field and her ilk, the consequences of making the wrong selection could be disastrous for boy readers. *Journeys through Bookland* is designed to remove those fears, to ensure culture in the home and to guarantee that boys are offered the best kind of reading material.

Sylvester's home library is an ambitious work bringing together works of fiction, history, mythology, poetry, travelogues, nature writing, and biography that will keep a child reading for years. And Bookland, as it is imagined by Sylvester, becomes a complicated space, one that is shaped by a variety of forces and beliefs about children, reading, and the power of books.

Sylvester's map of Bookland is based upon theories of pedagogy and literature, beliefs about the boy reader, idealizations of childhood, and hopes and goals for American literature. Reading is serious and Sylvester's Bookland is a serious place. Sylvester began his career teaching pedagogy and literature at a Midwestern Normal School. His academic presence is highly visible in the series through a range of paratextual practices such as notes, questions, glosses, and footnotes. Literature comes across as a serious study and one that demands guidance. In no way is the child's reading (or parents') left to chance. The result is that Bookland is a thoroughly mapped world which aims to guide readers up a carefully marked course.

Sylvester's series limits Bookland to what is contained in the ten volumes, removing the vastness and the overwhelming choice and unknown spaces. The romance connected with finding a book to read is gone. No more musty bookshops or book catalogues to peruse as readers are relieved of the responsibility (and pleasure) of deciding what to read until they are ready to make sage choices. For the children, there are still material pleasures associated with Bookland and they are contained in the book themselves through the illustrations. While the bindings are dark, uniform and serious, within the volumes are a variety of lovely illustrations, several examples of half-tone full page artwork, and the occasional author photograph. A number of illustrators contributed to the series including Dorothy Loeb, Gertrude Spaller, and Milo Winter. Sylvester considers illustrations to be an important tool in developing a child's enjoyment of books and reading. He explains:

The pictures in these books are from many artists, all of whom have tried to give at least an interpretation to the selection they were working upon, and to give it in such a way to be helpful and inspiring to their youthful readers. Every time the artists have tried to get a child's view of things and to draw so that a child will like their work. Their enthusiasm has been boundless, and their execution remarkably good. Some of the picture are gay, some are grave, a few sad; some of them highly imaginary and others very realistic. Not a few are wonderfully beautiful (10:392).

The illustrations factor largely in one reader's memory of enjoying the *Journeys through Bookland* series as a child. In *Journey through Bookland and Other Passages*, Stan Dragland, a Canadian poet recalls growing up with the set and poring over the illustrations. He writes,

All the Tenniel illustrations for *Alice in Wonderland* were sharply reproduced . . . I absorbed the text through the pictures . . . I couldn't understand some pictures, like the simple line drawing of a naked man with webbed feet squatting on the single branch of a tree, while someone below tried to hand him a garment. This had something to do with a *Midsummer Night's Dream*. But more often an illustration implied a whole story: Roland sitting under a tree in exhaustion and dejection, straining to wind his horn one last time. Or the slain dog and the wolves in the bed-chamber, all in black and white except for the red blood that graphically poured from their mouths. Did I read 'Beth Gelert?' Perhaps; the poem is not very long. Whether the poem or the picture is responsible, those wolves still haunt me (18).

The series aims to address some widespread concerns about boys' reading at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like many people concerned about childhood reading, Sylvester is worried about the effect of modern stories, including penny dreadfuls, story papers, and some periodical literature, written "with the avowed purpose of mere entertainment" (10: 359). Sylvester cannot overstate how important he views reading in the development of a child's moral character, and how quickly a combination of bad books or poor reading habits can lead a child astray. He cautions:

The influence of reading upon children is a potent one; in fact, it is doubtful if there is any other thing that so seriously affects the development of character as does the quality of the books and the manner in which they are read. Bad books lead a reader's mind astray and stimulate an imagination that is destructive in character, but good books make the mind sensitive to right and wrong, inspire higher ideals and lead to loftier effort (10.32).

His series is aimed to provide good books that will lead to "higher ideals" and "loftier effort."

In her review of various home libraries that were designed and sold to children in the early decades of the twentieth century, Velma Bourgeois Richmond notes that what distinguishes *Journeys through Bookland* from its counterparts such as *Young Folk's Treasure* (1909) and *Junior Classics* (1912) is its organization (285). The series is advertised as having a "new and original plan for reading, applied to the world's best literature for children" (1:iii) and the table of contents shows how each book in the series includes a hodgepodge of literary texts from a variety of genres, nations, and periods of time. Nevertheless, there is an organizing principal at work, which Sylvester outlines in his section "Talks with Parents." He explains how the series

is so arranged that the child who reads by course will traverse nearly every subject in every volume, and to him the different subjects will be presented logically in the order in which his growing mind demands them. We might say that as he reads from volume to volume, he travels in an ever widening and rising spiral. The fiction of the first volume consists of fables, fairy tales and folk stories; the poetry of nursery rhymes and children's verses; the biography of anecdotal sketches of Field and Stevenson; and history is suggested in the quaintly written Story of Joseph. On a subsequent turn of the spiral are found fiction from Scott and Swift; poetry from Homer, Vergil, Hay, Gilbert and Tennyson; hero stories from Malory; history from Washington (10: 443)

*Journeys though Bookland* is a spiral that rises up in age and widens in difficulty. Like other educators in the twentieth-century, Sylvester uses the image of the spiral to create a curriculum that introduces and exposes children to a range of material that increases in difficulty with each turn. Today the spiral curriculum is most often associated with the work in the 1960s of American education and child development professor Jerome Bruner; however, an entry in the *Cyclopedia of Education* from 1911 credits a German, referred to only as Rusham, for creating a spiral method for teaching arithmetic in 1866 ("Arithmetic" 206). The goal of the spiral curriculum in its various incarnations remains the same: using repetition and expansion to introduce students to increasingly difficult concepts as they move up and around the spiral. A spiral curriculum advocates exposing students to topics they might not understand on the first turn of the spiral, but with each subsequent turn, students' familiarity and comprehension grows and deepens.

Sylvester's organization of the texts along the spiral illustrates the influential recapitulation theory, which argued there was a correlation between the development of the child and the development of civilization and that each developmental stage was reflected in the development of literature. This theory, which originated in the work of biologist Ernst Haeckel, argued that ontogeny reflects phylogeny, or that each individual recapitulates the development of the species. It was a scientific theory that combined the evolutionary ideas of Darwinism and the Romanticism of Rousseau (Cremin 101-2). Haeckel's theory was influential in a variety of fields including evolutionary anthropology, philology, and mythology (Vaninaskaya 68). In the United States, it was also employed in child psychology and pedagogy, changing it from a theory that described a development to one that was employed in the teaching of children. Applied to education, the theory becomes a model of instruction that leads the child through the development of civilization, so as the child progresses from the primitive to the civilized, his education will mirror that progression as well. According to recapitulation theory, each stage of development is required for maturation to be reached, which means the child needs to read and understand each form of literature that accords with its development stage.

Just as a child's development reflects the movement from primitivism to civilization, advocates of recapitulation believed that literature evolved over time, progressing from primitive's legends and myths to the complex texts of history and scientific thought. Sylvester highlights how *Journeys through Bookland* organizes content according to the theorized link between a child's developmental stages and the appropriate literatures for that stage. As Sylvester explains:

It has been said that in every child is seen the history of the race, and that from infancy to manhood he typifies every stage of progress the race has seen. In early

years he loves the fables where the animals speak, feel and act like human beings; for in former times mankind believed the fables to be truth. A child peoples his world with fairies, good and bad, and believes in the limitless power of magic. A little later he loves the deeds of legendary heroes and revels in the marvelous acts of the more than human beings in whom the ancients believed. Later the stirring adventures of the real heroes of discovery and exploration, the heroic exploits of warriors on land and sea, and the courageous acts of noble men and women in every walk in life, appeal to him; while still later, real history seizes the imagination of the youth, who now look for the causes of things and learns to trace out their effects... Casting aside the wild tales of boyhood, he gathers up instead the facts of life and experience, and draws his inspiration from the noble works of the world's greatest writers (10: 335).

There is a point in this spiral when the pleasures of childhood reading, of the primitive fancy and boyish instinct are outgrown and instead reason, morality, and logic must be developed.

*Journeys through Bookland* follows this outline quite closely. The first four or five volumes of the series might be described as the land of stories. Besides nursery rhymes and simple verses, they contain fairy tales, fables, myths, and excerpts from novels such as *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Swiss Family Robinson*. By Volume V, the stories expand into narratives about epic heroes, Ulysses, Roland, and El Cid. Throughout the first four volumes, Sylvester's ever-present commentary reiterates how similar stories have emerged from different cultures: a Greek myth like "Cupid and Psyche" shares traits with fairy tales (4:111), epic characters enrich the literature of many lands, and creation stories are common to all ancient peoples. These volumes stress a universalism, the idea that at one time all nations and all peoples shared a

similar culture. By the sixth volume, more emphasis is placed on “facts of life and experience.” Volume VI introduces the importance of history and then each of the remaining books, while still allowing the reader to enjoy diverse selection of readings, has a clear pedagogical theme or purpose. Volume VII teaches poetic meter and scansion; Volume VIII provides a set of biographical profiles of American literary figures such as Whittier, Longfellow, and Lowell; and Volume IX introduces Shakespeare. Volume X primarily gives accounts of famous battles such as the Battle of Cresney and Siege of Leyden and ends with a chronicle of the Battle of Hastings.

Besides teaching pedagogy, Sylvester was a professor of literature; trends in American literary criticism also influenced *Journeys through Bookland*. In particular, the cosmopolitan approach of Brander Matthews, the leading American literary critic of the progressive era is evident. Largely forgotten now, Matthews was professor of dramatic literature at Columbia University and a prolific writer of essays and short stories. He was a proponent of American literature, creating one of the first university courses on the subject. His *An Introduction to the Study of American Literature* (1896) was the earliest textbook to cover the topic extensively (Oliver xi), but his goal was for American literature to be recognized within a larger tradition of literature in English. In a speech on “American Literature” deliver to the National Education Association in 1896, Matthews theorizes a tradition of literature in English based on the common heritage of the English language. He states:

All of these branches [of literatures in English] will take the same pride in their descent from a common stock and in their possession of a common literature and of a common language. A common language for the English language belongs to all those who use it, whether they live in London, or in Chicago or in Melbourne (“American Literature” 11).

For Matthews, just as the English language belongs to all English-speakers, so too is “a share in the fame of Chaucer and of Shakespeare, of Milton and Dryden is part of the inheritance of everyone one of us who has English as his mother-tongue” (12). This differs from many other literary and cultural critics in the United States which were then advocating for a stand-alone American literature and searching for the great American novel.

In a variety of ways, Sylvester demonstrates his affiliation with Matthews’s ideals. In an earlier home library he edited for adults entitled *English and American Literature* (1903), Sylvester treats British and American literature as primarily constituting one literary tradition. Likewise, in *Journeys through Bookland*, literature of the United States is included as part of a larger tradition of literature in English, and each volume of the series includes at least a few texts written by an American author or about the American way of life. Literary progress is linked to the development of civilization, and the growth of prominence and importance of the United States is part of that progressive movement. Although the series on a whole privileges English literature and the traditions of England, in his last volume Sylvester reveals his national bias. In a footnote to an historical account of “The Battle of Saratoga,” which is considered a turning point in the American Revolutionary War, Sylvester notes how “the whole world now feels the power of the United States in a way that was not dreamed of fifty years ago” (10: 112).

In naming his home library *Journeys through Bookland*, Sylvester could be seen as responding to a call for action that Matthews includes in the short story, “A Primer of Imaginary Geography.” Published in 1894, the tale describes a dream. In it, the first person narrator awakens on a ship bound for Ultima Thule, the name used for lands unknown in medieval times, and commandeered by Captain Vanderdecken, the shipman doomed to endlessly sail the seas in *The Flying Dutchman*. There is little plot to the story, but instead the two characters converse

and Vanderdecken describes all the places he has visited including mythological and fictional locales such as No Man's Land, Lyonesse, Xanadu, The Island of Bells, Robinson Crusoe's Island, the Kingdoms of Brobdinggap and Lilliput. Locations, characters, beasts, and landmarks are drawn from an assortment of imaginative sources, varying in age and era, some from Europe and others from the United States. At the end of the story, the narrator awakens on his sofa in his New York study and wonders "why it was that no one had ever prepared a primer of imaginary geography, giving to airy nothings a local habitation and a name, and accompanying it with an atlas of maps in the manner of the *Carte du Pays de Tendre*" (24).<sup>4</sup> Arguably Sylvester creates the atlas or primer of imaginative geography that Matthews is calling for in his short story, since Sylvester aims to educate as a "primer" would. Nevertheless, the Bookland that he creates does not quite resemble the more whimsical landscape Matthews imagines in his story.

While the recapitulation theory moves the child through time (both historical and developmental), the content of *Journeys through Bookland* provides movement through space and is chosen with the purpose of appealing to boy readers. In discussions of boyhood reading, the importance of vitality and excitement are stressed. In recalling his own boyhood reading, Arthur Conan Doyle exclaims:

How vivid and fresh it all is! Your very heart and soul are out on the prairies and the oceans with your hero. It is you who act and suffer and enjoy.... What magic it is, this stirring of the boyish heart and mind! Long ere I came to my teens I have traversed every sea, and knew the Rockies like my own back garden... Since those days I have in very truth both shot bears and harpooned whales, but the

performance was flat compared to the first time that I did it with Mr. Ballantyne or Captain Mayne Reid at my elbow (13-14).

For Doyle, the real life experience cannot outdo the experiences he had as a boy through books.

This idea that boys' lust for excitement is central to the fears and anxieties associated with boyhood reading, since it is this instinct that draws boy readers to sensational or inappropriate reading material such as story papers and penny dreadfuls. *Journeys through Bookland* is unambiguously designed for the boy reader. Sylvester assures parents that the series is "for girls as much as boys" (10:449) and that girls "now have the same education that boys have, they usually like the same things" (10:440). Nevertheless, his examples are always in reference to boyishness. When discussing the taking apart of a story, Sylvester compares it to when "you give a boy a mechanical toy, he is more interested in how it is made than in the running of it" (10:372). In designing the content of the series, he plans with boys in mind. Like Doyle, he assumes boys have a particular taste for excitement, but he also sees as way of combating the development of poor taste. He explains,

The danger lies in the fact that they [boys] may find excitement they wish in stories that are really immoral, or that are so poorly written that they will destroy all taste for fine literature. The right course is to supply plenty of reading in which excitement abounds, where Indians stalk the woods, pirates rove the seas, and knights fight for their lady-loves, but always in stories that are so well told that the taste for good reading is cultivated unconsciously as the boy reads (10:364).

Sylvester follows his own advice and takes the reader of *Journeys through Bookland* around the world to North America, South America, and Africa to enjoy exploring, pioneering, pirating, gorilla hunting, and mountain climbing.

In many ways, Sylvester edits the material in such a way that it creates a narrative that runs through the volumes resembling a treasure hunt such as might be found in books such as H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and American Thomas de Janvier's *Aztec Treasure House* (1891). These texts tell about treasure hunt story in colonial settings and follow a similar formula where a trio of men from Europe or the United States set off in search of a mythical place associated with treasure. In both novels, they start out with an incomplete map, struggle through a harsh landscape, visit a tribal society (which erupts into civil dispute during their stay), and discover immense treasure only to abandon it for practical and altruistic reasons. In much the same way as Africa, South America, or Asia provides the setting for a range of boyish adventures, so too does Bookland become a gendered place where the boy reader is a treasure hunter traveling across a landscape of books. Even the appearance and material qualities of the books help further connect reading to treasure, as Seth Lerer argues in his *Reader's History of Children's Literature*,

By the nineteenth century . . . the books themselves take on the massivity of land . . . late Victorian and Edwardian covers, with their embossed fronts, their engraved lettering, their colored leather stretched over the binding boards. They are hefty volumes, made of leather, gold, and heavy paper, with marbled boards and gilt edges. The boy's book is now a treasure in itself (166).

The book's appearance reiterates the content and experience of the story so that acquisition of treasure is not only in the book's narrative but is in owning the book.

If books have indeed become treasures and boy readers need excitement, then it is fitting that the motif of the treasure hunt runs through *Journeys through Bookland*. With the inclusion of Nathaniel Hawthorne's retelling of the legend of King Midas in "The Golden Touch" and

John Ruskin's fairy tale "The King of the Golden River," in Book II, the pursuit of treasure becomes a recurring subject matter in the series. Both stories illustrate how greed for gold can lead to destruction, but treasure hunts are not only the stuff of fairy tales. "The Sunken Treasure," taken from Hawthorne's collection of essays *Grandfather's Chair* tells the story of Sir William Phipps who became rich after discovering a sunken Spanish treasure and who later became the governor of Massachusetts. Stories of real-life pirates and buccaneers are included as well. Although the final volume of series is predominantly military history, it does include "The Gold-Bug" by Edgar Allan Poe. In this story, there are supernatural elements, but it is ultimately a man's reason and logic that allow him to discover the buried gold. In the end note, Sylvester praises the story for its double interest: "In the first place, it is an exciting story of a search for buried treasure; and in the second place, it gives vividly a splendid example of clear reasoning" (10:228). This is ultimately the goal for the treasure seeker in Bookland.

Like the heroes of imperial romance adventures, the reader faces difficulties along the way through Bookland. The "terrain" becomes increasingly difficult and essays like "Reading History" and "Reading Shakespeare" provide guidance to help a reader surmount these problems. Some of the boyish fun and excitement has to be relinquished for more serious accomplishments. These essays also reveal what the treasure is they seek: mastery. The sixth volume of the series begins to shift in tone and move into other genres besides fiction. The essay "Reading History" introduces the necessity for readings to progress beyond the simply pleasurable and to tackle material which requires hard work. Sylvester warns if a reader "reads nothing that makes him exert his mind, he becomes a weakling in intellect and never feels the pure delight that the man has who can read in a masterful way a masterly selection" (6: 126). The repetition of 'masterful' and 'masterly,' terminology that is both colonial and gendered, is

striking. This essay also outlines the theory of literature that while all races (to use Sylvester's language) may have begun as equals, over time certain races have progressed further and become more civilized. The mastery of Bookland means cultural supremacy.

By the end of the series, Sylvester's world of books overlaps with the history of Western civilization. Bookland becomes the Book of the World. It is not a literary cosmopolis but rather a cosmography, a map of the universe. The boy reader has safely been guided through the mass of books and is prepared to continue on. The reader at the end of the series does not exit Bookland: instead, Bookland continues to extend on and on. The last volume primarily gives accounts of famous battles such as the Battle of Cresney and the Siege of Leyden. Footnotes begin to appear directing readers to a map for more information. A footnote for "The Battle of Saratoga" states, "If not familiar with the region described, study the map closely. It will make the text clearer" (10: 113). For the first time, the world of Bookland begins to overlap with the map of the historical world. Fifteen years later, in 1924, Sylvester published another home library, an ambitious twenty-volume book set with the exhaustive title of *The Writings of Mankind, subtitled Selections from the Writings of all Ages, with Extensive Historical Notes, Comment and Criticism, Giving the Customs, Habits, Characters; the Arts, Philosophies and Religions, of those Nations that have Contributed most to Civilization*. Adults do not require the same kind of excitement to lure them into culture and knowledge. Like *Journeys through Bookland*, it aims to introduce the home learner to all that civilization has to offer, but divides it up according to nation. The inside cover artwork provides an interesting contrast: unlike the fairy tale landscape on the inside cover of *Journeys* showing a castle, forest, and lake, the inside flap of *The Writings of Man* is a world map, and marching across the map is a stream of people: the march of progress.

Although the emphasis in *Journeys through Bookland* is on the boy's future, in ensuring that reading will help form a strong moral character and will continue to serve as a valuable resource as he grows into adulthood, there is another argument about reading that is being made throughout the series. It is an argument that is rooted in a celebration of the Romantic child and its imagination and innocence and the value of childhood reading and reading like a child for the adult. *Journeys through Bookland* is a home library and is based on the premise for children to "become truly educated and truly refined it must be through the influence of home" (10:331); therefore an important emphasis is placed on the role that parents, and more specifically mothers, can play in helping their children learn to read. The last half of the tenth volume is dedicated to "Talk with Parents," and it assumes that the parents need as much education in how and why to read as their children do. The section is exhaustive. Sylvester gives detailed explanations on how to discuss fiction, poetry, and illustrations according to literary devices such as plot, character, and setting. Sylvester warns parents that "it is not enough to supply children with plenty of good books and to keep the bad ones away" (10: 396). In other words, it is not enough for parents to purchase the home library, but they must also be willing to read the books with the children.

In many ways, parents are there to help children learn how to read good books and to appreciate fine literature. But there is also a sense that the parent will gain from the experience as well. This comes through most distinctly in the section on how to talk about the pictures, where Sylvester models the kind of a conversation a parent might have with a child about an illustration. For this example Sylvester focuses on the illustration that accompanies Eugene Field's poem "Wynken Blynken and Nod." Sylvester encourages the parent to start with questions about the largest items in the picture, then move to smaller items, and then to ask

questions about feelings, ideas, and “what ifs” that the picture suggests. At the end, Sylvester writes:

After such a talk as that with a little child, do you not think, dear parent, that he would come nearer to you, and while you read the poem softly and smoothly to him, he would learn to like its music, and through its refining learn to love you a little better? When he has grown to manhood, do you not think there will come times when his heart will be touched, when he will long for the loving arms around him and the sweet mother voice to sing once more of wonderful sights that be? There are holier things to be done for children than to feed and clothe them (394).

In this passage, childhood reading becomes a sacred act for both the mother and the child. The mother’s love and the experience of reading the poem will be remembered long after the child has grown. What mother does not want to give her child such memories?

Such arguments are not only presented in the section for parents, but throughout the volumes, texts that speak of innocence of the child, the joy of childhood, the bond with a mother, and fond memories of a childhood home are included. Such images are established in the first two volumes through the inclusions of several poems from Robert Louis’s Stevenson’s *A Child’s Garden of Verses* and Eugene Field’s *Love-Songs of Childhood*.<sup>5</sup> Stevenson and Field are both given a biographical sketch and full-page halftone portrait. In their biographies, it is noted how well these authors understand or represent the perspective of childhood. Stevenson is praised for how his verses “show how clearly he remembered his own boyhood” (1: 127) while the opening sentence to Field’s biography sings, “how rare is the man who seems to know just how children feel and just what children like!” (1: 249).

Stevenson's poems tend to celebrate the child's ability to use the imagination to travel anywhere, the ability to move further out into the world, but all from safety of home. In "The Swing," the narrator goes back and forth, "Up in the air and over the wall,/ Till I can see so wide,/ Rivers and trees and cattle and all/ Over the countryside---" (1: 64). In "Foreign Lands," the narrator climbs a tree which allows him to see "many pleasant places more/ That I had never seen before" (1: 127), and he knows if he climbs up a bit higher he could see more, "where the grown-up river slips/ Into the sea among the ships" eventually "onward into fairy land" (1: 128). From a bed, a swing, a backyard tree, the child is able to find a way to imagine himself in another place, freeing the child to travel forth into the world, boundless and unfettered. At the same time, the experience of childhood is universal: the poems describe ways being a boy in Scotland might not be so different from being a boy in some other land. In "Singing," the narrator lists all the creatures who sing, the bird and the sailor, but also "The children sing in far Japan, /The children sing in Spain."

One poem Sylvester does not include from *A Child's Garden of Verse* is "The Land of Story Books," which ostensibly fits within the themes and ideals of a series centered in Bookland. Significant differences between "The Land of Story Books" and "Bookland" are evident, however. One distinction is the content of each land: Sylvester's Bookland encompasses more kinds of books than just storybooks. Part of Sylvester's goal is to lead children to read more than just fiction, so many genres of literature and not just stories make up his Bookland. Bookland is also meant to be a shared experience between mother and child. Ann C. Colley argues *A Child's Garden of Verse* "delineates a topography that essentially excludes adults" (179), and she cites the "Land of Story Books" as a poem that illustrates this divide. In the verse, the land that has been created from storybooks, feeding the idea that child's play, belongs solely

to the child, and it is not a place where adults can go. Instead, the parents “sit at home and talk and sing/ and do not play at anything” (*Child’s Garden of Verses* 47). While a child is deeply immersed in elaborate play, the adult can only break the spell and force the child to leave it behind at bedtime. But in Sylvester’s understanding, the parent plays an important role in the development of a child and gains from the child’s imagination, so they are not separate but actively engaged in reading together.

Meanwhile, Field’s poetry provides an American voice amid the nursery rhymes and old world fairy tales, and his poems, though fanciful, also include items and settings familiar to the middle-class American child such as private bedrooms, toys, and doting mothers. Several are lullabies, which depict a mother singing her baby to sleep such as “The Rockabye Lady” who “comes stealing, comes creeping” and “Little Blue Pigeon.” Other poems are about a child’s playthings and how they come alive at night. “Shuffle-Soon and Amber Locks” describes an old man and young boy joined together in imagination and play: “Shuffle Son and Amber-Locks/Sit together, building blocks;/Shuffle-Soon is old and gray,/ Amber-Locks a little child./ But together at their play/ Age and Youth are reconciled” (2:153). There is a sense that while the child may gain from playing so too does the adult, an idea expressed in Field’s biography. In describing Field, Sylvester mentions how much he was

always insist[ing] that he himself believed in ghosts, in witches, and in fairies; and it was this delight in the things that children love that made him able, when he was a busy man, working all day in a big city where men do not spend much time thinking about fairies and such things, to write so charmingly of the “fumfays” and storm-kings of which his poems are full” (1: 252).

For the busy adult, to retreat into the practices of childhood can be rejuvenating.

The last poem by Stevenson included in the series is “Picture Books in Winter.” The poem, which describes how the onset of cold weather results in more time spent indoors reading, and how when the outside world is covered in snow and ice, readers may still “find the flowing brooks/In the picture story-books” (1: 240). The poem ends in praise of the “happy chimney corner days” of warmth and happiness spent with books. Like many of Stevenson’s poems, “Picture Books in Winter” celebrates the imaginative transport a child can enjoy through play. Following the poem, Sylvester provides an extensive gloss and one of his first essays on the subject of reading. He notes the poem advocates for the pleasure of reading, which is often associated with the child; however, Sylvester does not limit this enjoyment to children. Sylvester “suspects that, after all, we are all of us small enough to sit in a chimney corner; and perhaps every book is but a picture story-book to the man or woman who is old enough and big enough to read it rightly” (1: 243). In this case, to read it rightly is to return to the child’s perspective, to find pleasure as a reader is to read as a child would. Reading provides the adult with a means for remembering what it was like to be a child.

Other poems run throughout the series which continue to present images and idealizations of childhood life. In George MacDonald’s “Baby,” the newborn child is celebrated as an innocent angel come from heaven who is part of God’s plan for its parent. As the baby tells the mother at the end: “God thought of *you*, and so I am here” (2:13). John Greenleaf Whittier’s poem “The Barefoot Boy” praises the simple pleasures of child and ends with “Ah! That thou couldst know thy joy,/ Ere it passes, barefoot boy!” (4:7). Washington Allston’s “Boyhood” focuses on the memory of a mother in adulthood. He writes “When by my bed I saw my mother kneel./ And with her blessing took her nightly kiss; /Whatever Time destroys he cannot this; --/ E’en now that nameless kiss I feel” (6: 372). Finally, Samuel Woodworth’s song “The Old

Oaken Bucket” recalls the pleasure of drinking water out of an old wooden bucket while growing up on his father’s plantation. The song ends with “And now, far removed from that loved situation,/The tear of regret will oftentimes swell,/As fancy returns to my father’s plantation, And sighs for the bucket which hangs in the well.” (7:300). These are just a sampling of the poems written about childhood or with child speakers in the series, a set of texts designed it would seem to appeal more to the mother than to the boy in need of excitement.

Once simple rhymes and verses are abandoned for more difficult reading material, these themes are emphasized through the biographies of famous American writers and poets. They tell how the influence of a loving mother, the existence of a home library, and the act of childhood reading helped form them into great men. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow benefited from a “mother [who] found time for close companionship with all of her children” (4:201) and a home where in the evening, the brothers and sisters “would draw up in a little group to listen to a story, possibly from the *Arabian Nights*” (4:201). John Greenleaf Whittier also grew up in listening to tales with his siblings when they “gathered about the great hearth, and there listened to stories of Indians, witches and Christian martyrs, and to many another weird or adventurous tale told by the older members of the family” (8:226). Other men were fortunate to have access to home libraries in boyhood. William Cullen Bryant’s biography tells of the “carefully chosen works of literature [that] were discovered by the boy in his father’s library” and how “he read widely and well” (8:239). Likewise, Oliver Wendell Holmes grew up in a home which contained “a well-chosen library” (8:245), while James Russell Lowell made use of his father’s library in which there were “more than three thousand books, and he began when only a small boy to choose for himself favorite authors” (8:259). Finally, Washington Irving’s boyhood taste in reading is

indicative of the kind of writing he eventually would grow up to create. His biography describes how “he came upon Robinson Crusoe and Sindbad the Sailor, and thus was awakened a great delight in books and travel and adventure” (9:140).

This somewhat tenderhearted and Romantic vision of childhood seems at odds with the more scientific and learned approach that dominates *Journeys through Bookland*. At the same time, there is a love for and pleasure in childhood reading that Sylvester wants to convey, even if it has to be outgrown. As the child matures to the boy to the man, it is important for literature to serve other needs and purposes. Nevertheless, the memory of childhood reading should always be treasured, and for the adult, reading with a child is a means of remembering what it was like to be a child.

### 3.3 THE FANTASY OF BOOKLAND

In 1917, another version of Bookland was imagined, which has more affiliation with the time-slip fantasies of E. Nesbit than to the imperial romances of H. Rider Haggard. *Girls in Bookland* is a work of fiction for children written by Hildegard Hawthorne, granddaughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and illustrated by John Walcott Adams. The story changes how Bookland is imagined and what it offers the child readers who are now gendered female. Bookland no longer belongs to Jim Hawkins poring over his map before adventuring forth, but instead is taken over by a girl such as Alice who falls asleep and finds herself in a whimsical world.<sup>6</sup> Bookland is no longer part of this world, but is an alternative world.

In the story, two sisters, Rose and Ruth, growing up on a Wyoming ranch, are settling into what they will expect to be a long, dull winter. Rose is imaginative; Ruth is a reader.

Together, as they watch the snow fall, they begin to spin fantasies of where they could go and the girls they could meet if they had a magic carpet. In the midst of their musings, a little fairy appears who is so tiny they can only hear her but cannot see her. The fairy, who comes to be called Honeysqueak, takes the girls through a Magic Gate to Ancient Greece where they meet Sappho in the first of many adventures to come.

In each of the following chapters, the girls find themselves within the setting of a well-known novel including such classics as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Romola*, *Little Women*, and *Ivanhoe*. They travel to various places and meet and interact with a variety of literary heroines including Sappho, Rowena, Maid Marion, Evangeline, Guinevere, and Little Nell. They only meet and interact with girls from literature, so when they want to go visit Queen Guinevere, they meet her while she is still a princess living with her parents. In many ways, these journeys teach the girls as much about what it means to be a girl as it does about literature. Rose and Ruth are depicted as active cowgirls growing up on a ranch who love to ride horses and play in the snow. Their favourite Christmas present is a new saddle. In many of their adventures playing with girls from other times and places such as Medieval times or Victorian England, they conclude that they are happy growing up where and when they are.

The girls always arrive in a story world prior to the time of the book's narrative. For instance, Captain March is still at home when they visit the world of *Little Women*. This allows the girls, and hence their readers, to have new adventures that are not described in Alcott's novel. There is no chronological order to their adventures. What is noticeable instead is how the girls themselves become increasingly brave and adventuresome with each journey. On their first few journeys, Ruth and Rose are mostly observers. They watch Sappho run a race in Greece and listen to Jo March tell stories. But in the later chapters, the sisters become participants in

exciting adventures: they help Maid Marian smuggle a set of arrows to Robin Hood's gang and escape from the Medici's with Romola in Renaissance Florence. Along with Marian, they are toasted by Robin Hood as "The three prettiest, bravest, coolest young maids in Sherwood Forest" (160).

In the last adventure, they visit the Quaker Maid Darthea from the novel *Hugh Wynne* and meet General Washington, who has yet to become the first president of the United States. In the story, the girls *know* that Washington is an important person, but they cannot remember why. When Darthea asks them "Why do you think so much of Mr. Washington?" (289), the girls struggle to remember an answer. When the words finally come, they are shouted out, but not to Darthea but rather to each other back in their own home. The visit to the world of *Hugh Wynne* is the last adventure the fairy takes them on. By that point, spring has arrived and Rose and Ruth no longer have long afternoons indoors to fill. In that way, reading becomes one activity for girls, but not the only one that matters. While there is fun to be had in reading, there is just as much fun to be had outdoors.

Upon return from an adventure, the girls always plan to tell their mother about their journey but then inexplicably forget. They even forget about the fairy in between visits and only remember her when she appears. At the very end of the novel, even the visits to Bookland have become a distant memory:

In the summer that followed Rose and Ruth saw no more of the Winter Fairy who had taken them on so many delightful excursions through the Magic Gate. Often they talked of her, and occasionally, just before falling asleep, they thought they caught a faint sound of her voice, almost like moonbeams singing. But of this they could not be quite sure. When they turned the pages of the books in which lived

the heroines she had taken them to see, it almost seemed to them at times that she had left the key of that Gate in their hands, and that the story was real to them . . . real as the house in which they lived, real as themselves. But when they told this to their mother she smiled, and said it was imagination, and kissed them (290-291).

Imagination is fanciful and, indeed, part of childhood. The girls can enjoy these flights of fancy for a while, but then they must outgrow them. What remains is a vague memory and a special attachment to the books that were read as children.

Bookland as Hawthorne creates it is an imaginative world and one that is not available to adults. In a “Word before the Story,” Hawthorne talks about an inside world different from the one in which we live, “a very wonderful world, that is ours for the taking” (vi). She explains:

Lots of us can never hunt lions in Africa or sail the high seas, or find gold, or herd cows on the wild prairies, or know a pirate, or run an engine, or become kings or queens or presidents or the wives of presidents, or anything great and famous like that . . . But in the world inside this we can be and do anything, not only now and here, but back in dim ages when knights were bold and castles held prisoned princesses . . . We can be hundreds of different persons, men and women and boys and girls, beasts and fishes, clouds and mountains. Once inside that world, anything is liable to happen to us. This inside world is the world of books. There, on your bookshelf, inside the quiet-looking blue and brown and red and green volumes, all sorts of exciting things are going on, all sorts of people are busy over all sorts of affairs, talking and laughing, crying and playing, having marvelous escapes, doing wonderful deeds. If we could just step inside those books and join

in the life going on so busily lose ourselves in one book after another! Wouldn't it be thrilling? (vi-vii).

Pointing out all the potential excitement that is available children in the books resting on their bookshelves is similar to Nesbit's representation of book magic. It is all there available for the child: she just has to take the book off the shelf. If there is an anxiety underlying *Girls in Bookland*, it is not so much fear that children will read the wrong books but that they will not read any books at all.

Hawthorne's version of Bookland continued to live on in the plays created by children's librarians. They used Bookland to entice children to read and elements such as magical entrances and a focus on the characters who reside in Bookland are standard. The entrance into Hawthorne's Bookland requires magic: Rose and Ruth have a fairy guide and must enter through a magic gate. In the plays by librarians, magic is required as well, although it can take the form of a magic gate, a bridge, or fairy guide. Once a child has entered Bookland, there is no need to wander or journey. In fact, the purpose is not to guide children through Bookland; instead, the emphasis is on helping readers to find entry into the magical world. Once there, what happens is determined by the characters they meet and the stories from which they are drawn. Meeting these characters and having an adventure with them is intended to spur the child on to read more about them.

### **3.4 THE END OF BOOKLAND**

By the 1930s, *Journeys through Bookland* was still being published and sold in the United States; however, over time, its purpose and values had changed to fit the literary and educational

climate. Concerns about childhood reading had changed and the emphasis moved from guiding children through too many books to encouraging children to read books and for them to develop taste. These changes are apparent in reading the memoir of James Keddie, who aided in the sale and success of *Journeys through Bookland*. His memoir *A Shady Corner of Paradise* (1936) is fascinating for how it brings together business practices with the culture industry, and in many ways, it is aimed to persuade what he calls “*Journey workers*,” i.e. the sales representatives who sold the book set, of the value of reading this particular home library. In his descriptions, however, his reasons for praising and promoting the series differ from the ones that Sylvester outlined in his original “Talk with Parents.”

In one passage, Keddie refers to the H. G. Wells story “The Crystal Egg” in order to explain the value of the *Journeys through Bookland*. In the story, a beleaguered shopkeeper Mr. Cave has what appears to be a valueless chunk of crystal, but when a customer offers to purchase it for five pounds, Cave refuses. As the tale unfolds, the crystal is revealed to be a magical object, which sometimes glows in such a way that it allows Mr. Cave views into another land. In the midst of his pathetic existence, these glimpses into a foreign world, which seems to resemble the red planet Mars, is the only happiness in the owner’s life, and he sacrifices much in order to keep it. Keddie claims that crystal eggs do indeed exist in the world and that they are “Books, and books and books again!” (46). Keddie believes *Journeys through Bookland* exemplifies a crystal egg. He exclaims:

How many children will gaze through the Crystal Egg and so land on the island of Robinson Crusoe in the Caribbean, and step ashore on that of the Swiss Family in the Pacific? Or wander by Walden Pond in the shade of the generous trees in summer or weather the bite of its shrewd New England winters . . . That Crystal

Egg, the Book, conquers time as well as space and today the boys and girls who know Ivanhoe may mingle with the knights and ladies at the Tourney at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and meet Palmers and Pilgrims, squires and men-at arms who have seen Palestine and the Crusades.” (47-8).

Like the crystal egg in Wells’s story, for Keddie, *Journeys through Bookland* offers readers the ability to see into other worlds, to transcend time and space, and to encounter characters from all sorts of places and eras.

Yet Keddie’s description of the series does not encapsulate the project as Sylvester conceived of it in 1909. Keddie’s Bookland is still a place for children, but its landscape and purpose have changed dramatically. Like the Bookland Rose and Ruth visit in Hawthorne’s story, Keddie version of Sylvester’s Bookland is a world drawn from books, primarily fantasy and fiction, where literary characters commingle amid a variety of literary locales. The material object of the book offers entrance, but then it becomes a world aimed to introduce children to the enjoyment of reading, even if it is a place they will eventually outgrow. According to Keddie, the goal is that “the child who begins to rambles through Bookland will not be consciously acquiring anything. The development of literary taste is like that. From stage to stage the child will wander plucking and savoring” (139). Instead of a stand-in for unexplored land or even a representation of civilization, Bookland is conceived of as a fantasy world, not unlike Alice’s Wonderland.

In Keddie’s opinion, the main threats to childhood reading include shoddy educational practices and popular culture such as movies, radio shows, and cartoons. *Journeys through Bookland* is presented as a means of combating those forces, in part, because the series helps a reader develop taste. The development of literary taste is a theme that runs throughout Keddie’s

argument. He writes, *Journeys through Bookland* “is made up of these fundamentals which strike deeper than taste. They are the foundations on which taste is built. And (Ruskin again!) “to teach taste is inevitably to form character” (105-6). In another passage, he explains what literary taste acquired in childhood offers the adult: “the taste and feeling for, the love and appreciation of the best in literature will be a secret map burning brightly in any circumstances, giving out a warm glow and an inner radiance at times when that inner light is most needed” (139). And, just as important, literary taste provides a tradition that will help a child not hinder him, unlike the other sources of children’s entertainment. Keddie writes, “One of the librarians in the Brooklyn, N.Y. public library said that the chief factors in intellectual development of the American child are gangster moving pictures, Katzenjammer Kids, and Mutt and Jeff. The article was appropriately headed ‘The Vulgarization of the American Child’” (166-7). For all these reasons, *Journeys through Bookland* is a valuable investment, but what it promises differs from the comprehensive knowledge and mastery that Sylvester touted.

Following 1930s, the image of Bookland began to disappear from literary culture as the concerns and anxieties about childhood reading shifted. There was an increased emphasis on the acquirement of literary taste and a general push to make reading enjoyable as books began to compete with other forms of media for children’s attention. As literary taste became more important, there was no need to map or provide maps of Bookland since the books that mattered were the classics that had survived. The literary cosmopolis is no longer a world of all books but consists of the books that are considered worth reading. To a certain extent, the abundance of books had been accepted: books would come, books would go, but what mattered were the

classics that had endured. Bookland disappeared, but imaginative geography survived in discussions of childhood reading, primarily in relation to younger readers. It was reduced to Storybook and Fairytale lands.

#### 4.0 L. M. MONTGOMERY'S BOOK FRIENDSHIP FOR GIRL READERS

In 1908, L. M. Montgomery published *Anne of Green Gables*, the first of many of her novels about the lives of girls and young women in ordinary domestic worlds. Throughout her books, reading plays an important part in the lives of her heroines, and what emerges is a manner and way of thinking about reading that can be described by the metaphor Book Friendship. Book Friendship describes an emotional attachment between girl readers and their reading material and the kind of sympathetic outlook it fosters. Book friendship signals a complex, emotional, and developing relationship with books and literature, which includes a range of ideas and practices including the notions that books provide friendship, friends read books together, reading feeds the imagination, reading leads to experiences of beauty, reading makes life more interesting, and some books should be read and re-read. In an article on Leigh Hunt's relationship with his library which explores how emotions effect understandings of print culture and vice versa, Jacqueline George argues that for devoted readers, "the printed words [is] infused with thoughts and sensations – a phenomenon present only, of course, in these readers' imaginations, but with acute consequence for their social worlds" (George 245). Book Friendship has "acute consequences" for Montgomery's heroines and for the readers of her girls' series. Book Friendship nurtures an imaginative spirit, a critical mind, and sensitivity to Beauty, ways of seeing that lead to a cosmopolitan sympathy.

To imagine or represent Book Friendship does not require magic or fantasy, but rather takes place within domestic scenes. Reading features prominently in Montgomery's three series built around the girl characters of Anne Shirley, Emily Byrd Starr, and Pat Gardiner. All three heroines have profound relationships with literature and books as well as many friendships and romances in which books and reading play important functions. Many of the reading experiences and practices in the *Anne*, *Emily*, and *Pat* books are ones that Montgomery herself practiced and which historians have shown were important to the new sense of girlhood in North America and the United Kingdom (Hunter; Mitchell). These practices can also be viewed as helping girls find a place in the modern world. Montgomery's novels defend aspects of girlhood reading and at the same time make arguments against other reading ideologies that threaten to limit or confine girl readers.

Cosmopolitan sympathy as it is represented in Montgomery's novels is not a detached form of cosmopolitanism that aims for a world citizenry, but rather one that emphasizes community and imagination, qualities which make day-to-day life more meaningful and connect seemingly small lives to something bigger. Through sometime simple acts and experiences with books and literature, girl readers learn to love how books can help them connect with other people, imagine other possibilities, be deeply impressed by ideas and feelings, and experience Beauty. These practices add pleasure and lead a girl reader to find her day-to-day life more interesting and make a connection with other readers, other experiences, other feelings, and other dreams beyond her realm of experience.

Over the course of Montgomery's career, the emotional attachment for books and the kind of cosmopolitan sympathy she represented went out of fashion. While Anne, Emily, and Pat arguably share similar relationships with books and ideas about reading, practices that

qualify as ‘sentimental,’ each series was written during a different decade of the twentieth century. The early *Anne* books were written in the teens, *Emily* in the twenties, and *Pat* in the thirties. Over the course of Montgomery’s career, ideas about the purpose of reading and the value of literature were in flux. Literary culture changed over Montgomery’s career, and her books respond to those changes as she defends girl readers against pressure to read in certain ways.

An enduring love for *Anne of Green Gables* on the part of women long past girlhood is a common theme in the literature and criticism about Montgomery’s novels. And this love of *Anne* into adulthood does represent a somewhat “knotty” problem that Brenda R. Weber investigates in “Confessions of a Kindred Spirit with an Academic Bent,” an essay that leads her through memories of her childhood reading, her grandmother’s love of books, her pursuit of a PhD, and the dictates of high and low art she has been wrestling with since her youth. Reflecting upon her experience of reading Montgomery, she determines that:

For a particular kind of imaginative and brainy person (and almost always this person is a pre-adolescent girl), these books not only express but shape much of what’s going on inside – the desire to belong, the intrigue of the imaginary, the delight that comes through standing our ground and letting kindred spirits magically find you (Weber 50).

This way of reading and its purpose and appeal are considered appropriate for girlhood, but as Weber knows, taste for a book such as *Anne* is not supposed to extend into adulthood. Weber concludes that rather than a focus on content or conceptions of literary taste, what really matters is the experience of reading. While books such as *Anne of Green Gables* may never fit within the parameters of high art, what is gained through the experience of reading them should not be

dismissed. She states: “I’ve become increasingly convinced that the subject matter we read is less important than the manner in which we read it” (Weber 55). Understanding Book Friendship and its cosmopolitan sympathy as it emerges in Montgomery’s novels is both an attempt to place her within the childhood reading culture of the turn of the century as well as understand the manner of reading she represents that have kept readers reading and re-reading her fiction.

#### 4.1 GIRL READERS AND SENTIMENTALISM

Upon its publication, *Anne of Green Gables* was immediately successful. Book reviews praised the character of Anne who was compared favourably with other girl heroines such as Alcott’s March sisters and Wiggin Douglas’s Rebecca Randall. It was deemed “an ideal volume for growing girls” (“Comment on Current Books” 484), “one of the best books for girls . . . seen for a long time” (487), and is a “story all girls from 12 to 15 and many grown-ups will enjoy” (*American Library Association Booklist* 488). At least one other review suggested it would “appeal to every reader, old and young” (“Comment on Current Books” 484). The terms ‘sweet,’ ‘wholesome’ and ‘pure’ are used by more than one reviewer to describe the book’s pleasures, how “in these days of unhealthy literature . . . it is a real pleasure to come across a story so pure and sweet” (“Comment on Current Books” 486). Another reviewer claims *Anne* provides a welcome relief for “all the novel-readers weary of problems, the duel of the sexes, broken Commandments, and gratuitous suicides” (*The Spectator* 489). Positive reviews also note how it shows sympathy: how Montgomery is the writer of “deep and wide sympathy” (*Boston Herald* 483) and that “it appeals in a very intense way to the best human sympathies”

(“The Way of Letters” 488). One perspicacious reviewer predicts it will be read and reread for years to come (*The Globe* 487).

Only one review of *Anne* makes use of the word sentimentality,” and it is negative. The writer complains that Anne talks as “though she had borrowed Bernard Shaw’s vocabulary, Alfred Austin’s sentimentality, and the reasoning powers of a Justice of the Supreme Court” (“A Heroine from an Asylum” 483). The comparison to Alfred Austin, Britain’s Poet Laureate between 1896 and 1913, is not a favourable one. Sentimental, a term often applied to the writing of women, had acquired negative connotations in literary culture by the beginning of the twentieth-century when it was used to suggest mawkishness or a lack of artistry. Sentimentalism, however, has deep roots in moral and ethical philosophy and is important for understanding Montgomery’s representation of reading and the faculty of cosmopolitan sympathy she promotes.

In *A Defence of Sentimentality* (2004), Robert Solomon tackles the so-called problems of sentimentalism from the perspective of moral and ethical philosophy. Solomon notes how sentimentalism is typically applied to what is considered to be bad art, but art which is not only aesthetically bad but which is also considered morally bad. Solomon then claims the war on sentimentalism began with moral and ethical philosophy, specifically in the writing of Kant (6). He identifies what he sees to be three main reasons why sentimentality is considered harmful: because it leads to an unrealistic viewpoint, emotional weakness, or emotional self-indulgence (10). In each case, feelings are a problem. They can lead a reader to view things in a distorted way that clouds judgment, they override other faculties such as perception and reason, or they lead to an enjoyment of emotion for its own sake without leading to any moral improvement or action. In other words, a reader might cry over the death of Little Nell, but that will not prompt

the reader to donate money to the poor or to advocate for better child labour laws. Ultimately Solomon concludes that sentimentality is “the rejection (or fear) of emotion, and a certain kind of emotion or sentiment in particular, variously designed as ‘tender’ or ‘sweet’ or ‘nostalgic’” (18). Solomon ends by suggesting the virtue of sentiment may be that it “stimulates and exercises our sympathies without straining or exhausting them” (19); in other words, it becomes a way of practicing feelings.

Michael L. Frazer’s *Enlightenment of Sympathy* (2010) provides a more detailed history of sentimentalism and how it evolved in eighteenth-century moral and ethical philosophy. Like Solomon, his goal is recuperate the value of sentimentalism. To do this, Frazer demonstrates the concept’s complexity by examining the way it was theorized by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Johann Gottfried von Herder. In Frazer’s argument, sentimentalism is not the opposite of rationalism, but rather, is an alternative means for reflection, reflection which is aimed at establishing moral standards and judgments. While rationalism makes reason the ruling faculty in that reflective process, sentimentalism, according to Frazer, relies upon all the cognitive, affective, and imaginative elements of the human mind (158). Sentimentalism, he argues, relies on the claim that all human beings share a psychology from which, with sufficient reflection, the same moral sentiments will develop (151). Within this framework, sympathy becomes the outward expression of the sentimental reflection. It is “the bridge between the social and psychological, the faculty by which inner mental states are shared among individuals” (Frazer 17-18).

These generous interpretations of sentimentalism are valuable for understanding how sympathy functions in Montgomery’s writing. Solomon’s argument that sentimentalism provides a safe outlet for practicing emotion is one that applies to girl readers. Likewise, Frazer’s holistic

view of sentimentalism is useful since Montgomery's cosmopolitan sympathy is critical, affective, and imaginative. These discussions of sentimentalism and sympathy also make apparent the ways in which they overlap with the concept of cosmopolitanism. Many of the reasons why sentimentalism is either praised or criticized are similar to reasons why the ideal of cosmopolitanism is celebrated or derided. For instance, the critique that sentimentalism does not lead to any real-world productive action is also said of cosmopolitanism. While cosmopolitanism is often touted for its imaginative value, in "The Illusions of Cosmopolitanism," Gertrude Himmelfarb argues the concept of cosmopolitanism is foolhardy and illusive: "Cosmopolitanism obscures all . . . unwelcome facts – obscures, indeed, the reality of the world in which a good many humans beings actually reside. It is utopian, not only in its unrealistic assumption of a commonality of "aims, aspirations, and values," but also in its "unwarned optimism" (76). Such arguments against sentimentalism and cosmopolitanism assume that the people are detached from their local lives. On the other hand, Frazer's description of von Herder's pluralist sentimentalism is similar to positive descriptions of cosmopolitanism by current scholars such as K. Kwame Appiah. Appiah defines a cosmopolitan patriot as someone who can "entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different, places that are home to other different people" (91). Both von Herder, as Frazer represents him, and Appiah view creative fiction as a valuable means for developing a sentimental or cosmopolitan outlook.

The history of sentimentalism in moral and ethical philosophy provides insight into how Montgomery's so-called sentimental novels might foster a cosmopolitan sympathy. The tender or sweet emotions that are associated with sentimentalism are exactly the kinds of qualities that

make reviewers praise books such as *Anne of Green Gables* for girls. There is no way to prove that imaginative engagement with a novel makes one more likely to help a starving person or lead a reader to care equally about all citizens of the world. Nevertheless, in practicing sentimental feelings, the girl readers in Montgomery's works cannot help but find greater beauty and meaning in their lives. Their identities are limited to what they are told or by the mores of a small community but also by what they can imagine and feel and see. Anne Shirley, Emily Byrd Starr, and Pat Gardiner are all considered 'queer' by their peers, and what constitutes their 'queerness' is a depth of feeling that is strange or uncommon. This depth of feeling does need to be tempered as they mature, but what it offers does not need to be abandoned or lost.

Montgomery was aware of the charges of sentimentality leveled against her books. She complains about a scathing review of *Kilmeny of the Orchard* (1910), one of Montgomery's first attempts at writing for an adult audience. The review, which appeared in *The Clarion*, begins by calling it "a terrible specimen of the American novel of sentiment" (quoted in *Selected Journals* 2: 52) and ends by stating "it is enough for us to know that it tells a childish and improbable story in commonplace language and a gushing manner" (*SJ* 2:53). The review draws a direct connection between "childish" writing and that which is sentimental. Later, *Rilla of Ingleside* (1920) was also dismissed for its sentimentality, which Montgomery writes about in her journal. She notes,

All [the reviews] were kind but one which sneered at my "sentiment." The attitude in some English critics towards anything that savors of sentiment amuses me. It is to them as the proverbial red rag to a bull. They are very silly. Can't they see that civilization is founded on and held together by sentiment.... My books

are not sentimental. I have always tried in them to register normal and ordinary emotions – not merely passionate or unique episodes (*SJ* 3.37).

Montgomery shows she understands what is often considered a problem with sentiment, that it is seen as an excess of emotion, but she does not believe she relies upon such “passionate or unique episodes” in her writing. At the same time, she is not willing to deny the value and importance of feelings, since “civilization is founded on and held together by sentiment.” This observation places an importance on smaller lives, especially those of women, in the outcome of history. Far from being something to be dismissed, she claims sentiment is what shapes the world.

#### **4.2 THE GIRL AND THE BOOK**

The concept of Book Friendship does not originate in the works of L. M. Montgomery, but has long been used by bibliophiles to describe the relationship between a reader and his or her book. While Book Friendship always describes the emotional attachment between a reader and his book, as it becomes a relationship between the girl and the book, it changes some of the assumptions about what those emotions are and what purposes they serve.

In his extensive two-volume work *The Anatomy of Bibliomania*, Holbrook Jackson outlines the many attitudes, ideas, and practices which can constitute book love, from the common to the bizarre. Jackson claims that “common to all bibliophiles” is “the sense of companionship which we receive from our love of books (92). In other words, all lovers of books view them as companions and friends. Jackson finds no end of examples of writers and thinkers who have written on this “pleasant subject” (99), and so he gathers together “a handful of commendations” (99) from sundry men including Sir. W. Waller, Isaac Barrow, Oliver

Goldsmith, and Washington Irving. According to these writers, book friends can be cheering, soothing, faithful, unrepenting, steady, and unaltered (Jackson 99). In all of the quotations Jackson provides, books fare much better than real friends, and the writers emphasize how books combat loneliness. Many of these quotations come from writers who lived during the long eighteenth century, arguably the heyday of book companionship. As book ownership became more accessible and affordable for some people, they were able to develop a more intimate relationship with books. Nor is it coincidental that the metaphor of Book Friendship flourished in the same era when sentimentalism was an important concept in moral and ethical philosophy.

By the 1890s, however, Agnes Repplier claims that the ability to view books as friends was disappearing. In her essay, "Our Friends, the Books," she posits Book Friendship as an ideal form of reading in opposition to what she views are the pressures, expectations, and duties associated with reading literature in fin-de-siècle literary culture. In Repplier's opinion, book friends were becoming scarce as pleasurable reading was being replaced by prescribed reading, since, she argues, no one views a book that he or she "ought to read" as a friend (15). Repplier includes several stories of famous authors such as William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and Sir Walter Scott who viewed their books as friends, but her favourite story is about Pushkin. According to Repplier, upon his deathbed, Pushkin is rumoured to have looked to the shelf where his favourite books sat and "murmured faintly . . . 'Farewell, my friends.'" (17). Repplier goes on in an ironic tone to explore the meaning of this scene. She writes:

When we remember that Pushkin lived before Russian literature had become a great and dispiriting power, when we realize that he had never been ordered by critics to read Turgueneff, never commanded severely to worship Tolstoi or be an outcast in the land . . . it seems incredible to the well-instructed that he should

have loved his books so much. It is absolutely afflicting to think that many of these same volumes were foreign, were romantic, perhaps even cheerful in their character; that they were not his mentors, his disciplinarians, his guides to a higher and sadder life, but only his “friends” (17-8).

As Repplier represents it, Pushkin was fortunate to die when he did, while he could still enjoy books for the pleasures they offer. In contrast, Repplier sees contemporary readers as being expected to read certain books, pressured to read serious material, and shamed into reading works of national importance – all ways in which pleasure is removed from reading as it is turned into a duty. In contrast, the qualities Repplier cites as part of book friendship include an emphasis on pleasure, a freedom of choice, and a motley collection of texts “creating a friendly canon.” (19). Although Repplier does not make a connection to childhood reading in her essay, the features of reading that comprise Book Friendship are ones that adults begin to nostalgically assign to child readers as they romanticize their own childhood reading as free from restraint.

Not all cultural critics believed child readers still viewed their books as friends; instead, others believed the child/ book friendship had been damaged as too many books were being published and purchased. In her 1891 work *A Child and His Book*, Mrs. E.M. Field suggests that with the overabundance of books, children are also losing their ability to see books as friends. Field imagines how a father might feel looking at his child’s bookshelf full with, what she calls, an “embarrass of riches” compared to what he grew up with. She writes

He remembers how he, as a child, owned but some two or three dingy little volumes, and remembers also how dearly he loved these few treasures. They were to him book-friends, and their influence on his life was a powerful one. They were read and re-read till the ideas they contained had sunk into the very depths

of his consciousness, till the author's thoughts and views had become his own, and each of the characters a personal friend (Field 2).

In Field's description, children are particularly suited to develop book friends since what is read during childhood makes a deep impression upon a child's mind and spirit. But, from Field's perspective, when a child owns a wealth of books, the possibility for such a deep, close connection with one book becomes unlikely. So while at one point book ownership opened up the possibility for readers to view their books as friends, ownership of too many books can destroy the intimacy between book and reader. In spite of Field's fears, however, according to novels of Montgomery, Book Friendship is still possible in the early twentieth century between the girl and the book.

In some ways, Montgomery's representation of girl readers in her novels aligns with accounts of the practices and functions of girlhood reading in this era. Recent histories of girlhood provide insights into how girlhood reading was practiced between 1880 and 1920. To write *How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Victorian Origins of American Girlhood* (2002), Jane Hunter examined girls' diaries and other archival material belonging to middle-class New England girls. She argues that in this period, girlhood reading shifted from a moral and didactic practice to one that was used in the pursuit of self-culture. These practices include the memorization of poetry, the sharing of novels amongst friends, the search for Beauty in words, and journal writing in which ideas on books and reading are recorded (Hunter 72). Many of these practices are part of Montgomery's books; indeed, they are ones she herself practiced as a girl growing up. In *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880-1915* (1995), Sally Mitchell studied periodicals designed for middle-class and working-class girls in the United Kingdom.

Based on this research, Mitchell argues that “reading – and its emotional and imaginary constructs – has an effect on girls’ inner lives, their personal horizons and standards, their image of self, and potential” (140). This can lead to a view of reading as experimentation and compensation: an opportunity to experience emotions beyond their range or to compensate for experiences and qualities missing in daily life (140).

Experts discussing and shaping girlhood reading at the beginning of the twentieth century assumed it was natural for girls’ reading to be connected with emotion. They also assumed this connection meant that girl readers were in need of guidance. In *The Children’s Reading* (1912), Frances Jenkins Olcott, a children’s librarian from Pittsburgh, claimed that the desire to read romance was a natural instinct and part of normal development in girls (152). In the absence of good reading material, a girl would read whatever she could find to satisfy this need. The fear among educators and librarians was that girls would indulge in sensationalist material to meet this desire; therefore Olcott argues, the onus is on the guardians of reading to ensure girls have access to stories of romance that are wholesome. Amongst her recommended list of romance for girls is *Jane Eyre*, a story which Olcott believes to be lacking in literary quality, but which offers a harmless and fascinating read for girls under seventeen (160). Although Montgomery tends to resist impositions upon girls’ reading, the problem of reading sensationalist and romantic fiction does arise in both *Anne of Green Gables* and *Emily of New Moon*.

Although Montgomery’s representation of reading reflects the ideas and attitudes in the early twentieth century, there are important ways in which the relationship she imagines between the girl and the book differs. Both the girls that historians have studied and the girls that librarians were aiming to guide and protect are assumed to be modern girls living in urban environments. They are girls who are assumed to have access to a variety of public places. They

represent or imagine a girl who is attending high school, playing tennis, and shopping with her friends. Likewise, they are believed to have access to a wide variety of books. Montgomery's heroines do not live in a world of abundant books, but rather in a small, isolated part of the world. Reading material is available, but it is by no means plentiful, which replicates Montgomery's own experience of growing up in Cavendish, P.E.I. An avid reader, Montgomery read everything she could find including books and magazines that were found at home, at school, through friends, and from other resources such as the Cavendish Literary Society. Many periodicals infiltrated this world, and they provided a lens on to the thriving literary cultures that existed elsewhere, but those cultures were far removed from small-town Canada.

Two notes from Montgomery's journals give insight into her reading culture and how that affected her relationship with books. In one instance, Montgomery writes about re-reading Bulwer-Lytton Zanon as an adult. She writes, "When I was a child I read it until I could repeat whole chapters off by heart. The book was one of the few novels in the house at that time. Uncle Leander had left a paper-covered copy there. It had an incredible fascination for me" (*SJ* 2:166). In another entry, Montgomery recalls when *The Diary of Marie Bashkirseff* by Marie Corelli was published: "I was a young girl and it made a tremendous sensation. It was discussed in all the reviews. I longed to read it but books like that never penetrated to Cavendish and I could not afford to buy it" (*SJ* 2:187). The first note suggests how randomly a book might come available to a reader and then become beloved; the second one illustrates the divide between the bustling urban literary culture that critics and cultural guardians are attempting to understand and control, while growing up somewhere remote from such an environment. Ultimately, Montgomery assumes the emotions and desires of girls and the reasons why they read to be more complex than the drive of natural desire or the pursuit of self-culture. *Book Friendship* assumes a girl

reader who, whether through isolation, loneliness, or desire, wants more from life and finds meaning through attachments with books.

To understand Book Friendship also requires some understanding of the book in Montgomery's novels, where it is both a fact and an ideal connected with sympathy. Throughout her novels, the book-as-object plays an important role in a girl's emotional and social life. Books offer solace. In her loneliness prior to arriving at Green Gables, Anne latched on to what books she could find and Emily, a rather solitary child, never felt lonely when there were books to read. But the physical book is also an important part of girls' friendships and romances. Anne shares many books with her girlfriends, Emily's friendship and eventual romance with Dean originates in a shared love of books, and Pat and her friends often spend time together reading aloud novels and books of poetry. At the same time, Book Friendship also assumes the book-as-ideal. The book is idealized for the ways it can make a reader see or feel or imagine. Likewise, it represents access to all kinds of ideas and images, to worlds that lay far beyond a girl's day-to-day reality, to ideas, imagination, and beauty. Montgomery's represents a relationship with books that is not static or passive but one that offers girls a connection with other people both real and imaginary, a means to other worlds, real and imaginary, and new possibilities of seeing and feeling. Book Friendship lasts a lifetime, and in that relationship, the book-as-object serves another important role. It represents a memory of the pleasures and emotional experiences attached with girlhood reading and a means to get back to them.

### 4.3 ANNE SHIRLEY: IMAGINATION, READING, AND BOOKS

Anne has been called “first and foremost a reader” (Robinson 125) and “a fiercely autonomous reader” (Weber 55), and there is little doubt that reading and literature are important for understanding Anne’s character. But while Anne is a reader, she is not bookish. She never expresses love of a book so much as she expresses a love for how reading a book makes her feel, see, or imagine. What Anne loves about reading are the ways its emotional powers and beauty can feed her imagination. Anne’s reading is always tied to her imagination, which nurtures a cosmopolitan sympathy, a way of connecting herself to things that are larger than her. Over the course of *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne learns to temper how she expresses her emotions and to distinguish between kinds of reading material; nevertheless, there is never any doubt that the manner in which Anne reads or what she gains from her reading is anything but positive.

From her very first scene in *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne proves herself to be a literate and imaginative girl. In the span of the short drive back to Green Gables, she uses queer expressions such as “scope for imagination” and “worldly goods.” She talks of imagining what it would be like to sleep in a tree and how sometimes, while at the orphan asylum, she would imagine other girls were the daughters of “belted earls.” She tells of reading about a girl with an alabaster brow, compares a tree in blossom to a blushing bride, and renames the Avenue and Barry Pond the White Way of Delight and The Lake of Shining Waters. Anne often compares what she has read with what she experiences. At times, Anne uses a phrase or a name she had read to enhance the world around her so a spring becomes Dryad’s Bubble and a path is turned into Lover’s Lane, both names she has gleaned from books (141). Other times, reality overrules as in the instance when she tells Marilla, “I read in a book once that a rose by any other name

would smell as sweet, but I've never been able to believe it" (85). Just as she can use a book to improve her surroundings, she is able to critique a book based upon her experience.

In the works of E. Nesbit, the children often note the difference between book reality and everyday reality. They assume that what is true in books, magic, fairies, and so on, does not exist in the real world. Over time, however, they discover that if they believe in the magic of books, then they can discover the pockets of the real world where book reality still can be found. For Anne, this division between books and reality is different. What she finds in books and other literary sources influences how she sees and interprets her world. This is the precisely the kind of practice that is considered sentimental since it could be argued that her reading distorts how she views the world. It is an interpretive act rather than a discovery of truth. But Anne's ability to transform her world according to her reading does not come across as naïve, but rather as winning, perceptive, and leading to a greater understanding of her community and the world beyond.

Prior to her arrival at Green Gables, Anne had to make do with whatever reading material she could find, which does not appear to have been much. Her first eleven years were spent as an orphan, living as unpaid help with poor families before moving to an asylum. Along the way, her schooling and religious education have been spotty at best. That Anne is not particularly bookish is not surprising considering the scarcity of books in her young life. Anne does not grow up with access to a home library. The only bookshelf she ever knew was broken and empty of books. As Anne explains to Marilla, "When I lived with Mrs. Thomas she had a bookcase in her sitting-room with glass doors. There weren't any books in it" (52). Nevertheless, this empty bookcase with a broken glass door becomes a place of refuge for Anne. She uses her reflection in the other glass door to create another little girl she names Katie Maurice. Anne explains,

Katie was the comfort and consolation of my life. We used to pretend that the bookcase was enchanted and that if I only knew the right spell I would open the door and step into the room where Katie Maurice lived . . . and then Katie Maurice would have taken me by the hand and led me out into a wonderful place, all flowers and sunshine and fairies, and we would have lived there happy for ever after (53.)

Instead of Book Friends inhabiting the bookcase, volumes that could provide comfort and be reread for company, it becomes the home of an imaginary friend who serves similar purposes. Montgomery seems to be intentionally playing with the idea of book companionship here, suggesting that it is not always the book itself that offers companionship but rather the book's imaginative possibilities.

Even after Anne settles at Green Gables and books become more available to her, many of the acts of reading that are depicted in the novel are rather small and ordinary, such as opting to do her school lessons instead of finishing a novel, which does require great effort on her part. Anne, however, does not always show such restraint. She is caught by her teacher Miss Stacey reading *Ben-Hur* when she was supposed to have been studying Canadian history (316). Her excuse is that the book was too exciting to resist, so that once again when Anne speaks of books, she speaks in terms of its emotional effect. She defends the value of reading a book such as *Ben-Hur* for what it teaches about Christianity, which is arguably as valuable as knowing the history of Canada.

Only once is Anne depicted in the act of reading, and she is not even really reading, but instead has been launched into a reverie. When Marilla looks in on Anne, she finds that “she [Anne] had been reading, but her book had slipped to the floor, and now she was dreaming, with

a smile on her parted lips. Glittering castles in Spain were shaping themselves out the mists and rainbows of her lively fancy; adventures wonderful and enthralling were happening to her in cloudland” (191-2). Even if she does not love books, what Anne finds in them affects her profoundly and feeds her imagination. What is interesting is how this scene of Anne captures precisely what G. Stanley Hall worries about with girls and reading. Hall, the influential pioneer in child psychology, had concerns and ideals about the role reading should play in childhood development. In his speech “Children’s Reading: As a Factor in their Education” delivered in 1908, the same year as *Anne*’s publication, Stanley talks of book crazes that “cause a bifurcation of the inner life of idealization and fancy with the outer life of dull monotonous daily routine” (125). He goes on to describe “In reverie she [the girl reader] dreams of wealth, splendor, heroic woovers who take her away to a life where all desires are fulfilled, where the possible becomes actual and castles in the air materialize” (125). In Hall’s view, a girl such as Anne would have a distorted view of reality, but within the context of the novel, Anne’s “castles” do not detract from her day-to-day life, but only add to its beauty. Even in the midst of a daily chore, of bringing the cows home from pasture, Anne recites a passage from *Marmion*, “exulting in its rushing lines and the clash of spears in its imagery (303).

Reading is not always an individual pursuit for Anne and books are an important aspect of her friendship with other girls. When she meets Diana, her soon-to-be-bosom friend, the young Miss Barry is in the midst of reading. Diana is described as “sitting on the sofa, reading a book” (137). Diana’s mother worries about her daughter’s reading and hopes friendship will help provide a healthier alternative. Mrs. Barry tells Marilla, “She’s always poring over a book. I’m glad she has the prospect of a playmate – perhaps it will take her more out-of-doors” (138). Mrs. Barry is articulating one of the more ‘modern’ concerns about children’s reading, one that Hall

also expresses, that it is can be an unhealthy activity and that time spent reading would be better spent playing outside. Rather than taking Diana away from reading, however, friendship with Anne includes more reading. Novels, which are still vaguely suspect in Avonlea, circulate amongst friends. One of Diana's first acts of friendship is to lend a book to Anne that Diana recommends as being "perfectly splendid and tremenjusly exciting" (140). During school recesses, the girls read aloud from books that are brought from home. Jane Andrews, in particular, is a friend who is often lends Anne books, which distract her from her lessons with assurances they are "warranted to produce any number of thrills" (200). The emotional enjoyment of a book is enhanced through friendship and friendship is enhanced through the exchange of books and reading.

Sensational novels, the reading material most reviled for girls, infiltrate the community of Avonlea, and many of the books that girls share and exchange are of this ilk: books that are viewed as lurid and therefore lacking in moral value. Mrs. Allen, the new minister's pretty wife, and Miss Stacey, the energetic new teacher, intervene and discourage Anne from reading such material. Anne promises both Mrs. Allen and Miss Stacy, people Anne is anxious to please, that she will only read works they consider proper for a girl of thirteen and three-quarters. Mrs. Allen and Miss Stacey are characters that Kelly Hager identifies in her essay "Betsy and the Canon" as standard in girls' books such as *Anne*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, and *Betsy-Tacy*. They are the older and trusted friends who help guide the heroine to develop a better taste in literature (Hager 119). Acting upon compassionate advice from a well-loved mentor, a girl such as Anne learns to avoid sensationalist stories and to read and appreciate better quality books instead. According to Hager, this in turn instructs the reader of *Anne* to avoid reading such books as well.

At the same time that books such as *Anne* warn girl readers against sensationalist stories, Hager argues they also provide readers with appropriate reading material. In studying girl novels from *Little Women* (1868) to *Betsy-Tacy* (1940), Hager compiles a list of the writers and poets who are mentioned in all these books, a list she finds to be quite consistent. It includes Shakespeare (in particular *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*), Dickens (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, *David Copperfield*), Scott (*Ivanhoe*), Tennyson, Wordsworth, Longfellow, and Whittier (110). After noting the similar references made in these books, Hager goes on to argue

these correspondences, numerous and random as they are, suggest a concerted program of standardization. That we find such similar patterns, such striking recurrences in the texts that span almost one hundred years suggests a program at work in the culture and a shared system of belief that has to do both with the nature of childhood and with the properties of taste (111).

The consistency that Hager notes is interesting; however, deeming it a “concerted program of standardization” is problematic. That these storybook heroines all read similar novels could be explained in terms of what books were widespread and available at the time, so that Alcott, Wiggins, Montgomery and Hart included references to literature they assumed their readers would know. It does suggest that certain authors remained popular for girls over a long span of time and that certain reading practices were common to girls.

The understanding and implication of canon in Hager’s argument is negative. It suggests the canon is a set of authoritative texts based on so-called universal standards that are then imposed upon readers. This understanding of the canon and the kind of literary culture that it creates has been a subject of much critique over the last thirty years, and for good reasons. But to apply this concept of a canon to the reading material in *Anne of Green Gables* is problematic. It

is true: *Anne of Green Gables* does not merit canonical status, but the understanding of a canon as Hager represents it did not yet exist in 1908 or at least did not apply to the reading of girls. The kinds of dictates which were forming girlhood reading at this time were not ones based on literary taste. The concern for child and adolescent readers, be they girls or boys, was about their moral and spiritual development. The concern was with how a book would help a child build his or her character, which is not the same as measuring a book's value according to its aesthetic qualities. Indeed, some of the writers Hager lists such as Whittier and Longfellow, and even Dickens, eventually struggled for canonical status and Sir Walter Scott survived primarily as a writer for children. What unites the books and poems that these girls read is sentiment. They can constitute a canon, but a canon that is understood in a somewhat different way.

In her work on the eighteenth-century novel, Deidre Lynch argues that a canonical text was, at one point, a novel that offered readers regulation and repetition. While Lynch's argument does not fully translate to the girls' books of the early twentieth-century, it highlights how canonicity can be connected to the practices or manners of reading more so than to the meaning of the work. In the period Lynch is studying, she argues a canon worthy novel had a steadying effect on readers and could withstand several re-readings over time. Instead of regulation and repetition, the girls' novels could instead be considered canonical for the emphasis that is placed on the exercise of feeling and imagination. What is interesting is how Hager's argument highlights the way that these girls' books create their own canon. Together they become a set of texts designed to cultivate emotional attachments and sympathy.

Many of the literary sources that Hager lists are included in *Anne of Green Gables* in a variety of ways, including allusions, references, and direct quotations. *Anne of Green Gables* is a very literary text, and many scholars have worked to identify and annotate her texts and

interpret how these allusions function in the novel.<sup>7</sup> For instance, the last line of the book is taken from Robert Browning's "Pippa Passes," and scholars such as Elizabeth Epperly have presented detailed arguments about why Montgomery ends Anne's story with this particular quotation (Epperly 37). Scholarly arguments such as Epperly's assume that readers are either familiar with the allusions or that they wish to find out where they come from. At the time of its publication, it is likely many readers had some familiarity with the poem, if only because it was widely anthologized in school textbooks. Even if the reader does not recognize it, identifying a quotation's source can add to the appeal of reading the book, especially since Montgomery was effective at parodying and playing with her literary sources in interesting ways. Literary scholars tend to rely upon textual analysis to discuss the meaning of a text, and yet as Janice Radway learned when discussing romance novels with women readers in the 1980s, such an approach to literary texts is not always relevant to readers. Radway discovered readers preferred to discuss "the significance of the act of romance reading rather than the meaning of the romance" (*Reading the Romance* 34). In a similar way, literary allusiveness is not the primary pleasure in reading *Anne*. Allusions, instead, are significant for the manner in which Anne quotes and the reasons why she chooses to refer to literature when she does. What impresses readers is the relationship Anne has with the literature, rather than who is responsible for the quotation that caused Anne such pleasure.

That the experience of literature is more important than its meaning is illustrated in the chapter "The Unfortunate Lily Maid," where Anne and her friends attempt to re-enact a scene from Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*. This is a memorable event in the book and has been interpreted as helping to discourage girls from becoming too romantic;<sup>8</sup> instead, it validates an emotional and playful relationship with reading. The scene begins with Anne, Diana, Jane, and

Ruby Gillis gathered together deciding who will play Elaine in their reenactment. The narrator explains

They had studied Tennyson’s poem in school the previous winter . . . They had analyzed it and parsed it and torn it to pieces in general until it was a wonder there was any meaning at all left in it for them, but at least the fair lily maid and Lancelot and Guinevere and King Arthur had become very real people to them (295).

The “at least,” is noteworthy. In spite of education’s best efforts to drain all pleasure and emotion from the poem, *at least* the characters had become friends, and the girls had found a way to make an emotional connection. Their love of the story inspires them to act it out together and to experience the beauty of the poem in a new way. This attempt to make a beautiful and romantic scene come to life is derailed, however. Instead of recreating a tragic scene, Anne is forced to abandon a sinking barge to cling to the side of a pole until help arrives in the form of her nemesis Gilbert Blythe. Once safely home, the misadventure leads Anne to decide that “it is no use trying to be romantic in Avonlea” (302), a lesson that could arguably be aimed at Anne’s readers as –well—except that for readers, what remains is the experience of acting out a favourite work of literature and the enjoyment of a brief moment in the burgeoning romance between Anne and Gilbert.

Anne does learn to be less romantic. By the time *Anne of Green Gables* ends, she talks less and is wary of the dangers of an overactive imagination. Anne has her own little bookshelf in her room, a testament to her place within a family and a community. That same bookshelf also serves as a safe and respectable containment for her imagination and flights of fancy to a private space in her room. And perhaps this reiterates the concept of Book Friendship. Even as

one outgrows certain aspects of girlhood reading, the books that inspired the feelings and experiences remain accessible. Not every girl has an imagination such as Anne's; however, every girl can enjoy the pleasures of imagination through books. Every girl can have a relationship with books that can make life more interesting.

As the *Anne* series progresses and Anne assumes various new roles including teacher, wife, mother, and matriarch, she continues to find meaning in literature and to use quotations to express her ideas and emotions, although arguably in a more learned manner. At the very least, she is more apt to know the source of a quotation. The *Anne* series consists of eight books written between 1908 and 1938. Montgomery did not write them in chronological order, but instead, as demand for *Anne* novels continued, Montgomery would fill in gaps in Anne's life story. Two other examples from the *Anne* series, published in two different decades, give insight into how Montgomery's representation of reading changes over time. *Book Friendship* remains an important part of Anne's life, although she expresses it in differently ways.

*Anne's House of Dreams* was published in 1922 and was her first book after *Rilla of Ingleside* (1920). *Rilla*, the youngest of Anne and Gilbert's children, is perhaps Montgomery's only heroine who cannot be considered 'a reader.' Her story is set during the four years of WWI and *Rilla* focuses on the role of girls during the wartime, an experience which challenges the concept of cosmopolitan sympathy as the 'real world' becomes part life on Prince Edward Island and P.E.I becomes part of the real world. This transformation is made evident through the character of Susan, who is a housekeeper and long-time live-in resident of the Blythe family. The novel opens with Susan reading the newspaper for the local gossip notes and ignoring the news of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination. As the story and the war progresses, Susan reads the newspaper avidly and her knowledge of the world and other countries increases daily.

One of the women on the home front even wonders about the value of literature in the midst of wartime. Miss Oliver, the school teacher boarding with the Blythes, asks:

Have you noticed . . . how everything written before the war seems so far away now, too? One feels as if one was reading something as ancient as the *Iliad*. This poem of Wordsworth – I’ve been glancing over it. Its classic calm and repose and beauty of the lines seem to belong to another planet (107).

Beauty, or its value, is hard to find when the world is so ugly, but once the war is over, Montgomery creates a newly married Anne in *Anne’s House of Dreams* who finds way to make poetry suit her moods and ideas. Alone in her room, Anne looks out at the view of the harbour and quotes a few lines of Keats, while listening to Captain Jim tell stories of his seafaring days, she quotes Tennyson’s “Ulysses,” and in response to a friend’s pessimistic warnings, Anne “dreamily” responds with a another quotation from Tennyson. Her quotations, which are often signaled by a page break, are spoken in ways described as “softly” or “dreamily.” *Anne’s House of Dreams* marks a return in faith in reading and books that was lost during the war years, faith in an experience that is valuable for seeing the world and imagining one’s place within it.

*Anne of Windy Poplars*, written in 1936, is an epistolary novel, consisting of letters Anne sends to her fiancé Gilbert and retroactively fills in another gap in their relationship: a three-year separation prior to their wedding. The literary references are sprinkled throughout the letters and are mostly used by Anne to describe people she meets. She always notes the source of her reference, and they are often ones that she and Gilbert know for a similar reason, so it is a line from a “song we used to sing in Avonlea School” (11) or reference to a poem of Tennyson’s that they studied in English class at Redmond. There is something much more learned and much less emotional about her relationship with literature in these letters, although they do serve to deepen

her relationship with Gilbert. Anne's reading does not take her into flights of fancy or to moments of beauty. Instead, such moments are saved for her time with little Elizabeth next door. Indeed, the child becomes the one who is allowed to indulge in imagination and fancy, although the adult, in this case Anne, can enjoy it with her little friend.

Books and reading continue to mark small moments in Anne's life and in her friendships. As she matures, her library continues to grow and her collection of books is a source of love and companionship. In *Anne's House of Dreams*, Anne uses books as a means of gaining the friendship of Leslie Moore. Leslie, who is lonely and trapped in a miserable marriage, is "wild for books and magazines" (69). As an offering of friendship, Anne invites Leslie to peruse the Blythe bookshelf. Anne explains "our library isn't very extensive ... but every book in it is a friend. We've picked out books up through the years, here and there, never buying one until we had first read it and knew that it belonged to the race of Joseph" (79). The newlywed Anne speaks as a true bibliophile, showing how her criteria for choosing is based upon affection. Her book shelf is not a representation of culture or of literary taste but instead one based on friendship and love, holding books that will be worth rereading over the years.

In *Anne of Windy Poplars*, Anne writes to Gilbert about lending a book to one of her students. She tells him,

I lent Jen my *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. I hate to lend a book I love... it never seems quite the same when it comes back to me . . . but I love *Foxe's Martyrs* only because dear Mrs. Allan gave it to me for a Sunday School prize years ago. I don't like reading about martyrs because they always make me feel petty and shamed (75).

Anne is now in the position of Mrs. Allan, able to influence the reading of a young girl friend by lending a text designed to teach moral uplift. The irony is that it is a book she herself does not enjoy. This raises two possibilities: that Anne has learned to reject some of what Mrs. Allan taught her or that Mrs. Allan secretly disliked books such as *Foxe's Martyrs* as well.

Over the years that the *Anne* series was written, the values and ideals underpinning Book Friendship stay the same, but the literary culture in which she was being published did not. What originally made Anne such a beloved character with critics were qualities that increasingly were dismissed as lacking artistry, complexity, or depth. In spite of those changes, Montgomery tried to stay true to Anne's original ideas about reading. As Anne grows up, her reading practices reflect a more learned and staid approach to books and literature, but the books on the bookshelf remind the reader of Anne's spirit. At the same time, the series never questions the importance of the imagination or the value of cosmopolitan sympathy in the day-to-day world.

#### **4.4 EMILY BYRD STARR AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF READING**

In 1923, after penning her sixth *Anne* book and making a "dark and deadly vow" to never write another, Montgomery happily turned her attention to a new heroine: Emily. The series consists of three books: *Emily of New Moon* (1923), *Emily Climbs* (1925), and *Emily's Quest* (1927). If Anne is the heroine who shows the power of the imagination, Emily is the bookish character who loves to read and finds in books many ways for understanding the world. Her reading is cosmopolitan in that books offer many different pleasures and possibilities, and Emily values all of them.

Although Montgomery knew a new heroine would require writing sequels with titles she loathed, Montgomery loved the character of Emily and was proud of *Emily of New Moon*.<sup>9</sup> She wrote in her journal:

Today I finished *Emily of New Moon*, after six months of writing. It is the best book I have ever written – and I have had more intense pleasure in writing it than any of the others ... I have lived it, and I hated to pen the last line and write finish. Of course, I'll have to write several sequels but they will be more or less hackwork I fear. They cannot be to me what this book has been (2:39).

Emily is dedicated to becoming an author, and the series charts her growth and development as she manages her family, her love affairs, and her ambition. Emily is viewed as Montgomery's most autobiographical heroine, and many of Emily's ideas about books and writing can be found recorded in Montgomery's journals.

Emily shares many qualities with her predecessor Anne as well as with Sara Stanley of *The Story Girl* (1911). Like Anne, she is a lover of the beauty of words and can be stirred by a particularly affective phrase or poem. This feeling, which she calls "the flash" occurs whenever she is moved deeply: when she finds the right word for her poem, when she hears a moving line of verse, or when she sees a lovely scene in nature. In such moments, she is transported and transfixed. She shares with Sara a recognition of the value and appeal of good stories. In the chapter "The Book of Yesterday," she listens as her Cousin Jimmy recounts the Murray family lore: tales of sea captains and lost diamonds. Like Sara, Emily recognizes that interesting stories abound in all kinds of places, even on Prince Edward Island, and again like Sara, she yearns to tell the stories, although as a writer rather than a storyteller.

Emily is, however, first and foremost a reader. Emily loves books and she loves to read, and she loves to think about and to write about her reading. Books provide Anne with a way to imagine and give Sara material that she can re-work into stories, but for Emily, they serve a variety of purposes: worlds to burrow into, introductions to new ideas, comfort in times of sadness, and so on. There is no limit to what a book can offer. One of the very first images of Emily is of her “curled up in a ragged, comfortable old chair and reading *Pilgrim’s Progress* all afternoon” (3). This is a child who reads often and for long periods of time, and she not only reads, but re-reads, and has opinions on her reading. The narrator explains,

Many a time had she walked the straight and narrow path with *Christian* and *Christiana* – although she never liked *Christiana*’s adventures half as well as *Christian*’s. . . She had not half the fascination of that solitary, intrepid figure who faced all alone the shadows of the Dark Valley and the encounter with Apollyon.

(3)

Such critical opinions about poems and books are recorded often throughout the *Emily* series as much of it consists of letters Emily writes to her deceased father and entries into her journals she calls her Jimmybooks.

Like any book lover, when Emily arrives at the Murray house, she is immediately drawn to and cheered by the bookcase she finds there since “Books were friends wherever she found them.” (37). She quickly discovers her ideas about books as “belonging to everyone” (37) are at odds with those of Aunt Elizabeth, who views them as symbols of culture and fine possessions that require reverence and care. When she is eventually allowed access to the books, Emily is quite sure Aunt Elizabeth does not approve of her reading Washington Irving’s *Alhambra*. Emily writes to her father, “I am reading *The Alhambra*. It belongs to our book case. Aunt

Elizabeth does not like to say it isn't fit for me to read because it was one of her father's books, but I don't believe she approves" (157). From Elizabeth's perspective, any book her father would include in the family library would have to be respectable and so she must allow Emily to read it.

Emily and Aunt Elizabeth represent a clash in beliefs about books and reading, which is in part generational. Aunt Elizabeth is of another era. She represents a Victorian attitude towards reading and books, a time when reading was meant to be ameliorative and books were symbols of culture and refinement and when novels were highly suspect. She explicitly bans Emily from reading novels as "they are wicked books and have ruined many souls" (224). This attitude towards girlhood reading could be found in the sentimental fiction of the mid-nineteenth century. Susan Ashworth argues that originally domestic novels, like conduct books, aimed to teach young women how to read properly. According to Ashworth, a novel such as *The Wide, Wide, World* taught young ladies that reading should be for self-application and self-improvement, that it should be initially monitored by the mother and later monitored by a male figure, and that reading novels is almost always bad (143). In many ways, Aunt Elizabeth represents this old-fashioned mothering figure, one who wants to limit and monitor Emily's reading. By the time Montgomery begins her career as a novelist, many of these attitudes and concerns about reading, while still in existence, had become viewed as old-fashioned. In Montgomery's novels, fears about girls' reading, and of reading novels in particular, are always voiced; however, they are not presented seriously. They are spouted by old-fashioned aunts and grandmothers with outdated Victorian mores, or by overly pious and faintly ridiculous characters such as Sara Ray's mother in *The Story Girl*. Whatever moral fortitude such characters may have, they are always lacking in imagination. She disapproves, for instance, of Emily reading the dictionary, but does not stop her. For Aunt Elizabeth, any reading that causes pleasure is suspect.

This clash of book ideologies between Emily and Aunt Elizabeth extends beyond reading to how a book should be treated. Emily believes marginalia reflects engagement and appreciation of a book; for Aunt Elizabeth, it only represents the destruction of property. Aunt Elizabeth confiscates Douglas Starr's books when she discovers that Emily has been underlining words in them. Emily defends this practice to her father. She writes, "Aunt Elizabeth has locked your books away and say I'm not to have them till I'm grown up. Just as if I wouldn't be careful of them, dear Father. She says I wouldn't because she found that when I was reading of them I put a tiny pencil dot under every beautiful word. It didn't hurt the book a bit, dear Father" (184). Sara Stanley in *The Golden Road* (1912), the sequel to *The Story Girl*, also recognizes a book's dinginess as evidence of its value. When she receives a worn volume as a Christmas gift from a friend, she knows how special it is, but her cousin Felicity believes it in poor taste to give such an old and battered copy. Sara explains, "It's one of his own... one that he has read a hundred times and loved and made a friend of. A new book, just out of a shop wouldn't be the same thing at all" (16). Whereas Aunt Elizabeth views books as symbols of culture to be cared for, Felicity views the book as a commodity that is valued for its newness.

The New Moon bookshelf, which belonged to the long-deceased Murray patriarch, represents the kind of idealized old-fashioned home library of yore, and Emily is the sort of reader who tackles the odd mixture of adult material with gusto, which she outlines in a letter to her father. She tells of reading:

A history of the reformation in France, very relijus and sad. A little fat book describing the months in England and the afoursaid Thompson's Seasons. I like to read them because they have so many pretty words in them, but I don't like the feel of them. The paper is so rough and thick it makes me creepy. Travels in

Spain, very fascinating, with lovely smooth shiny papers, a missionary book on the Pacific Islands, pictures very interesting because of the way the heathen chiefs arrange their hair... Mrs. Hemans' Poems . . . Rob Roy, a novel . . . A lovely Tiger-book, full of pictures and stories of tigers that make me feel so nice and shivery. The Royal Road, also religious but some fun in to . . . Reuben and Grace, a story but not a novel, because Reuben and Grace are brother and sister and there is no getting married . . . Nature's Mighty Wonders which is good and improving. Alice in Wonderland, which is perfectly lovely, and the Memoirs of Anzonetta B. Peters who was converted at seven and died at twelve (100).

This is the kind of home library that contains the unexpected riches that Kate Douglas Wiggin remembers so fondly from her family's library, where works of travel, history, religions, fiction, poetry, autobiography, and geography are all mixed together. For many writers, this family library with a cosmopolitan mixture of books is the ideal initiation for the child into a love of reading. They wonder whether any child who grows up reading only juvenile literature can have the same rich reading foundation, and by including this scene, Montgomery is agreeing with that ideal.

Emily not only shows her readiness to read whatever she can find, but that she has preferences about how a book should look and feel. Her reactions to the material qualities of books illustrate how book design changed over the nineteenth-century. The heavy paper that Emily finds 'creepy' was standard in books made in earlier nineteenth-century when, as symbols of permanence, they were designed to last a long time. The use of shiny paper that Emily finds pleasing is found in books where design is meant to charm (*Middlebrow*, Radway 137).

A voracious reader, Emily works her way through the New Moon bookcase and any other bookshelf or home library with which she has contact. At her friend Ilse's house, she reads through Dr. Burnley's bookcase until Elizabeth is scandalized to discover that she is reading novels and, even worse, medical texts. Dr. Burnley is then asked to lock his bookcase. When visiting Aunt Nancy, Emily is given permission to read anything, except for the top shelf, which holds "French novels," although when Emily peeks she wonders why French books are written in English. In spite of how much she reads, prior to earning her own money, Emily does not have any books of her own. The only books she is able to read are those that she can find. She is not even allowed access to her father's books.

Besides Aunt Elizabeth, Emily has a 'father figure' with whom she must contend, and he also wishes to manage and control her reading. Mr. Carpenter is her schoolteacher and the first person to treat her writing aspirations seriously. Although he acts more as a writing mentor, the opinions he voices about Emily's writing also relate to her choices in reading. Emily's journals become filled with self-censoring based on the advice Mr. Carpenter has given her. She struggles to avoid italics, to learn to use simple words, and to avoid florid prose. She outgrows a taste for sensational novels and laughs instead of cries when reading *The Children of the Abbey*, a book she finds at her Aunt Ruth's house (EC 223). Nevertheless, Emily does struggle against some of Mr. Carpenter's dictates, in particular, his distaste for Mrs. Hemans. In ridiculing the poetry of Hemans, Mr. Carpenter is articulating the accepted literary opinion of the day. Hemans was a Romantic poetess whose poetry was highly popular throughout the nineteenth century, but by the twentieth-century it had become a symbol of all that was bad about sentimental poetry. Intellectually, Emily understands how Hemans's work can be viewed sentimental and overwrought. Yet, in spite of Mr. Carpenter's derision, Emily cannot quite relinquish her love for

Mrs. Hemans's poetry, and her reasons are not easily explained in words (253). Her appreciation for Hemans is connected to an inexpressible way that her poems make Emily feel. (It is noteworthy that both sentimental texts that Emily reads are remnants from her aunts' past romances. In each case, the book was a gift from a would-be lover.)<sup>10</sup>

Emily's opinions about Mrs. Hemans are pulled directly from Montgomery's journals. On two separate occasions, Montgomery too wonders at her enduring affection for Mrs. Hemans poetry. She notes, "Today I began re-reading Mrs. Hemans' poem. I read them all through once before. In my childhood those sweet and tender lyrics of hers . . . were a source of great pleasure to me. I admit that I love them yet" (158). A few years later, she muses

Why have some lines of poetry a potent and indescribable influence over us – an influence that is not conditioned by their merit. There are four lines of Mrs. Hemans which have always, from the time I first read them as a child, opened the doors of magic to me. . . Today they recurred to me and I shivered with profound delight (2.183).

In part, there is a sense that the child reader is particularly open to sentiment, which is why the poetry of Hemans can create such a deep and long-lasting impression. At the same time, neither Emily nor Montgomery wants to dismiss the experience of being deeply moved by a poem as 'childish.'

The *Emily* series illustrates the various practices which can make up Book Friendship, as Emily shows all the many ways that books can function in a girl's life. Her practices are many, and at times she appreciates a book for the way it makes her feel, what she learns from it, how it aids in her writing, and how much pleasure it gives. There is no limit to what books can provide or do.

#### 4.5 PAT GARDINER: BEAUTY AND BOOK FRIENDSHIP

In 1933, Montgomery introduced a new girl heroine named Pat Gardiner in *Pat of Silver Bush* (1933) and its sequel *Mistress Pat* (1935). In the *Pat* series, Montgomery represents many of the same practices associated with books and reading that are found in her previous books: Pat is deeply affected by the beauty of words, she cries over a sad story about a dog she finds in an old scrapbook, and she and her friend Bets read *Wind and the Willows* together. The world that Pat lives in, however, has changed from that of Anne and Emily. She lives in a modern world with telephones, movies, and streetcars where books are a normal part of life. There are no Victorian aunts or grandmothers or well-meaning minister's wives warning Pat and her sisters against the evils of novel-reading or sensationalist fiction. Instead, as Pat matures, her reading becomes scrutinized and criticized for other reasons. Somehow Pat's reading practices are the ones that have become old-fashioned and out-of-date. In her journal, Montgomery notes, "About two weeks ago I finished my new book 'Pat of Silver Bush.' It is a story for girls, of the Anne and Emily type and will probably please that public. I wrote it against time and tide and have no great expectations for it" (162). The book is "against time and tide" since how Pat reads and what she reads are easily dismissed as "sentimental." Indeed, the books can be read as testing the limits and powers of sentimentality.

Many of the reading practices which were part of the *Anne* and *Emily* series, quotations from literature, discussions of beauty, and connections between friends, are defended in the *Pat* series. In *Anne* and *Emily*, Montgomery criticized and poked fun at reading ideologies from the past. In *Pat*, Montgomery defends her ideas about reading against the future. Pat can be read as a plea for cosmopolitan sympathy and in a literary world where an elite discriminating cosmopolitan taste and the importance of national literatures dominate. In a letter to her friend

George MacMillan, Montgomery writes that *Pat of Silver Bush* “has been very favourably reviewed. I really put more of myself into Pat than into any other of my heroines” (168), a somewhat mystifying comment since Pat is a rather passive and, at times, a dislikable character. But Pat admits to struggling with being “hopelessly Victorian” in a modern world, which was a sentiment that Montgomery expressed as well.

The novel begins when Pat is eight years old. At the beginning, a reader is informed that Pat is often viewed as “queer,” since as Judy the cook (who speaks in an Irish dialect) tells Pat’s brother, “She’ll love folks . . . and things . . . better than most . . .and that’ll give her the great delight. But they’ll hurt her more, too. ’Tis the way of the fairy gift and ye have to take the bad wid the good” (13). Pat’s ‘queerness’ proves to be less engaging than a “fairy gift” suggests. Unlike Anne and Emily, Pat is quite ordinary. She is not particularly imaginative. She does not have a knack for storytelling nor does she dream of writing novels or poetry. She is not especially bright and has no love of school. What defines her character, what makes her ‘queer,’ is her fierce love of home and her strong resistance to change. Her main ambition is to remain at Silver Bush forever and for Silver Bush to never change. She dreams of a life where she and her brother Sidney never marry and instead remain together forever in the beloved home.

*Pat of Silver Bush* covers the period of Pat’s girlhood from ages eight to eighteen. The plot revolves around the two important friendships she develops that teach her how to love people beyond her clannish circle. These friendships take her beyond the boundaries of her home, but are also integrated into it, so that Pat remains contentedly *of Silver Bush*. The first friendship is with Jingle, an orphan who lives with some of his distant relatives. The other is with Bets, who moves in next door. Up until she meets Jingle, Pat does not really have friends—or

any friends who are not fields, trees, flowers, or pieces of furniture. Jingle is boy whose real name is Hilary Gordon. Unlike Pat, who belongs to Silver Bush, Jingle does not really belong anywhere. They meet one night when Pat is lost on her way home. Jingle helps her find her way, and from that first walk together “they were just like old, old friends” (99). After another particularly happy afternoon together, Pat muses, “Friends *are* nice” (113).

Pat’s other important friendship is with Bets, which proves to be the more passionate and romantic of the two. As with Jingle, upon meeting Pat and Bets are immediately friends without ever exchanging words: “Pat could not have told what it was . . . only it gave her a queer feeling that she had known this girl always” (151). As fortune would have it, this new girl moves into the house next door to Silver Bush. Pat tells Judy, “I’ve found the dearest friend . . . and we’ve promised each other that we’ll always be faithful till death us do part” (153). As their friendship progresses, Pat’s love and admiration for Bets grows. She tells Judy, “I love her *dreadfully*.” (159). And everything they do together becomes special. Pat muses, “It was lovely to be together. For it all came back to that. Nothing would have had just the same flavour if it had not been shared with each other” (156).

This perfect friendship cannot last forever, and Bets catches the flu and dies, leaving Pat bereft and angry. In her despair, Pat asks Judy, “Our friendship was so beautiful. Why didn’t God let it go on? Doesn’t He like beautiful things?” (315). To which Judy replies, “We can’t be telling what He has in mind but we can be believing it’s nothing but good. Maybe He was wanting to *kape* your friendship beautiful, Patsy darlint” (315). Friendship is important in the lives of Montgomery’s heroines: Anne has Diana, Emily has Ilse, but the friendship between Pat and Bets is different, perhaps because Bets never comes across as real. She is always too perfect and too beautiful; their friendship comes across as highly idealized and sentimental. It would

seem that Montgomery is playing with one of the oldest sentimental tricks in the books: having the beautiful child die. Rather than reading it as cliché; however, it serves as a challenge to her readers to test the limits of what they will accept in terms of sentimentality.

In a pivotal scene in *Pat of Silver Bush*, while spending the night at Bets's house, Pat wakes up. Feeling a bit homesick, Pat looks out at the snowy landscape with a view to her family home when lines of poetry come to mind. The narrator explains:

She repeated it to herself with a strange, deep exquisite thrill of delight, such as she had never felt before... something that went deeper than body or brain and touched some inner sanctum of being of which the child had never conscious.

Perhaps that moment was for Patricia Gardiner the "soul's awakening" of the old picture. All her life she was to look back to it as a sort of milestone... (141).

The pleasure Pat feels in this moment is beyond reason or explanation and not much of her character has prepared readers for this scene. The moment brings together everything that Pat loves most: her friendship with Bets, a beautiful scene in nature, and a view of Silver Bush. The poetry allows Pat to experience the beauty and love as a pleasurable aesthetic experience. The scene is somewhat strange, as what milestone it marks is not obvious, but it represents a refining of Pat's selfish sentimentality into a cosmopolitan sympathy. Although Pat may be unremarkable and ordinary, beauty and literature can affect her as well as her more imaginative and bookish counterparts. They can help lead Pat out into the world.

The lines that Pat quotes during her "soul's awakening" come from "A Northern Vigil" by Canadian poet Bliss Carman (1861-1929), and the majority of poetry that is quoted directly in both *Pat* books is also by Carman. Earlier I argued that the source of the poetry quoted in Montgomery's texts is not particularly relevant to understanding the girl's relationship to it, and

that is still an argument I stand by. However, the literary culture in which *Pat of Silver Bush* was written had changed from when *Anne of Green Gables* was penned in 1908, and the emphasis on Carman is noteworthy. He is Canadian, which is a nod to national heritage, but this is a complicated heritage, since Carman moved to the United States and many of his works were read widely in both countries. He is not a Canadian writer so much as a writer who was born in Canada, although he was eventually retrofitted into the national literature as one of ‘the Confederation poets.’” Montgomery was not anti-nationalist, but she was skeptical of the national qualities for which writers were celebrated. Morley Callaghan, considered one of Canada’s first Modernist novelists, was particularly despised by Montgomery; she considered his writing ugly and vulgar. The value and purpose of literature is much more personal for Montgomery, and, within that framework, the concerns of national identity are of little import.

The inclusion of Carman also relates to the subject of Beauty in the *Pat* series. According to Terry Whalen, one of Carman’s critics, an aesthetic principle of George Santayana is essential to Carman’s poetry. The principle is “the assimilation of phenomena where ‘words, images, emotions, or systems of ideas, to the deeper craving of the mind’” (quoted in G. Lynch 144). This same principle appears to apply to the milestone moment that Pat experiences. Carman is quoted often in the *Pat* series, particular in moments which emphasize beauty or friendship. In *Mistress Pat*, while admiring a particularly beautiful sunset, Pat recalls lines from Carman’s poem. The narrator writes, “It was a spring sunset . . . pale golds and soft pinks and ethereal apple greens shading up to silvery blue over the birches Pat ached with the loveliness of it . . . ‘who feel the thrill/ Of beauty like a pang’” (55). Afterwards, she muses, “How terrible not to see and feel beauty” (55).

*Mistress Pat* focuses on the adult Pat as the novel spans a decade as she matures from eighteen to twenty-eight. It explores what ideals of girlhood need to be outgrown and what can be kept. As the story progresses, it becomes apparent Pat needs to outgrow her love of home. She does not, however, need to outgrow the kind of literature that she loves or her love of Beauty. When *Mistress Pat* opens, Pat still hopes to remain unmarried at Silver Bush with her brother. This love of home, which was quaint and perhaps ‘queer’ in the eight-year-old Pat begins to seem warping and delusional in the adult Pat. In the first few pages, the reader is told that Pat “loved her home with a passion” (2) and that “Silver Bush isn’t her house . . . it’s her religion” (2). Later on, when her sister suggests changing a room’s décor, Pat protests and explains, “I love everything in this house *terribly*” (italics in original 34). Her desire for nothing to change begins to threaten her family relationships. Pat eventually realizes that her intense love for Silver Bush is destroying her chances for happiness.

In spite of her oaths to never marry or to be anyone’s ‘girl,’ over the course of the two books, Pat has love affairs, which are most interesting for how books and reading are part of these relationships. The ideas and arguments about literature and reading are often articulated through these relationships with friends and would-be lovers, and the majority of these ideas are voiced by men. These men articulate a range of ideas about reading: men do not read poetry, poetry should be written in free verse, and good novels have unhappy endings. Pat is not a bookworm or a critical reader. Like Anne and Emily, the experience of reading and of literature is always more important to her than what is being read. Montgomery seems to be asking: What is so wrong with the way Pat reads?

Pat's first crush is Harris, a cute boy who moves to town and starts walking her home after church services and parties. Pat is quite smitten, and Harris writes her a letter full of sweet nothings. In one scene, as they are walking together, Pat notices a beautiful garden and is moved by the sight to recite a poem. When Harris reacts by saying "Don't let's talk about the weather," and "I want you only to think of me" (300), Pat's attraction is immediately soured. Such a callous attitude towards poetry and beauty makes him an unsuitable companion. Later she learns she was only one of Harris's paramours, which only confirms her dislike of him.

In college, Pat becomes deeply enamored with Lester Conway, a brilliant student and poet. Everything about Conway is modern. He designs a cover for the poetry journal, which is described as futuristic, and he writes poems in free verse. He explains to Pat "everything else . . . was outmoded and the tyranny of rhyme was ended forever" (329). The result is that Pat is then careful to hide her purchase of a second-hand volume called *Poems of Passion* in which she had underlined half of the lines including "I shall be dust when my heart forgets" (329). Pat knows that Lester would disapprove of the perceived sentimentality and superficiality of Ella Wheeler Wilcox. The relationship comes to a crashing end, however, when Lester criticizes Pat's beloved Silver Bush. He tells her "You are too lovely, Pat, to be wasted any longer on a shabby, obscure old farm" (331). That statement immediately ends all of Pat's affections. In the aftermath of the relationship, Pat destroys *Poems of Passion*, but she finds another line in a poem by Carman to underline that sums up her feelings: "split water from a broken shard." In her bitterness, she believes, "this was all really love was anyway" (334).

In *Mistress Pat*, the older and less naïve Pat befriends David Kirk and his sister Suzanne who move into Bets's old house together. Initially, Pat is reluctant to like anyone who lives in Bets's house, since she prefers it empty as a sad monument to her lost friend. The chance of

friendship flourishing is later jeopardized by a rumour that Suzanne Kirk made fun of Silver Bush, which proves to be untrue. Pat eventually overcomes these prejudices and begins to spend many evenings with the Kirks when they often read aloud together. Kirk is widower and a newspaperman who has an intelligence and world-weariness about him. Insight into Kirk's reading taste is revealed when Pat's Uncle Horace comes to a visit. Uncle Horace is a former sea captain and avid reader of sentimental novels. When he exhausts the Gardiner bookshelf, he borrows books from David, although he does not enjoy them. As he complains to Pat, "These modern novels that leave everything unfinished annoy me... Things are often unfinished in real life . . . All the more reason why they should come out right in books" (133-4). It is interesting to have a male provide a defense of sentimental literature, but then all of the opinions about literature are voiced by men in the *Pat* series.

As a reader knows, of course, everything "will come out right" in *Mistress Pat*, which means the stubborn heroine will eventually realize that she loves her former childhood friend Jingle, now the accomplished architect Hilary Gordon. Hilary is mostly absent in *Mistress Pat*, completing his studies and then working on various projects around the world. As children, they shared a fast friendship, one that included poetry. On one of their first adventures together, they found a lovely little spot they named "Happiness." The spot reminds Hilary of the poem "The Haunted Spring" which he recites for her. In a letter written while visiting a relative, Pat tells Jingle, "To-night it's the kind that Judy calls the ghost wind. It makes me think of that piece of poetry you read the last day we were in Happiness . . . Those lines always give me a lovely creepy shudder, Jingle, and I'm glad you feel it, too" (*PSB* 222). Their friendship includes other moments of shared poetry. In many ways, their enjoyment of poetry becomes a symbol for their compatibility. This is further confirmed when in *Mistress Pat*, Jingle sends her a book in the

mail, a book she deems as perfect: “A lovely book in a dull green leather binding with a golden spider-web on it . . . a book that belongs to Pat” (186). Eventually Hilary returns and professes his love once again, and Pat finally accepts.

Pat is sentimental, and at times it is a problem and other times it is not. Her sentimentalized views of home lead Pat to have an unrealistic outlook on her future. At the same time, the moments of Beauty that she experiences while reading poetry or looking at nature expands her world. As Solomon argues in his defense of sentimentality, feelings are neither good nor bad, but rather they depend upon the context. He writes,

whether sentimentality is appropriate, good or bad, morally uplifting or self-defeating, or humiliating depends upon the situation, including the object and nature of the sentiment in question, the identity and character of the “sentimentalist” and the overall social context. (11).

Pat sentimentalized views of home do lead her to have an unrealistic outlook on her future and are self-defeating. At the same time, her reading of poetry and books provide her with moments of Beauty that help her to move beyond her small world. For Montgomery’s girl readers, books offer ways of understanding, seeing, and imagining the world that makes the girls grow and their lives more beautiful and meaningful. That is the message that endures throughout her career as she writes about girls over the first four decades of the twentieth-century. Regardless of how sentimentalism is viewed within the literary culture, Montgomery believed in the value of cosmopolitan sympathy for girl readers, indeed for all readers, to help them imagine, feel, and experiences what only books could offer.

Of all the metaphors in this study, Book Friend is, in some ways, the odd one out. It is not a relationship that is limited to childhood nor does it have ambitious goals for the development of modern society or assume a vision of how the child and the book might influence modern society. The relationship between the girl reader and the book is personal. At the same time, Book Friendship as Montgomery could have only been developed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Part of and yet distant from so many aspects of the modern world, Book Friendship offers a sense of attachment and belonging with something bigger.

## 5.0 MY BOOK HOUSE AND THE BEAUTY OF CHILDHOOD READING

In 1920, the *My Book House* series was introduced in the United States. Edited by Olive Beaupre Miller, the series was intended to span a child's reading life from preschooler to young adult. The explicit goal of the series is to provide wholesome and appropriate reading material to children so they can become discriminating readers. *My Book House* marks a change in the child's home library: from a focus of comprehensiveness to one of tastefulness. Her concern was to foster imagination and beauty. The child reader becomes the owner of a cosmopolitan taste as reflected in the aesthetic space of the book house. Decorating the space of the *Book House*, one filled with timeless stories and childhood fancy, ensures authenticity and remains a source of beauty that will feed the individual into adulthood.

Miller's fairy tale was also aimed at creating American citizens who will help foster a new and beautiful society. The set was created and published in Chicago, which is important for understanding its contents and ideology. By 1920, Chicago represented the possibilities and problems of the modern American city with its industrialism, materialism, urbanization, mechanization, and immigration. Historian Henry Claridge argues, "Chicago possessed no relics, physical or otherwise, of a republican or colonial past; indeed, its rapid development made it, virtually, a city without a history (quoted in Wooley 88). Another critic has argued that Chicago reveals "modern materialism in the making" (Rochberg-Halton 312). American versions of aestheticism and kindergarten education emerged out of and adapted to this complicated environment. Within both theories, the child became important, both as an authentic figure with natural connections to the past as but as well as a means for building a new American society.

Miller is not the only Chicago-based writer whose hopes and fears about modern America led to an attempt to weave an American fairy tale out of an idealized child reader and some version of aestheticism. Following the success of *The Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum created a collection of American fairy tales, which aimed to incorporate fantasy into the realm of modern American life, to show how fairies and sprites could inhabit department stores and tenement housing. The troubadour poet Vachel Lindsay tried to revive spoken poetry and to preach a gospel of beauty that rejected the urban and mechanical and instead celebrated the farmer and small town America. Although Miller, Baum, and Lindsay attempt similar projects, their ideas about children, their version of what constitutes beauty and their visions of how to foster it differ. In the end, none of these fairy tales endured, and beauty's role in developing childhood readers and the United States slowly disappeared.

## 5.1 STORYTELLING AND *MY BOOK HOUSE*

Miller's initial ambition had been to become a novelist, but following the birth of her daughter, she turned to writing children's verses instead. Beaupre Miller credits the creation of the *My Book House* series to her own search to find appropriate reading material for her daughter. Teamed with her husband Henry Miller, who worked in publishing, the Millers formed their own publishing company in 1920 and began printing the first three volumes of *My Book House* the same year. The next three books in the series were published in 1921.

In describing the series, Miller explains, "I began to discover, too, how a very young child soaks up all the ideas you give him, good or bad, in his stories and how deeply stories influence the standards he is forming in the most important and impressionable years of his life"

(quoted in Taylor 278). Miller also describes her aim to “grade stories so that a child might have the right story at the right time in his life; for I saw that even a good story, read at the wrong age, creates a wrong impression” (quoted in Taylor 278). These beliefs about stories, that they can deeply influence and that they must be graded, aligns with the vision of kindergarten movement in the United States, which promoted the value of storytelling in a child’s development. For the kindergarten movement, which based its pedagogy on children’s instincts, the story is viewed as something which children naturally desire, and this instinct is traced back to the beginning of humankind.

In the United States, Elizabeth Harrison is an important figure in the kindergarten movement. She began as a kindergarten teacher and eventually founded the Kindergarten College in Chicago, where she was president until 1920. In the 1890s, she gave lectures in Chicago to educators and mothers about kindergarten philosophy. These lectures were eventually published in the book *A Study of Child Nature* (1903), where Harrison outlines many of the instincts which are fundamental to Friedrich Froebel’s kindergarten pedagogy. Harrison’s text assumes that children have instincts which can be “trained upward or downward”; that these instincts begin to show early in children; and that adult guidance can determine whether the instinct becomes an “unhesitating insight” (11-12). According to Harrison, the child has instincts associated with his body, mind, and soul. For example, the child may instinctually need activity, and this instinct can be used for the training of the muscles. Likewise, a child’s mind instinctually yearns for continuity and justice, which offer the opportunity for the training of reason and a sense of right and wrong. In the absence of proper training, however, these instincts can go awry.

As the kindergarten movement grew in the United States, several collections of stories and books addressed to teachers and parents on the art of storytelling began to appear. Texts such as *Stories Children Need* (1916), *Educating by Storytelling* (1918), and *Children's Stories and How to tell Them* (1924), to name just a few, provide a range of instruction on how best to tell a story, what stories suit each age group, and what stories convey what morals and lessons. Throughout the discourse on storytelling is the belief that it is an old art that must be revived, and that the storyteller is an ancient figure who has an important responsibility in fostering a child's development. According to Anne Carroll Moore, who ran the New York City Public Library children's room, bad storytelling was even more damaging to the child than bad books. Storytelling advocates represented stories as innocent and enduring carriers of information and morals that have been entertaining and educating children since the dawn of time, an argument which, in spite of its apparent innocence, was highly ideological.

The importance of storytelling and stories in the development of the child reader brings together a range of beliefs about the child, the effect of reading on a child, and the role of childhood reading in shaping American society. Again, it positions the modern child as the Janus figure facing both the past and into the future. Storytelling is an ancient art, and its appeal for children serves as evidence of the presumed primitive nature of the child. It offered the new society of America a past upon which to build a foundation, so that the old world becomes incorporated into the new. Children become the carriers of this tradition and the creators of the future. Many of the kindergarten teachers and librarians were associated with progressive goals of producing Americans. In urban centers, they were faced with the work of naturalizing immigrant children, which was also accomplished through storytelling.

Miller organizes the series according to kindergarten pedagogy so that the reader moves through stages described as rhythmic, imaginative, heroic, and romantic. This assumes children begin by liking stories about familiar things, then they like make-believe, then they prefer stories of action and adventure, and finally they find romance and sentiment most appealing. *My Book House* follows this progression so that a child reader moves up through age-appropriate material, graduating from Mother Goose and fables to fairy tales and epics. The image of a house gives Miller a useful metaphor to “build” a series upon, and indeed, in naming the volumes, she emphasizes how the reading moves through the rooms, reiterating a reader’s progression from infancy to adulthood, from innocence to experience. The titles of the first five volumes of the first edition of *My Book House* are “In the Nursery,” “In Fairy Halls,” “Up One Pair of Stairs,” “The Treasure Chest,” and “From the Tower Window.” They indicate the location in the house as well as the content.

While kindergarten advocates were promoting stories for children between 1919 and 1939, another set of female professionals were also influential in shaping the field of children’s literature and understandings of childhood reading. These women, dubbed bookwomen by Jacalyn Eddy, were librarians, publishers, and magazine editors who worked to “help ensure the success of books by producing, promoting, and evaluating them. . . [and] whose persistent and innovative efforts helped to shape the specific economic and cultural niche of the modern children’s book industry” (Eddy 3). Like the women in the kindergarten movement, bookwomen believed that children’s reading should be guided and also saw stories and folklore an important source of reading for children. Although much of her series is based upon kindergarten pedagogy, Miller work as an editor also qualifies her as a book woman. *My Book House*

demonstrates many qualities publishers and librarians actively promoted such as the value of the personal library and a commitment to international material.

A widespread belief held that every child should own his or her own personal collection of books. Librarians and educators viewed book ownership as an important step in the development of readers. They saw “children’s pride in book ownership as a boon to their own mission of instilling in the young a sense of enfranchisement in the world of books . . . Children who owned good books, the argument ran, would reread and treasure them and then turn to the library in search of others about which they might feel similarly (Marcus 75). The inclusion of “My” in the title of *My Book House* emphasizes how this set is the child’s personal property. Book ownership also stresses discrimination in the marketplace, an important goal for both storywomen and bookwomen. Books are an investment, and to purchase a book requires careful thought.

Another important trend in American children’s literature at this time was what was known as internationalism, which is another example of cosmopolitan ideals having influence in the vision of childhood reading. May Masee, one of the first female editors of children’s literature, committed Doubleday to publishing children’s books with international dimensions. Likewise, Anne Carroll Moore, the influential New York librarian and critic, often “demanded that internationalism takes its proper place in American publishing” (Marcus 95). This approach was out-of-step with larger publishing trends in the 1920s, following World War I, when the impulse was to retreat to an American viewpoint. The interest in international material is shared by the kindergarten movement as well, and reflects beliefs about stories, children, and the place of such material in American society. Stories from around the world, stories from different

cultures and eras, are all used to demonstrate ‘childhood’ fancy, assuming the recapitulation theory that children and civilization follow the same line of development.

*My Book House* includes a range of international content, and has been praised for being ahead of its time in providing children with poetry and prose from around the world (Sanders). Each volume of the set, from the first to the last, includes texts by writers such as Russian Nicolas Nekrassov, Swedish Zacharias Topelius, and Indian Rabindranath Tagore. Fables, fairy tales, and epics from countries in Asia, South America, Africa as well as Native American stories were interspersed with the works of American and European writers.

The female educators, librarians, editors, and other professionals who shaped the field of children’s literature in the early decades of the twentieth-century have been described as forming a “metaphorical matriarchy” (Eddy 11). They employed many metaphors to describe the value of reading and books for children, although their metaphors have been described as vague and as obscuring the criteria upon which their judgments are based (Eddy 11). The maternal attitude and the mixture of vague metaphors are illustrated well in a passage from Kathryn Cather’s *Educating by Story-telling*, where she outlines the consequences of not guiding a child’s reading choices. She explains:

Because of the abundance and cheapness of books, many of them of questionable merit, boys and girls are left to browse unguided, and just as the range man is to blame if his hungry herd strays into a loco patch and eats of noxious weeds when he fails to drive it to the place of wholesome herbage, so it is the fault of parents and teachers if their charges acquire a taste for sensational yarns instead of good literature. The very hunger that impels them toward that which contaminates, if satisfied in a wholesome manner would make them lovers of the best, and the

reason why children become devourers of “yellow” stories is because they have failed to stumble upon a more fascinating and less dangerous highway, and no one has led them to it . . . There is no more powerful means to use in diverting a child from the undesirable to the desirable than that of throwing a searchlight upon the attractions of the latter and presenting them to him through joyful experience. The narrator’s art is in truth a magic luminary, an unfailing means of bringing hidden beauties to sight and causing them to be loved because they give pleasure (Cather 7-8).

Cather’s passage brings together, all at once, many of the metaphors that fill the discourse about childhood reading. There is the image of books as diet and the need for “wholesome herbage” instead of “noxious weeds.” Likewise, reading and books is a kind of road and the child must be guided to a “less dangerous highway.” Hints of moral and religious discourse come through the invocation of darkness and light as the parents is called upon to be a “magic luminary” and to use a “searchlight” to provide the child reader with guidance.

What distinguishes Miller’s work is her choices of the metaphor of a house. Aesthetic beliefs on the value of beauty can be found in the works of storywomen and bookwomen; indeed, Cather makes note of “bringing hidden beauties to sight,” but for the most part, it is a subtext of their writings. But in *My Book House*, aesthetic ideals about the value of beauty and art are brought to the forefront of childhood reading. By using the house to create a series, Miller shows her belief in the power of Beauty and Art and invokes the American dream of home ownership.

By selecting the metaphor of a house to describe the child/book relationship, Aestheticism immediately becomes important for understanding Miller’s goals for childhood

reading. In 1917, the Millers built a new home in Winnetka, a suburb of Chicago, which may have led to her connection between the child, the book, and beauty. Perhaps it was a mere coincidence, although many houses in that town were designed by members of the Prairie School of Architecture, a group that identified with the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. The process of home construction may have provided Miller with the opportunity to read and learn about home decoration and design. The same theories that applied to creating a beautiful space in the home were then applied to creating an interior space for the child filled with beautiful stories. Miller's *My Book House* must be understood as an aesthetic space, one that is tastefully decorated with stories from around the world that assumes Beauty and Art can exert a positive influence upon the spirit.

## **5.2 THE ETHOS OF AESTHETICISM IN *MY BOOK HOUSE***

By the time Miller published the *My Book House* in 1920, aestheticism was on the decline in the United States. From the 1850s onward, variations of the British aesthetic movement had permeated American society in a variety of complicated and, at times, contradictory, ways that influenced high culture, middle-class culture, and popular culture. In *Professions of Taste*, Jonathan Freedman attempts to chart the ways aestheticism functioned in the United States between the 1850s and the 1930s, from the introduction of the ideas of John Ruskin to the development of a high modernist aesthetic. Freedman notes that aestheticism in the United States always had a commercial component. Following the Civil War, more and more people furnished homes with mass-produced household items (Agnew 136), and aesthetic ideals became part of the discussion of how to decorate a house, which were found in treatises on home décor

as well as in advertisements for furniture. In a way, the American version of aestheticism becomes more democratic as any person can be an aesthete through his or her purchasing power. Indeed, Freedman claims that Oscar Wilde's tour of the United States did not launch an interest in the House Beautiful, but rather coincided with a trend that had been growing since the first publication of Charles Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste* in the United States in 1872 (Freedman 105). Wilde's tour made the House Beautiful movement even more visible as he provided a popular focal point for the trend, and his ideas and appearances were covered in a variety of publications in the United States.

Aestheticism as a religion of Beauty had started to disappear in the United States by the 1920s. Mary Warner Blanchard in *Oscar Wilde's America* argues that by 1918 in the United States, aestheticism had mutated from a religion of beauty to being associated with the commercialism of an ever-growing consumer culture" (235). In her study of commodity culture in modern Britain, Elizabeth Outka examines how the paradoxical concepts of authenticity and artifice became joined together as people pursued meaningful experiences within consumer culture. She uses the term "commodified authentic" to describe this "search for a sustained contradiction that might allow consumers to be at once connected to a range of values roughly aligned with authenticity and yet also to be fully modern" (4). By appealing to ideals of timelessness, refinement, and ingenuity, marketers were able to combine ideals of authenticity to the experience of consumerism.

From the earliest origins of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain in the 1880s, the house was an important symbol of the movement's beliefs, simultaneously serving as a material, artistic, psychological, and spiritual space. In her text on interior design *The Art of Decoration*,

M.E. Haweis writes that “To be healthy and happy, we must have beautiful and pleasant things about us. If we cannot have trees and flowers, mountains and floods, we can have their echoes – architecture, painting, textile folds in changing light and shade” (6). Besides health and happiness, the house and its decoration are tied to morality. In a speech delivered to the Arts & Crafts Society entitled “A Plea for Art in the House,” W. J. Loftie observes:

There seems to be something paradoxical in talking of the cultivation of taste as a moral duty. Yet a little reflection may perhaps convince us, not only that it may be a moral but even a religious duty. . . . And if we look on the home here as the prototype of the home hereafter, we may see reasons for making it as sacred thing, beautiful and pleasant, as, indeed, we have no hesitation about making our churches (89).

Home décor becomes a means for bringing beauty and art into daily life in order to foster the spirit and offer a respite from an increasingly mechanized world. But the pursuit of creating a beautiful home is tied up with what one critic deems, the commodity aesthetic, so that the “way of seeing the world in general and the self and society in particular, as so much raw space to be furnished with mobile detachable, and transactable goods” (Outka 135). Decorating the interior of the house through a display of refinement and good taste becomes intertwined as an influence and reflection of a person’s interior self. *My Book House* series brings together these various aspects of aestheticism as childhood reading becomes associated with the goals of Beauty, tasteful discrimination, and collection.

Miller’s series aims to promote beauty and art as important for developing the child’s morals and ethics. Stories are valuable for their instruction and knowledge, but within the interior space of the Book House, they also become possessions to collect. These stories can influence

the child, turning him into not a mere consumer, but instead the owner of a tasteful collection of literature. The international material is not only included to appeal to the belief in a universal childhood fancy; instead, it also follows the tenet of aesthetic home décor that called for the creation of an atmosphere that showed ‘tasteful eclecticism.’ An ideal house, according to expert in home décor, might include “A lit-clos from Brittany, a refectory table from Italy, Spanish iron-work, roundels from Switzerland, English linen-fold paneling, a German chest” (quoted in Agnew 141). That other cultures become something to own and collect is illustrated in “The Little Maid of Far Japan,” a poem by Annette Wynne included in the first volume of the *My Book House*. The speaker is an American girl who addresses the picture of a maid on a Japanese fan:

Little maid upon my fan,  
Did you come from far Japan?  
Then you crossed your lattice floor,  
Flung aside your paper door,  
Joined the other maids at play,  
far away.  
Now you live upon my fan,  
Little maid of far Japan.” (2:68).

A poem such as “Little Maid of Far Japan” shows how the American child, through stories or other material goods, is allowed to collect items from around the world in the process of creating a tasteful interior.

The child reader must grow and mature; however, the book house remains an unchanging interior space where she can return. Indeed in naming the last volume of the series *The Latch*

*Key*, Miller suggests ownership and re-entry. The volume's cover art by Milo Winter depicts a girl and a boy on the cusp of opening a large wooden door and suggests that as readers mature, they will go out into the world. A latch key, however, is what allows the independent child entrance into her own home. The key lets the child back into her own Book House, a space of art and beauty which shapes the child then becomes a retreat for the adult. Interiority and ownership are reinforced in the volume's opening epigraph to *The Latch Key*. Written by Miller, it announces:

Here stands a house all built of thought,  
And full to overflowing  
Of treasures and of precious things,  
Of secrets for my knowing.  
Its windows look out far and wide  
From each of all its stories.  
I'll take the key and enter in;  
For me are all its glories (6:11).

The narrative that is created by *My Book House* is the stuff of fairy tales. It tells of the child reader who creates a fantastical place, filled with wonderful stories from around the world, an enduring place where the adult can retreat and be fed by art and beauty.

The philosophy of the series aims to teach and promote aesthetic values, and the design and appearance of the set reflect these goals as well: the Millers were committed to creating beautiful books. As Dorothy Lang Taylor describes in her profile of Olive Beaupre Miller, “the Millers envisioned a superlative set of books . . . illustrated and decorated by fine artists, printed on the best paper, and bound solidly enough to withstand years of reading and rereading” (279).

Books published by The Book House for Children never had dust jackets since Miller wanted “to arouse in the child a deep love of his book” and she believed that “anything that separates the hands of the child from the beloved possession – his book – defeats the purpose” (Taylor 279). One special edition of the series was sold with its own bookshelf that was designed to look like a house.

The original bindings for the 1920-21 first edition were done in black with gold lettering. The front cover of each book has a paste-on full-page glossy picture depicting a scene to suggest the volume’s contents. The pictures on the first three volumes emphasize fancy and imagination. For instance, the cover artwork by Alice Beard for “Through Fairy Halls,” the third volume in the series, depicts three cherub-like children being escorted by a beautiful female fairy whose immense wings stretch the entire width of the frame. For the fourth volume, “The Treasure Chest,” the material becomes more mature, which is reflected in N. C. Wyeth’s cover art. The scene depicts an explorer newly alit from his canoe. He stands in profile, with his gun in hand facing into the woods, watchful and careful, as he sets off on unknown adventures. Inside, the books are filled with illustrations, headpieces, tailpieces, and postage stamp size images all done in a muted Arts and Crafts palette of orange, green, and black. No other colours are introduced, and depending upon the artist at work, all three hues might be used simply black and white. Most stories are illustrated by one artist, who might contribute up to four or five pictures. Poems are often given a full page treatment and are surrounded by or incorporated into an illustration.

Although the so-called “Golden Age of American Illustration” is said to have ended by 1914 (Dalby 7), the *My Book House* series provides evidence of the rich selection of illustrators working in the United States in the 1920s and onward. The many artists who contributed illustrations to the book include Donn P. Crane, N.C. Wyeth, Milo Winter, Maginal Wright

Enwright, Glen Ketchum, and Maud and Miska Petersham. Miller employed artists from a range of backgrounds and aesthetics to contribute to the series. N. C. Wyeth, who was a protégé of Howard Pyle; Milo Winter and Maginal Wright Enright, sister of Frank Lloyd Wright, were graduates from the Chicago Art Institute; and Willy Pogany and Miska Petersham, who along with his wife Maud went on to illustrate many famous works of children's literature; were immigrants from Eastern Europe. In many ways, the group of illustrators who contributed to *My Book House* reinforces the purpose of the series: to bring together various aspects of society to create a beautiful America.

The first five volumes of *My Book House* provide children with verses and stories. There is a mixture of classic and contemporary material, American, and international, stories about animals, engines, and little children, providing lessons in justice, forgiveness, and a love of nature. Unlike the first five volumes of *My Book House*, "The Latch Key" contains no poetry or fiction, but is comprised of childhood biographies of authors; a set of essays on the history of Mother Goose, folklore, myths, and epics; and four indexes which categorize the content according to authors and titles; geography; special subjects; and ethical themes. The opening biographical essay in "The Circus Man" describes the career of P. T. Barnum. Describing his acquisition of the American Museum of New York, Miller claimed Barnum "found himself, at last, in possession of a valuable and instructive, as well as amusing collection, well worthy that he should devote to it all his wonderful energies" (6:19). Like Barnum's museum, the biographies in *The Latch Key* are best understood as an 'amusing collection' of writers and poets.

The nearly fifty childhood biographies of writers cover an impressive breadth of time and space. English luminaries William Shakespeare, John Keats, and George Eliot; American authors

Louisa May Alcott, P.T. Barnum, and Harriet Beecher Stowe; writers from around other parts of Europe and beyond such as Leo Tolstoy, Anatole France, Selma Lagerloff, and Rabindrath Tagore are included as well as many, many more. Written by Miller, these life stories follow a similar trajectory and almost all of them describe a beautiful or fascinating environment that influenced these great authors in childhood. The locations of these environments vary. Sometimes it is a special room such as the Griff dining room where young Mary Ann Evans would sit and read with her father in a “deep, leather-covered armchair at the right of the ruddy fireplace” (260). Or it is a family home such as Sandyknowe, Walter Scott’s grandfather’s farm where he could play in the ruins of an old castle, or Harriet Beecher Stowe’s childhood vacation place she named “Cloudland.” The European cities of Paris and Frankfurt influenced Anatole France and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, respectively. Likewise, quaint villages and towns such as Oliver Goldsmith’s “charming” Lissy and Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s Portsmouth, where “the constant sight of tall-masted ships and the smell of the sea are enough to set any boy’s blood a-tingle” (292), were important. Beyond the United States and Europe, the wonders of India inspired Rabindrath Tagore, and Salomon de la Selva was moved by the landscape of Nicaragua. And nature, whether it is green meadows, wheat fields, mossy woodlands, or craggy hills, is influential on more than one of these burgeoning artists. Even the titles of the essays highlight the connection between the writer and his native environment: James Whitcomb Riley is the “Hoosier Poet”; Leo Tolstoy is “A Boy in Russia”; Selma Lagerlof is “A Little Girl in Sweden”; and William Wordsworth is “A Boy of the Lake Country.”

In the essay “Fjords and Mountain Peaks,” the biography of Norwegian poet and novelist Bjornestjerne Bjornson, Miller describes how he “soaked up all the weird loveliness” (275) of the valley in which he grew up. “Soaking up” is an expression Miller uses in the context of

young readers as well, when she describes, “ how a very young child soaks up all the ideas you give him, good or bad, in his stories and how deeply stories influence the standards he is forming in the most important and impressionable years of his life” (quoted in Taylor 278). The child is viewed as a sponge, absorbing, for better or worse, whatever he is exposed to. The lesson of the biographies in *My Book House* is that a child who is allowed to soak up a beautiful or fascinating or stimulating environment will become imaginative and artistic. The distinction, of course, is that the environment Miller is providing is an imaginary one. Built out of stories and words, this interior environment is assumed to be as influential as real location.

This belief in the influence of the environment can be found in most aesthetic treatises of home décor and house design, where the goal is to create a beautiful and artistic home, which will feed the soul. The unconscious power of material items in shaping individuals, in particular children, is explored by Walter Pater in “A Child in the House” (1878). In this meditative essay, Pater presents the child as particularly influenced and affected, albeit unconsciously, by his or her environment. The essay is one of Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* that has been described as “explor[ing] moments of intellectual and cultural awakening” (Seiler 47). In the text, a man named Florian Deleal dreams of his childhood home, which he then ruminates upon as he is interested in tracing the “the story of his spirit,” to understand the process of “brain-building” that led him to become who he is.

In reflecting upon his home—its rooms, the sensory experiences he had there, the emotions associated with it—Deleal realizes “he owed the place many tones of sentiment that afterwards were customary with him” (150). The child in this essay is represented as particularly sensitive to its material environment, a tabula rasa upon which surprising ideas and emotions have been stamped forever. Pater writes,

How insignificant, at that moment, seem the influences of the sensible things which are tossed and fall and lie about us, so, or so, in the environment of early childhood. How indelibly, as we afterwards discover, they affect us; with what capricious attraction and associations they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax, of our ingenuous souls, as “with lead in the rock for ever,” giving form and feature, and as it were assigned house-room in our memory, to early experiences of feelings and thought, which abide with us ever afterwards, thus, and not otherwise (152).

Pater represents these lasting influences as being purely accidental or serendipitous. The process of “brain building” (148) is compared to the creation of a bird’s nest, an assembly of “floating thistle-down and chance straws compact at last, little accidents have their consequences” (158). The essay is not didactic but reflective, pondering how something came to be. Nevertheless, the representation of the child as so easily and indelibly affected by its material environment became influential and was used as evidence for the necessity to create a child’s environment, so that the process of brain-building is not accidental, but rather carefully constructed.

Other writers adopt this concept of a child’s unconscious susceptibility to unknown forces, and begin to use it for more didactic purposes. Vernon Lee, a female aesthete and disciple of Pater, provides a similar image in her essay “A Child in the Vatican” (1881) where she argues for the art of sculpture in the modern world. The essay begins by observing the behaviour of children in a Vatican sculpture gallery. They are either running about or walking dumbly with their parents. In both cases, the children are numb and indifferent to the beauty and art that surrounds them. Lee’s assumes, as does Pater, that childhood is the period when ideas

and feelings are shaped, but is even more emphatic and suggests that all understanding of art and beauty are ‘unalterably’ formed in childhood. She writes that from

haunting impressions, of things seen or heard of (the strange deeply significant sights and words of our childhood), do we get our original, never really alterable ideas and feelings about art; for much as we may clip, trim, and bedizen our minds with borrowed things, we can never change, never even recast its solid material: a compact, and seeming homogeneous soul mass, made up of tightly-pressed, crushed odds and ends of impression; broken, confused, pounded bits of the sights and sounds and emotions of our childhood.

Although her beliefs are similar to Pater’s, her tone is much direr. If childhood is the period of time which will determine all of one’s ideals and emotions about art, how does one ensure children will learn to recognize Art and Beauty? And in order to answer this question, Lee spins a ‘fairy tale,’ one that imagines the spirits of the sculptures targeting one boy’s soul. The effects of this spiritual interference are not immediately noticeable, until years later, when the boy finds he is peculiarly sensitive to Art and Beauty, finding himself in love with Rome’s architecture and hearing the whispers of symphonies.

Miller’s concept of aestheticism is influenced by both Pater’s representation of the effect of the environment upon a child, and Lee’s application of that theory to the necessity of teaching children about art and beauty. These are forms of aestheticism at its most ideal, when it is concerned primarily with the role of Art and Beauty in one’s life, and seems most removed from consumerism and commodity culture. At one point in “A Child and the House,” Pater represents the child as affected by beauty found in the most unlikely sights or objects. The child, according to Pater, is not “dependent on any choiceness or special fineness, in the objects which present

themselves to it” (150). To illustrate his point, he suggests “those whites and reds through the smoke on very homely buildings, and in the gold of the dandelions at the road-side” (150) are enough to spark a child’s “unstinted delight” (150). Miller creates a similar image in the poem “City Smoke” she wrote and included in the first volume of *My Book House*. The poem begins by describing the smoke leaping from the tall black chimneys. Printed to mimic the movement of smoke in the sky, the smoke “laughs out its joy in/soft white puffs;/then slowly fades to pearl and purple,/ And, settling to the earth, outspreads o’er all the city/ Its brooding, dove-gray wings!” (1:54). The poem celebrates unexpected beauty to be found in city life and pays homage to Pater at the same time.

The ideas put forth in Pater’s essay had widespread influence, as many professional began to explore how “operations of unregistered experience” (Mao 11) could be used and exploited, particularly in relation to child development. As Douglas Mao explains in his book *Fateful Beauties*, scientists, artists, and educators in the United States worked to understand how environment might influence development. Fears about juvenile delinquency and new theories of the ‘unconscious’ led to attempts to use the environment as a means for shaping children’s development in positive and productive ways. Mao traces this movement in the genre of the bildungsroman and modernist writings of Dreiser, Joyce, and Auden. Although these projects originated in aestheticism, Mao concludes that by the mid-twentieth century, Beauty and Art had disappeared from the equation and only environment remained as influential. As he explains, “What art could make people know or feel was not necessarily more important than what aesthetic environments could make people insensibly become” (15).

*My Book House* aims to expose the child to beauty so she can know, feel and become. As Miller shows in her childhood biographies, she believes environment is powerful in shaping a

child, but Miller's concern is with the role of Art and Beauty in a modern society. Even though she is creating a consumer experience based on timelessness and refinement, like Lee, in her essay on "The Child in the Vatican," Miller's series is better understood as creating a fairy tale, in order to expose children to beauty and instill in them an enduring appreciation for art. Her concern is less in avoiding juvenile delinquency and more in ensuring a reverence for imagination and fancy in the modern world. Beauty is still influential, and children become the ones who can embody the original ideals of aestheticism; instead of a mere consumer, the child reader becomes a collector, in this case, a collector of fine stories. These stories provide moral education, but they also serve as a connection to the past.

In the childhood biographies of *The Latch Key*, environment is not the only important influence upon the subjects. Again and again, the essays describe how these authors benefited in their youth from listening to a special storyteller, whether it was a parent or a nursemaid, who shared folklore and fairy tales. Young Leo Tolstoy enjoyed stories from Lyof Stepanovitch, a blind serf belonging to his Grandmother (6: 100). Robert Burns lived with old Betty Davidson who "knew more tales than anyone else in the country concerning fairies, ghosts and devils" (6: 269). Joel Chandler Harris would visit the slave quarters on the plantation where he lived to hear the stories of Brer Rabbit and "all the other lore of beasts and birds handed down from their African forefathers" (291). In each case, the source material comes from an 'authentic' and 'rustic source, which is then reproduced and repackaged by the writer. These stories offer a connection to the past, demonstrating the enduring appeal of folklore and fairy tales, but they also become the basis of their artistry. By collecting these stories as children, these authors become successful writers by passing along traditional material.

In *An Introduction to Folklore* (1904), Marion Cox describes stories as “the common property of all storytellers” (281). And Miller’s essays on the evolution of Mother Goose and on myths and fables fall into the oral tradition and how stories have endured over time. But in Miller’s biographies, the story becomes a collector’s item. Folklore and stories becomes something to consume, collect, and own. As another storytelling advocate suggests, “The tales heard during childhood become fixed and lasting possessions. They stay with the hearer through the years, and because their ideals become his ideals, do much toward shaping his character” (Cather 7). Collections can be assembled in many different ways, as the four indexes show, but collecting is a means of recognizing the value of particular items, of discriminating between what is valuable and what is not.

Discrimination is the goal. The only way to ensure a reader will have good taste in literature is to teach them when they are young. There is no romanticism associated with ‘wandering’ aimlessly amongst books or reading whatever happens to be lying about. Laura Kready firmly dismisses this approach to reading. She recalls Charles Lamb’s fond description of his sister’s education in *Makery End*, where he reminisces on how she was given the freedom to explore a closet of books. Kready writes,

Lamb would have argued: Set the child free in the library and let him choose for himself, and feed on great literature, those stories which give general types of situation and character, which give the simplest pictures of a people at different epochs. But with all due respect to Lamb it must be said that Lamb is not living in this scientific day of discovery of the child’s personality and of accurate attention of the child’s needs. (Kready 36-7)

Miller's *My Book House* series was a success, and the set continued to be expanded, updated (*Little Sambo* was removed after 1937), repackaged, and republished throughout the first half of the twentieth century. And a group of readers across the United States grew up and identified themselves as "Book House Babies" (Taylor 281). At least one child went on to become an artist. Larry McMurtry recalls reading the *My Book House* series as a child in his biography *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen* (69). In 1954, the series was sold to United Educators and continues to be available today. The metaphor of the Book House and what it represents and its original story about childhood reading, however, did not endure. The emphasis on interiority was too elusive and the value of Beauty was too obscure. While the *My Book House* series continued to be published well beyond 1920, its original way of imagining the child/book relationship did not survive. By 1937, the set had expanded to twelve volumes; however, there is no book titled *The Latch Key*. Instead the original cover art was applied to a new volume entitled "Through the Gate." The children in the painting are no longer returning to their interior space of the book house, but instead are heading out into the world.

### **5.3 BEAUTY IN OTHER AMERICAN FAIRY TALES**

Miller was not the only writer with Chicago connections who attempted to create an American fairy tale for children. Both L. Frank Baum and Vachel Lindsay aimed to capture the spirit and Beauty of America and use it to inspire children. Miller, Baum, and Lindsay shared a desire to instill aesthetic values in children as a means of combating some aspects of American society

while at the same time creating a new American tradition; however, the aesthetic values they believe in vary as do their visions of the United States.

As stories became an important component in kindergarten pedagogy and publishers looked for old and new tales to sell, many writers began to produce so-called 'modern' fairy tales. Miller includes some of these tales written by American contemporaries in her series, such as "The Story of Fairyfoot" by Frances Browne (1816-1879), "The Coming of the King" by Laura E. Richards (1850-1943), and "The Knights of the Silver Shield" by Raymond MacDonald Alden (1873-1924). There is, however, nothing particularly 'modern' or 'American' about these stories. The characters and settings are reminiscent of those found in tales by Perrault, Grimm, and Andersen: knights, giants, princesses, and fairies in nonspecific pastoral locations of yore. One writer who did produce modern American fairy tales is L. Frank Baum. He has been credited with creating the first American fantasy in *The Wizard of Oz*, since the story begins and ends in the wheat fields of Kansas and incorporates technology into the magical world (Clark 130). In 1901, the year after the publication of *The Wizard of Oz*, Baum continued his bid to become the American Hans Christian Andersen by releasing *American Fairy Tales*. This collection of twelve stories include typical fairy tale elements such as treasure lost and treasure found, talking animals, wizards, magic potions, and other fantastic elements, but they are brought into the milieu of modern American cities of Chicago and Boston, and set in amongst the world of socialites, cowboys, and senators, mixing magic into suburban homes, tenement housing, and department stores. Written twenty years prior to the publication of *My Book House*, Baum's *American Fairy Tales* provide another attempt to use the child to reconcile aestheticism and consumer culture. Like the *My Book House* series, his tales suggest the place for magic and fantasy in the modern world is an aesthetic interior.

In spite of Baum's popularity as a writer for children and his connection to Chicago, there is no childhood biography about him in *The Latch Key* nor is any of his work included in *My Book House*. This is not strange, however, for as Beverly Lyon Clark outlines in her examination of the construction and reception of American fantasy, the *Wizard of Oz* did not always fare well in American literary culture. In the first half of the twentieth century, Baum's work was often excluded from libraries, and many histories of children's literature tend to ignore him (139). Baum's exclusion from American literary culture has been blamed upon his popularity, the development of a series, and a general distrust of American fantasy. Another important reason is that Baum's work is often permeated with consumerism (Clark 137), a point supported by the fact that the same year *The Wizard of Oz* was released, he also published *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows*. Decorating store windows was a relatively new phenomenon in the art of selling, and it is an example of how aesthetic ideals of home decoration were applied to the marketing of products. Many of the same principles that applied to decorating aesthetic interiors were adapted to creating aesthetic displays to attract shoppers. In both locations, material objects are displayed and considered powerful, although their power yields different effects. In the private home, Beauty is assumed to inspire the spirit to goodness and love. In the department store, the beautiful display is intended to stir desire and longing for ownership. Baum is not usually connected to aestheticism, although his work in store display windows suggests he had extensive knowledge of creating beautiful settings. In his stories, the child is imaginative and is able to see the magic at work in commodities and consumer culture and to view them as a means to magic and beauty.

Baum's *American Fairy Tales* have not received much critical attention. When discussing Baum's *American Fairy Tales* in his essay "The Wizard of Chittenango," James Thurber states

bluntly that they are “not good” (161). For Thurber, as soon as Martha, the female protagonist of the collection’s opening story “The Box of Robbers,” announces that the setting is on Prairie Avenue in Chicago, Illinois, all possible romance and magic is killed (161). Thurber’s evaluation is not without merit. The overall effect of the stories is jarring: they demonstrate how much the world of magic and the world of commerce are at odds and tend to result in somewhat cynical morals. However, in defending Baum’s work, Edward Wagenknecht suggests that Baum’s writing must be seen as an antidote to American life. He writes:

It is not healthy – and it is not true – for children to be made to feel that romance belongs only to the past, and that everything in America today is drab, uninteresting, and businesslike. For after all we grow to resemble our dreams, if we are dull unimaginative children, what under the sun are we going to be as adults? Thus Mr. Baum’s work is primarily significant because it has pointed in the right direction: it has helped to teach us how to find wonder in contemporary American life (152).

Miller and Baum share similar beliefs about children and reading and imagination and both produce works, albeit in different genres, intended to provide American children with an updated American fairy tale. While Miller created an American fairy based on tradition, Baum attempts to weave fairy tales out of contemporary situations where fears of immigration and probably caused by consumerism become visible. Nevertheless, both Miller and Baum celebrate urban life for the American child and see Beauty as an important means of fostering imagination and keeping certain ideals alive in a new and changing society.

“The Box of Robbers” imports the old world into the new. It begins in an attic, a place where a child can rummage around and discover old artifacts and odd collectibles. Pater

provides such an image of the attic in “A Child in the House,” where he describes it as “an infinite, unexplored wonderland of childish treasures” (149). Martha’s attic is described as “well lighted by three dormer windows and . . . warm and pleasant. Around the walls were rows of boxes and trunks, piles of old carpeting, pieces of damaged furniture, bundles of discarded clothing and other odds and ends of more or less value.” Although less magical than Pater’s ‘wonderland,’ Martha still manages to find a curiosity, an unopened trunk belonging to her long-lost Uncle Walter. Inside she discovers a trio of Italian bandits. What ensues is the realization of how unsuited bandits are to American society. Martha suggests other possible, much more prosaic, occupations for them such as law or police work, which they reject. As they go about burgling her house, Martha devises a plan to get them back into the trunk, but not before the bandits can express their amazement over the amount of wealth to be found in one American home, exclaiming that “This America must be a rich place.” The enterprising Martha manages to fool them back into the trunk and all is well by the end of the story.

Commerce and magic are at odds in the modern world. Riches, that commonplace element in many fairy tales, become problematic in a world of business, monetary exchange, and private property. “The Wonderful Pump” sets up a familiar fairy tale trope where a poor couple is rewarded for showing kindness, in this case to a beetle. Out of gratitude, the beetle makes their water pump run with gold pieces, which are described as “stamped with the design of the United States mint and . . . worth five dollars each.” When the couple makes an offering of these gold pieces to the church, the pastor rejects it. He reasons that it must be either fairy gold, which will disappear by the next day, or money that has been stolen. Only when the beetle explains that his kingdom of insects collects the coins they find on the ground does the couple accept that the

money is real and untainted. After foolishly flaunting their good fortune, however, the couple's treasure is stolen by robbers and the beetle has no more to give.

Two of the stories are "fairy tales in reverse," in which magical creatures visit the real world instead of humans entering a magical real world (Riley 72). In both cases, through accident or pure mischief, the creatures interfere with a business, which leads to financial loss. In "The Enchanted Types," a creature called the Popopo the knook travels to the city out of boredom. While there, he frees the stuffed birds from a millinery shop, only to discover the next day that he has hurt the shopkeeper's livelihood. As guardian of birds, he cannot return the animals to slavery; however, he feels he owes the woman some kind of restitution. He consults the king of the knooks who advises him to change the fashion. This he accomplishes by 'enchancing the types,' which is described in detail:

The office of every newspaper and magazine in the city was visited by the knook, and then he went to other cities, until there was not a publication in the land that had not a "new fashion note" in its pages. Sometimes Popopo enchanted the types, so that whoever read the print would see only what the knook wished them to. Sometimes he called upon the busy editors and befuddled their brains until they wrote exactly what he wanted them to. Mortals seldom know how greatly they are influenced by fairies, knooks and ryls, who often put thoughts into their heads that only the wise little immortals could have conceived.

Types become one of the places where magic can infiltrate larger society even if adults do not realize it. Most of the adults in Baum's stories do not know how to interact with magic and end up trying to exploit it or being victims of it. At best, they are blind to its forces.

The other 'reverse' tale is "The Dummy Who Lived." A department store mannequin is brought to life by Tanko-Mankie the Yellow Ryl, who is described as exceedingly mischievous. He breathes life into her and then disappears, leaving her to manage on her own. She goes from one mishap to another, and everything she does requires money. This is a problem since she does not have any let alone know what it is. Everywhere she turns, she is asked to pay: twenty cents for coffee and a bun, coins for a newspaper, fare for the bus. After being hit by a car, she is taken to jail, where the department store owner is filing a stolen property report, in which he lists the value of all the items the dummy is wearing: "a \$19.98 costume, a \$4.23 hat, a \$2.19 parasol and a 76-cent pair of gloves" (95). He ends up losing the merchandise as the dummy, once relieved of her consciousness by the Tanko-Mankie, is found "prone upon the floor. Its wax was cracked and blistered, its head was badly damaged, and the bargain costume was dusty, soiled and much bedraggled" (96). Money is "easy come, easy go" in these stories. Magic, as well as anything else, can explain how money is circulated, gained, and lost.

Only in the stories with female child protagonists is magic, while disruptive, contained. These stories take place in the home, where money is not required. Martha outsmarts the bandits and keeps the trunk and the secret it holds. In the "Girl Who Owned a Bear" another little girl, Jane Gladys, also finds herself faced with magical creatures and must find a means to contain them. In her case, while alone in the big sitting room upstairs, a disgruntled man shows up and gives her a book. The man is a book sales agent and is seeking revenge against Jane Gladys's father, since he refused to purchase *The Complete Works of Peter Smith*. The book proves to be enchanted, so that as each page is turned, the illustration comes to life and exits the book, a story which has clear affinities with E. Nesbit's short story "A Book of Beasts." First a clown appears, then a monkey, donkey, and leopard, although they are artist's renderings, so the donkey has two

legs that are too short and a leopard has no teeth or claws. It is only when the grizzly bear comes to life that Jane Gladys is in danger, since, as the other creatures, note, he does have teeth and claws. The bear concurs:

“Indeed I have,” said the bear, in a low, deep, growling voice. “And I know how to use them, too. If you read in that book you’ll find I’m described as a horrible, cruel and remorseless grizzly, whose only business in life is to eat up little girls—shoes, dresses, ribbons and all! And then, the author says, I smack my lips and glory in my wickedness.”

Just in time, Jane Gladys remembers that the book is her “personal property” proven by the fact that her full name is written on the inside front cover. Once the creatures realize that they are her property, they must follow her command and go back into the book. While Baum clearly borrows the plot of Nesbit’s story in his tale, there are some significant differences. Most notably is how the child protagonists solve the problem of the escaped beasts. In Nesbit’s tale, the boy relies on his reading to figure out a way to get the dragon back into the book. In the case of Jane Gladys, it is ownership that solves the problem. Martha and Jane Gladys are the owners of secret and powerful knowledge and the magic is contained in an item that belongs to them. Jane Gladys is the owner of the book, and with it, she is able to command the animals back on to the pages. Once mastered, these become means for accessing magic while still owning it.

The reader imagined by Miller’s fairy tale heroine is a little girl such as Martha or Jane Gladys inhabiting a domestic space full of magical objects. Baum’s fantasy world is a feminine one, which has been said about *The Wizard of Oz* as well. Russell B. Nye writes:

For Oz is beyond all doubt a little girl’s dream-home. Its atmosphere is feminine, not masculine, with very little of the rowdy, frenetic energy of boys. . . . The few

boys in Oz are girls' boys, drawn as little girls assume boys should be. Baum could not make Oz fit boys, nor was her capable of making boys who could fit easily and naturally into Oz society (172).

Magic and fantasy belong in the home and are better managed by girls.

*American Fairy Tales* includes one story with a boy protagonist. Like his female counterparts, he interacts with the magic, but not before creating mischief. In "The Capture of Father Time," Jim, the son of a cowboy, moves from Arizona to live with his uncle in the east. One day, while practicing his lassos in an empty pasture, he unexpectedly captures Father Time, and in so doing, stops time. Jim takes the opportunity to play some pranks, particularly on disagreeable adults. Jim changes the course of certain events, so that when time resumes, students will yell at the teacher, molasses will flow all over the mean shopkeeper's floor, and a beggar will receive \$20 instead of small coin from a notorious wealthy miser. Father Time watches and observes:

I've known boys for thousands of years, and of course I know they're mischievous and reckless. But I like boys, because they grow up to be men and people my world. Now, if a man had caught me by accident, as you did, I could have scared him into letting me go instantly; but boys are harder to scare. I don't know as I blame you. I was a boy myself, long ago, when the world was new.

Father Time's speech suggests that boys have an ingenuity and courage that men lose as they mature. While girls' imaginations have the ability to connect with the traditions of the past, the ingenuity of the boy is what will affect the future.

Beauty is not a term that Baum employs often, although the last story in the volume introduces beauty and nature as enduring forces in a world of change. As in the first story in

*American Fairy Tales*, “The Chinaman and the Butterfly” concerns the old world’s entrance into the new. A much disliked Chinese mandarin is forced to immigrate to the United States where he adopts a new identity as the owner of a laundry, which, as Baum claims, is the “natural vocation of every Chinaman, be he coolie or mandarin.” In China, the man was often teased and tormented by children and the same is true once he is settled in the United States. One day, the mandarin captures a butterfly, whose “wings were exquisitely marked by gorgeous colors laid out in regular designs like the stained glass windows of a cathedral.” Using a magic book he brought from the old country, he learns how to talk butterfly language, and suggests that they are both victims of children’s pranks. The butterfly admits children can be rough with him; however, “they are but children, and ‘tis natural they should wish to catch such a beautiful creature as I am.” Children, whether they are in China or the United States, naturally see people and things for what they are. They can see that the Chinese man is mean. Likewise, they are naturally attracted to the beauty of a butterfly, an impulse the butterfly understands and does not begrudge. Nevertheless the mandarin enslaves the butterfly and concocts a plan to use the creature in a plot of revenge against children. He dips the butterfly’s legs in a potion, which when it touches a child, will turn it into a pig. The butterfly pretends to do the mandarin’s bidding and eventually uses the potion on the Chinese man, turning him into a pig. The story ends with the simple picture of beauty: “When the night came [the butterfly] slept in a rose bush.” The effect of this ending for the story and the entire collection is to suggest that true Beauty can still be found and it endures amongst the most modern of settings.

Money is what leads people astray in modern society, but the beauty present in both nature and material goods can offer the child a means to discovering magic and imagination. The children Baum’s stories do not have money nor do they participate in the market economy

directly, but they do have access to things in their home. Not all girls can be Dorothy and discover a magical realm; the best hope of most young girls, whether on Kansan farms or Chicago houses, is for magic to be found in the material items that surround them. Throughout the *American Fairy Tales*, Baum distinguishes between the slipperiness of money and the magic of material goods. Baum believed in Populist politics and Aesthetic values. He designed beautiful shop windows in order to sell items and supported William Jennings Bryant in the United States during the 1896 presidential election. Bryant's platform was in support of a "bimetallic monetary standard [which] would loosen credit and increase the money supply, stabilizing wages and prices and spurring general economic recovery" (Geer and Rochon 59). Indeed, *The Wizard of Oz* has been read as an allegory about Bryant's run for the presidency noting that in the novel, Dorothy's shoes are made of silver. In his *American Fairy Tales*, Baum works out the contradiction between money and the goods that money can buy through the child figure who is not a consumer but rather a connoisseur of the beauty and magic.

While Baum wrote American fairy tales and Miller created a home library, one other writer attempted to create a new fairy tale for the American people, one that promotes Beauty through poetry. Vachel Lindsay aimed to create a new American heritage, one that wove together the new world and the old work in an inclusive cosmopolitan vision. Unlike his counterparts, who aimed more for exclusive ideals of beauty, Lindsay did not see the future of the United States in the city. Instead, he located his fairy tale within rural areas and small towns. Through his poetry, he aimed to plant seeds of beauty that children would eventually harvest.

Vachel Lindsay is considered part of the Chicago literary scene of the early twentieth century, due to his Springfield, Illinois roots and his initial publication in Harriet Monroe's Chicago-based magazine *Poetry*. In spite of his connection to that city, Lindsay was anti-

mechanization and anti-urban and believed the future of the United States was in the country and small towns of America. One response to the modern world was to look back to a mythic past, to romanticize the pastoral and seemingly simpler ways of life, which became viewed as the foundations upon which a nation is built. In folklore studies, the rustic and the pastoral were viewed as more authentic, and Lindsay believed this as well, and aimed to show this spirit is alive in the United States. The United States did not have a distant past, so Lindsay wanted to establish that this authentic way of living existed within the farming and small-town communities of America. They needed to be celebrated and nourished, which is one of the goals of his *Gospel of Beauty*.

Lindsay aimed to revitalize the lost art of spoken poetry by becoming a wandering troubadour. After spending time as an art student in both Chicago and New York City, Lindsay returned to Springfield, IL, where he developed the ideas for his *Gospel of Beauty*, and his plan for spreading it around the country. Before acquiring any fame, Lindsay went on three different walking tours in the Midwest, West, and Southwest of the United States. Along the way, he lived as a beggar and a tramp and traded his poems and a pamphlet “Rhymes to be Traded for Bread” in exchange for food or lodgings. In the summer of 1912, he traveled across Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado, a journey he recounts in *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*, published in 1914.

*Adventures While Preaching* is comprised primarily of letters documenting his journey, telling of the people who he met along the way, the places he slept, and the work that he did harvesting on Kansas farms. Interspersed with the letters are some poems as well as the text of “The Gospel of Beauty,” his “one page formula for making America lovelier” (Lindsay 11),

which he had distributed to listeners along his journey. The text ends with a set of proclamations based on these experiences.

The book opens with a description of an encounter Lindsay has with a group of gypsies who approach him to ask what he is selling. He tells them he is not selling anything, but instead he offers them his gospel. Lindsay says, "its essential principle is that one should not be a gypsy forever. He should return home. Having returned, he should plant the seeds of Art and Beauty" (11-12). After providing this précis, he provides the document in its entirety. Divided into two parts, the first section states:

I come to you penniless and afoot, to bring a message. I am starting a new religious idea. The idea does not say "no" to any creed that you have heard. . . . After this, let the denomination to which you now belong be called in your heart "the church of beauty" or "the church of the open sky." . . . The church of beauty has two sides: the love of beauty and the love of God (15).

Beauty is a religion for Lindsay. It is a reflection of God in the world, and also provides a means for worshipping God. The second part of the *Gospel of Beauty* is subtitled "The New Localism" and it explains:

The things most worth while are one's own hearth and neighborhood. We should make our own home and neighborhood the most democratic, the most beautiful and the holiest in the world. The children now growing up should become devout gardeners or architects or park architects or teachers of dancing in the Greek spirit or musicians or novelists or poets or story-writers or craftsmen or wood-carvers or dramatists or actors or singers. They should find their talent and nurse it industriously. They should believe in every possible application to art-theory of

the thoughts of the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. They should, if led by the spirit, wander over the whole nation in search of the secret of democratic beauty with their hearts at the same time filled to overflowing with the righteousness of God. Then they should come back to their own hearth and neighborhood and gather a little circle of their own sort of workers about them and strive to make the neighborhood and home more beautiful and democratic and holy with their special art. . . . They should labor in their little circle expecting neither reward nor honors. . . . In their darkest hours they should be made strong by the vision of a completely beautiful neighborhood and the passion for a completely democratic art. The reason for living should be that joy in beauty which no wounds can take away, and that joy in the love of God which no crucifixion can end. (16-17 ellipsis in original)

Beauty, democracy, freedom, and a love of God are woven together into one vision. It uses Biblical discourse and *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Gettysburg Address* to illustrate the kind of Beauty which America has produced, which can then serve to inspire more Beauty, democracy, freedom, and love of God. For Lindsay, Beauty is a means for uniting people and creating community. Beauty is also the hope for the future, something to be fostered in small towns as each individual can contribute to the well-being of society.

Traveling across the Midwest, Kansas emerges as Lindsay's ideal American state and hope for the future. He launches into a paragraph of praise on its various virtues:

Kansas, the Ideal Community! A Kansas, nearer than any other to the kind of land our fathers took for granted! Kansas, practically free from cities and industrialism, the real last refuge of the constitution since it maintains the type of agricultural

civilization, the constitution has in mind! Kansas, State of tremendous crops and hard, devout, natural men (18-19).

Echoing these sentiments is “A Proclamation of the Balm of Gilead,” a text Lindsay describe as “another phase of the same crusade” (171). These proclamations appear at the end of *Adventures While Preaching*, but were originally published in *Farm and Fireside*. The proclamation preaches:

You to whom the universe has become a blast-furnace, a coke-oven, a cinder-strewn freight-yard . . . turn to the soil, turn to the earth . . . Think with the farmer once more, as your fathers did. Revere with the farmer our centuries-old civilization, however little it meets the city’s trouble. Revere the rural customs that have their roots in the immemorial benefits of nature (176).

There is a need to recognize the Beauty that already exists in the United States, particularly a state such as Kansas, with its epic landscapes, which Lindsay compares to Biblical scenes. Beauty is found in nature, not in the trappings of home décor, which only distract and numb. Living as a beggar, Lindsay does occasionally admit to missing aspects of civilized living. After a brief stay with a professor, Lindsay writes how material goods are seductive, that “books and teacups and high-brow conversations are awfully insinuating things” (74). Nevertheless, he believes that “to be a little civilized, we sacrifice enormous powers and joys” (74). Lindsay’s Aestheticism is not rooted in a retreat into a domestic interior, but is instead a retreat away from the city and all it represents.

Across the rural Midwest, Lindsay meets people from different ethnic backgrounds with whom he shares his Gospel. They include Mexicans, Gypsies, Swedes, African-Americans, and Germans. However in his story of “The Five Little Children Eating Mush,” he describes

entertaining a group of children on a farm where he has been given a meal. While the parents are Scandinavian, Lindsay deems the five children as “real Americans” (167). These children are the hope for the future. Lindsay’s poetry is primarily addressed to an adult audience; however, he views children as the force that will bring his plan for civilization to fruition. In the *Gospel of Beauty*, he discusses planting seeds and he repeats it in another proclamation for “Welcoming the Talented Children of the Soil.” He exhorts:

Yea, in almost every ranch-house is born one flower-like girl or boy, a stranger among the brothers and sisters. Welcome, and a thousand welcomes, to these fairy changelings! They will make our land lovely. Let all of us who love God give our hearts to these His servants. They are born with eyes that weep themselves blind, unless there is beauty to look upon. They are endowed with souls that are self-devouring, unless they be permitted to make rare music; with a desire for truth that will make them mad as the old prophets, unless they be permitted to preach and pray and praise God in their own fashion, each establishing his own dream visibly in the world. The land is being jewelled with talented children, from Maine to California (180).

When speaking of children and young adults, Lindsay’s vision as a fairy tale becomes most apparent. He becomes the old wizard disguised as a troubadour who can plant magical seeds. The children are always referred to as having fairy faces or as being fairy changelings, while the young women are nymphs and the young men of small towns are heroes in waiting.

*The Latch Key* includes an essay about Vachel Lindsay entitled “The Tramp.” The essay is not a childhood biography per se, since it is based almost entirely upon *Adventures while Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*, a journey made when Lindsay was 33 years old. Miller and

Lindsay are on a similar mission to plant Beauty in the minds and hearts of children in the hopes of influencing their ideals. They differ, however, as to what constitutes Beauty and how it should affect the children. Miller hones in on the aspects of Lindsay's philosophy which connect Beauty to children, while omitting his new localism. She writes that after returning home from his journey, Lindsay dreamed of another harvest, "a harvest of art and beauty to be gathered there in Kansas." She paraphrases a section of The New Localism from the *Gospel of Beauty*: "The children now born in the west should be poets, artists, actors, musicians, gardeners, architects, classic dancers. They should have in their eyes the vision of beauty and live to express that beauty in the world" (307). She omits Lindsay's theory of New Localism and anti-urban sentiments, which do not align with the urban and urbane qualities of *My Book House*.

Indeed, Miller's bias against Lindsay's new localism comes through when she claims he was trying to "urge a flowering of beauty on lonely farms or in ugly little villages" (302). This is not Lindsay's language. He would not describe a farm as lonely or villages as ugly but rather as overlooked and threatened by urban and commercial society. In the "The Illinois Village," one of a trio of poems which he often recited since they also summed up his *Gospel of Beauty*, Lindsay writes:

Yet when I see the flocks of girls,  
Watching the Sunday train go thro'  
(As tho' the whole wide world went by)  
With eyes that long to travel too,  
I sigh, despite my soul made glad  
By cloudy dresses and brown hair,

Sigh for the sweet life wrenched and torn  
By thundering commerce, fierce and bare.

The railroad distracts these young women and men and makes them desire something other than a rural lifestyle. The enemy for America is not immigration and diversity but urbanization and mechanization. For Lindsay, Art and Beauty are a means for fighting these forces, of providing another source of purpose and joy in life.

Besides “The Tramp,” *My Book House* contains two poems by Lindsay, “An Explanation of the Grasshopper” and “The Moon’s the North Wind’s Cooky.” Both are short verses, which provide whimsical descriptions of natural phenomenon. They are not representative of the style of poetry Lindsay was best known for, poems such as “The Congo.” Lindsay intended for his poems to be performed and they are filled with repetition, the rhythms of popular music, and street slang. *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* includes such a poem, which is entitled “The Kallyope Yell.” It comes with instructions that it should be read “Loudly and rapidly with a leader, college yell fashion” (75). This five stanza poem represents the more populist and performative qualities of Lindsay poetry, which bring together traditional and current sounds and new and old cultural references. Kallyope is Lindsay’s Americanized version of Calliope. The poem begins, “I am the Gutter Dream,/ Tune-maker born of steam, Tooting joy, Tooting hope, I am the Kallyope. Car called the Kallyope. Willy willy willy wah HOO!” (76). The poem employs circus and parade imagery to imagine a world of equality, where everyone is a performer and a spectator, where democracy reigns and “popcorn crowds shall rule the town” (77).

Miller refers to Lindsay’s style in her essay and treats him as a novelty act more than as a serious poet. She describes his performance style:

he would go through the most extravagant antics, roaming up and down, shouting, gesticulating . . . Face a poet who could end a poem on Daniel in the lion's den, as if he were leading a football yell . . . Or imagine a devotee of the same art as Tennyson's shouting: "Black cats, gray cats, green cats, miau/ Chasing the deacon who stole the cow!" (302).

For Miller, Lindsay's poems are too raucous and lack refinement. Lindsay's approach to poetry is too indiscriminate, inclusive and public. She deems him "an overgrown boy" (302), and for the most part, overgrown boys do not belong in the imagined space of the *Book House*

In her study of dialect in American poetry, Lisa Wooley includes a chapter on Vachel Lindsay. She compares Lindsay's project to that of E. D. Hirsch, the English education scholar who published *Cultural Literacy* in the 1980s, a text which argues for the necessity of a shared knowledge of cultural references. Wooley argues that in the early decades of the twentieth century, Lindsay embarked on a similar project, aiming to create a shared cultural literacy through his poetry. His poems include references to American history, American legends, European culture, and Biblical references. While Hirsch called this "communally shared information," Lindsay might have called it "the strange composite voice of many millions singing souls" (quoted in Wooley 44). Lindsay sought to familiarize Americans with his favorite writers and the nation's folklore, history, and geography, thereby changing what Americans knew (Wooley 56). .

Lindsay's poetry and his *Gospel of Beauty* have long since disappeared from the American literary landscape. His ragtag aesthetic and emphasis on public performance did not fit with the trends in modern poetry. Even when he was preaching his *Gospel*, Lindsay's notion of Beauty was old-fashioned and out-of-date; however, he offers another example of attempting

to create a fairy tale in order to instill a love of Beauty in children. Unfortunately, the monster in Lindsay's fairy tale, the modern American city, was already too powerful to be slain.

Baum's fairy tales and Vachel Lindsay's poetry have not survived, but versions of the *My Book House* continued to be published late into the twentieth century, in part because of Miller's ability to adapt her series over time. The core values of fostering good literary taste and a sense of tradition stood the series in good stead as childhood reading and its purposes changed became more fully connected to the development of taste. Nevertheless, the original emphasis on beauty was eventually erased as the values of Beauty for the child or the adult became increasingly obscure. Instead of focusing on how literature could foster beauty on the inside, providing an escape from the modern society, the series focused instead on how reading could prepare the child to be a discerning reader and to take those skills out into the world of business.

*My Book House* was launched with ambitious goals for the child/book relationship: to foster an enduring love of beauty in the child, to create a cosmopolitan tradition of children's stories, to influence the child's development so that he or she would grow up to help create a beautiful America. Part of its story, however, was for the child to develop taste, a cosmopolitan taste, a refined taste, and it this component, this aspect of Miller's vision that marked a change in how childhood reading would be imagined in the decades to follow.

Taste has always been used in discussion of childhood reading, although rarely in books that are aimed at child readers. In the early decades of the twentieth-century, librarians and educators often used to taste to describe what children should and should not read. They describe how children should eat "wholesome herbage" and avoid "noxious weeds," or that reading must not be overindulgence in sweets but must also include a diet of healthy nutritious fare. In these discussions, taste is associated with healthy development. If children fail to eat right, they will

fail to develop into healthy adults. Likewise, if they fail to read the right kinds of books, they will fail to develop good characters. But the *My Book House* series marks a shift in how taste is used in relation to childhood reading. The goal increasingly becomes the development of taste, a thing that is to be acquired rather than a need to be met. Childhood reading becomes a way of ensuring children would grow up having good literary taste.

Book Magic, Book Friend, Bookland, and Book House are all ambitious ways of imagining childhood reading. Influenced by a variety of forces and fears and aimed at producing various results for the future, they still provided exciting ways of imagining what might happen when a child and a book come together. They turned reading into time travel, adventure, romance, and fantasy. The relationship between the child and the book is still viewed as valuable and continues to be of interest to many people, even as the book is believed to be disappearing. And many of these metaphors for the child/book relationship still circulate in some form as childhood reading is privileged as highly pleasurable, particularly imaginative, or especially indiscriminate. These metaphors reveal what cosmopolitan ideals endure in relation to childhood reading and help to reveal the ones that have faded away.

## NOTES

1. The article “The Book and the Child” in *Home Progress* in 1911 begins by asking, “What shall little Americans read? What do children need most nowadays ? These are questions which must be troubling mothers when they pore over the tempting catalogues or stand bewildered before book-bargain- counters in the department stores.” See Brown 11.

2. In an undated review of a reissue of the Nesbit’s Bastable trilogy in the United States, reviewer Donald Douglas writes, “You need not be so very old to recall the old Strand Magazine and the unforgotten far-off things like your father shivering his way through ‘The Hound of the Baskerville,’ and your mother reading aloud all of E. Nesbit’s serials and yourself listening with very bated breath to ‘The Dragon Book’ and ‘The Phoenix and the Carpet’ and ‘The Amulet’ and especially the chronicles of the Bastable family.” See Douglas 96.

3. Sylvester spent some of his academic career in the Wisconsin countryside before relocating to Chicago, and it would appear that *Journeys through Bookland* was intended for sale in the Midwest and beyond, in the more culturally isolated regions of the country. In the memoir *Shady Corner of Paradise* by James Keddie, a publisher with Bellows-Reeve, he reveals some of the sales plan for the book set. The goal was to enlist female teachers to be sales representatives and to sell the set to mothers. Keddie describes the success of a few sale representatives, one who was sent into a western Texas town at the peak of the oil boom (78-9) and another who sold several copies while traveling between Indianapolis and Seattle (155).

4. In “The Confidential Postscript” to the volume of short stories, Matthews admits “Imaginary Geography” owes some influence to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “A Virtuoso Collection.” Indeed, Captain Vanderdecken refers directly to Hawthorne’s tale when he tells of taking an American journalist named Hawthorne to see the Wandering Jew’s collection of artifacts. Vanderdecken then shows off the new pieces he has to donate, including the Horn of Hernani, Hester Prynne’s “A”, and the rake of Maud Miller, curiosities mentioned in works of American literature by Cooper, Hawthorne, and Whittier. In spite of its homage to “A Virtuoso’s Collection,” according to Matthews, “It was no recalling of Hawthorne’s tale, but a casual glance at the *Carte du Pays de Tendre* in a volume of Moliere, which first set me upon collecting the material for an imaginary geography” (209). Hawthorne’s story centers on a collection of artifacts, a museum of famous literary and mythological objects, everything from the sword of Damocles to Little Red Riding Hood’s cape. Matthews, however, is admittedly more attracted to geography as a mean to describe his experience of reading and imaginary worlds.

5. Field, a well-known book collector, wrote a series of essays entitled *Love Affairs of the Bibliomaniac*. In one passage, he creates his own version of Bookland: “I thank God continually that it hath been my lot in life to found an empire in my heart – no cramped and wizened borough wherein one jealous mistress hath exercised her petty tyranny, but an expansive and ever-widening continent divided and subdivided into dominions, jurisdictions, caliphates, chiefdoms, sensechalships, and prefectures, wherein tetrarchs, burgraves, maharajahs, palatines, seigniors, caziques, nabobs, emirs, nizams, and nawabs hold sway, each over his special and particular realm, and all bound together in harmonious cooperation by the conciliating spirit of polybibliophily!” (18-19).

6. An article titled “Alice in Bookland: A Trend in Modern Literature” appeared in the *Methodist Review* in 1929, which complained about the state of literary culture. John Benjamin Magee writes, “Alice never found more topsy-turvydom in her dreams than is to be found in Bookland. Can she make anything out of it? It would take more than the mathematical genius of Lewis Carroll to lead Alice through this hodgepodge without losing her” (867).

7. See Wilmshurst, Rea. “L.M. Montgomery’s Use of Quotations and Allusions in the *Anne* Books.” *Canadian Children’s Literature*. 56 (1989): 15-45; Doody, Margaret Anne & Wendy E. Barry. “Literary Allusion and Quotation in *Anne of Green Gables*.” *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables*. Ed. Wendy E. Barry, Margaret Anne Doody & Mary E. Doody Jones. NY: Oxford UP, 1997. 457-462.; Epperly, Elizabeth. *The Fragrance of Sweet-grass: L.M. Montgomery’s Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992.

8. See Howey, Ann F. “Reading Elaine: Marjorie Richardson’s and L.M. Montgomery’s Red-Haired Lily Maids.” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly*. 32.2 (2007): 86-109 and Miller, Kathleen Ann. “Haunted Heroines: The Gothic Imagination and the Female Bildungsroman of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and L. M. Montgomery.” *The Lion and the Unicorn*. 34:2 (2010): 125-147.

9. Although *Anne of Green Gables* has been always been the most popular and best-loved of Montgomery’s novels, a tradition of readers who prefer *Emily* exists. Canadian writers Alice Munro and Jane Urquhart are two examples.

10. The exchange or lending of a book was considered the “first truly intimate contact between a young man and woman” (5), according to an examination of a young girl’s reading practices growing up in small town Manitoba in the 1890s. In Norman J. Williamson &

Angela E. Williamson, "Mamie Pickering's Reading, Part One: The Role of Books in the Social Life of a Late Victorian Child." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. 9.1 (1984): 3-6.

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