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Imprints of the Mind: The Depiction of Consciousness in Children's Fiction

by Maria Nikolajeva

The incentive to reflect a characters' internal life is a relatively recent development in Western literature, often connected with Henry James and Virginia Woolf. In children's literature, this tendency has only become prominent during the last twenty or thirty years. Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology can explain this phenomenon for us: it is a shift from epic toward polyphonic discourse, from depicting primarily an external flow of events to attempting to convey the complex nature of human consciousness. Bakhtin's concept of the dialogical nature of the novel, as opposed to the epic in "Epic and Novel," is extremely helpful in pinpointing the specific aesthetics of children's literature, as several critics have done, most recently Robyn McCallum in *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction* (Bakhtin 3-40; see also Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature* 95-120). Yet while McCallum is primarily interested in how the dialogics between self and society, culture, and ideology govern the construction of subjectivity, and thus examines the connection between thematic and narrative aspects of texts, I have in this essay chosen to concentrate on the purely textual relationship between the author/narrator and the character.

A children's novel is constructed in a dialogical tension between two unequal subjectivities, an adult author and a child character. In "Discourse in the Novel" and especially in "The Author and the Hero in Aesthetic Activity," Bakhtin explores the relationship between the authorial and the figural discourse, that is, narrations that can be ascribed to an autonomous narrative agency or to a character respectively.¹ This complex relationship results in a variety of blended narratives that have been classified as stream of consciousness, interior monologue, *Erlebte Rede*, free indirect discourse, dual-voice discourse, narrated monologue, and so on (see Pascal 8-32; Martin 130-51). All of these techniques presuppose that authors, through their narrators, enter the minds of their characters and are able to convey their state of mind to readers by means of language. This statement in itself presents a problem since language does not always have adequate means to express vague, inarticulate thoughts and emotions—an argument found in much postmodern criticism.

In children's novels, the duality of the voice is further enhanced by the asymmetrical power position of the author (in most cases an adult), the narrator (who may be an adult or a child), and the character (in most cases a child). The particular poetics of children's literature thus demands that when applying analytical tools from general criticism,

be it narratology (Genette, Chatman, Rimmon-Kenan, Bal) or speech act theory (Austin, Pratt, Banfield, Lanser, Fludernik), we must necessarily adapt them by taking the specifics of children's literature into consideration, which is the goal of this essay.

Although the questions of subjectivity, narrative perspective, and authorial control in children's fiction have been investigated from a variety of vantage points,² there are few special studies of the portrayal of internal life in children's fiction.³ A general consensus about children's literature seems to be that adult writers can easily recreate a child character's mind, while logically it should be infinitely more difficult than to reflect the mind of another adult. By analogy, it is often questioned, especially by feminist, postcolonial, and queer theories, whether male writers can successfully depict the internal life of female characters, or white writers of black characters, or heterosexual writers of homosexual characters. This skepticism is based on the unequal power positions, in which the "oppressors" presumably have limited possibility to understand the mentality of the "oppressed." Even though *all* adult writers have been children once, the profound difference in life experience as well as linguistic skills creates an inevitable discrepancy between the (adult) narrative voice and both the focalized child character's and the young reader's levels of comprehension. The infamous "double address," although primarily referring to the implied audience rather than the textual perspective, nevertheless conveys the essence of the dilemma (Wall 9, *passim*). The many successful attempts to breach this discrepancy—for instance, by using strong internal focalization of a child character or the first-person (autodiegetic) child perspective—do not eliminate the dilemma as such.⁴

In this essay, I will apply some of the categories proposed by Dorrit Cohn in *Transparent Minds*, in which she also claims that "[n]arrative fiction is the only literary genre, as well as the only kind of narrative, in which the unspoken thoughts, feelings, perceptions of a person other than the speaker can be portrayed" (7). Although some of Cohn's categories partially coincide with the terminology elaborated by modern narratology, I find that her consistent and symmetrical system provides an additional insight into the intricacy of the depiction of consciousness in fiction. Her concept of psychonarration proves especially valuable in assessing some complex narrative forms in contemporary children's and juvenile prose. Even though Cohn does not explicitly describe the techniques

under examination as polyphonic or dialogical, the very juxtaposition of the two agencies, the narrator and the character, presupposes the dialogical relationship. Thus, although my examination is firmly rooted in some previous inquiry into narration in children's literature by John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, my using Cohn's theoretical framework is intended to extend their work.

Following Käte Hamburger, Cohn makes a distinction between personal and impersonal narration, which some other narratologists, notably Gérard Genette, have tried to eliminate (*Narrative* 243-52). Hamburger denies the first-person narration fictionality inherent to narrative fiction, which for her is exclusively third-person, that is epic, or mimetic narration (*Logic* 311-41). Hamburger acknowledges three kinds of first-person narratives: autobiography (which she with all right excludes from the scope of narrative fiction), epistolary novel, and memoir novel. She thus ignores such techniques, widely used in contemporary children's and young adult fiction, as fictitious autobiography (*The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* [1990] by Avi), fictitious diary (*The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4* [1982] by Sue Townsend), retrospective self-narration (*Jacob Have I Loved* [1980] by Katherine Paterson), and introspective, or self-reflexive, first-person narration (*Walk Two Moons* [1994] by Sharon Creech). By neglecting first-person narration, Hamburger significantly limits the range of narrative forms for conveying consciousness. Since an ever growing number of children's novels uses first-person child perspective, children's literature critics cannot afford to ignore these other first-person means of conveying consciousness. Cohn, on the other hand, acknowledges the important distinction between the narrating self (extradiegetic-homodiegetic in Genette's terminology) and the experiencing self (which he describes as intradiegetic-homodiegetic).⁵

I find Genette's elimination of differences between personal and impersonal narration extremely helpful, as he instead operates with various patterns of distance and focalization. In children's literature, there is little difference between an omniscient adult narrator focalizing a child character (heterodiegetic: the narrator is not a character in his own narrative) and a retrospective adult first-person narrator focalizing himself as a child (homodiegetic: the narrator is a character in his own narrative). Both narrators are extradiegetic in Genette's terminology; that is, they are situated outside the narrative at the time of narration and are thus detached from it. Both occupy an unequal power position over the child character, possessing greater knowledge, life experience, and linguistic skills. On the other hand, the difference between personal and impersonal introspective narration, that is, between an autodiegetic child narrator and an adult heterodiegetic narrator focalizing a child character, is indeed profound, due to the difference in cognitive level.

McCallum points out that in first-person narrative, "the gap between represented and representing discourse is frequently less perceptible," which is exactly why I find it valuable to explore (*Ideologies* 33).

For my purpose in this essay, it is also essential to note that not all first-person narratives are concerned with the narrator's consciousness; instead they primarily render events and happenings around them. Cassie is one such narrator in Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976). In Genette's terminology, this type of narrator is homodiegetic but not autodiegetic. However, as a first-person narrator, he cannot enter other characters' consciousness. Such "outsider" narrators (or narrator-witnesses) are unusual in mainstream fiction. An example commonly referred to is Dr. Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories; another one would be Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* (1925). In children's fiction, such narrators are widely used. Lloyd Alexander's *Vesper* books, such as *The Illyrian Adventure* (1986), present an excellent illustration, with their adult narrator accompanying the young protagonist through her breath-taking adventures. I call this mode of depicting narrative consciousness quasi-self-narration because the focus of the narrative is not on the narrating self.

In the following, I will apply some of Cohn's categories to the variety of narrative forms occurring in children's fiction, illustrating each of them with a short passage. Instead of separating personal and impersonal narration, I start with the simplest forms, in which the character's consciousness appears to be transparent and straightforward, and proceed toward the more complex and ambiguous forms that approximate the unconscious. As Cohn points out, historically, authorial techniques—in which the narrator's discourse prevails over the characters'—precede figural techniques, in which the relation is the reverse. This is especially true of children's fiction and will be reflected in the texts I discuss. Children's literature has often been thought to serve a didactic purpose (see e.g., Nodelman 192). Didacticism presupposes unrestricted authorial control, when an authoritative narrative agency manipulates the reader's subject position and leaves nothing for the reader to ponder or wonder about. Disclosing the scope of narrative techniques available and widely used by children's authors, as well as the tangible shift toward figural discourse, we might get a reason to reevaluate the claim about didacticism being an intrinsic feature of children's literature. On the other hand, we may also discover that some mixed forms create an illusion of figural discourse while they in fact are highly manipulative, which makes didacticism covert and therefore harder for the readers to protect themselves against. Since as critics of children's literature we are interested in the ways that texts affect young readers, the efficiency of various narrative forms is indeed of primary concern to our discipline.

Quoted Monologue

Quoted monologue implies a direct rendering of a character's mental discourse, with or without phrases such as "he thought" or "she wondered." This is the most primitive and also the most direct way of conveying internal life. Established in the mid-nineteenth century, such phrases can sometimes appear outdated or unnatural. But since the development of narrative technique is usually delayed in children's fiction (as compared to the mainstream), quoted monologue is still frequently used in children's novels.

Quoted monologue conveys inner speech, endophasy, but it cannot convey the unconscious because it is dependent on language. According to Cohn, quoted monologue often conceals more than it reveals because of its verbal, structured nature. Therefore, Cohn questions the term "stream-of-consciousness" (78). However, the unconscious can be individualized by employing such stylistic features as dialect, sociolect, babytalk, or other particular speech idiosyncrasies. Cohn mentions a possibility that child language is "a neglected source of *Ulysses*" (95). She further connects this to Lev Vygotsky's concept of "egocentric speech," the thinking aloud of small children, a device widely used in children's fiction (95). This is especially relevant when the dialogue occurs without speech tags. On the other hand, if we have the tag "he said to himself," does it mean that the character is indeed talking aloud to himself? Yet in most cases the distinction between audible and inner speech does not change our understanding of the character's mind. However, we should pay attention to the psychological credibility of quoted monologue. In children's literature, it excludes advanced vocabulary, abstractions, and high level of knowledge and life experience, all of which could contribute to making the child character implausible.

Quoted monologue is frequently used in action-oriented narratives, where the characters' internal life is of less importance and where thoughts, like direct speech, are primarily used to advance the plot. Let us consider some examples from a novel in which the characters' thoughts are rare and usually expressed in quoted monologue. I use italics to emphasize the narrator's discourse. C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) provides an example: "'This must be a simply enormous wardrobe!' *thought Lucy*.... Then she noticed that there was something crunching under her feet. 'I wonder is that more moth-balls?' *she thought*.... 'This is very queer,' *she said* [...] 'why, it is like branches of trees!' *exclaimed Lucy*" (Lewis 13). The grammatically incorrect phrase "I wonder is that more moth-balls" is an example of an individual style that enables the author to come closer to figural narration. However, the whole scene is psychologically implausible, since Lucy seems to be talking to herself in a rather unnatural way.

Lucy and Edmund are the only characters in the novel whose minds we are allowed to enter (which naturally emphasizes their prominent roles in the story). Lucy appears on her own only once, during her first exploration of the wardrobe, and since she cannot share her thoughts with anyone else, she is talking to herself. Edmund is separated from the rest of the group for a considerable part of the story, first as he enters the wardrobe, following Lucy, and again when he has nobody else to talk to. In his mental discourse, all three interchangeable tags are used: "said," "thought," and "said to himself."

"Thank goodness," *said Edmund*, "the door must have swung open of its own accord"....

"She's angry about all the things I've been saying lately," *thought Edmund*....

"Just like a girl," *said Edmund to himself*, "sulking somewhere, and won't accept an apology." (Lewis 31)

Further on, when he leaves his siblings, his thoughts are the only source of information for the reader about his feelings, since he, for obvious reasons, does not share them with the Witch or any of her companions:

"Because," *[Edmund] said to himself*, "all these people who say nasty things about her are her enemies and probably half of it isn't true. She was jolly nice to me, anyway, much nicer than they are. I expect she is the rightful Queen really. Anyway, she'll be better than that awful Aslan." *At least, that was the excuse he made in his own mind for what he was doing. It wasn't a very good excuse, however, for deep down inside him he knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel.* (Lewis 83)

The narrator's comment is didactic; it is as if he does not trust the reader to make correct inferences on the basis of Edmund's thoughts. From this example, we see how important it is to view quoted monologue in its narrative context, considering what surrounds the narrative form. As we see, quoted monologue may be interspersed with a narrator's comments. This creates either an ironic or a didactic discrepancy between the narrator's discourse and the character's discourse, which is especially pertinent with the cognitive difference between the two.

In contemporary fiction, it is not unusual to omit quotation marks that otherwise indicate quoted monologue, as Paterson's *Lyddie* (1991) demonstrates: "Once I walk in that gate, I ain't free anymore, *she thought*. No matter how handsome the house, once I enter I'm a servant girl—no more than a black slave" (18). The tag "she thought" clearly points to the source of discourse. Yet tags can be omitted

as well, as another of Paterson's narratives, *The Great Gilly Hopkins* (1978), demonstrates:

Well, I'm eleven now, folks, and, in case you haven't heard, I don't wet my bed anymore. But I am not nice, I am brilliant. I am famous across this entire county. Nobody wants to tangle with the great Galadriel Hopkins. I am too clever and too hard to manage. Gruesome Gilly, they call me. *She leaned back comfortably.* Here I come, Maime baby, ready or not. (3)

In this passage, the only indication of the source of speech is the sentence "She leaned back comfortably." Apart from the character's personal style and self-evaluation, tense and deictics enable the reader to identify the rest of the text as the character's discourse.⁶ This is what is normally referred to as free direct discourse, or interior monologue, ostensibly the invention of Edouard Dujardin and further developed by James Joyce. While children's fiction has not as yet produced a counterpart to Molly Bloom's interior monologue, the example above is by no means unique. In most cases, however, interior monologue in children's novels is marked by italics, to help the reader:

"Willa, would you like to sit for me?"

"I am sitting," said Willa.

"I mean for a painting. I need a model. Of course, I would pay you.

Pay me? For sitting?

"That is, if you've nothing more important to do for the next few weeks. And if your parents do not mind."

"Would you like to, Willa?" her father asked.

"It isn't easy, you know."

Not easy? Of course it would be easy. Sitting for him.

"I had started the painting with Winnie—Horace's mother," said Matthew. "But I need a model to finish it."

Winnie. Horace's mother. Gone to seek her fortune. (MacLachlan 39; emphasis in the original)

In this passage, italicized phrases clearly mark Willa's thoughts as opposed to the audible direct speech.

The examples in this section demonstrate the change of narrative techniques in recent children's fiction and the complexity that can be achieved by merely dropping tags in direct rendering of characters' thought.

Autonomous Monologue

Autonomous monologue implies that the character's discourse is uninterrupted by a narrator's discourse in an

extreme case of interior monologue extending to a whole novel.⁷ Like interior monologue embedded in a narrator's discourse, autonomous monologue does not immediately reveal the source of narration. Conventional first-person novels may have a form either of written memoirs or spoken discourse, both of which present a clear narrative situation. Autonomous monologue cancels this clarity with the ambiguity of situation. We see this distinctly in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), when the narrative situation is undetermined. Holden may be telling his story to a psychiatrist in the clinic where he is treated; however, we do not know whether he tells the whole story at one go or whether there are temporal ellipses between chapters. Or he may also be telling the story as self-therapy in a letter for instance to his older brother, which is not very plausible, since he mentions the brother in third person, and further, the brother would be familiar with the "David Copperfield kind of crap" that Holden rejects in the beginning of his story. He may, however, simply be writing the story down, either as self-therapy or as an exercise in creative writing. Depending on how we as readers determine the narrative situation, our interpretation of the story will be slightly different. The degree of reliability of the narrative changes if Holden is talking to a psychiatrist or to himself. In spoken discourse, we do not necessarily expect the narrator to remember all details, while in written discourse we allow for the possibility of after-the-fact adjustments. This is the narrative situation presented in Aidan Chambers' *Dance on my Grave* (1982), where the character/narrator Hal eventually reveals that he is writing down his story and how much trouble he is having in this endeavor. He also constantly corrects himself in his reminiscences and even "replays" certain scenes, adding details and sometimes an emotional touch. This works well with the premise of a written discourse.

Cohn suggests as possible subdivisions of autonomous monologue autobiographical monologues, memory narratives, and memory monologues. I find the distinction too subtle to be of any practical interest, but it is clearly based on the narrative situation. Reciting one's own autobiography to oneself is not psychologically plausible, unless it is a public confession, or self-justification, that has a communicative purpose (181). This is probably why we are inclined either to search for a covert narratee in *The Catcher in the Rye* or to view the narrative as a written account.

The initial establishment of the narrative situation, whether spoken or written, is often forgotten by the reader as it is dropped later in the story. An excellent example of this is Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), which is the protagonist's written account of his experience, performed while he is in jail waiting for trial. If we remember this and realize that the narrator is telling the story in self-defense and most likely in a state of mental disturbance, the

events Humbert Humbert describes appear to be products of sick imagination rather than a true account of facts.⁸ In juvenile literature, it seems that authors feel obliged to remind readers of the narrative situation. In *Dance on My Grave*, Hal's narration is written in self-justification while he is awaiting a court trial, much like Humbert Humbert's. However, unlike *Lolita*, we are constantly reminded of the purpose of Hal's writing. Moreover, his story has, as it ultimately turns out, a very concrete narratee, a social worker investigating his case.

Hal's story, the way he tells it, is an account of external events. We have to read between the lines and make inferences from the short glimpses of his feelings to understand what is going on in his mind. Yet, being an account of his memories, the whole narrative is a direct reflection of his inner life. In one of the few explicitly self-reflexive passages, Hal is telling about his first visit to the grave of his friend Barry.

I don't much like telling what happened next.

I started crying...

The thing is, I didn't know what I was weeping about. That probably sounds crackers. (But I am—I told you so at the start of this.) What I mean is, I wasn't crying only because of sadness. I was also crying because of anger. In fact, I felt angry more than I felt sad. I didn't know why—not then. (I do now, I think. But if I am to keep everything in its right order so that you'll understand properly, I can't tell you why here; it comes later.) (Chambers, *Dance* 234)

The last two sentences, within parentheses, are a direct invocation of the narratee, as well as a prolepsis, a leap forward in time. Here, the narrating self is detached from the experiencing self, demonstrating for the reader the possibility of holding simultaneously two sets of awareness.

Diary and Epistolary Novel

Two further forms of simultaneous self-narration are the diary and the epistolary novel. Unlike autonomous monologue, the diary is fragmented and discontinuous. Unlike autonomous monologue, diary is focused on the present. It creates the illusion of immediacy since it presupposes that at each given moment in the narrative, the narrator does not know what is going to happen next; neither can he judge the events and his own response to them from a distance, as can Hal in the example above. ("I didn't know... then.") The pretended immediacy allows improbable narrative situations such as a character keeping a diary during his last minutes of life, especially while being executed, or writing the last entries in a sinking ship.

The fictitious diary is a popular narrative structure in children's fiction.⁹ One would assume that a diary is the closest way of conveying a character's consciousness. However, fictitious diaries can be radically different in their degree of mental representation. Some diary novels merely attempt to render external events, imitating a child's limited vocabulary and unsophisticated world-view, and inserting the phrase "Nothing very much happened today" (Ure 162) every now and then for the sake of authenticity. The success of the attempt is once again encumbered by the cognitive difference between the adult author and the child narrator (Cadden 148-54). Not infrequently, the adult author's efforts to use grammatically corrupt and syntactically primitive sentences, naive judgments, and immature opinions produce an unnatural effect. It may seem that the adult author makes fun of the young character's ineptitude.

Further, if the diary writer mostly describes external events, the effect is the same as with a witness-narrator: we do not learn much about the narrator's internal life. A widely known contemporary example in the English-language is Sue Townsend's *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 3/4* and its sequels. Here is a typical example from *Adrian Mole*:

My father got the dog drunk on cherry brandy at the party last night. If the RSPCA hear about it he could get done. Eight days have gone by since Christmas Day but my mother still hasn't worn the green lurex apron I bought her for Christmas! She will get bathcubes next year.

Just my luck, I've got a spot on my chin for the first day of the New Year! (1)

Of course, this passage does contain some comments from the diary writer that reveal his character and disposition. However, the diary is primarily a rendering of external events.

Similarly, in Jean Ure's *Skinny Melon and Me* (1996), the bulk of the narrative is a description of what is going on around the protagonist rather than inside her:

Monday

Dad called last night. He said his new job is keeping him really busy. He's having to work on weekends, and that's why he can't come up to London to see me. But maybe I can go and stay with him in October. He's going to speak to Mum. She'd better say yes! It's the least she can do now that she's gone and broken her promise to let me have a dog. (34)

It may seem that the narration style in both novels is more or less identical. However, looking at the two texts as a

whole, we may notice that while Adrian Mole never goes beyond the superficial rendition of events or at best his feelings toward these events, Ure's novel contains an interesting subtext, revealing a considerable change in the diary writer's attitude in the first place toward her mother's boyfriend. The eleven-year-old Cherry never expresses her true emotions, yet they emerge through the surface of her narration in a palimpsestic manner: small bits and glimpses that the reader has to assemble and interpret. If the external plot revolves around lousy school lunches and the pre-pubescent girl's concern about non-existent breasts, the hidden story is about her complicated relationship with her biological father and her stepfather—a relationship she is not prepared to verbalize. Thus, even a seemingly external narration in a diary novel can reflect consciousness by means of the choices of what is narrated and what is omitted.

The difference between fictitious diary and epistolary novel is that the latter is supposed to have an addressee. Presumably, a letter-writer is less likely to reveal his innermost thoughts to an external correspondent; however, since both situations are fictional, the degree of candor depends wholly on the author's intentions and skills. Otherwise, the difference is marginal: in both cases we see either external events described through a young person's eyes or a deeper self-reflection. In fact, part of the letters in Beverly Cleary's *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (1983) are supposedly not mailed but are instead written as a diary.

The classic epistolary novel for young readers, *Daddy-Long-Legs* (1912) by Jean Webster, is noteworthy for its suspense plot. It invites feminist re-vision, as a depiction of a young woman's total submission to a man (Trites 61-65). In terms of internal representation, however, the novel is of little interest. The narrator, Jerusha Abbott, describes an external flow of events during her four years in college, with little self-reflection, all the more remarkable since she aspires to be a writer. The change in style or mentality, which would mark a transition from a poor orphan to a well-educated young woman, is marginal.

Dear Mr. Henshaw may appear to be the same type of rendering of external events. On closer examination, we see that the letter writer, Leigh Botts, changes profoundly as time goes by. His first fan letter to his favorite author goes as follows:

May 12

Dear Mr. Henshaw,

My teacher read your book about the dog to our class. It was funny. We licked it.

Your freind,

Leigh Botts (boy) (1)

As the novel progresses, Leigh develops better writing skills (spelling mistakes in the beginning supposedly add to authenticity) and style. He becomes a more mature personality, acquires a good deal of imagination, and gradually becomes more self-reflexive, stimulated by the sarcastic replies of his correspondent (to which the reader never has access). Here is one of the final passages of the book:

I thought of Dad hauling a forty-foot refrigerated trailer full of broccoli over the Sierra and the Rockies and across the plains and all those places in my book of road maps until he got to Ohio. Personally I would be happy to see all the broccoli in California trucked to Ohio because it's not my favorite vegetable, but I didn't like to think of Dad alone on that long haul driving all day and most of the night, except when he snatched a few hours' sleep in his bunk, and thinking of Mom. (133)

The epistolary form is here used for extremely subtle characterization, where character development is never stated explicitly, since the character is too young to judge himself. We can further read the novel as a *Künstlerroman* about a young person's aspirations to become a writer, which are much more manifest than in *Daddy-Long-Legs*. What we see from the examples discussed in the previous two sections is the increasing sophistication and ambiguity in the more recent novels, which may be ascribed to the general shift in juvenile literature toward complexity. I have elsewhere argued that this development, which eradicates the basic aesthetic difference between children's and adult literature, is not necessarily constructive (Nikolajeva, "Exit" 221-36). Yet we can also make a case that the ambiguity of autonomous monologue, diary, and epistolary novel in their contemporary forms involve readers in the awareness of consciousness as it is constructed, thus making the author-reader communication truly dialogic (McCallum 214-28).

Narrated monologue

Narrated monologue implies a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse.¹⁰ Narrated monologue is close to quoted monologue and can usually be converted into it by changing deictics and tense. Since these are connected with the character and not the narrator, narrated monologue originates and so is figural rather than authorial. However, the conversion does not always work, since narrated monologue is more complicated and ambiguous. This ambiguity, when we can never be quite certain whether the statements we read come from the narrator or from the character, allows irony and satire.

Let us start with a simple case of narrated monologue:

What was a Heffalump like?
Was it fierce?
Did it come when you whistled? And how did it come?
Was it Fond of Pigs at all? If it was Fond of Pigs, did it make any difference *what sort of Pig?*
Supposing it was Fierce with Pigs, would it make any difference *if the Pig had a grandfather called TRESPASSERS WILLIAM?* ...
Of course Pooh would be with him, and it was much more Friendly with two. But suppose Heffalumps were Very Fierce with Pigs and Bears? Wouldn't it be better to pretend that he had a headache...? (Milne 60-61, emphasis in the original)

The whole passage is figural discourse that emanates directly from a character. It can be easily converted into direct discourse by changing tense and deictics. (I use italics to emphasize these):

What is a Heffalump like? [Piglet thought].
Is it fierce?
Does it come when you whistle? And how does it come?
Of course Pooh *will* be with me.

Interestingly enough, this is the only case of narrated monologue in the two *Pooh* books. Most of the characters' thoughts are conveyed in quoted monologue, usually with the tag "he said to himself."

Let us now consider the following passage, in which I use boldface to emphasize discourse in which the source is indeterminate:

So Mary Poppins put on her white gloves and tucked her umbrella under her arm—**not because it was raining, but because it had such a beautiful handle that she couldn't possibly leave it a home. How could you leave your umbrella behind if it had a parrot's head for a handle? Besides, Mary Poppins was very vain and liked to look her best. Indeed, she was quite sure that she never looked anything else.** (Travers 22)

The first part of the first sentence, up to the dash, is the narrator's discourse. The second part, however, may be Mary Poppins' opinion. To check whether the phrase is indeed narrated monologue, we can transform it into quoted monologue, changing tense and deictics: <"It has

such a beautiful handle that I can't possibly leave it at home">. The narrated monologue of the second sentence is either Mary Poppins or the Jane-and-Michael entity:

- 1) <"How can I leave my umbrella behind if it has a parrot's head for a handle?" Mary Poppins thought.>
- 2) <"How can she leave her umbrella behind if it has a parrot's head for a handle?" Jane and Michael thought.>

The third sentence is obviously the authoritative narrator's comment (the word "vain" is hardly part of the children's vocabulary; and Mary Poppins would not describe herself as vain), unless we choose to interpret them as Mrs. Banks' thoughts expressed in narrated monologue. It could be transformed into quoted monologue as: <"Mary Poppins is very vain and likes to look her best," Mrs. Banks thought.> The fourth sentence can express the narrator's, the children's, Mrs. Banks', or Mary Poppins' evaluation, transformed as:

- 1) <"I know that she was quite sure that she never looked anything else."> (neutral statement)
- 2) <"She is quite sure that she never looks anything else," the children thought.> (admiration)
- 3) <"She is quite sure that she never looks anything else," Mrs. Banks thought.> (disapproval)
- 4) <"I am quite sure that I never look anything else," Mary thought.> (conceit)



Cover detail from *Mary Poppins* by P. L. Travers, Harcourt, 1981

Depending on which point of view we assume in each sentence, we get a slightly different portrait of the character Mary Poppins as well of the other characters. However, in any case, the individual sentences in narrated monologue are included in the otherwise authorial narration, which makes us perceive the whole passage as coming from the narrator rather than any of the characters. And the discourse allows for an ambiguous narrative consciousness.

In *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), we find quite a few examples of narrated monologue. Here is one, appearing in the depiction of Anne's first morning in Avonlea:

Anne dropped on her knees and gazed out into the June morning, her eyes glistening with delight. **Oh, wasn't it beautiful? Wasn't it a lovely place? Suppose she wasn't really going to stay here! She would imagine she was. There was scope for imagination here.** (31)

Except for the first introductory sentence, the whole passage is Anne's narrated monologue, which can be transformed into: <"Oh, isn't it beautiful?" [she thought]. "Isn't it a lovely place? Suppose I am not really going to stay here! I will imagine I am. There is scope for imagination here."> There are several reasons for assuming that we are dealing with the character's discourse. The interjection "Oh" and the exclamation mark reflect Anne's exalted style, with which we are already familiar from the previous chapters. "There is scope for imagination" is her recurrent idiom, which has already been used often enough for us to associate it with the character's way of expression. Finally, there is no indication of the authorial discourse in this passage. In fact, the chapter goes on for another three lengthy paragraphs, describing the vista from the window, clearly seen through Anne's eyes (in a literal point of view). Then the figural discourse stops quite abruptly: "Anne's beauty-loving eyes lingered on it all, taking everything greedily in; she had looked on so many unlovely places in her life, poor child; but this was as lovely as anything she had ever dreamed" (32). Here, the authoritative narrator takes over, evaluating the character's "beauty-loving eyes" (hardly a self-evaluation from an eleven-year-old), and especially in the condescending "poor child." Yet, the very last phrase can be a return to figural discourse: <"This is as lovely as anything I have ever dreamed," she thought.> *Anne of Green Gables*, on the whole, uses figural representation, although—perhaps as a tribute to the tradition of didactic children's literature—every now and then it lapses into authorial discourse.

These examples show what a close reading of narrated monologue can reveal. On the one hand, we may discern elements of figural discourse in what is normally described as third-person omniscient perspective. On the

other hand, having discovered such elements, we may believe that authorial control is thus eliminated or at least subdued, while it is in fact merely hiding behind the characters. Covert didacticism and covert ideology can more easily be practiced through narrated monologue.

Psychonarration

Psychonarration is the most indirect technique, the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness. This definition may sound like the conventional limited omniscient perspective, but the point is that psychonarration, the way Cohn describes it, combines omniscience ("the narrator knows more than the character"), external focalization ("the narrator knows less than the character"), and fixed internal focalization ("the narrator knows as much as the character") in a mixture in which the techniques are inseparable and therefore highly ambiguous. It also attempts to convey the unconscious, the vague, the unuttered feelings, by finding adequate linguistic expressions for them. Psychonarration is Cohn's original term, and it lacks correspondence in established narratology. It is with this term, however, that I find Cohn's conceptualization of narrative techniques especially valuable.

In children's literature, since the third-person narrator is by implication an adult, while the character is a child, psychonarration is unavoidably affected by the adult narrator's experience and very often makes use of a far more advanced language than the character would logically master. This has assets as well as problems. We can distinguish between two types of psychonarration: the dissonant and the consonant. In dissonant psychonarration, the narrator is detached from the psyche he describes; he may make comments, use abstract, analytical vocabulary, which is hardly used by characters in their thoughts, and so on. In consonant psychonarration, the narrator's mind fuses with the character's, and the narrator's knowledge coincides with the character's self-knowledge. In children's literature, it would seem that psychonarration is by definition dissonant, because of the cognitive disparity between narrator and character, as well as because of the pedagogical and ethical dimensions of the literature, since authors often try to make use of the narrators in order to pass judgment on characters. Conspicuous, didactic, authoritarian narrators of traditional children's fiction seldom have the ability or interest to penetrate the secrets of a child's mind. However, in contemporary children's novels, there are many successful examples of consonant psychonarration. Cohn mentions as an important option of psychonarration the rendering of subverbal states, taking her examples, as do many other scholars, from Henry James' *What Maisie Knew* (46). In this novel, we share both Maisie's literal and transferred point of view, and since she is unable to judge the events around her, her responses remain unuttered. In children's literature, this situation is a rule rather

than an exception. Yet as adult readers, we can liberate ourselves from the imposed point of view of the text and understand that things are not really as Maisie sees them. Young readers, on the other hand, are mostly just as naïve and inexperienced as child protagonists. The interaction of the various points of view becomes extremely intricate. The child characters' inability to verbalize their emotional responses to the events around them has always been the challenge of psychological children fiction.

Let us consider the following passage from Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911):

She was not an affectionate child and had never cared much for anyone. The noises and hurrying about and wailing over the cholera had frightened her, and she had been angry **because no one seemed to remember that she was alive.** Everyone was too panic-stricken to think of a little girl no one was fond of. **When people had the cholera it seemed that they remembered nothing but themselves. But if everyone had got well again, surely some one would remember and come to look for her.** (Burnett 11)

The first sentence is clearly authorial narration: it is a very strong judgment on Mary and cannot be her vision of herself. The second sentence begins in the narrative mode; the words "frightened" and "angry" are part of the narrator's judgment. However, the last clause is a representation of Mary's feelings, which is stressed by the verb "seemed." Transformation into direct inner speech would give us: <"Nobody seems to remember I am alive," she thought.> The next sentence is narration again, for two reasons. The word "panic-stricken" is not likely to be part of a poorly-educated nine-year-old's vocabulary. "A little girl no one was fond of" is hardly an expression of Mary's thoughts. The verb "seemed" in the next sentence reestablishes representational mode. The word "people" reflects Mary's contemptuous attitude toward everybody around her. "Remembered nothing but themselves" is a young, selfish, self-centered child's indignation at the fact that people other than herself may think themselves important, which is here expressed, typically, as an accusation of others' selfishness. Finally, the last sentence is, by all standards, a clear case of narrated monologue. "Everyone" is a typical childish hyperbole, "surely" indicates Mary's subjective feelings, and the whole sentence is focused on herself. The analysis of this paragraph shows a fluctuation between narration (authorial) and representation (figural) that creates ambiguity and tension, since the readers are never wholly sure whose voice they hear.

This blending of the narrator's and the character's point of view is consistent throughout *The Secret Garden*. I

will provide a few more examples to show how complex psychonarration can appear:

Four good things had happened to her, in fact, since she came to Misselthwaite Manor. She had felt as if she had understood a robin and that he had understood her; she had run in the wind until her blood had grown warm; she had been healthily hungry for the first time in her life; and she had found out what it was to be sorry for some one. (49)

In this passage, the differentiation between the narrator's and the character's point of view is almost impossible. By this time, Mary may have become self-reflexive enough to make the observations about the change in her personality: <"Four good things have happened to me since I came to Misselthwaite Manor," she thought. "I have felt...> and so on. On the contrary, the following passage unmistakably comes from the didactic narrator: "Living, as it were, all by herself in a house with a hundred mysteriously closed rooms and having nothing whatever to do to amuse herself, had set her inactive brain to working and was actually awakening her imagination" (66-67). The judgment "her inactive brain" and the statement "awakening her imagination" are hardly Mary's self-evaluations. Generally, mental representation is not a prominent feature of *The Secret Garden*, in which external characterization is the foremost device. Whenever it is used, the authorial presence is highly tangible. Characteristically, beginning with Chapter 13, in which Mary meets Colin, the narrative employs considerably more direct speech than the previous chapters. Instead of rendering the changes in Mary through the didactic narrator, the author allows the reader to follow Mary's self-discovery through direct speech. However, there are constant lapses back into the authoritative narration, combined with narrated monologue: "Mary had not known that she herself had been spoiled, but she could see quite plainly that this mysterious boy had been. **He thought that the whole world belonged to him. How peculiar he was and how coolly he spoke of not living**" (123). The first sentence is the narrator's discourse; the following two employ narrated monologue, which we can easily test by transforming them into: <"He thinks that the whole world belongs to him. How peculiar he is and how coolly he speaks of not living," Mary thought.>

By contrast, many contemporary psychological novels for children employ consonant psychonarration as a single and consistent narrative device. The challenge of this form is the delicate balance between the young character's mental capacity and the adult narrator's vocabulary and life experience, enabling mental representation to become considerably more sophisticated than

quoted or narrated monologue would allow. Paterson is one of several writers who rely on consonant psychonarration in order to convey the young characters' disturbed state of mind, "subverbal states." Here is a passage from Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) that describes Jess' attempt to come to terms with Leslie's death:

It came into his mind that someone had told him that Leslie was dead. But he knew now that that had been part of the dreadful dream. Leslie could not die any more than he himself could die. But the words turned over uneasily in his mind like leaves stirred up by a cold wind. If he got up now and went down to the old Perkins place, Leslie would come to open it, P. T. jumping at her heels like a star around the moon. It was a beautiful night. Perhaps they could run over the hill and across the fields to the stream and swing themselves into Terabithia. (106)

To separate authorial and figural discourse here is virtually impossible. Formally, the passage is written in third person. Several sentences are written in narrated monologue (transformable into quoted monologue: <"Leslie cannot die any more than I can die," he thought>). By contrast, "like leaves stirred up by a cold wind" or "like a star around the moon" are similes, poetic language that Jess, a reluctant reader and a non-verbal boy, would not have as a part of his idiom. Yet the passage is a poignant rendering of the boy's thoughts and feelings. The narrator is articulating them for him because Jess lacks the language to do so himself, which does not mean that he lacks the emotions themselves. Needless to say, this technique is more advanced than quoted or narrated monologue and brings us closer to the character's mind than dissonant psychonarration.

Except for the direct speech, the whole of *Bridge to Terabithia* is written in psychonarration, merging authorial and figural discourse into a highly intricate narrative. Here is another example:

Now it occurred to him that perhaps Terabithia was like a castle where you came to be knighted. After you stayed for a while and grew strong you had to move on. For hadn't Leslie, even in Terabithia, tried to push back the walls of his mind and make him see beyond to the shining world—huge and terrible and beautiful and very fragile? (126)

Obviously, the language and the level of self-reflection are too advanced for Jess; however, the spirit of his feelings is adequately conveyed. The examples reflect the unstructured,

chaotic mode of a young person's thinking; they are "unspeakable sentences," to quote Ann Banfield's title.

Of all the modes of impersonal mental representation, consonant psychonarration is the most challenging for a children's author and the most demanding on the young reader. Because of its ambiguity, it is seldom, if ever, used in traditional children's literature, and it has so far only been used by a limited number of sophisticated children's writers, such as William Mayne, Alan Garner, Lois Lowry, Virginia Hamilton, and Patricia MacLachlan.

Retrospective Self-narration

The narrative situation of retrospective self-narration is similar to psychonarration, but it is by definition less omniscient and more self-reflexive. Like psychonarration, retrospective self-narration can either be empathic or detached, consonant or dissonant. Like consonant psychonarration, retrospective consonant self-narration using a child focalizer meets the dilemma of the child's lack of vocabulary, experience, and understanding (Cadden 146-54). It is naturally an extremely difficult narrative form. In the mainstream, one of the possible strategies for achieving the same effect is to use a developmentally disabled person. Most critics refer to Benjy from *The Sound and the Fury*, but *Forrest Gump* (1986) provides a more recent example: "I'm probly a lot brighter that folks think, cause what goes on in my mind is a sight different than folks see. For instance, I can *think* things pretty good, but when I got to try sayin or writin them, it kinda come out like jello or something" (Groom 1-2, emphasis in the original). Like a young child, Forrest naturally has thoughts and emotions, but he cannot articulate them properly. The challenge of this narration is to keep the balance between the authenticity of his style and the coherence necessary for the reader to understand what is going on. Like so many children's novels, *Forrest Gump* demands that the readers liberate themselves from the character's subjectivity.

In Paterson's *Jacob Have I Loved*, the first-person narrator is homodiegetic, identical with the character. However, although both the narrator and the character are called Louise, they are not exactly the same subject. There is a substantial gap between the actual time of the story and the time when the story is narrated. Louise's rendering of her adolescent years on the island is an analepsis (a flashback) that takes place while she, now an adult, is returning back to her childhood home. The narrator is extradiegetic, detached from the story she is telling. There is, in other words, a discrepancy between the naive perspective of a young person and the experience of an adult, quite similar to the most common situation of impersonal narration in children's fiction. Let us consider a passage from the middle of the novel in which Louise contemplates her jealousy toward her twin sister:

It is hard, even now, to describe my relationship to Caroline in those days. We slept in the same room, ate at the same table, sat for nine months out of each year in the same classroom, but none of these had made us close. How could they, when being conceived in the same womb had done nothing to bind us together? And yet, if we were not close, why did only Caroline have the power, with a single glance, to slice my flesh clear through to the bone? (73)

The first sentence is clearly the narrator's discourse, separating narration from the narrated events by deictics "now" and "those days." The rest of the passage is highly ambiguous in its voice. Is it the rendering of Louise's thoughts and feelings at the time of the events, or it is her more mature, distanced reflections long after the events? Is the thirteen-year-old Louise capable of expressing her emotions in the way the passage does, or is the adult Louise verbalizing these emotions for her exactly the same way that the covert narrator in *Bridge to Terabithia* verbalizes Jess' emotions? The narrator's discourse and the character's discourse are inseparable, yet the adult narrator definitely has control over narration.

Since a personal narrator is by definition subjective and unreliable, Louise the narrator tells us exactly as much as she chooses to. She may omit facts, she may pass wrong judgments, or her memory may fail. What the readers may see is a susceptible young girl practicing self-defense against jealousy that borders on hatred toward her pretty, talented, and admired twin Caroline. Louise the narrator tells us that Louise the character feels that she is treated unjustly. However, it is hardly possible for the reader to decide whether this is an objective fact (the narrator states that the character felt that way), a subjective memory (the narrator believes, many years later, that the character probably felt that way), or a deliberate lie: the narrator, in self-defense, wants us to believe that the character was maltreated; she has an "interest point of view," in Chatman's terminology (152).

Yet in many cases we can discern the cracks between the narrator's and the character's discourse. Louise's self-reflections go on as follows:

Hate. That was the forbidden word. I hated my sister. I, who belonged to a religion which taught that simply to be angry with another made one liable to the judgment of God and that to hate was the equivalent of murder.

I often dreamed that Caroline was dead.... I once dreamed that I had killed her with my own hands. (74-75)

The first paragraph of this passage continues the ambiguity of narration. Does Louise the narrator put a verbal label ("the forbidden word") on her true feeling toward her

sister? Is she saying, from her adult position, that she now realizes that what she felt toward her sister was hate, a feeling prohibited by her religion and therefore lacking a verbal expression? Or is she saying that already at the age of thirteen she felt guilty because she hated her sister? Both interpretations are possible. However, the next paragraph, describing Louise's dreams, or rather nightmares, of Caroline's death are undeniably the narrator's rendering of the character's experience at the time of the described events. This may support the reading of the previous paragraph as figural discourse. Louise's thoughts at the time of the events may have been something like: <"My religion teaches that hate is murder, and I have dreamed that I have killed Caroline. This means that I hate her."> Equally, the passage may be the adult Louise's painful memories of her old dreams, prompted by the reflection that "to hate was the equivalent of murder."

It is interesting that the first part of the paragraph presents the iterative memory: "I often dreamed.... Sometimes I would get word of her death.... Always there were two feelings in the dream" (74-75). The words "often," "sometimes," "would," and "always" are certain markers of the iterative frequency: this is a description of a dream that has haunted Louise many times. Iterative frequency is a good indication of the narrator's discourse since it is the narrator's



Cover detail from *Jacob Have I Loved*
by Katherine Peterson,
HarperCollins, 1980

function to organize recurrent events into one single description. Yet the most disturbing memory, that of the dream in which Louise kills her sister, is singulative: "I once dreamed." Thus, this passage also leaves a good deal of ambiguity in terms of perception. As readers we might see through Louise the character and assess her as a selfish, resentful, and rather immature adolescent. We might even decide that Louise the narrator is deliberately defending herself as a young girl in order to present her in a more favorable light. If we interpret the text that way, we liberate ourselves from the subjectivity imposed by the text.

It may seem that "retrospective consonant self-narration" in children's literature is a contradiction in terms, since the temporal gap between the described events and the narrating act prevents the necessary consolidation of the narrating self (the adult) and the experiencing self (the child), so that retrospection would preclude consonance. However, just as consonant psychonarration provides a way to breach the cognitive level between the narrator and the character, some successful attempts have been made to allow the narrator to re-enter his own mind in the past. Often such narratives involve a relatively short lapse of time between the events and the narrative act so that the narrator is still cognitively closer to the character than to the adult writer.

In *Walk Two Moons*, the narrator's memories alternate between the six-day long car journey with her grandparents (which is more or less chronological), and the family story of Phoebe Winterbottom, told by the narrator to her grandparents as they are traveling. This story is embedded in the first memory narrative and has overt narratees. For the narrator, thirteen-year-old Sal, telling her friend Phoebe's story works as therapy. As she confesses in the beginning of the novel, "beneath Phoebe's story was another one. It was about me and my own mother" (3). The memory of the first time after she has moved to Ohio with her father—what she refers to as the story of Phoebe and her lunatic—is repeatedly interrupted by the memories of the car travel, and the narrator also frequently leaps forward in her memories, in short prolepses, such as: "But this was later, during the whole thing with Phoebe's lunatic, that I realized this" (13). There are also a number of side memories going back beyond both primary stories, to the time when Sal's mother was alive, including the most traumatic reminiscence of the stillborn sibling. Presumably these memories are not part of the story she is telling her grandparents, although they are nested within it. There is no strict chronology in the memories; instead they are built wholly on associations, as memories usually are. For instance, the blackberry pie Sal eats at Phoebe's brings the memory of picking berries with her mother (much like the function of the madeleine cookie in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*). Sal is trying to tell a coherent story to her grandparents, and at the same time she is telling the story about her travel with her parents to another covert narratee. Thus, the memories acquire a

structure, the absence of which would make the novel totally unreadable. At the time of narration, Sal knows the outcome of the story, but pretends she does not, saying for instance, "we found out that she wasn't coming back" (49), meaning <"we found out that she was dead."> The first and only case when the word "dead" is used occurs well toward the end of the novel, after Sal has described visiting her mother's grave: "I still did not believe that my mother was actually dead. I still thought that there might have been a mistake. I don't know what I had hoped to find in Lewiston. Maybe I expected that I would see her walking through a field" (238). In this passage, Sal is rendering her thoughts during the journey with her grandparents, but already with the knowledge and acceptance of her mother's death. The present tense ("I don't know") signals the gap between the narrating self and the experiencing self; however, since the temporal interval between these two agencies is relatively short, the narrator and the character are practically inseparable. Sal is not contemplating her gained insights from the superciliousness of adulthood; both her mother's death and her journey with her grandparents, ending with her grandmother's death, are still very close and vivid. Compared to *Jacob Have I Loved*, the narration in *Walk Two Moons* eliminates the detachment between the narrator and the character, thereby allowing us a genuine view of the young protagonist's inner life. Unlike *Jacob Have I Loved*, there is no adult, mature narrative self providing distance to the experiencing self. The reader is left completely without guidance. Needless to say, such narration is a greater challenge for the adult author, since she must completely abandon her adult subjectivity, instead skillfully imitating the perception of her character.

Subjectivity and Authorial Control in Children's Fiction

The most profound consequence of the different modes of mental representation in children's fiction is the discrepancy between the (adult) narrator and the child character. Naturally, this can also be the case in the mainstream first-person novels depicting the protagonist's childhood, such as *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* (see Galbraith 123-41). Yet in an adult novel, readers are expected to be able to fill the gaps from their own experience. Young readers may need some guidance in how to interpret what they read. Such guidance is provided in literary texts through positioning the readers and manipulating their subjectivity, as McCallum describes throughout her work. Thus, to the intricate play of voices and points of view we must also add the readers', in a dynamic, dialogical manner described by Bakhtin. The various modes for reflecting consciousness allow readers a different degree of freedom in adopting the subject position.

As I have already observed, quoted monologue is the most primitive way of conveying characters' states of mind

because the narrator's and the character's discourse are kept clearly apart and the didactic narrator can always correct whatever erroneous views the young characters may express in their own thoughts. The readers may unproblematically share the child character's subjectivity and occasionally feel their own inadequacy when addressed by a didactic adult narrative voice. Alternatively, they may adopt the narrator's subjectivity and therefore feel no empathy with the inept character. Both positions seem highly undesirable to me.

Autonomous monologue, lacking an external narrator's authority, is considerably more ambiguous, and thus more complex. Young readers adopting the characters' subjectivity might fail to acknowledge their shortcomings, even if this has been the author's intention. In blended narration, including retrospective self-narration, readers may be confronted with the difficulty of adopting a subject position since at any given moment, the source of the internal discourse and the textual point of view is ambiguous. Whether intentionally or not, the author loses control over the reader's subjectivity, which gives the reader greater freedom of interpretation and puts higher demand on the reader's part in text decoding.

The different narrative modes for conveying consciousness are seldom employed consistently throughout a text, but are mixed and combined, the transition often being very vague, almost indiscernible, which naturally also contributes to complexity. Further, contemporary children's and juvenile fiction has also given us examples of experimental multiple techniques, for instance, a combination of personal and impersonal narration (*Breaktime* by Aidan Chambers), of self-narration and witness-narration (*Dance on My Grave*), of dialogue and self-narration (*I Am the Cheese* by Robert Cormier), and so on (see also McCallum 203-10). In these novels, authorial presence is almost eliminated, while the subjectivity is obscure and ambivalent. Such experiments aim at still more elaborate ways of expressing the complex inner world of a young protagonist. While internal representation in itself is the most complex characterization device, the development in children's fiction toward psychonarration has contributed to the overall complexity of contemporary novels for young readers.

While Jacqueline Rose maintains that the impossibility of children's fiction lies in the authors' narcissistic self-indulgence in childhood memories at the expense of the young readers (Rose 38), it would seem that the narrative dilemma presents a more insurmountable challenge. Adult authors intending to write a story for children can choose one of several possible strategies. They can write from their superior power position, using a didactic narrative agency and primarily authorial discourse. While this mode of writing used to be the only acceptable one, today we perceive it as unnatural, obsolete, and degrading toward children. Many children's writers today would perhaps say that they "lend out their voices" to children who cannot make their

own voices heard or their own stories told. This may seem a generous standpoint; yet some of the arguments used by feminist and postcolonial theories can be successfully applied to writing for children. For instance: "lending out a voice" to a silenced minority is unethical, because the author is in any case writing from a superior position and cannot adopt the minority's subjectivity. It is still more unethical, since lending a voice always means usurping the voice. Further, the activity can be viewed as self-indulging, practiced for self-justification (which is Jacqueline Rose's view). Not least, the stance is impossible, because the authors cannot use their own immediate experience in their writing. The counter-argument to this last stance insists that a talented author will know how to adopt another subjectivity.

The most radical advocates of feminist and postcolonial theories claim that the oppressed and silenced groups should write their own discourses. This may be plausible about female, Black, Jewish, Native American, or gay writers—but what about children? Can they write their own discourse in a way that adults would listen? Within childhood culture studies, examinations of children's own stories, oral and written, have become prominent. Shall we let children write their own literature? This may seem the extreme consequence of "childist criticism" proposed by Peter Hunt ("Childist" 42-59; "Question" 180-200).

It looks like children's authors in their narrative strategy are inevitably torn between two incompatible desires: to educate and socialize the child or to take the child's part. If the nineteenth-century authors tended to be overly didactic, perhaps contemporary authors have gone to the other extreme. When children's writers choose to let their narrators take a definite step back, readers are left without any guidance as to the characters' inner qualities, behavior, or ideology. Readers must themselves decide whether characters are morally acceptable, whether their openly expressed feelings are sincere, and whether they act on impulse or by conviction. To foist such decisions on the readers is demanding of them, for the adult author is addressing young readers on equal terms. We may applaud the effort, but doubt the results.

Sophisticated readers may be expected to have the capacity of liberating themselves from the subjectivity imposed by the text. Unsophisticated or naive readers—children and adults alike—often automatically adopt the subjectivity set by the text. Moreover, naive reading is encouraged by schoolteachers when they propose questions such as: "Who would you like to be in this story?" Thus, young readers are deliberately trained to adopt the characters' subjectivity. A naive reader is unable to recognize the irony created by the discrepancy of the authorial and the figural discourses and, at best, will be confused if they pose attitudes and opinions that are too far apart. From their inferior power position, young readers are more likely to trust an adult narrative voice, while they at the same time

are persuaded, by the age of the child characters, to share their subjectivity. While the split and fluctuating subjectivity has become a token and a conscious narrative strategy in postmodern literature, it is perhaps less desirable in literature geared toward readers whose sense of self is not quite established yet. On the other hand, it is exactly the books in which didactic narrative agency has taken a step back that we as critics of children's literature often value highest: *Bridge to Terabithia*, *Unclaimed Treasures*, *Walk Two Moons*. It would be contrary to my beliefs to call for a return to didactic writing for children. But still, another danger of naive reading includes the problem that readers may fail to recognize covert ideologies, whether they are expressed by the narrator or by the character. As we know, covert ideologies are more effective than explicit ones (Hollindale, "Ideology"; Stephens, *Language*; McCallum, *Ideologies*).

McCallum repeatedly states in her study that contemporary children's and adolescent novels tend to put implied readers into active subject positions. While as critics we undoubtedly welcome such narrative strategies, they do present a number of problems. If we want to train children to be critical readers, we must first ourselves learn to identify the ways children's writers, consciously or subconsciously, manipulate their texts and thus their readers in the construction of subjectivity. Narrative theory provides us with one essential tool for this task.

NOTES

1. For a quick orientation in Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia, see Section 2 in *The Bakhtin Reader* (88-122). A concise explication of Bakhtinian concepts as they apply to youth literature can be found in McCallum 9-17, 25-30.
2. See, for example, Hunt, *Criticism* 109-17; Stephens 47-83; McCallum, *Ideologies*, throughout; Cadden 146-54.
3. See Kuznets (188-98); see also Goodenough, *Infant Tongues*.
4. In Gérard Genette's terminology, an intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator is the protagonist in his own narrative (245); specifically, he is a particular case of a homodiegetic narrator, who is a character—although not necessarily the main character—in his own narrative. In this essay, I tend to use the generic masculine pronoun for the sake of convenience.
5. The binarity of extradiegetic and intradiegetic in Genette's system refers to the position of the narrator during the narrative act (distance): whether he is outside or inside the narrative (*Narrative Discourse* 228-31). The binarity of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic refers to the narrator's participation in the narrative, that is, whether the narrator is a character in his own narrative (*Narrative Discourse* 245-52). This results in four possible combinations. Genette's terminology has been applied to children's literature by Joanne M. Golden (*The Narrative Symbol*).
6. Deictics are words that shift meaning depending on the source of utterance, such as "I," "here," "how," or "tomorrow." In indirect speech, they will be changed into "s/he," "there," "then," and "the next day."
7. For the sake of consistency, autonomous monologue should be called "simultaneous self-narration," in analogy with retrospective self-narration discussed further below. It could also be described as unframed. I keep to Cohn's terminology to avoid confusion.
8. See Seymour Chatman's concept of the interest point of view in *Story and Discourse*, 151 and following.
9. Since I am only interested in fiction, I will not discuss the most famous example of a young person's authentic diary, Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, even though it poses some extremely interesting questions in connection with the writer's subsequent editing of her earlier entries with future publication in mind.
10. A more common term is free indirect discourse, but I will continue to keep to Cohn's terminology for the sake of consistency.

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