Masculinities in British and French Children's Fiction, 1940-1970.

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Abstract

While gender is an increasingly central topic in French and British children's literary scholarship, few studies examine images of masculinity in children's fiction during the period 1940-1970. This mid-century moment constitutes a transformative time in history and especially in terms of gender ideologies, which were complicated by changes brought about by World War Two, imperialism and decolonisation, and the expansion of women's liberation movements. Equally, post-war Europe abounded with protective measures in publishing to safeguard children from 'corruptive' influences, also witnessing a growth in youth cultures, and an idealistic belief in the reconciliatory potential of children's literature in an age of reconstruction. Like all literature, children's fiction engages with sociocultural norms in the environments in which it is produced, including norms of gender and national identity.

This thesis analyses images of masculinity in French and British children's fiction published between 1940-1970, asking how fiction intended for consumption by young people reflected ideals of masculinity and broader current ideologies of gender, but could also reflect and indeed constitute challenges to normative views. Drawing on developments in publishing, it considers how literary trends and influences contributed to these constructions of masculinity, and compares portrayals across Britain and France, evaluating their reflections of their individual cultural circumstances of creation. It intends to fill gaps in children's literary scholarship, which has not previously considered images of masculinity within this time frame and depth using a comparative model; this model highlights similarity and difference to access a deeper intercultural understanding of mid-century masculinity in Europe. The thesis focusses analysis through themes of series fiction, the family unit, war and imperialism.

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Preface

Before introducing the structure and content of the thesis, it is valuable first to evaluate the epistemological standpoint from which the research arises and the journey that led to its creation. No research is created within a vacuum, and while I strive to create an objective and high-quality contribution to knowledge, it is the accumulation of experiences within the PhD journey that has formed this work into the piece it is. As the feminist slogan proclaims, 'the personal is political,' and as feminist theory forms an important foundation for the gender analysis carried out in this thesis, it is important to acknowledge personal experience. Thus, the thesis represents a personal journey of discovery into children's literature research, with an important period in history used as a lens for this discovery.

When considering how to prepare for a PhD project concerning children's literature, I began with the broad knowledge that I wished to work within the scope of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and the field of gender. This came from my passion for children's texts of these centuries as they are ones that I grew up with and to which I had a particular attachment. During my undergraduate degree, I had enjoyed revisiting favourites through new lenses and attempting to understand their finer workings, particularly in terms of gender which had held my interest in other modules pertaining to feminist methodologies. They provided a new means of reading texts in which I had a significant personal investment. I began by rereading said childhood favourites and asking some questions that form fundamental considerations of children's literary study: what made these texts special for me as a child and how did I see them now, as an adult? The 1940s-1970s stood out to me as a time during which many important and fascinating children's texts were published in Britain and France, and from there I considered what a vital period of history these

decades represented. This thesis is a testimony to a journey that combined both personal discovery and academic study.

This thesis does not claim to be a comprehensive guide to masculinity in the children's literature of this period, and the corpus cannot include all important children's texts from 1940-1970. Rather, it is a focussed analysis of selected texts from this period that provide telling perspectives on the workings of gender and masculinity. These texts provide a glimpse into the connections between historical context and children's literature in these decades of the mid-twentieth century. The corpus was chosen for the texts' relevance to what my research suggested were four key elements in the representation of masculinity at this time, and for their wide circulation among the young reading public. I also aimed to focus on some books that are interesting in the context of gender, but have seldom been the focus of gender scholarship. Thus, some prominent works (for example Antoine Saint Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, 1943) have been referred to but not extensively studied here. Individual justifications for texts are included within each chapter, but overall, the arguments in the thesis are based on a representative sample of the sort of fiction that French and British children were reading in the selected decades.

Informed by interrogating my own childhood reading and how this helped to shape my view of gender, but based on substantial research into both texts and contexts, this thesis is intended to provide an insight into the intersection of historical events, literary developments and representations of masculinity in children's literature of the mid-century.

Introduction

In 1932, Paul Hazard's *Les livres, les enfants et les hommes* was published, a pioneering work of comparative children's literature in which Hazard speaks of what he believes to be the 'essence' of childhood and children's fiction. He dedicates a portion of his work to identifying the ways in which children's fiction reiterates national identity, and ultimately concludes that the genre is unifying in an international sense:

> children's books keep alive a sense of nationality; but they also keep alive a sense of humanity. They describe their native land lovingly, but they also describe faraway lands where unknown brothers live. They understand the essential quality of their own race; but each of them is a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world in search of new friendships. Every country gives and every country receives – innumerable are the exchanges – and so it comes about that in our first impressionable years the universal republic of childhood is born. (1983: 146)

In short, the books published for children unite to form a 'universal republic of childhood' that effortlessly effaces global frontiers. 'The world of children is tolerant,' Hazard argues, pointing to the admiration of international children's classics globally (1983: 147). Contemporary scholars such as Emer O'Sullivan have since identified that Hazard's work shows little regard for the actual processes – such as translation and adaptation – through which children's fiction crosses international borders (2005: 7). Hazard's imagining of children's literature ignores 'the real conditions of children's communication across borders' (8), basing itself on a highly romantic ideal. Contemporary criticism, by contrast, considers childhood to be

intersectional rather than monolithic, and to vary considerably depending on the surrounding context (Hintz and Tribunella, 2019: 42).

Nevertheless, Hazard's articulation of the transcendent properties of children's fiction held significant currency in an age where Europe was threatened by instability and conflict (O'Sullivan, 2005: 8). In the wake of World War Two the power of this sentiment grew, and a desire for peace and cooperation across nations became crystallised within this romanticised ideology of childhood and the genre of children's literature (1). Across the twentieth century, there was a recurring

> vision de petits humains communiant magiquement avec leurs homologues
>
> dans le monde entier, sans aucune considération des problèmes concomitants
>
> de langue, de culture, de religion ou de race. C'est là une projection
>
> sentimentale des aspirations des adultes à la paix et à l'entente universelles.
>
> La littérature d'enfance est l'un des principaux domaines dans lesquels
>
> l'utopie de l'internationalisme a prospéré. (O'Sullivan, 2006: paragraph 2)[1]

Hazard's idealism is not unusual for a genre so commonly perceived nostalgically by adults and, in Humphrey Carpenter's words, as a vision of the world 'as it should be' (1985: 1). It is viewed culturally as an escapist genre that readers come to seeking respite from the mundanity of real life, satisfying a craving for 'anything which measures up to [...] ideals of adventure and imagination' (1). Through this combination of qualities, the genre became co-opted for reconciliatory purposes, and the idea of the universal republic of childhood became conceptualised as 'a repository for the traumatic experiences of adults' (O'Sullivan, 2005: 7), considered an antidote to war (O'Sullivan, 2006: paragraph 6). Jella Lepman, a German

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[1] '[V]ision of little humans communing magically with their homologues the entire world over, without any consideration of the concomitant problems of language, culture, religion or race. This is a sentimental projection of adult aspirations of peace and universal understanding. Literature of childhood is one of the principal domains in which the utopia of internationalism has prospered.'

journalist, pleaded for donations to set up an international exhibition of children's literature in 1946 with the words: '[b]it by bit…let us set this upside down world right again by starting with the children. They will show the grown-ups the way to go' (Lepman, 2002: 33, cited in O'Sullivan, 2005: 8).

   With this idealism in mind, my aim in this thesis is to interrogate how children's literature of the post-war period presented images of masculinity during a time of conflict and change in ideologies of gender and childhood in Britain and France. As a comparative literary project, it deploys contextual and close textual analysis to compare images of masculinity in children's fiction published from 1940-1970 by French and British authors. Through this work, I aim to understand what ideas surrounded the concept of masculinity in some popular texts of this transformative period of history, during which children's literature was charged with an important symbolic role. The comparative element of the thesis aims to generate 'a deeper understanding of literary texts in a broader historical, social and literary context' (Nikolajeva, 2008: 30). How similar were these versions of what it meant to be a man, and how differently shaped by the specific conditions of each country? What versions of masculinity were French and British children absorbing in the mid-century decades as they read for pleasure? To measure the direct influence of one element of childhood entertainment is beyond the scope of this thesis, but my aim is to examine what ideals of masculinity were proposed and communicated in British and French children's fiction to the children reading them during the mid-century. How, in short, might this idealised genre 'show the grown-ups the way to go' as Hazard, Lepman and their successors hoped? Important to this enquiry too is the question of how changing approaches within publishing and the children's publishing industry influenced portrayals of masculinity.

Britain and France in Context

The choice of Britain and France as my focal nations is firstly driven by their shared historical contexts, in terms of being affected by many of the same conflicts, social shifts and events, and secondly their mutual influences and developments during this time in the publishing industry. While the thesis is literary in scope and cannot fully explore the minutiae of each major historical event that affected Britain and France during this period, exploring some of the events and overarching historical narratives can enlighten our analysis of this era's fictional representations of masculinity. These contexts will be expanded upon in the chapters to follow, but here constitute starting points for contemplating why this comparison is pertinent while offering a broad outline and comparison of experiences.

Perhaps the most significant event within this period, World War Two engendered a temporary but marked shift in social codes, the male lived experience, and conceptions of masculinity:

> men were allowed, and even encouraged, to kill; women took on previously inconceivable roles in the military and civilian sphere; even children were taken from their parents to be raised by others in areas far from home. Such acts shifted seemingly inviolable social codes. Inevitably, then, there were also shifts in idealised conceptions of malehood. (Robb and Pattinson, 2018: 3)

While Linsey Robb and Juliette Pattinson refer specifically to the British experience, many of these social shifts were similarly applicable to France. British and French men were drawn into the sphere of war and charged with protecting their nation, with the general mobilisation of French men aged 18-35 beginning on 1st September 1939 (Diamond, 2013: 19) and conscription in Britain beginning just two days later

(UK Parliament, n.d.). France, unlike Britain, remained occupied for four years and thus suffered from feelings of inadequacy and emasculation: 'French men […] had conspicuously failed to protect their country […] or their womenfolk' (Kelly, 1995: 119). Britain's self-image, meanwhile, revolved around a strong feeling of solitary national pride as articulated, for example, in Britain's convenient dismissal of France's role in Dunkirk (Tombs, 2013: 3); a common narrative was that of 'Britain as a nation of plucky underdogs who stood united together, laughing in the face of the much more powerful Nazi war machine' (Robb and Pattinson, 2018: 3).[2]

War also shifted social codes by bringing women into the public sphere in greater numbers, with British women dubbed 'heroines of the Home Front' who 'made the weapons with which the men fought Hitler' (Carruthers, 1990: 232). French women increasingly took over men's work within state defence industries such as arms factories (Diamond, 2013: 30) before Vichy policy reinforced the woman's role within the home (34). Both British and French women were key in the operation of resistance movements during the war, including within the Special Operations Executive. After the efforts of French women in resistance efforts during World War Two, French women's suffrage was granted by Charles de Gaulle in 1944.[3]

While Hazard's idealism saw childhood in the post-war period as a force of reconciliation, the lived experience of British and French youths during war was traumatic and alienating. In Britain especially, evacuation left a deep imprint on wartime memory (Zahra, 2011: 63) due to the urbanisation of the English working class, who had lost their familial links to the countryside over many generations (Lee

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[2] Chapter Three explores how the theme of war within children's fiction intertwines with complex images of masculinity, highlighting not only a pressure to be resilient, but equally a reality of trauma.
[3] The changes to women's experiences during war is expanded upon in Chapter Two, where discussions of the family unit implicate the role of women more directly.

Downs, 2006: 59). Upheaval to the countryside thus constituted 'une rupture brutale avec les modes de vie familiaux' (59).[4] War was traumatising for French youth too, who were variously displaced, separated from loved ones and witnesses to death (Fishman, 2002: 45); yet the close intertwining of French urban and rural culture into the twentieth century meant that evacuations 's'inscrivirent dans la longue tradition des migrations estivales des enfants des classes populaires vers les campagnes françaises' (Lee Downs, 2006: 59).[5] A lengthy separation from home was a key element of becoming a socialised French citizen (Zahra, 2011: 63).

A second important context uniting British and French experience was one that was intricately intertwined with the war. European imperialism reached its apex during the focal period, and Britain and France were the two 'greatest imperial powers of the age', with the conflicts and effects of war reaching to the far corners of the world (Yechury and Chabal, 2013: 83). British imperial forces contributed significantly to its war effort, with native peoples in Burma and India playing a deciding role in defeating Japan (Jackson, 2006: ix). French African colonies meanwhile were 'the Free French's greatest asset' for years, with French Equatorial Africa declaring loyalty to Charles de Gaulle in August 1940 (Millington, 2020: 83). Despite the perceived primitiveness of this territory, it constituted a key strategic 'launching pad for attacks' on Italian colonial territories (83).

Yet, as the century progressed, European imperial authority diminished and key conflicts were catalysts in the dismantling of empire. Many British and French territories had gained independence by the end of the focal timeframe in the 1960s and 1970s. The Indochina War of 1946-1954 ended with the liberation of many

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[4] '[A] brutal rupture with familial ways of life'.
[5] '[W]ere written into a long tradition of summer migrations of working-class children to the French countryside'.

Franco-Asian territories, and African territories soon followed with the Guerre d'Algérie (1954-1962) ending with Algerian independence. Britain suffered its own challenges that led to the liberation of many of its territories, with the partitioning of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947, the Suez Crisis of 1956 ending in Egyptian victory, and all of Britain's African territories becoming independent by 1966. By this point, empire was deeply embedded in the popular culture of both Britain and France, and particularly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries children's books were 'produced within a pattern of imperial culture' (Bradford, 2001: 196).[6]

With the end of war came a global baby boom, and a renewal of British and French industries which had been ravaged by the exigences of conflict. Despite the shifts that the war caused to the gendered order, the post-war period was largely marked by conservative and traditional ideas about family and gender. In France there was even a strong desire to 'buttress male authority', and the vote given to women in 1944 did not have its anticipated revolutionary impact (Fishman, 2017: xv). Similarly in Britain, the integral role of women in the war effort did not generally translate into lasting progress in the wider emancipation of women post-war. Even in 1943, at the peak of mobilisation, most women remained housewives and those who did take up work had undertaken labour before, with many women eager to give up their jobs as soon as possible (Pugh, 1990: 158-159), partly due to the hostility they experienced from employers and a determination to keep women from achieving equal pay (159). Attitudes of the time suggested that 'women continued to regard domesticity as the ideal,' with the married population rising sharply again in 1945 (159).

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[6] Chapter Four goes into greater depth about masculinity and imperialism.

Yet this was a time in which both nations witnessed a melding of tradition with progress. In France, this manifested as a rejection of the recent past, and thus of the traditional ideologies embodied by Vichy, while the rise of consumer society had transformative effects for women (Fishman, 2017: xv). Indeed, within the 'apparently conservative decade' of the 1950s, there was an undercurrent of change, with France's increasing prosperity unleashing:

> major intellectual and cultural forces that seeped out into broader culture, redefining how people thought about women, men, children, family relationships, and eventually about themselves […] In that decade, the habit of seeing others, children, spouses, and the self, in psychological terms spread. That along with the new legitimacy of individual autonomy and an acknowledgement of hidden drives and sexual desires all continued the deconstruction of older ideas about family. (xxiv)

In Britain, this was similarly a decade in which a return to tradition concealed wider transformations at work. Stephanie Spencer draws attention to the conflict of opportunities for girls of school leaving age; amidst improvement in educational opportunities after the *Education Act 1944* and a background of full employment, there was also a strong discourse of domesticity with girls 'marrying younger and having their first babies [earlier]' but equally 'having fewer babies' (2005: 2).

Beyond these broad social changes, the war caused severe disruption to the publishing industry, and '[m]ilitary actions, blockades, and diminished shipping capacity seriously curtailed British publishers' ability to supply their huge, long-held worldwide markets throughout the empire and commonwealth' (Hench, 2010: 3). Luftwaffe bombings of British publishing warehouses resulted in significant stock shortages, while the censorship programme by Joseph Goebbels had widespread

control over publishing throughout territories dominated by Germany, including France (3). Moreover, very few specialised children's publishers existed in Britain at the end of World War Two (Pearson, 2013: 3). A similar case was true for France, which struggled to sustain the needs of its international readers (Hench, 2010: 3). The French publishing industry had faced struggles throughout the Depression in the 1930s, and this was magnified by the beginning of the war (30). Judith Proud admits that tracking the status of the industry during the war itself is difficult due to the destruction of relevant records during war, yet she estimates that the effect was similar to that of the Great War: World War One had seen the production of children's books halving between 1912 and 1914 and then again into 1915 (1995: 13).

French publishers struggled to regain momentum in the post-war period due in part to economic difficulties and ongoing paper shortages (Boulaire, 2023: 391). In Britain, a government recycling scheme remained in place from the outbreak of war up until 1950 making it compulsory for the population to offer up their recyclable materials, with paper rationing remaining in place until 1949 (Finkelstein and McCleery, 2019: 168). After initial struggles, however, a post-war economic boom, dubbed *Les Trente Glorieuses* in France, engendered a blossoming of popular culture fuelled by technological advances and an emphasis on consumption driven by increases in average incomes in the West (Milestone and Meyer, 2012: 23). With the emergence of a more dedicated youth market, there came an increased demand for consumer goods and cultural products:

> les jeunes gens nés dans l'après-guerre parviennent à l'adolescence au moment où cette société, au fil des années 1960, est brassée par une culture de masse encore plus prégnante qu'auparavant et, en outre, davantage

réceptive à des ferments venus précisément de ces couches démographiques

les plus jeunes, l'ensemble s'opérant de surcroît dans un contexte de

dilatation mondiale. Une culture juvénile se développe alors, qui colore en

profondeur cette culture de masse, lui conférant de nouveaux traits et

modifiant non seulement sa tonalité mais aussi sa teneur (Sirinelli, 2002:

116).[7]

This swelling of youth culture in post-war France reached its climax in the Mai 1968

demonstrations and reflected wider changes in motion in Britain and France since the

end of the war. Tendencies arguably already present in some post-war children's

fiction, such as a focus on individualism, adventure stories that invited 'an

exploration of the self', adult narrators being replaced by younger perspectives, all

were intensified after 1968 (Brown, 2008: 266). Readers were increasingly

encouraged to challenge 'les normes […] d'une société jugée encore trop

hiérarchisée' (Ottevaere-van Praag, 1999: 167; cited in Brown, 2008: 266).[8] This had

a marked effect on gender portrayals in literature, with Danièle Henky noting that

post-1968 heroines of French children's literature, 'qui s'interrogent sur le destin

réservé à leur sexe dans un monde masculin', became increasingly common, with

girl characters seen in more unconventional roles over time as mentalities changed

(2010: 8).[9] While the events of Mai 1968 appear at the end of the time frame for this

thesis, it is important to recognise this event as a culmination of existing societal

forces and influences present in the post-war period of reconstruction.

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[7] '[T]he young people born in the post-war period came to adolescence at the moment where this society, through the course of the 1960s, was swept by a mass culture that was more significant than before and, moreover, more receptive to forces coming precisely from these youngest demographic strata, the whole also operating in a context of global expansion. A youth culture thus develops, which profoundly colours this mass culture, conferring on it new traits and modifying not only its tone but also its content.'

[8] '[T]he norms [...] of a society still judged to be too hierarchical'.

[9] '[W]ho wonder about the destiny reserved for their sex in a masculine world'.

After initial struggles, economic renewal brought about new printing technologies, which enabled higher quantity and yet cheaper print runs to be produced (Heywood, 2016a: 1). In Britain, the previous lack of specialist children's publishers (Pearson, 2013: 3) was remedied over the course of the following two decades (Reynolds, 1998: 22) as the children's publishing industry in Britain became professionalised in the 1950s (23). This, Kimberley Reynolds argues, can be understood as part of 'the post-war emphasis on the child as representative of the future and his or her resulting need for education and nurture' (26), a concept that harks back to the ideas of Paul Hazard. By the 1960s, the industry was booming, with children's fiction earning publishers as much as 70% of their total income in some cases (27). Children's books became increasingly commercial and merchandised, and in France 'Hachette's cheap and luridly coloured cardboard-covered books for children' flooded the French publishing scene (Heywood, 2016a: 2). French children's books sales doubled in the five-year period from 1957 to 1961, from 55 million francs to 111 million francs, meaning the industry represented 15% of total book sales (2).

Yet this period was equally one of censorship (Heywood, 2016b: paragraph 2). A pervasive belief that children were deeply influenced by their reading material, amplified by the role of children in France's post-war reconstruction – to again recall Hazard – brought about this concern for the protection of children (Heywood, 2016b: paragraph 2). The popularity of *bandes dessinées* in France was challenged by the growing appeal of American comics, and in 1949 a law was passed restricting US imports with the goal of protecting French youth from their apparently corruptive influence (paragraph 2-3). The law did not specifically apply to books, but it provided publishers with a framework (paragraph 3); namely that no immoral

behaviours should be portrayed in a positive light, whether it be stealing, lying, or worse (paragraph 6). A similar ban on horror comics occurred in Britain in 1955 (Lent, 2009: 74). The ban originated as a campaign against 'American-style' comics (Barker, 1984: 10) and forbade materials which portrayed violence that could theoretically 'corrupt' children (*Children's and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955*).

Thus, many changes and generation-defining events took place within this short period of three decades, and while many of the overarching events and transformations were present in both countries, their individual timelines and circumstances differ. Many of the ideologies and attitudes that came with and were shaped by these experiences are vital contexts for understanding how masculinity is represented in children's texts of this period, particularly in terms of how differing elements of these experiences may be suggested within texts.

Identity Formation in Children's Fiction

Acknowledging how societal values are passed down to children through literature is vital in understanding how ideologies from this historical moment permeate children's fiction. Literary critics acknowledge that '[t]o imagine a story [...] is to imagine the society in which it is told' (Dowling, 1984: 115, cited in Kutzer, 2000: xiii), and this is especially applicable to the plastic minds of children in their early years of life. Indeed it is 'arguably impossible for a children's book […] not to be educational or influential in some way' as the ideologies that permeate all books produced within their context inherently influence an inexperienced young mind (Hunt, 1994: 3). During childhood, individuals learn many vital skills for life, from typical milestones such as speech and walking, to skills about navigating society

itself (Stephens, 1992: 8), leaving children's writers 'in a position of singular responsibility in transmitting cultural values' (Hunt, 1994: 3). Every element of a text constitutes a potential teaching point. Equally, because children's fiction is a key place in which social values are inculcated, it can constitute an arena for contesting those values and instilling new ideals within young minds, a concept summarised by Raoul Dubois: '[c]omme toute action éducative, la littérature pour la jeunesse exerce deux fonctions: l'une de reproduction de la société où elle apparaît, l'autre de contestation de cette société' (1977; cited in Montardre, 1995: 29).[10]

To return to Hazard's initial statements, national identity is closely bound up in this implicit teaching process: '[w]e can disregard the literature for childhood only if we consider unimportant the way in which a national soul is formed and sustained' (1983: 111). Children's literature is a key arena in the formulation of a culture's identity because it furnishes young readers with images of the world they are entering and the tools to read that world (O'Sullivan, 2011: 6). The genre of children's fiction is shared among most groups of people within communities, adult and child, and it thus functions as a communication point for articulating the conditions of belonging to a given group and is a 'reservoir for the collective memory of a nation' (6). Texts published during the mid-twentieth century in Britain and France were created against a backdrop of intense conflict, with questions of 'self' and 'other' consistently at the forefront of the national psyche: wars 'provide the classic version of "them and us"' and bring into sharper relief considerations of similarity and difference (Meek, 2001: xv).

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[10] '[L]ike all educational action, children's literature has two functions: one of reproducing the society in which it appears, and the other of contesting this society.'

Likewise, a sense of belonging can also be articulated around the idea of gender, with depictions of gender holding significant power for those still forming their own gender identity (Hassel and Clasen, 2017: 2). Gender schema theory suggests that children develop their thinking about the differences between male and female during early childhood (Trepanier-Street and Romatowski, 1999: 155). A gender schema is 'an organized pattern of behavior which they use to sort information about the world with regard to gender', which includes considerations of 'how society classifies people and the roles they play by gender' (155). Consequently, gender stereotypes may work to limit children's choices, interests, and abilities (155).

Thus, children's literature is considered a cultural practice intended to socialise its target audience (Stephens, 1992: 8), and typically has a purpose of instilling a respect for certain cultural values 'which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience' (3). The intentionality that John Stephens describes does not always come from an adult writer's conscious duty to teach children right from wrong, but it is part and parcel of the genre's history, its conventions, and the general culture of childhood; it reaches centuries back before the formal recognition of the children's literature genre to instructive, often deeply pious, writing for young people in both Britain and France (Grenby, 2009b: 4; Brown, 2008: 10).

The socialising capacity of literature for children is attributed partially to 'the impossible relation between adult and child' within the children's literature genre: it 'sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between' (Rose, 1984: 1-2). Here, Jacqueline Rose articulates a foundational tenet of children's literary criticism: the literature produced for children is built upon adult

perceptions of childhood and not on the expressed desires of any 'real' child. The genre is therefore a construction of the child's perceived desires and embodies the adult's desire to 'secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp' (2). In essence, the subconscious function is to form the child according to the adult's image. As children do not produce literature intended for their consumption, manipulation is possible in the messages that are embedded within. In this vein, Maria Nikolajeva proposes the concept of 'aetonormativity', an 'adult normativity' which has long controlled how children's literature comes to be formed and structured (2010: 8).

Rose's ideas have evoked variously positive and negative responses since their appearance four decades ago, and while her book has undoubtedly 'rattl[ed] the cage of children's literature criticism', it remains one of the most quoted works in the field (Rudd and Pavlik, 2010: 224). How critics of children's literature choose to engage with the 'gauntlet' thrown down by Rose in the eighties that has since 'haunt[ed] children's literature criticism' (Rudd and Pavlik, 2010: 225) varies, though it is generally agreed that Rose contributed a 'usefully suspicious frame of mind' that 'opened up one's eyes to other possibilities' (Nodelman, 2010: 241). Rose's book drew attention to the essentialist vision behind the idea of childhood innocence and how it pertains to the threat seen by adults within 'the actually anarchic and antisocial nature of children's thinking and experience' (230); the 'children' within the genre of children's literature 'are not real human beings at all, but merely artificial constructs of writers' (Nodelman, 1985: 98). This concept is useful when considering how gendered and national ideologies come to be presented to the child and when returning to Hazard's idealistic view of children's fiction in the post-war period.

Literature Review

There is a healthy and growing body of children's literature research in both Anglophone and Francophone scholarship that pertains to gender, and the approaches are suitably broad for a topic that has so many potential sociopolitical, historical, and literary implications. Some studies aim simply to analyse the representations of gender within children's fiction in linguistic and narrative terms, some seek to understand reader response or the direct influence these representations might have, and some take a more statistical approach and wish simply to understand gender representation in numerical terms for the purposes of appealing for improvement. This list is not exhaustive, and indeed the study of gender in children's fiction is a topic taken up by scholars across multiple fields, including education, literary studies, sociology, and psychology. While this thesis is concerned with analysing literary representations rather than measuring actual impact, examining other critical approaches to gender in children's fiction is useful: it establishes existing trends that have been acknowledged within studies of gender in children's fiction and assists understanding of the potential consequences of the findings of this thesis. Perhaps the closest work to encroach on similar territory to this thesis is Elizabeth Poynter's *You Girls Stay Here* (2018), which features the most similar time frame and also includes an analysis of serial adventure works based on the equal gender representations of characters seen within (2018a: 3). This thesis differs, however, in its range of genres, its use of historical moments as anchor points, its specific focus on masculinity and its comparative model.

Christiane Connan-Pintado and Gilles Béhotéguy explain that in France, the question of gender representation in children's fiction has been a central concern for

'médiateurs du livre pour enfant', with awareness-raising events and information leaflets being common outside of the field of children's literary criticism (2014b: 7). A 2019 bibliography by the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF) entitled 'Filles et garçons: égalité? dans la littérature de jeunesse' for example recommends a list of relevant fictional titles for children around the subject of equality. University studies are, while rising consistently, less common, and often come from the disciplines of education, sociology and psychology rather than from literary specialists (Connan-Pintado and Béhotéguy, 2014b: 8). *Écriture feminine et littérature de jeunesse* (1995), edited by Jean Perrot and Véronique Hadengue, draws on femininist methodologies to understand the relationship between women's writing and children's literature, often implicating gender representation. The collection is close to thirty years old now, and the topic has more recently seen growing numbers of critical works utilising feminist methodology. At the time, however, Jean Perrot drew attention to the relative dearth of Francophone works applying feminist methodology to the study of children's fiction (1995b: 5). Much of the existing scholarship nowadays is focussed on the representations of female characters, with a view to critiquing the sexism that has kept girl characters in lesser roles. As explained by Connan-Pintado and Béhotéguy: 'quel que soit le cadre théorique adopté, c'est presque toujours la condition des filles qui retient l'attention des chercheurs' (2014b: 8).[11] A substantial amount of critical work on the representation of girls and femininity in children's fiction now exists in France, including for example Isabelle Smadja's *Le Temps des filles* (2015), on three contemporary novels, and Nelly Chabrol Gagne's *Filles d'albums: les représentations du féminin*

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[11] '[W]hatever theoretical framework is adopted, it is nearly always the condition of girls that retains the attention of researchers.'

dans l'album (2011) on picture books. French works on gender in children's literature commonly examine British and American texts as well as or instead of French texts. Smadja, for example, examines works by Lois Lowry and Philip Pullman rather than French children's authors.

Far less attention is shown to boys and masculinities, with few dedicated works about masculinity, boys, or boyhood in French children's fiction. *Le Roman d'aventures: 1870-1930* (2010) by Matthieu Letourneux incorporates discussions of masculinity as part of the study of the adventure novel and what it entails, but this is not its explicit focus. Sophie Heywood's 'Petits garçons modèles' (2007) is one example of a dedicated work that makes important contributions to the discussion of masculinity through analysis of the work of a hugely influential French children's author of the nineteenth century, the Comtesse de Ségur. Yet overall, works on masculinity and boyhood as they are represented in children's works of the mid-twentieth century are scarce. Whilst works discussing femininity and girlhood do discuss masculinity to some degree, it is interesting that, for the most part, masculinity is kept to the side-lines of discussion. This is especially surprising given that even in contemporary children's publishing, the majority of main characters are male, with female characters typically taking secondary roles (Montardre, 1995: 25):

> la plupart des personnages principaux sont de sexe masculin […L]orsqu'une petite fille lit un livre dont le héros est un garçon (ce qui est la majorité des cas), si elle souhaite s'identifier à un personnage féminin, elle a le choix entre le rôle de grand-mère, d'une mère, d'une sœur ou de celui d'une amie, si elle a une âme de garçon. Ceci revient à rappeler à la petite fille ce qui est dans la mémoire collective de tous les peuples depuis la nuit des temps: sa place est au second plan, toujours, partout. La preuve, même dans les livres, garants de

sérieux, modèles de culture, ce sont les garçons qui ont la première place.

(Montardre, 1995: 27)[12]

If boys and boyhood are as centralised as Montardre claims, further enquiry should be carried out into what messages about masculinity are being presented to this audience, and particularly so during this time frame. Scholars are evidently concerned with the immediate knowledge of what is being presented to children in this moment for the potential repercussions it could have. Yet a historically anchored project such as this one can aid understanding of the ideologies of that significant historical moment in greater depth, as well as the role that children's literature played in promoting them.

There are considerably more works on boys and masculinity within Anglophone studies, though few that specifically target the period of inquiry. Annette Wannamaker's study *Boys in Children's Literature and Popular Culture* (2008) is an example of a more contemporary study. Numerous studies focus on masculinity or boyhood within British fiction prior to the 1940s: *Books for Boys: Literacy, Nation and the First World War* (1999) edited by Simon J. James; *Masculinity in Children's Animal Stories, 1888-1928* (2011) by Wynn William Yarbrough; *Manliness and the Boys' Story Paper in Britain* (2004) by Kelly Boyd. Edited works such as *Ways of Being Male* (2002) with John Stephens again provide fascinating insights but pay relatively little attention to France and Britain in the 1940-1970 period.

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[12] '[M]ost of the main characters are of the male sex [...W]hen a little girl reads a book of which the hero is a boy (which is the majority of cases), if she wishes to identify with a female character, she has a choice between the role of grandmother, mother, sister, or that of a friend, if she has the spirit of a boy. This is tantamount to reminding the little girl of what is in the collective memory of all people since the dawn of time: her place is secondary, always, everywhere. Proof of this is that even in books, guarantors of seriousness, models of culture, it is the boys who are in first place.'

As I have suggested, gender-focussed studies of children's literature in the mid-twentieth century period, while a developing area of study, are lacking in the domains of masculinity and comparative approaches. On the Anglophone side of the equation, comparative studies of masculinity are scarce; Francophone studies may not always aim specifically for a comparative approach, but at the least they are far more likely to mention the contributions of English works, an act that is rarely reciprocated; this is evident in many of the previously cited works. This is no surprise, given that the import rate of foreign fiction is low in the United Kingdom as opposed to the export rate (Lathey, 2016: 37). Those studies that do explore gender in children's literature often prioritise the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century; the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century is commonly named the 'Golden Age' of children's literature, a time during which the genre expanded drastically (Gubar, 2009: vii) and many classic works of children's fiction were published, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the Comtesse de Ségur's *Les Malheurs de Sophie* (1858), and Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). The shortage of resources during the war and the unsteady state of the children's publishing scenes at the beginning of the chosen period might explain why this period lacks a positive reputation and has been relatively neglected in scholarship. The end of the chosen period, in the 1960s, is often described as constituting the beginning of a second Golden Age in children's publishing, 'characterised by a new sense of excitement and possibility' and brought about by 'a dramatic expansion in children's publishing following a period of quiescence' (Pearson, 2013: 3). While this is most commonly said in relation to British publishing, the same can be said for France, which similarly saw a huge expansion of its children's market during this period.

Yet these decades, which witness such transformative events in European history, in the children's publishing scene, and in the lives of children in Britain and France, deserve more critical attention. In this time of significant turmoil and gender-related changes, many enduring French and British children's classics were published. In comparison to those works of the previous century, and with consideration of their fascinating historical contexts, they are understudied.

Corpus and Definitions

The corpus I am working with in this thesis encompasses different genres and approaches to a variety of texts that feature boys or men in central roles, alone or as part of a group. Most of the authors are male as the thesis aims to understand how men experiencing significant changes to ideologies of masculinity within the focal time frame might have crystallised their feelings within the texts they produced. The breadth of genres is intended to generate an understanding of images of masculinity across a range of important children's fiction during this time. This selection cannot encompass every potential subgenre of children's fiction, and one omission is thus texts that were marketed to girls, which can equally have interesting things to say about masculinity, but as Montardre has argued, are less likely to capture the interest of male readers (1995: 27). As the focus here is texts centring on boys or groups including boys, the corpus inherently distances itself from texts marketed to a female readership, at the most including texts aesthetically and generically gender-neutral and thus marketed to both sexes. Boys may too have read books that were targeted at girls, but it is through reading books produced with boys in mind that we may better understand what was expected of future men during this period.

The thesis acknowledges the contribution of women writers to children's fiction published historically and during this period; indeed, the genre has been seen as one through which women have found agency, entry into and a voice within the public sphere.[13] While the corpus is male dominated, many important and relevant children's texts were produced by women during the focal period, for example Susan Cooper's adventure tale *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965), which has some pertinence for Chapter Four's interrogation of masculinity, adventure fiction and imperialist ideals. Meanwhile, Colette Vivier's wartime story *La Maison des quatre vents* (1965) is relevant to Chapter Three's discussion of masculinities during war, with its story of a young boy during the Occupation. Women-authored omissions from Chapter One include Cécile Aubry's two popular series for children featuring male protagonists, *Bélle et Sébastien* (1966-1977) and *Poly* (1964-1986).

The male bias of the corpus is not intended to erase the women's contributions but is a consequence of the thematic focus on texts created with boys in mind. Moreover, the supposed dominance of the field by women is somewhat overstated, even in contemporary publishing. One study of children's authors cited by Montardre in the 1990s revealed that male authors accounted for 60.8%, while female authors accounted for only 37.6% of the catalogue (1995: 26). The one female author who is included in this corpus, Enid Blyton, appears because of her unrivalled influence upon the children's publishing scene. Blyton's variety of published works and her popularity among children globally justifies her dominance in the corpus, for it provides an important insight into what was marketed to many

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[13] This is particularly evident in the genres of the *conte de fée* which was dominated by aristocratic women in the seventeenth century (Zipes, 2007: 16), and the domestic fiction of the nineteenth century. The latter offered French women an opportunity to 'capitalise on their own experience as mothers and grandmothers' (Brown, 2008: 40), and similarly in Britain, the genre came to be dominated by mothers (Grenby, 2009b: 12).

children – boys included – during this period. The influence of Blyton's work globally cannot be overstated, the author constituting, in Bob Dixon's words, 'less a writer than a whole industry' and 'a phenomenon in the world of children's literature' (1978: 56).

Dixon's *Catching Them Young 2* (1977) was published back in the seventies, but its proximity to the focal timeframe of the thesis enlightens our understanding of Blyton's popularity just after the period under study here. In the year of her death, 1968, she was the twelfth most translated author globally; the Noddy books had sold more than 11 million copies alone, while the *Famous Five* titles sold 3 million British copies (Dixon, 1978: 56). Nearly a decade later, there were around 250 Blyton titles 'more or less constantly in print' (Dixon, 1978: 56). This only scratches the surface of her immense legacy, and to this day she remains the most translated children's author of all time according to UNESCO (Index Translationum, n.d.). An exceedingly prolific author, Blyton 'wrote more series than most novelists write novels,' and in 1951 alone published 37 books, an average of one every ten days (Watson, 2000: 84). In total, she authored more than 700 children's books during her lifetime (Gillett, 2020: 1). Not only was the reach of her translated works significant, but the ripple effect that many of her works had on the landscape of children's literature is equally so. The style and generic forms popularised by Blyton's works inspired many children's writers across the globe, including some of the French authors whose works are also examined within this thesis, notably Paul Berna and Paul-Jacques Bonzon.

The dominance of Blyton's works within this thesis equally reflects the range and variety of genres across which she worked during the selected period; two of the selected novels are series fiction of slightly different subgenres: one adventure and

one detective. The final text I will consider is one of Blyton's standalone novels, *The Six Bad Boys*: a work whose realism and social commentary strike a significantly different tone to her usual works. Whilst, unavoidably, this is not a fully representative range, it represents some of the variety of Blyton's works.

This thesis also focusses on texts and authors that explicitly respond to, or are involved within, key cultural and historical contexts. For example, Maurice Druon was mobilised during World War Two (Jackson, 2009), while C.S. Lewis served in World War One and was deeply affected by his experiences (Demy, 2011-2012: 103). He was not conscripted due to his teaching at Oxford when the 1939 war arrived (Phillips, 2003: 4), but he took in evacuees and made a series of Christian radio broadcasts during the war that formed his book *Mere Christianity* (1952). Jean Giono formed his pacifist stance due to the horrors he experienced during the Great War, which were later described in *Le Grand Troupeau* (1931; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). Others, such as René Guillot, lived in colonial territories for some time during their life (Schmidt, 1976: 71), while part of Roald Dahl's military experience included him serving in the colonial army and commanding askari in the King's African Rifles (Sturrock, 2010: 116). As the contextual concerns are largely what anchor the images of masculinity that are analysed within this thesis, prioritising authors who have some direct connection to these events lends further significance to the images produced. The corpus is also selected by the age range of the targeted audience which is roughly eight to thirteen, or 'Middle Grade', that is the formative years between early childhood and the beginning of adolescence. As the thesis is concerned with the textual construction of images of masculinity, the texts selected are also writing-focussed, rather than the more visual sub-genres of picture books or *albums*.

In defining the corpus for her own work, Michèle Piquard speaks of 'intentionality' in children's literature (2004: 16) and this is a concept that I similarly draw on. Piquard explains her preference for the term 'édition *pour* le jeunesse' rather than '*de* jeunesse' on the grounds that this phrasing invokes intentionality and envisages the intended reader from a product and consumer perspective: '[l]a préposition "pour" […] inscrit la jeunesse […] comme enjeu d'un marché économique' (2004: 16).[14] During the economic boom of the post-war period, children's literature became more of an economic enterprise, with the child seen more fully as a potential consumer (Piquard, 2004: 16). Piquard uses this to explain her focus on texts specifically marketed for children and her exclusion of those adult texts that so happen to be read by children too. My own interest is primarily in what images of masculinity were intended to be viewed by children, rather than a broader and less defined corpus that might examine any and all images *actually* seen by children. The child, after all, could potentially read any text, however 'inappropriate' for them, and thus such a corpus is potentially infinite. The thesis includes some texts that are read by both children and adults, but those selected have overtly and frequently been marketed to children, and their authors have explicitly written for children. The key example of this is Jean Giono's *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres* (1953), which did not begin life as a children's story but is commonly marketed as one. Piquard explicitly says that her own work will not include any works 'appartenant à l'édition pour adultes que la jeunesse s'approprie' (2004: 16), and makes no reference in her selective bibliography to Giono.[15] In this case, my corpus is more lenient than that of Piquard, with the reasoning that Giono's text is both

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[14] 'The preposition "for" [...] inscribes childhood [...] as an issue of an economic market'.
[15] '[B]elonging to publishing for adults that youth have appropriated'.

significant in the history of children's literature and concerned with masculinity in a meaningful way that is relevant to the other French texts discussed, such as *Tistou les pouces verts* (1957).

Due to constraints on word count it has been impossible to analyse every text during this time frame that portrays masculinities in any significant way. *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage* (1971) by Michel Tournier could have been included for its relevance to the theme of colonial masculinity, but is just outside of my time frame and thus would be incorporated should the work be expanded. Chapter Four does, however, devote some time to discussing the Robinsonade form. Another key example is *Le Petit Prince* (1943) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, which could fit well into Chapter Three's discussion of Romanticism and the special child in the theme of war, but has been more extensively discussed elsewhere than the selected texts. My decision was to analyse similar texts while referencing Saint-Exupéry to bolster the discussion of the themes and offer further intertextual connections to form a more complete image of masculinities in French children's literature.

Defining Masculinities

How then is 'masculinity' to be defined? The specific ideals associated with masculinity are in constant flux, but the term itself is broadly used to describe the expectations of male conduct and behaviour, and the ways in which men present themselves and their bodies. Masculinity or manliness typically rest upon sociocultural perceptions of what a man is or should be like, and how he should act and look; maleness is seen as biological, relating to biological details, genetic maleness and male sexual organs. The expectations of masculinities are culturally specific, with the expected behaviours of men differing depending on surrounding

contexts. R.W. Connell usefully articulates the contextual relativity of masculinity and discusses plural 'masculinities' rather than 'masculinity' owing to the specific circumstances that dictate masculine conduct. Connell references a social hierarchy that determines the acceptability of different types of masculinity depending on sexuality, race and class among others, with straight, white, middle-class, Christian men being viewed as superior to, for example, the masculinities of black, gay, or working-class men (2005a: 76-81). Gender is best pictured as a spectrum rather than a binary division, and 'masculinity' itself can describe a number of different conducts and can present itself in a variety of different forms. It is with this in mind that the thesis intends to examine how images of masculinity might differ within the two focal nations, which have parallel and yet contrasting experiences of similar world events during the twentieth century.

The dominant attitudes towards gender throughout most of the twentieth century were not particularly welcoming, however, of this idea of a 'spectrum'. Up until around the mid-twentieth century, the main attitudes surrounding masculinity were predominantly biologically 'essentialist' and 'deterministic', meaning gendered behaviour was seen as directly linked to and explained by biological differences and phenomena in men and women. Toril Moi summarises determinism as 'biological facts justify[ing] social norms' (1999: 19) in which there is 'no distinction between male (sex) and masculine (gender) or between female and feminine. Whatever a woman does is […] an expression of the ovum in her' (1999: 20). Biological differences affecting male and female behaviour could include a consideration of the differing hormones (testosterone and oestrogen), and how these might alter behaviour and change bodily composition to perhaps 'naturally' favour certain types of labour. Women's reproductive centrality, in growing and nurturing the child,

means they are seen as '"natural" carers', whilst the increased muscularity and prevalence of testosterone in men makes them '"naturally" aggressive and competitive' and assigns them roles as protectors and hunters (Bradley, 2008: 17), leaving women in more typically domestic roles. Biologically essentialist ideas hold men up as the pinnacle of civility, comprehensibility, strength, power, and intelligence in relation to women, and readily stigmatise behaviours that are divergent from specific ideals. These ideas have a certain number of other implications, including an androcentric worldview perpetuated by society, often articulated with the terms 'phallocentrism' or 'phallogocentrism'. The term phallocentrism originates largely in debates surrounding Sigmund Freud's work. Freud's influential work on child psychology assumes that the male is the norm and even the superior sex. Meanwhile, the female is 'negatively defined in terms of a lack' (Bradley, 2008: 67). More detail is given about the relationship between masculinity and the selected topics within each chapter to provide a more nuanced image better suited to the discussion.

Structure

The thesis explores masculinity in French and British children's texts from 1940-1970 from four perspectives. Chapter One examines images of masculinity against the backdrop of the huge popularity of series fiction, by examining specific literary archetypes and structures and asking how they support and challenge normative conceptions of masculinity that centre boys as heroes and leaders. Chapter Two moves on to the family unit, and the transformations it underwent during the post-war period, acknowledging the roots of the nuclear family in patriarchy to understand how family dynamics instil specific behaviours and conceptions of

masculinity in young boys. Chapter Three is based on the recent context of World War Two, asking how children's fiction uses the theme of war and in so doing interrogates the relationship between masculinity and conflict. It explores the limits of martial masculinities in light of the trauma, injury and destruction caused by war as well as pacifist solutions to conflict resolution. Chapter Four discusses masculinity in relation to imperialism against the backdrop of imperialist culture and decolonisation. The chapter draws attention to the power dynamics between white and native men, asking how masculinities differ based on conceptions of race, othering and difference. In each chapter, close readings will highlight language use, narrative techniques, structure, thematic elements, character development and plot. Likewise, each chapter will identify differences between British and French experiences and explore how these differences manifest within the texts themselves.

Chapter One

Character Archetypes, Series Fiction and Masculinities

The aim of this chapter is to understand how the children's detective series of the mid-century encode masculinities. These were popularised in Britain and France following the increasing commercialisation of children's publishing, the success of other serial forms such as publisher collections and comic books, and of influential authors such as Enid Blyton. Many of these series utilised a specific formula: a group of children, collectively regarded as central characters, who are independent from their parents, solve a mystery with minimal adult aid or intervention. This chapter takes into consideration how this formula and its focalisation through a group of friends, can influence images of masculinity within the texts by creating gender dynamics that can shift standard masculine hero and feminine sidekick archetypes. It sees these series texts as a key site of struggle within gender roles and considers this in the context of publishing trends of the moment. It equally considers how girls' roles within these texts might be influenced by the general feminist struggles ongoing during the three decades of interest and thus how their portrayals may increasingly incorporate tasks and traits typically seen as heroic and masculine.

As explored in the Introduction to this thesis, the mid-twentieth century constituted a time of significant change and upheaval in the way that childhood in Britain and France was envisaged and experienced. Concerns of children's welfare were brought into sharp relief by the devastation of the war, while the post-war years engendered a growth in youth cultures that incited scrutiny towards the content of children's media. This was further crystallised within idealistic views towards children's literature and childhood such as those explored by Hazard and Lepman. These views co-opted children's fiction as a vessel for the promotion of international

peace and understanding. The Second World War was the first experience of its kind for the children growing up in the late 1930s to early 1940s, who were thus born after the Great War and had no memory of it. It temporarily but drastically changed the experience of childhood for these young people in Britain and France; they were faced with traumas they had for the most part not experienced previously, uprooted from their families and sent away to safety through evacuation procedures. These often constituted a significant and difficult rupture to typical experiences particularly for British children. The nuanced differences of evacuation experiences explored in the Introduction to this thesis will be considered when evaluating potential differences in the freedoms given to children across British and French texts. Baby booms across Europe in the post-war period brought even sharper attention to concerns of children's rights and youth culture industries, while a protective sentiment surrounded children, childhood and children's literature. This was articulated in the optimistic writings of Paul Hazard and crystallised within protective measures in juvenile publishing such as the 1949 and 1955 comic book laws in both France and Britain, intended to shield young people from 'corruptive' influences.

With this renewed interest in youth culture and a rise in consumer culture came the growing popularity of series fiction. An established series can be especially lucrative; series held a particular appeal for publishers in the 1940s and 1950s due to the relative ease with which they could sustain reader loyalty (Watson, 2000: 74). Indeed, a well-established series 'markets and advertises itself' to those who are introduced to it (74), making it not only a safe choice for sustaining reader interest, but equally for publisher profit margins. Once a child reads the first novel in a series, they are automatically introduced to every further instalment in the story (74), and

this can even be advertised to the child through the frontmatter of the first instalment where a page might list other novels within the series, paratextual information suggesting that the book is part of a series, recurring cover art and other related information.

For children still becoming familiar with reading, moreover, series fiction can make reading more welcoming, increasing the likelihood that more books will be purchased. Victor Watson explains this particularly well in an account of a Year Six child's reasoning for preferring series fiction: 'when you begin a new novel […] it is like going into a room full of strangers, but reading the latest book in a series which you already know is *like going into a room full of friends*' (6; emphasis in text). Indeed, there is 'chanciness' in reading a standalone novel, but reading a series is 'always conscious and always deliberate. You cannot read a series of twelve novels by chance' (1), and part of this choice can come with the warm feeling of re-entering a world with which one is already acquainted; there is less at stake and more opportunity to simply enjoy reading. The relative financial safety provided by series fiction is an important consideration during a time of post-war rebuilding after the struggles experienced by publishers during wartime resource shortage.

A similar case can be made for publisher's collections, which like series fiction comprise multiple books similarly aesthetically and thematically branded; however, these are often written by different authors, do not focus on the same characters and are not chronologically ordered in the same way that many series are. The advantages of the collection are similar to those of a series:

abaissement des coûts de production (les cartonnages, les fers, les mises en page sont conçus pour de longues années), structuration de ses catalogues, rationalisation de ses politiques commerciales, fidélisation et mise en

confiance des lecteurs, incitation à l'achat, promotion d'[une image de

marque et […] situation privilégiée chez les distributeurs. (Renonciat, 1997:

287; cited in Piquard, 2004: 180)[16]

Publishers collections were a vital part of a 'rejuvenation' of French mass culture

during the 1960s (Sirinelli, 2002: 117), with the Bibliothèque Rose and Verte

becoming flagship imprints in France during the post-war period (Heywood, 2016a:

2). Other key examples of culturally significant French children's collections include

the Père Castor collection by Flammarion in print since 1931, which even inspired a

television series that first aired in 1993, more than sixty years after the publication of

the first instalment. The popularity of collections was equally encouraged through

American imports; from 1949, the popular American children's collection Little

Golden Books was published in France under the name of Les petits livres d'or

(Boulaire, 2023: 390).

The standardisation of novels in this way was not a new phenomenon, for the

grouping of publications in format and presentation-specific collections marketed at

a certain price-point was already a popular technique within British and French

children's publishing in the nineteenth century (Piquard, 2004: 179). In fact, '[e]n

1870, il paraît [...] très peu de livres pour enfants en dehors d'une collection [en

France]' (Mouranche, 1986: 228; cited in Piquard, 2004: 179).[17] Some of the most

famous children's books from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at a

minimum had sequels or were episodic. These include Lewis Carroll's *Alice's*

Adventures in Wonderland (1865) with its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871),

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[16] '[L]owering of production costs (packaging, plates and set ups are designed to be in place for many years), structuring of their catalogues, rationalisation of their commercial strategies, creating loyalty and confidence in readers, inciting to purchase, promotion of [an image and a brand and [...] a privileged place among distributors'.
[17] 'In 1870, there [...] appeared to be very few novels for children that were outside of a collection in France.'

Beatrix Potter's books beginning with *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in 1902, and the Comtesse de Ségur's *Les Malheurs de Sophie* (1858), which had two sequels. Yet these formats became more common as the century progressed, with commercialised series fiction dominating the literary scene from the 1920s onwards (Watson, 2000: 73). Indeed, '[t]o become a reader in the thirties or forties […] was to become a series-reader' (73). It was during this period that many enduring series of children's fiction were created, for example *Swallows and Amazons* (1930-1988), *Babar* (1931-present), *Biggles* (1932-1999) and *Just William* (1922-1970), each of which began during the interbellum and endured decades past the devastation of World War Two. The phenomenon of episodic literature for children was particularly popular in the form of comics and *bandes dessinées* such as *Bécassine* (1905-1962), *The Beano* (1938-present), *Le Journal de Mickey* (1934-present), *The Dandy* (1937-2013), *Tintin* (1929-1976)[18] and *Les Pieds-Nickelés* (1908-present). The growing influence of American popular culture also had an impact on the popularity of series fiction; one of the first extended series that gained popularity across both Britain and France was Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle*, published in the United States in 1920, imported into Britain in 1922 (Watson, 2000: 73), and translated into French a decade later in 1931. While these texts were influential there was still some fear about the influence of American texts and comics in particular, with the 1955 British law on horror comics originating as a campaign against 'American-style comics' (Barker, 1984: 10).

The mid-century saw the publication and enduring success of a huge number of children's series in Britain and France, for example: Rev. Wilbert Awdry's

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[18] Tintin's creator, Hergé, was Belgian, but the huge impact and influence of *Tintin* across French *bandes dessinées* as well as wider comic culture warrants its inclusion here. *Le Journal de Mickey* was specifically French-made, but the Disney subject matter was American, with its creation inspired by the already-imported American comic strips.

Railway Series (1945-1972), C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), Georges Chaulet's *Fantômette* (1961-2009), Mary Norton's *The Borrowers* (1952-1982), L.M. Boston's *Green Knowe* (1954-1976), and René Goscinny's *Le Petit Nicolas* (1959-present). Yet the most notable series author of this time is Enid Blyton, who had many hugely successful series including *The Famous Five* (1942-1962), *The Secret Seven* (1949-1963)*, The Faraway Tree* (1939-1951), *The Naughtiest Girl* (1940-2001) and *Malory Towers* (1946-1951). It was in large part due to Blyton's success that detective series for children became so popular in France, with some notable authors following similar templates to that used by Blyton, such as Paul-Jacques Bonzon (*Les Six Compagnons,* 1961-1994 and *La Famille HLM*, 1966-1978) and Georges Bayard (*Michel,* 1958-1985, *Cécile* 1982-1987 and *César*, 1964-1980). The success of Blyton and the format that she popularised is a vital consideration within the context of series fiction of the mid-century.

Blyton experienced huge success in Britain and France, with Hachette purchasing the rights to her works in 1955, publishing many of them under their Bibliothèque Rose series (Brown, 2008: 268). Her *Famous Five* novels, translated in the fifties under the title of *Le Club des cinq,* 'gripped the imagination of young French readers' (268) with their 'depiction of a group of children who are allowed to go about on their own, on their bicycles, accompanied by their dog, and encounter all sorts of often dangerous adventures involving robbers, smugglers, gypsies, kidnappers, and other villains' (268). The children are particularly independent, as adult and parental involvement is limited sometimes due to such characters simply being 'incompetent, stupid, or unscrupulous' (268). This enables 'the children to

assert their superior intelligence, initiative, and courage and outstrip the police in defeating the wicked' (268).

In this chapter, I argue that the formulaic detective series fiction popularised by Blyton's novels across the mid-century challenges the existing gender biases of the genre of children's fiction. As explained by Hélène Montardre, there is a notable dominance of male central characters evident throughout children's fiction, with fewer heroines and instead many '[p]ersonnages féminins secondaires' (1995: 25; 'secondary feminine characters'). This is interesting given that girls on average read more than boys and read for enjoyment more often than boys in both the United Kingdom and France (OECD, 2011: 71). In summary, while girls tend to be more avid readers, books cater more for boys than girls, a fact that Montardre argues is evidence of the secondary place of girls and women in society (1995: 27). 'Group texts', I argue, bring with them the possibility to make both girls and boys central, including girls within a more central role, without risking losing the interest of boys. Equally, groups featuring both boys and girls provide a vital arena in which to analyse gender dynamics; no history can be carried out independently of the other sex, and this is equally true for analysis of gender within literature. Indeed: '[n]ous ne pouvons établir l'histoire des masculinités sans étudier d'une part la constitution simultanée et connexe des fémininités, et d'autre part les possibilités et les dénégations de la "masculinité féminine"' (Surkis, 2007: 18).[19]

Thus, I argue that the popularity of series fiction during this time is a vital context against which to examine images of masculinity. While the popular series of

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[19] 'We cannot establish the history of masculinities without studying on the one hand the simultaneous and connected constitution of femininities, and on the other hand the possibilities and denials of "feminine masculinity".'

the mid-century did not invent series texts, they were a significant force in making them more widespread.

Character Archetypes and Gender

In order to better analyse the ways in which series fiction encodes gender, it is pertinent to examine recurring character archetypes. The gendered implications of archetypal characters underpin their deployment in specific texts, the main roles being hero and sidekick. While the villain role has an important contribution to make in the discussion of masculinities, for the purposes of this chapter only heroes and sidekicks will be considered, as it is the dynamics of the group with which I am primarily concerned.

The word 'hero' comes from the Greek for 'protector' and 'defender' (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.) and was used to refer to mythological figures such as Perseus, Jason, and Heracles, who completed seemingly impossible feats of strength (e.g. *The Twelve Labours of Heracles*, circa 600 BC). Heroes had 'superhuman strength, courage, or ability' and were 'favoured by the gods' or 'regarded as semi-divine and immortal' (OED, 2023). Since ancient times, the term has transformed, but still focusses on a character achieving greatness in a comparable way. 'Hero' can also simply refer to the protagonist of a text (2023) who does not necessarily present heroic characteristics; yet it often refers to a brave central character who overcomes adversity to reach some level of greatness, and who often defends the weak and vulnerable, 'distinguished by the performance of courageous or noble actions' (2003; and Bergstrand and Jasper, 2018: 231). The word evokes a general sense of goodness, greatness, and bravery of a central character with whom the reader is often meant to align themselves morally. Moreover, the violence carried out by heroes in

pursuing these great deeds is often deemed acceptable since it is in the pursuit of justice.

The hero possesses power and often exerts power over the course of the plot, guiding the events that take place: '[c]ontrol is the hero's raison d'etre, the sole purpose of his existence, and he directs that control outwards, projecting his will onto the world to make it more like himself' (Phillips, 2023: xviii). Heroes are typically physically or intellectually powerful in some way, even if this must be discovered: it is with this power that they overcome the challenges of the plot and the threat posed by the villain. Power, defined within a Western patriarchal system, is inherently conceived of as masculine, and thus the concept of the 'hero' similarly becomes viewed as typically masculine. The archetypal heroic qualities of strength, power, agency, resilience and determination are moreover those generally associated with a chivalric masculine greatness. For Margery Hourihan, the 'centrality of the hero story in our culture is unarguable' and it 'tells how white European men are the natural masters of the world because they are strong, brave, skilful, rational and dedicated' (1997: 1). It is a story, moreover, 'told over and over again, in innumerable versions, from the earliest times' (1).

Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) similarly describes the 'monomyth' or 'hero's journey': a narrative structure that permeates mythology and many stories today, particularly in the case of fantasy and adventure. Campbell's hero's journey is structurally androcentric, testing stereotypically masculine qualities. Initially, the hero experiences a 'call to adventure', the first true evidence of his power and significance within the story, and which 'signifies that destiny has summoned the hero […] from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown' (2008: 48). This is later followed by a 'road of trials' sent to challenge

him, which might test such qualities as strength and determination (81). The masculinity that permeates the hero's journey is moreover emphasised in his confrontation with his greatest fear in what Campbell terms the 'atonement with the father' (105-126). This is the equivalent of coming to terms with the central power held over the hero throughout the story. It is important that this event is communicated in terms of a confrontation between male characters, as this emphasises the entrenchedly masculine nature of the hero narrative. It also takes on a psychoanalytical dimension reflective of the Oedipal struggle of Freud's model of male development, in which the young boy, who yearns for his mother, must confront the father; a confrontation with a father figure is not only viewed as integral to a hero's journey, but equally to his development into a man.[20] In the final stage of the story, the hero is rewarded for his strength and bravery, returns home, and shares the glory with others. Campbell's 1949 work unsurprisingly simply accepts the androcentrism of the hero's journey and does little to interrogate it, yet this assumption holds true in a large way; as discussed in the Introduction, children's literature demonstrably contains an ideological bias towards male characters. Even animal protagonists are far more likely (73%) to be male than female; male creatures are moreover ones 'more typically embodied as powerful, wild and potentially dangerous […] such as dragons, bears and tigers', with female animals being 'more vulnerable creatures' (Ferguson, 2018).

To return to my earlier discussion of detective series, a specific iteration of the hero that is particularly relevant to this chapter is that of the boy detective hero. As Lucy Andrew writes, this character had been a hallmark of British children's fiction during the era of penny dreadfuls, 'cheap, serialised novels, published in

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[20] The relationship between fathers and sons is a significant focus of Chapter Two.

penny parts and predominantly featuring criminal protagonists […] at the height of their popularity in the 1860s' (2017: 1). The boy detective figure was not an immediate staple of this genre and

> did not materialise in the story-paper form [sic] until the 1890s, when Alfred and Harold Harmsworth launched their boys' story papers that, at a halfpenny, were affordable to the working-class boy audience. It was in the Harmsworths' vast story-paper empire, which dominated the market for several decades, that the boy detective finally became a regular, and hugely popular, fixture in British children's literature (1-2).

The boy detectives of penny dreadfuls, Andrew writes, are often different to Blyton's creations, being more definitively established within the detective profession whereas Blyton's heroes are amateur detectives in groups (2). Andrew uses the example of Ernest Keen of *The Boy Detective; or, The Crimes of London. A Romance of Modern Times* (1865-1866) which she claims is 'the first British text to feature a clearly defined boy detective protagonist' (2). Ernest possesses all of the qualities that one might expect of a detective hero. He is 'intelligent, quick thinking, observant, physically fit, plucky, loyal, patriotic, and incorruptible', and has a 'sense of duty to society, a respect for the law, a strong moral conscience' which 'reinforces middle-class values and upholds the social status quo' (3). While these qualities do not define every detective hero, they are often relevant to the detective heroes that became popular over the course of the twentieth century. Many of them are equally qualities that can be attributed to the archetypal masculine hero, including a sense of strength and bravery, some sense of greatness and moral drive.

If the 'hero' narrative and archetype are inherently masculine, this is not however the case for the supporting character, the 'sidekick'. The sidekick, Stephen

Zimmerly notes, 'occurs almost as universally as the hero' (2019: 1), and accompanies the hero on their adventure, in a 'subordinate', 'deferential' (1), and supportive role. They are often close friends or allies of the hero (1), and help the central character to achieve their goals, through a mixture of moral support and the offer of extra knowledge or experience. The specific role that the sidekick plays can be multifaceted, whether they allow further insight into the protagonist, offer comic relief, or other (2). Whatever the case, however, the sidekick is at its core a supporting character to the hero.

The concept of the sidekick has also existed since ancient times. Zimmerly cites several examples, including Aaron (Moses; Biblical), Patroclus (Achilles; from Homer's *Iliad*; circa 850-750 BC), and Enkidu of *Gilgamesh*, a Babylonian epic from the twenty-fifth century BC (2). Though sidekicks are often not female, this is a 'feminised' role in comparison to the almighty masculine hero, defined by its comparatively 'lesser importance' to the central character. Examining sidekicks, Zimmerly notes, is important because they 'inherently occupy a "one-down" position', meaning 'conversations regarding power, oppression, marginalization, and "Othering" come into play', which equally means themes such as 'race, identity, gender, and intersubjectivity' are relevant (3). This observation will be significant in the examination of how gender roles are distributed throughout collective central characters; observing which characters occupy this 'one-down position' and which control the central power of the plot can provide important insights into the gendering of the characters.

The inherently gendered qualities of character archetypes become complicated when the protagonist or hero and sidekick roles become one, as they do in the children's detective series that are the focus of this chapter. What happens to

considerations of gender and power when a group of boys and girls become the hero together? Do some come to occupy that same 'one-down position' despite being identified as equal to the others within the paratexts, or do both genders gain opportunities for heroism? How does heroism itself become reconsidered? Does the heroism by female characters remain strictly masculine, or is there room for a reimagining of what heroism looks like? These questions will guide the exploration of masculinities within this chapter.

To reiterate, this chapter will consider how images of masculinities are presented within children's detective series published between 1940-1970 with consideration of how the characters within the central group can complicate matters of gender-coded character archetypes. In this chapter in particular, masculinities will not be limited to considerations of men and male characters, but, for example, will equally explore how female characters take on traditionally masculine characteristics in fulfilling the hero role, and how male characters can take on feminine characteristics in group character novels. I approach the analysis of characters within this chapter by purposefully selecting texts that focus on mixed sex groups of children that bring out gendered power dynamics in differing and interesting ways, and with detective plots that provide action and danger as important environments for testing the boundaries of masculinities. These texts include French work *Le Cheval sans tête* (1955) by Paul Berna, which although not a series text uses the same formula as many series detective works of its time. The other two texts are by Enid Blyton, and are the first novels in two of her most famous detective series, *The Secret Seven* (1949-1963) and *The Famous Five* (1942-1962), the selected volumes being *Five on a Treasure Island* (1942) and *The Secret Seven* (1949).

Five on a Treasure Island **(1942)**

As previously established, Enid Blyton was hugely influential across Britain and France, with *Le Club des cinq* published in 1955 within Hachette's Bibliothèque Rose, a collection for six- to twelve-year-olds, to huge success. Michèle Piquard puts this success down to a combination of a formula promoting 'la fidélisation du public pour faire fructifier un succès éditorial' combined with 'un mode de diffusion massif rendu possible grâce au réseau de distribution mis en place par la Librairie Hachette' (Piquard, 2004: 200).[21] Blyton was in no way the originator of series in Britain and France, and French publishers in the 1950s developed 'une politique éditoriale consistant à exploiter, dans les collections d'albums, le succès des héros favoris des enfants parus dans leur journaux' (198).[22] However, it was through the success of this series in France that Hachette in particular 'orienta massivement sa production vers la publication des séries telles que *Fantômette, Alice, Les Six compagnons, Langelot, Bennett…*, mettant en scène des héros aux caractéristiques préétablies' (199).[23]

Not only did the author have a considerable international influence, but she was significantly aware of, and concerned with, the potential power of her own books, believing them to be educational and morally uplifting. She claimed in 1950 that her audience 'find in [her] books a sense of security, an anchor, a sure sense that right is always right and that such things as courage and kindliness deserve to be emulated' (Blyton, 1950; cited in Stoney, 2006: 143-144). The potential influence of

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[21] '[T]he creation of public loyalty to fructify publishing success' and 'a massive means of diffusion made possible thanks to the distribution network put in place by the Librairie Hachette'.
[22] '[A] consistent publishing politics to exploit, in picture book collections, the success of the heroes favoured among children that appeared in their journals'.
[23] '[M]assively oriented its production towards the publication of series such as Fantômette, Alice, Les Six compagnons, Langelot, Bennett…producing heroes with preestablished characteristics'.

her texts is no small matter considering their popularity and the number of readers they attracted, and her international reach puts the matter of gender representation in her texts into dizzying perspective. It is vital to consider how texts with such a monumental cultural status present masculinity during a key time of change and tension in the lives of both men and children. What can also be garnered from Blyton's statement here is that the author saw her influence as supportive of stable, normative values, describing the texts as an 'anchor' and bestowing security and promoting good values in children. Nadja Jukić, among many others, has described how 'Blyton complies with the essentialist notion of gender as a natural consequence of sex' (2021: 54). I would agree that there is a strong underlying essentialist current that 'complie[s] with the view of gender-appropriate behavior promoted by her socio-political background' (54), yet equally there are some radical aspects of her stories and their characters that are important to consider as potentially influential on the growing minds of children in the 1940s-1960s. Blyton appears to combine a strong foundation in tradition with awareness of wider gendered changes in a reflection of both the undercurrent of tradition and the transformations in gender roles occurring in 1940s wartime Britain.

Considering Blyton's titanic status within children's literature, she is far less frequently the subject of critical debate than one might expect, and this was especially the case several decades ago and during the focal timeframe of this thesis. Interestingly, most early critical attention paid to Blyton's works used them as an example of 'children's literature which should be avoided' (Pearson, 2013: 67). In particular, critics such as Margery Fisher opposed the utter lack of challenge posed by the works, claiming that the author 'th[ought] that children are taxed too much if they are confronted with so much as a polysyllable' (1961: 28; cited in Pearson,

2013: 68). Indeed, many literary critics have stated that they believe Blyton's works to be 'colourless, dead and totally undemanding' (Dixon, 1978: 54), as well as endlessly repetitive, with some criticising 'her lookalike, readalike volumes of anodyne pap' that supposedly lacked quality (Green and Karolides, 2005: 61). This, of course, is a common criticism of series fiction, which is seen by many in the field of children's literature as encouraging an interest in 'low-quality' reading and is certainly not a comment that is unique to Blyton's works (Watson, 2000: 2-6). Other critics believe the style to simply be 'crisp and economical' (Hollindale, 1978: 154; cited in Rudd, 2000: 46), or 'direct and practical', however '[u]nsubtle and unstimulating' it may be (Wall, 1991: 190; cited in Rudd, 2000: 46).

While the quantity of scholarship around Blyton's works has since increased considerably, and that devoted to concerns of gender especially, an angle far less explored is that of how the aforementioned 'simplistic' elements contribute to the gendered debate. My principle focus in this is, as the subject of this chapter dictates, the serial detective form. David Rudd makes several suggestions as to the effect of the serial narrative structure and formatting in this regard, on the one hand claiming that *The Famous Five* promotes a 'world of unlikely equality' that is not reflective of many children's real life experiences (2000: 119), but pages earlier suggesting that George's membership in a group comes to assist in the erosion of her power in *The Famous Five* (113). By becoming more enmeshed with the other children and thus becoming one unit, Rudd argues that George loses her unique identity; she has 'joined the Symbolic order' and the group are 'henceforth an entity, with their name in the public domain' (113). Yet few works explore in detail the ways in which the serial format can aid our understanding of gender within Blyton's works.

Five on a Treasure Island is the first in a series of twenty-one detective adventure novels, and follows a group of four siblings as they go to stay with their aunt and uncle and meet their cousin George. Eventually the children befriend George, and together the five discover the secrets of a nearby island she owns. Blyton's novel is one in which there is a fair level of equality between the children in terms of input in the novel's events, yet equally the collective nature of the group provides opportunities for a reimagining of heroic masculinity. Indeed, Liesel Coetzee has similarly recognised the complex portrayal of gender demonstrated by Blyton in the *Five* books, assessing that Blyton upholds many heteronormative gender roles but equally provides opportunities for reimagining gender roles and female agency in ways that are not sufficiently recognised (2011: 86). This section expands upon this element of Coetzee's argument and upon previous explorations of gender in the series by exploring how this balancing act takes place specifically through the serial form: how do the individual perspectives within the group and an intentionally repetitive and simplistic structure bring about important dynamics that contribute usefully to a discussion of gender?

We might begin our exploration by examining the paratextual elements in terms of gender. The title of the novel implies a group of protagonists, a hallmark feature of the children's detective series that Blyton popularised. By identifying five characters as central to the novel, rather than one named and gendered hero, the novel creates possibilities for a reimagining of traditional archetypes before reading even begins, decentring any gendered hero. This neutrality equally means that girls are invited to participate in the adventure without the risk of alienating boys. Montardre argues that 'si par malheur la couverture est rose, cela risque de devenir

un vrai échec commercial: on ne le vendra pas aux garçons' (1995: 27);[24] in short, if

the book's cover clearly signals feminine interests and audiences, it is less likely to

be sold to boys. The reverse, Montardre argues, is not true: 'si ça plait à un garçon,

ça plaira à une fille. L'inverse n'est pas forcément vrai' (29).[25] A gender-neutral title

avoids this potential pitfall, enabling the inclusion of girls in adventure and detective

narratives without dissuading boys, at whom the adventure genre was originally

marketed. Indeed, as Jeffrey Richards notes, the genre has imperialist roots, and is

said to have 'satisfied [boys'] robust instincts […] while at the same time teaching

them' about ideal masculine conduct in particular (1989b: 4).[26] Publishing a book

without placing a specifically gendered hero (or subject of interest) at its centre

might be considered a smart and lucrative marketing strategy that enables the

promotion of books to a wider audience; as Marie Lallouet's chapter explains, boys

and girls are generally understood to elect for different reading materials (2005: 177-

186). Blyton's novel even anticipates this desire to hook the reader on a sequel

before the first instalment has finished, with the final line being: 'but that's another

story!' (2015 [1942]: 157).

     The beginning of Chapter One hints that male dominance is to be expected in

an adventure novel of this kind, prioritising a male voice within its first lines. The

story begins with the voice of Julian asking his mother if he and his siblings will take

their habitual holiday during the summer (6). Julian is the oldest of the children who

form part of the 'five' later in the story, and the immediate prioritisation of the voice

of the eldest male character suggests that he will be the central character going

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[24] '[I]f by misfortune the cover is pink, it risks becoming a true commercial failure: it will not be sellable to boys.'

[25] '[I]f it is pleasing to a boy, it will please a girl. The reverse is not necessarily true.'

[26] Chapter Four goes into further depth about the adventure genre, masculinity, and the genre's colonialist roots.

forward. There are indeed a few occasions upon which he takes the lead throughout the novel; for example, in Chapter Ten he suggests a plan of action for the group to follow after discovering that Kirrin Island and its contents are being explored by other parties, and he uses commanding language to do so: 'Now listen! […] We'll ask Aunt Fanny if we can go to Kirrin Island' (86). It is Julian's enquiry about the holiday that triggers the beginning of the plot, whereby it is decided that the children will go to their aunt's house for the summer. This establishes the expectation of male dominance in the lead character, but it is surrounded by hints that these expectations are not set in stone and will later be undermined.

The relatively even distribution of the dialogue between male and female characters maintains some neutrality within the opening chapter; each character is included in the events and dialogue is divided between the children, Anne, Dick, and Julian, fairly evenly. Statistically, no voice is particularly prioritised in the number of lines given to each character. Equally, despite the story being introduced through the voice of the eldest male, for the entire second half of the chapter, the narrative is focalised instead through Anne, the youngest girl of the group, giving her an unprecedented level of power within an adventure narrative. This suggestion that both girls and boys are capable within this narrative is bolstered by Anne's claim that it will be 'lovely […] to wear jeans again […] I'm tired of wearing school tunics. I want to wear shorts, or a bathing suit, and go bathing and climbing with the boys', with her mother agreeing that she will soon be able to do all of these things (8). Within this same chapter, Anne is introduced as a girl who loves stereotypically feminine interests like dolls (9). By providing these details, Blyton subtly establishes that being a girl or having feminine hobbies should not prevent Anne's equal participation in the adventures of the narrative. The way in which the characters are

balanced within this introductory chapter gives a sense of awareness of the status quo, but makes considerable structural suggestions that other possibilities exist.

The way in which the radical character of George is mentioned before her full introduction in Chapter Two is perhaps the biggest indication of the complex gender relations of the novel, and signals a theme that will carry throughout: George complicates the masculine hero role and traditional gender roles, and is considered something of an outsider because of it. We are invited to make multiple assumptions about George before her introduction: in the first chapter, for example, several characters mention George having what they consider a strange name. Initially it is the children's mother who says: 'what's her name – something funny – yes, Georgina!' (7), an initial indication that George is unusual. Not long after this, Julian makes an early hint at the challenges that George will bring to the gendered order of the story: 'I wonder what Georgina's like. Funny name, isn't it? More like a boy's than a girl's' (8). This clearly foreshadows the struggle between George and her family about her desire to be considered a boy, including one in which she states that she refuses to answer to 'Georgina'. There is some irony in the fact that the name Julian identifies as more like a boy's name is still too feminine for George's taste.

In the Second Chapter, George occupies a peculiar narratological positioning that further emphasises her status as 'other'. The title of the chapter, 'the strange cousin', immediately alerts the reader to the fact that the chapter is about George and emphasises her outsider status. There is equally potential for this title to be read as indicative of a villain of some sort, with the mystery surrounding George being ambiguous enough to present the character as a threat – and indeed, as we soon find out, George does present a threat to the gendered order of a typical adventure story. It is at this point that the concept of the male hero starts to truly become interrogated.

At the beginning of this chapter George is variously spoken of by her family as defiant and rude, distancing her from the reader and contributing further to this idea that she is 'other'. Even George's own parents see her as an outsider. Fanny, her mother, insists that George is a 'naughty girl' (used twice on page 12), and 'a funny little girl' who can be 'very rude and haughty' (14); indeed, George is not the pleasant, conforming little girl, and rather causes complications and difficulties wherever she goes. Fanny also adds that George is 'very loyal', but equally finds it difficult to make friends (14), another sign of her struggles to fit into a society based on normative approaches to gender.

George is finally introduced through the focalising character of Anne, who wakes up one morning to see George in the other bed. The reader viewing George for the first time through Anne's eyes emphasises a point that was already hinted in Chapter One: in 1940s terms, Anne is a 'normal' girl, and George, introduced as '[t]he child in the opposite bed' (15), is considered abnormal, and thus Anne observes George with curiosity. It is significant too that George is not introduced until the Second Chapter of the novel. The structure of the narrative at this point means we are intended to see George as more of a secondary character and not as a hero; the narrative does not begin with her and she is more frequently perceived and seen as a spectacle rather than acting as the main focalising character whose thoughts are passed to the reader.

George is considered out of the ordinary because even as a girl she is far more akin to a masculine hero than to a helpful and accommodating feminine sidekick. She is depicted as adventurous and rebellious from her very first scenes, the decider of her own destiny, with her introduction seeing her coming in late after the other children are already asleep in bed (14). She has stereotypically masculine

features, with Anne noting that she 'look[s] like a boy' (15) and has 'very short curly hair, almost as short as a boy's' (15). Blyton's direct use of the word 'boy' makes it clear that the reader is intended to see George in masculine terms, while the 'almost' reinforces how George teeters at the edges of gendered norms. As will become a common theme throughout the novel, George is considered 'almost' a boy but not quite, excelling in masculine occupations but dominant essentialist notions dictating that she lacks the essential masculine quality of being a biological boy. As she spends so much time outdoors, she has skin that is 'burnt a dark-brown with the sun' (15), an early sign of her adventurous heroic spirit; George will not be kept to the domestic sphere and has far more interest in exploration. As a foreshadowing of her aptitude for heroic activities, George equally has 'eyes as blue as the sea' (19) that she later so deftly navigates.

George makes her own outsider status clear from the moment she is fully introduced, particularly in the fact that she often wilfully excludes herself and thus struggles to make friends; she does not 'make friends with people just because they're [her] cousins, or something silly like that' and only does so 'if [she] like[s] them' (19). She refuses to act pleasantly to please those around her, will not conform to feminine ideals, and is aware of her outsider status: '[l]ots of people don't like me, now I come to think of it' (19). George's conviction of her own righteousness is a vital part of her heroism; she will not be swayed into a path that she does not fully align with. Thus, she fights a constant battle with her family to have her identity respected, insisting on 'George' rather than 'Georgina', and on the male title of 'Master' (43) rather than Miss. These choices are rarely accepted even by her family. Her mother, for example, ignores the child's preference (13), and for a significant period within the book, the other children also misname George, including Anne –

for example: 'I do wish Georgina would come' and 'I wonder where Georgina is' (14). This leads to tensions between the characters; George hates her full name because it reminds her of the femininity forced upon her. With this struggle in mind, we might return to the initial observations that the title of the novel is gender-neutral; Blyton clearly recognises the importance of naming in establishing gender in the eyes of children, and highlights how even a few letters between two names can make a significant difference to the ways in which a character is perceived.

George is closely linked to her father in these early scenes, being the inheritor of her father's qualities rather than her mother's, as a further sign that she is seen more in male terms than female ones.[27] Blyton describes George as 'sulky' with a 'frown like her father's' (15), with similar references made throughout the novel, including a few pages later when the author describes her as having a 'scowl exactly like her father's' (18) and a 'sulky mouth' (19). When we look back at the appearance of George's father, presented just pages earlier when the children arrive at Kirrin Bay, we can see the similarities clearly: 'very tall, very dark, and with a rather fierce frown on his wide forehead' (13). George defies the expectations placed on women to be happy, polite, and compromising with her scowls and frowns that make it clear she will not become an obliging 1950's housewife.

This lack of compromise is equally evident when the children first arrive in Kirrin Bay, and George is not there to greet them. Anne says to herself: '[i]sn't she odd – not waiting to welcome us – and not coming in to supper – and not even in yet! After all, she's sleeping in my room – goodness knows what time she'll be in!' (14). To Anne, importantly the voice of the perfect feminine little girl, the idea that a

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[27] Chapter Two examines the links between fathers and sons.

girl would not wish to play hostess and make guests feel welcome is baffling, and it is significant that she should be the one to vocalise this.

The scorns and scowls typical of George have been the subject of linguistic analysis by Elizabeth Poynter, whose study of the series concludes that predominantly negative language is used to describe George (2018b: 90). Poynter decides from this that Blyton's attitude towards the character seems 'ambivalent' (90). The conservatism of Blyton's writing is certainly clear: David Rudd concedes that Blyton's vision throughout the series is 'decidedly circumscribed' (2000: 120). Yet Rudd equally argues for some liberating qualities within the works, and draws attention to the fact that Blyton did partially model George on herself (120). Ambivalence thus seems unlikely given the author's personal investment; rather, I would argue that the negative language is precisely what draws attention to the oppressive and conservative social environment against which George struggles and, thus, adds further to the complex gendered dynamics in wartime Britain.

The essentialism that informs both the idea of masculinity and the hero role is frequently the focus of the other children's criticisms towards George. Anne makes this clear when she says that her brothers are '*real* boys, not pretend boys, like you [George]' (16). Again, it is Anne, the perfect girl by society's standards, who vocalises such thoughts. George's masculinity is still viewed as inauthentic because she was not born biologically male; masculinity exercised by 'girls' must be proven and accounted for and constantly reinforced as George must do. Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig describe this as George being in a 'false position,' meaning that 'like all tomboys, she can be "as good as", but this implies a basic deficiency. She can never be the genuine article' (1976: 338-343; cited in Rudd, 1995: 186). They further this argument by stating that George's 'fantasy of being a boy' is never accepted as

normal as Anne's domesticity naturally is (1976: 338-343; cited in Rudd, 1995: 186).

Because of her 'false position' as a pretend boy, George constantly feels the need to prove her 'belonging' by being superior:

> I hate being a girl. I won't be. I don't like doing the things that girls do. I like doing the things that boys do. I can climb better than any boy, and swim faster too. I can sail a boat as well as any fisher-boy on this coast (15).

George's masculinity must be justified by her being better at typically masculine activities than boys themselves are; only then, if she makes a 'better' boy, might she be accepted into the club. In the Fourth Chapter, for example, Julian admires George's swimming, and it is only at this point that she becomes somewhat acceptable in her masculinity: 'the boys found that George was a much better swimmer than they were. She was very strong and very fast, and she could swim under water, too, holding her breath for ages' (29). Later, Aunt Fanny declares that the children will be safe on their journey to Kirrin Island with George because '[s]he can handle a boat like a man' (42), making direct comparison to the increased strength and physical abilities associated with manhood as a means of showing the validity of George's masculinity. In these situations where George is showing her physical capability, this ability is always judged through the eyes of another who will decide if she is worthy of boyhood; again, like an anomaly or spectacle, George is variously observed and spoken of, emphasising her 'otherness'. In essence, 'George epitomises both the sharp division between the social construction of girls and boys and the longing to cross the divide' (Simons, 2009: 143). She is a 'compelling portrayal of liminality', existing in a space between genders, where she

defies normative girlhood and yet struggles to be accepted as essentially masculine (143).

Due to her prowess in adventure-related activities, George instantly recognises signs that sailing may not be safe despite no-one else noticing, these being that '[t]he wind is wrong' and that there are 'little white tops' on the waves (42). She also effortlessly and 'cleverly' navigates the boat through the rocks that prevent passage to the island (44). None of these sections, importantly, are viewed through George's perspective; while George is physically the archetypal adventure hero, able to carry out adventure-related tasks with far more ease even than the oldest boy, the narratological structure does not centre George and does not favour any single perspective. It is in this way that *Five on a Treasure Island* creates a particularly complex space where there is a distinct awareness of the dominance of male heroes and the reader is drawn to consider the complexities of masculinity, essentialism, and the hero role within a more neutral space. Yet George is never bestowed full narrative agency.

George's performance of masculinity is also evident in her tentative ownership of Kirrin Island, the small island that the children explore as part of their adventures in this first novel in the series and of which she claims ownership. George's relationship with the island is reflective of her difficulties in having her masculinity accepted; when George tells the other children that Kirrin Island is hers, they do not believe her: '[c]hildren don't usually own islands, even funny little ones like that' (20). The narrative at this point is focalised through a biological boy, with Julian recalling that 'Aunt Fanny had said that George was absolutely truthful' (20). Equally, George reinvents gender norms by taking on a traditionally masculine privilege of claiming and owning land. She also reinvents the masculine colonial

narratives that will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Four, as a girl setting out on adventures to her own island. When Dick enquires about George's ownership of the island, he asks, ignoring George's desired name, '[h]ow does it belong to you, Georgina?' (20). That Dick specifically – even if accidentally – uses the girl's name, Georgina, when asking this question hints again at the gendered concept of power; as a girl, George is less likely to have this power and is questioned about it constantly. It is only as the children come to see that George is as capable as a man that they accept and even defend her ownership of the island.

The narrative pertaining to the island's heritage equally points to white European colonial masculinities, and to the patrilineal primogeniture of inheritance that was dominant in the past. This places George as something of a hero adventurer within a distinctly masculine history, highlighted by the constant mentions of her male predecessors. When the island is first mentioned in Chapter Three, George explains that the shipwrecks surrounding the island belong to her great-great-great grandfather (22), evoking an image of the male-dominated colonial exploits of the past. Upon exploring the island and discovering its secrets, the children find a mysterious 'old wooden box' from the wreck, also belonging to this distant patriarch figure, with his initials engraved upon it (72). The children feel that 'they really had something mysterious in their possession' and ask some questions about what it may contain (72), reminiscent of the mystery surrounding distant lands and exploration. The final chapters of the narrative contain a treasure hunt, castles, and dungeons, with the children following a map to find gold ingots. The excitement of treasure hunting is evoked in detail throughout: '[i]t was really very thrilling' (105); 'Julian gave a sigh of excitement' (108); 'whoop of delight' (110). All of this, alongside the

children's exploration of the island and the discoveries they make, together with the survival skills required of George, harks back to the mystery of colonial exploits.

The insistence upon George's femininity, and thus the perceived inferiority of her character, equally comes across in the way Julian seems to patronise George. In order to try to pacify his cousin and even manipulate her into giving information, he attempts to put his arm through George's in an intimate manner, and says: '[g]o on, George – tell us' (20). George, of course, will not accept this, and quickly 'pulled away from him' (21), but it is interesting that Julian believes he can manipulate someone he perceives as female in this way, by touching them and invading their space. Feminist critics often explain how women are taught by a patriarchal system to take up less space than men, a symbol of their supposed inferiority and subordination.[28] Julian's actions here might be viewed as an assertion of masculine dominance and an attempt to control George.

Yet George will not be manipulated, and tells the other children that it is her 'own private island, and [she] doesn't let anyone go there unless they get [her] permission' (21). Just as George constantly attempts to reinforce her masculinity, she also attempts to exert control over her own territory, which is constantly under threat and brought into question. The other children, the boys in particular, are eager to invade George's space for their own ends, again reflecting the dominant perception that men are property owners and women subservient and property in their own right: 'I hope you'll be friends with us and take us there one day soon. You simply can't imagine how we'd love it' (21). When a shipwreck comes ashore, however, interest in the island by the local community increases, and George finds her island

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[28] For texts pertaining to the gendering of space, see Shirley Ardener (2020), Susan Best (1995), and Daphne Spain (1993).

being invaded by journalists, with no authority to object to it. No matter how much she attempts to exert her power and ownership, it is dismissed and exploited: '"[i]t's *my* castle!" she stormed to her mother. "It's *my* island. You said it could be mine. You did, you did!' (84). Aunt Fanny even emphasises the sheer powerlessness of George in this situation, and the futility of challenging it: '[w]hat can it possibly matter if people go to look at the wreck? You can't stop them' (84). As a further hint at the exploitation of the colonial era, George complains that her mother and father 'only gave [her] the island when [they] thought it wasn't worth anything,' but when its potential worth becomes apparent, they decide it is of interest (88).

A further complication to George's heroic status comes when George eventually agrees to make friends with her cousins and take them to the island, an occurrence that harks back to the idea that girls must always conform to the preferences and desires of others regardless of their own desires or strengths: 'I used to think it was much, much nicer to always do things on my own […] But it's going to be fun doing things with Julian and the others' (41). George's socialisation as a girl comes into conflict with her heroic role in a way that sharply draws attention to the struggles that girls undergo in co-opting a traditionally male role. The invasion of George's island by initially unwanted parties is symbolic of the struggle for power that punctuates the entire text, and the struggle for what constitutes a 'true' hero. Nevertheless, I would argue that George conceding on this point does not negate the radical potential of her character or the complication of the heroic role that she triggers. Instead, it draws further attention to the complexity of the heroic role and its close relationship with essentialist views of masculinity. It is emblematic of the battle that female characters must undergo in navigating socialised gender roles and

prioritising their own strengths and desires in a society that is still struggling against that freedom; *Five on a Treasure Island* was, after all, published in the 1940s.

As a symbol of this struggle, George's behaviour is not just interpreted as defying feminine expectations, but also as being abrasive and rude. This, however, can be put down to two reasons: firstly because she is a girl exhibiting traits thought suitable for boys and not girls, and secondly because she is consistently denied her own identity by those around her. In fact, George mostly comes across as abrasive because she is 'absolutely truthful' (20), loyal to a fault, and always ready to pursue justice even to the detriment of relationships, traits that are stereotypical of the archetypal masculine hero. This is partially highlighted by her mother's perception of her behaviour, but also by her father, who frequently argues with her. George discusses how her dog, Timothy, caused trouble at home and how her father began hitting the dog in retaliation, which George responded to by being 'awfully rude to him' (25). From somebody who is identified by society as a boy, this behaviour might seem justified or even brave and heroic, but for George it is seen as rude because she is a girl. George equally has the emotional resilience that is expected of masculine heroes, being ashamed to admit that she cried when the dog was taken away and being brave and resilient in the face of punishments: 'it doesn't matter what punishment I got' (25).

When the children plan to spend a day on Kirrin Island, George's hero status manifests in her desire for independence from her parents. Her mother, Aunt Fanny, declares that the children must think George an 'odd girl never to want [her] mother to go with [her]' (42) to the island. Shortly after, the text confirms that George has no real desire for her mother's presence, but rather is desperate for Timothy to come with her, which is not possible with the presence of her mother (42). All the same,

George's separation from her mother is a key sign of her status as the main heroic figure, detaching her from the feminine and domestic, and allowing her the freedom required of a hero.

As the novel draws to the end, we are reminded of the complexities of the heroic role in the story. While the book does not begin with George, giving us reason to believe that she is not the hero, it instead closes with her, with the final lines depicting reunion with Tim. While the five are all considered heroes, and George evokes this in her final line – 'we'll have other adventures together, the five of us – won't we?' (157) – it is significant that the novel's final moment brings us to George, as if this is the character that is intended to leave an impression on the reader: the truly memorable and heroic character. In this way the novel appears to take us through a journey into the complexities of masculinity and heroism, keenly aware of the expectations that come with the genre, and depicting a complex gendered battle between boys and girls to decide what can be considered a 'boy' or a 'hero'. George's mention of the other members within these final lines recalls how the group structure has enabled this reversal of hero and sidekick roles. In the end, George's masculinity and heroism come to be accepted but with a caveat; she equally takes on some of the compromising, feminine behaviours that have encouraged her to be agreeable and share, regardless of her comfort in a given situation. She even admits to enjoying sharing her prized possessions with her cousins (156).

In conclusion, *Five on a Treasure Island* is a key text from a popular mid-century children's adventure series which uses its status as such to complicate and interrogate the meaning of masculinity. It shares many qualities in particular with Berna's novel, in depicting potentially radical female characters and centring on a

mixed-sex group rather than a single male, but against a backdrop that clearly recalls the structural biases towards men. The tendency to favour boys is, in Coetzee's eyes, sexist (94), while critics such as Margery Fisher argue that George is outright stereotypical (1986: 233; cited in Rudd, 2000: 110). Bob Dixon, moreover, claims that George is successful with readers only because she demonstrates penis-envy and resonates with the common wish among young girls to be boys (1974: 53; cited in Rudd, 1995: 186). By contrast, I would argue that Coetzee's point of view pays insufficient attention to the story's original 1940s context. Rather, in its structural and narratological complexity, Blyton's novel provides a snapshot of a moment of change in gender history in Britain, where tradition held firm but melded with transformations in gendered expectations in the wake of war. On the one hand, the text uses its status as a children's detective series to blur gendered lines, decentre masculinity and create more of a neutral playing field in terms of character archetypes. A number of characters are identified as being protagonists in this novel; the focalisation swaps between all four of them, the dialogue is fairly evenly distributed between these characters, and each of the characters participates in plot and dialogue in a largely consistent way. This means that the male characters, while still central, are not overwhelmingly dominant, and female characters are provided opportunities for heroism. Thus, Blyton presents a girl hero who is just as capable of masculine exploits as any boy hero, and the novel largely ends with an acceptance of George's identity.

Equally, however, the novel suggests that the reader should expect boys to be dominant; in the beginning stages, for example, male characters speak first, and George's performance of masculinity struggles to be accepted as authentic. Not only this, but George's acceptance as a masculine character at the end of the novel is not

flawless, as she internalises the societal expectation that girls be polite, pleasing and accommodating in becoming part of the group and sharing her belongings with her cousins. Ultimately this nuanced presentation of masculinity reflects the complexity of the period in which it was published; women contributed significantly to the war effort and became heroines of war effort in their own right, and though the novel precedes Second Wave Feminist movements, it heralds changes lurking under the surface of a conservative Britain. Yet normative approaches to gender were still dominant, and despite George's radical potential the text reminds us of this through its internal structuring and George's struggles. The image of masculinity provided in this novel is distinct from the one in the next novel to be introduced within this thesis and another novel by Blyton, *The Secret Seven*, where a more conservative image of heroism and masculinity is depicted.

The Secret Seven (1949)

The Secret Seven was another of Blyton's popular series, this time a sequence of fifteen novels. It was published in France nearly a decade after its original publication in Britain, under the title of *Le Clan des sept* in 1958, and like *Le Club des cinq* three years prior was also published within the Bibliothèque rose by Hachette. The series had sold over 3.5 million copies by the twentieth anniversary of its French publication, fewer than that of the more popular *Five* series but still a considerable success (Soriano, 2002: 97). Perhaps due to the overwhelming popularity of the *The Famous Five,* this series has received less critical attention, and in comparison, there are few existing works that interrogate the gendered dynamics within the series in significant detail.

There are seven central characters: siblings Peter and Janet, their friends Pam, Colin, Jack, Barbara and George, and a dog named Scamper. The first book in the series, simply named *The Secret Seven* (1949), follows the seven as they investigate what they initially believe to be a kidnapping but which turns out to be the theft of a horse that is being kept in a house in their village, and it is far more directly focussed on solving a crime than on adventure, unlike *Five on a Treasure Island*. Equally unlike *The Famous Five,* where each member is characterised in a distinct and unique way, the *Seven* books are shorter, the characters are younger (Cohen, 2018: 77), and given the greater number of members, less attention is paid to the individuality of each one. This is perhaps because, as Andrew Maunder claims, the series was created 'as a way of capturing the pre-Famous Five age group' and thus the novels are less detailed, and 'not all of them terribly well-characterised' (2021: 262). Gender is thus a less explicit focus in *The Secret Seven* than in *Five on a Treasure Island*, and certainly not the site of passionate struggle as in the case of George, meaning it has comparatively received little critical discussion.

The question of gender is nonetheless present in *The Secret Seven,* but in the sense that this collective hero novel confirms and endorses existing gender roles; girls and boys are generally grouped together with specific roles that are relevant to normative gendered expectations, and the roles carried out by the boys are the ones that consistently contribute most to the forward movement of the plot. Girls tend to be supporting characters who fill the role of sidekick more than hero and support the boys in achieving the final resolution of the plot. Where *Five on a Treasure Island* and *Le Cheval sans tête* create a more complex image of gender that allows for more nuance and interpretation, *The Secret Seven* takes a more straightforward and conservative approach. One might hypothesise that the younger target audience and

shorter book length provides fewer opportunities to delve into profound discussions of gender, and moreover that the subject might have been considered by Blyton and publishers as 'too complex' for younger minds.

The number of girls and boys in the group is fairly equal, and there is no single focalising character; the novel is mostly written from a third-person omniscient perspective with no single character's thoughts or emotions being prioritised. However, as with *Five on a Treasure Island,* this novel also begins with the voice of a male character, Peter, who is the leader of the group and decides on most of the group's activities, delegates tasks, and arranges meetings. While the group was co-founded by him and his sister Janet, it is Peter who is clearly established as leader, a character described by Maunder as sometimes appearing 'dictatorial and pompous' (2021: 263). He immediately shows leadership of the group within this first sentence: '"[w]e'd better have a meeting of the Secret Seven," said Peter to Janet' (Blyton, 2000 [1949]: 1). Moreover, throughout the First Chapter, he adopts a tone of superiority that carries into later chapters, acting in a condescending manner to Janet, the co-founder of the Secret Seven, for having forgotten the password, and generally taking control. The novel equally ends with Peter taking command, as he celebrates the group and is firm on its boundaries, denying entry to his parents: '"it's the Secret *Seven*," said Peter, firmly. "The best Society in the world. Hurrah for the Secret Seven!"' (117). Despite Peter's dominance, he does allow the seven to take turns telling their own sections of the story at the end of the novel (110), recognising the teamwork that makes the solving of the mystery possible. Yet Peter is clearly the most powerful member from the beginning of the story and the structural focus on him at these key points is indicative of this being a theme throughout.

As leader, Peter dictates the messages sent out to the members of the club and writes the majority of them himself (3), creates the 'S.S.' sign that goes on the door of the Secret Seven hideout (8), and chastises other members for forgetting the password or their member badges (10): after all, 'Peter could be very strict' (11). When Jack forgets the password, and is told it by Colin, Jack implores him to not tell Peter for fear of his reaction (12). Indeed, as leader Peter takes the integrity of the club very seriously: for example, he gets angry when Colin says the password loudly. Blyton describes 'Peter's angry face' (12) and has him ask bitterly '[w]hatever are you shouting for? Do you want everyone in the village to know our password, you fool?' (12-13). In short, Peter takes the club more seriously than the others and adopts a tone of authoritarian leadership. He is the patriarch and admits this himself when he says: 'I'm the head of this society, and I say we will choose a new password' (14). Janet, meanwhile, takes on more domestic roles within the group. She cleans: 'Janet cleaned a little shelf to put the lemonade and biscuits on' (7), and also sets herself to preparing drinks for the group with the little available to her. Peter participates in this task too, but it is Janet who is shown as being most enthusiastic here, and ultimately in charge of this job:

> Mummy hadn't any lemonade to give us, and we didn't particularly want milk because we'd had lots for breakfast […] So we suddenly thought of a pot of blackcurrant jam we had! This is blackcurrant tea! (16-17).

It is especially pertinent that the mother should be evoked in this phrasing, as if suggesting Janet's inherent association with the maternal figure. Rather than a founder, she is a feminine sidekick to Peter, taking his orders and assisting where necessary.

The warm cosiness of the Secret Seven meeting place, combined with the mixed sex group of children that occupy it, means that the shed where they meet could be read as something of a domestic haven. This similarly happens to the hideout of the gang in Blyton's *The Six Bad Boys* (1951), analysed in Chapter Two. The meeting place contains seats for every member, fashioned from boxes and plant pots, 'sacks on the ground for a carpet' (6-7), and 'a little curtain at the window' (13). When the Seven meet, moreover, both male and female children comment on the place being '[w]arm and cosy, and right away from the house' (13), like a home away from home. Barbara equally comments on how 'you and Janet have made it very comfortable' (13). The Secret Seven might thus be read as something resembling a nuclear family unit, with a father figure, Peter, a mother figure, Janet, and the rest of the children being under their charge.

As if to emphasise the dominant masculine power in the narrative, it is a male member, Jack, who initially discovers the novel's mystery when searching for his club badge in Chapter Four, and thus inadvertently gets drawn into a dangerous criminal plot. Indeed, to avoid being spotted by the villains, he must hide and creep around them; 'slip[ping] quickly down from the gate, as he s[ees] a powerful torch flash out' and 'crouch[ing] behind the snowy hedge', whilst his 'heart beat[s] so hard against him that it hurt' (34). Jack's masculine hero potential is tested in this situation. Despite his fears, he must be brave, and even prepares himself to stand up to the villains before an interruption makes this unnecessary: indeed he 'was just about to get up and show himself, and say who he was' (34). Yet this does not mark the end of Jack's travails; he hears a terrifying noise, which turns out to be the horse stolen by the villains, and is nail-bitingly close to the criminals in action:

> [the] sound that sent Jack helter-skelter over the gate and up the lane as fast
>
> as his legs would take him! An angry, snorting sound, and then a curious
>
> high squeal – and then a noise of a terrific struggle, with the two men panting
>
> and grunting ferociously (35).

Jack finally breaks free and runs home, his terror palpable: '[a]ll he wanted was to get home before anything happened to him. Something was happening to somebody, that was certain, out there in the snowy lane' (35-36). Blyton underlines Jack's habitual courage and justifies his fear on this occasion: '[i]t would need a very, very brave person to go and interfere – and Jack wasn't brave at all, that night!' (36). Moreover, his fear is rapidly overcome. Once the immediate danger is over, he 'wasn't frightened anymore' (37), and his focus turns to the possibility of mystery and adventure, and to providing a good mystery for the Secret Seven to unfold. Male experiences and heroism continue to be centred, as it is a boy that comes across the first significant threat within the novel, and his discovery is the catalyst for the unfolding of the plot. This is a pattern that continues throughout the book, and onwards into other investigations carried out by the Seven.

Upon discovering the mystery, the letter Jack leaves demanding a meeting of the Seven in the previous chapter is addressed to Peter and not Janet, once again reinforcing Peter's position of control and the central position of boys in action plots (41). Peter orders Janet to alert the girls to the meeting, whilst he alerts the boys, further enforcing a gender divide in the group (42). Peter then controls the delegation of tasks for the group upon beginning the investigation of the criminal plot, and these tasks each are subtly gendered. The girls are ordered to complete tasks containing fewer demands for potentially dangerous confrontation. Barbara and Janet are told to go and investigate car-tracks (46), whilst most of the boys – Colin, Jack, and Peter –

confront the caretaker of a nearby house to try to find out more information, deciding

to bring the dog, Scamper, along '[i]n case the caretaker turns nasty!' (47). One of

the boys, George, goes along with Pam to do an investigative task, and to find out

who owns the house involved in the mystery, but broadly speaking, the tasks are

delegated along gendered lines. The girls are assistants or sidekicks who provide

information parallel to the main conflict, rarely engaging in the action. While the

girls investigate the car tracks, Barbara even feels that she is missing out on the main

excitement by being segregated from the male members of the group, suggesting her

awareness of the gendered delegation of tasks. She is eager to 'go down the lane and

join the three boys' (54), though she is powerless to change her role, and comments

on the perceived futility of her own job: 'I don't see how these things can possibly

matter' (54). Only Janet, the more feminine and maternal member of the group as

seen in her previous organisation of the gang's hideout, takes the task seriously. She

takes a sketch of the vehicle tracks, which she assumes may be useful. Her eagerness

confirms the male dominance of the group, as she tells Barbara 'firmly' that she

would 'like to have *some*thing to show the boys!' (54). When Barbara and Janet go

to join the boys, they see the caretaker, who angrily rushes towards them. They flee

at this first sign of danger, not bothering to find their friends, and reacting with

stereotypically feminine panic.

When the group reconvenes to report their findings, Janet is praised by the

boys for her work in taking a drawing of the vehicle tracks. She seems pleased at

having been praised by Peter and Colin, becoming 'red in the face' (67) and

'glow[ing] with pride' (69). Janet is again valued based on her worth to male

characters towards the end of the novel: 'Peter looked at her and smiled proudly. She

was a fine sister to have – a really good member of the Secret Seven!' (113). Janet's

consistent need to please the boys is indicative again of the expectation that women be pleasing to others, as equally evoked in *Five on a Treasure Island*; George is considered rude and unladylike for not wishing to be agreeable to everyone she meets.

In the following chapter, Blyton describes how the three boys visit the house to ask the caretaker questions pertaining to the mystery, and the boys are presented as more intrepid than the female characters. The caretaker immediately becomes hostile when he sees the boys, and goes to 'fling [the window] open in a rage' (62): '[y]ou clear out. I won't have kids round here. You'll be breaking windows before I know where I am!' (62). Yet the boys are brave and stick to their guns, unlike the girls at the end of the previous chapter: '"[n]o we shan't," shouted Jack, determined to make the deaf old man hear. "We'll just collect our dog and go. Sorry he came in here"' (62). The boys are persistent in their attempts to gain information from the man despite the caretaker's anger, denying their own wrongdoing in the pursuit of justice: 'I bet it was burglars or something last night' (63). The caretaker is sceptical, but Peter continues, asking questions carefully to try to gain information, like a true detective: '[d]idn't you hear anything at all last night? If burglars *were* trying to get in, wouldn't you hear them?' (63). They eventually succeed in gaining useful information, but the situation once again turns hostile when their dog, Scamper, approaches and the man, feeling threatened, tries to hurt him.

When the group reconvene, much of the discussion is dominated by the boys, and when it comes to finally confronting the villains, only the boys are present, something accepted as natural and logical by the group. George asks, '[w]hy shouldn't all four of us boys go and wait in hiding?' (73), a suggestion that is scarcely contested. Though Pam protests: '[c]an't we girls come too?' Barbara is

quick to admit that she does not want to, and Peter quickly explains that 'seven is too many' and four gives 'more chance of success' (74). No explanation is offered for why this group must be made entirely of boys and the mild protests end quickly. In fact, one might wonder why Blyton created a group of seven children if only four of them should be involved in the main action of the plot; even the dog, Scamper, goes with the boys, yet still the girls remain absent.

That night, the boys put together an elaborate ruse, dress up as snowmen and stand in the field opposite to watch the villains, unravel the mystery, and help any potential victims. This task proves extremely dangerous, risking discovery by potentially violent criminals, which perhaps provides some 'justification' for why Blyton, consciously or not, decided to exclude the female characters from the climax of the story. Indeed, the girls are all safely in bed when the boys return from their mission. The only girl to have much of a role at all in this final mission is Janet, the mother figure of the group, whose only job is distinctly feminine, reminiscent of a mother dressing her children: to make the white skull caps that the boys wear for the mission, and help them dress up as snowmen (78). The boys, meanwhile, expose themselves to extreme peril, sneaking past criminals in a dark and terrifying house. Upon being discovered by the crooks, Peter and Jack's bravery is tested; they become scared and overpowered, and are 'picked up […] at once' and given 'a rough shake' (92) before being locked in a cupboard (93). Eventually, the other two boys come to rescue them, all while the girls stay in bed and play no part in the climax of the plot, despite their roles in the unfolding of the mystery. All children are rewarded for working out the criminal plot, but ultimately the story is almost entirely about boys and not girls, who have minimal participation in the action.

In conclusion, *The Secret Seven* is a text in which the children's detective series narrative, format and structure are used to reinforce normative gender ideologies and centre heroic masculinity. Unlike the previous Blyton novel, the collective group of characters does not translate to any discernible equality within the main body of the text. Indeed, the gendering of *The Secret Seven* is less complex and less thematised than that of *Five on a Treasure Island*, the novel operating on a general basis of male, masculine heroes taking on dangerous tasks, venturing out bravely, while the girls on the whole work as sidekicks, subordinate and assisting rather than taking charge, and staying safe in the domestic sphere. In this way, the novel uses the vogue of a commercial, gender neutral, repetitive serial form as a means of luring in readers of both sexes before reinforcing normative roles. This 1949 text is a perfect demonstration of the return to conservative ideologies of gender dominant in the post-war period. Leadership roles, important decisions, and rulemaking are taken on by boys, usually Peter. When the girls do have jobs as part of the investigation, they are usually feminine, either due to their secondary importance or because they are in some sense domestic. Despite the title's implication of collective heroism, the function of the female protagonists here is essentially that of a sidekick. This novel, together with my analysis of *Five on a Treasure Island,* demonstrates the complex landscape of gender in Britain during the 1940s, with some resistance to gender roles in characters such as George and the slight protests by the girls of the Seven, but a strong and often dominant conservative tradition still apparent in terms of gender ideologies. As the novel was published in 1949, seven years later than *The Famous Five*, the gap between publication dates may speak for the marked difference between the texts. Perhaps the upheavals of the war crystallise within the complex questioning of gender seen within *The Famous*

Five, while *The Secret Seven*, arises out of a post-war return to tradition and structure. Given the ideological positioning of children and children's literature in the post-war period, this could come from some level of caution about what one teaches children, best articulated in the French law brought into effect that same year. Though these texts are British, it makes sense that this increased conservatism could be representative of a shared desire across Europe to monitor content given to children, and to return to the safe familiarity of traditional gender roles.

Le Cheval sans tête (1955)

Le Cheval sans tête (1955; 'the headless horse') is the best-known, standalone children's detective book by Paul Berna, published by Générale Publicité within Bibliothèque Rouge et Or, which was intended for older children (around ten to sixteen). Inspired by the film adaptation of German detective story *Emil und die Detektive* (1929) by Erich Kästner, Berna produced 'un des tout premiers romans policiers français publiés pour la jeunesse' (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 4).[29] It achieved best-seller status with its English translation *A Hundred Million Francs* (1957), was widely celebrated (paragraph 6) and was even adapted into a film by Disney in 1963 (Brown, 2008: 273). Janine Despinette noted in 1984 that the novel was, at the time of writing, the only winner of the new Grand Prix de littérature enfantine that was still continuously appearing in libraries and bookshops decades after its publication (cited in Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 6). Not only this, but the novel stirred discussion as a potential example of a high quality literature for children, with Claude Bron claiming in 1972 that the novel could be worthy of being named 'Grande littérature' ('great literature'; 44; cited in Nières-Chevrel, 2019:

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[29] 'One of the very first French police novels published for children'.

paragraph 67). Isabelle Nières-Chevrel substantiates this claim by confirming that reading the novel, 'c'est faire une authentique expérience de lecture littéraire' (paragraph 68).[30]

The story follows a group of children whose favourite toy, a headless horse on wheels, is stolen, and depicts their quest to find it. Berna produced other stories featuring characters from the same novel, for example *Le Commissaire Sinet et le mystère de l'autoroute sud* (*Commissioner Sinet and the Southern Highway Mystery*; 1967; Hahn, 2015). While it is not part of a series in the style of Blyton's texts, Berna's novel can be profitably compared with the works discussed above. It shares many of the characteristics of the period's children's detective fiction explored above, and follows an independent group of children pursuing a mystery. At the same time, Berna's novels also provide a challenge to many of the attitudes and 'injonctions éditoriales' ('publishing demands') of the post-war period (Demougin, 2011a: paragraph 4), and *Le Cheval sans tête* constitutes a site for this struggle; according to Françoise Demougin the author simultaneously echoed and contested certain positions in publishing at this time, unwilling to simplify the world for the sake of his young readers and subverting some of the traits of comparable works of the period (paragraph 4). The mysteries within Berna's novels rarely bring with them glory or fortunes, for example (paragraph 4). This is evident within the focal text, and ties in with the deprived environment in which the novel is set.

The key distinction between the work of Berna and that of Blyton is the relative grittiness of Berna's world, with the characters of *Le Cheval sans tête* sharing a far different background (Brown, 2008: 272). Despite being published in 1955, the same year as *Le Club des cinq*, Berna's novel is set in a working-class

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[30] 'It's undertaking an authentic experience of literary reading.'

environment, and maintains an exclusive focus on a group of children living in an economically deprived area, a 'banlieue' (a suburb of a city), and their efforts to thrive there. Thus, Berna 'inscrit son roman dans un temps et un espace contemporains', (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 8);[31] such areas had been expanded hugely during the 1950s, in response to the housing shortage in the wake of the devastation caused by World War Two, an expansion which led to the development of shantytowns ('les bidonvilles') and slums on the edges of Paris. The shortage was equally aggravated by the Baby Boom and increasing immigration; during Les Trente Glorieuses the French state encouraged immigration from former colonies as a means of responding to a shortage of workers, leading to high immigrant populations in the banlieues. While not all banlieues are working-class and deprived, the ones described in *Le Cheval sans tête* are. In Brown's words, the children:

> live in the tenements of Louvigny, a working-class district of Paris that is close to the railway line and the shacks of ragpickers and bottle collectors. Their freedom of movement is limited to the streets, the large patch of waste ground where an old engine lies rusting, and the ramshackle and deserted industrial buildings nearby. (2008: 272)

Indeed, Berna portrays a reality removed from the comfort of Blyton's works and is an author who is '[p]eu enclin […] à "euphémiser" le réel ([par exemple] par des happy end d'où la réalité sociale est absente' (Demougin, 2011a: paragraph 4).[32] Berna mixes real and invented toponyms from southern Paris (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 8) and in so doing further embeds his fictional story within a real

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[31] '[I]nscribes his novel in a contemporary time and space'.
[32] 'Little inclined […] to "euphemise" the real ([for example] by happy endings where social reality is absent'.

microcosm of French society and a specific economic moment. The action of the

novel is, moreover, almost entirely centred on a rail operating centre, and the fathers

of the central characters are firmly situated within working class industries

(paragraph 12-13). The central characters communicate as one would expect

residents of this specific milieu to speak, and not as polished characters from a novel,

lending the story further verisimilitude to its historical moment (paragraph 15-17).

Isabelle Nières-Chevrel argues that the novel is innovative in this regard, despite the

mixed reception it received among professionals of children's publishing (paragraph

17). Such receptions recall

> l'écart qui s'est creusé à partir des années 1920 [...] entre l'entrée de la
>
> langue orale, populaire, argotique dans la littérature pour adultes et les
>
> attendus conservateurs qui dominent l'édition pour la jeunesse dont une des
>
> missions est de 'polir' les jeunes lecteurs en leur offrant des modèles
>
> d'écriture et de langue. (paragraph 17)[33]

Equally, the omnipresence of urban environments along with nocturnal scenes,

smoke, grey skies and other monochromatic imagery that is reminiscent of a black

and white film (paragraph 35) further embed the tale within its dusty and deprived

industrial working class setting.

The socioeconomic background of the children, I argue, impacts upon the

novel's depiction of gender; their economic status, and their more limited means in

the world, helps to dissolve gendered boundaries and expectations. This leads to

different gendered relations to those seen among the wealthier children in many

Blyton novels, in which the children possess an 'effortless sense of superiority over

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[33] '[T]he gap that widened from the 1920s [...] between the entry of oral, popular, slang language into
literature for adults and the conservative expectations that dominate children's publishing, of which
one of the missions is to 'polish' young readers by offering them models of writing and language'.

the lower orders, who know their place and keep to it' (Gillett, 2020: 19). Indeed, Blyton's novels:

> appear to promote the middle-class heteronormative views prevalent in Britain at the time, which regulated the behaviour of women in respect of what were considered appropriate middle-class domestic roles and activities for women, such as raising children and managing the household, rather than following a career (Coetzee, 2011: 85).

On the whole, Blyton's oeuvre does work in a far more middle-class and socially conservative environment than Berna's mystery. The shared poverty of Berna's characters brings about a further necessity to collaborate, make do (in the post-war spirit), and share, which in turn leads to a lowering of gendered barriers and expectations. Within this environment normative gender roles are still evident, but their impact does not have the same exclusionary effect that they have in other novels such as *The Secret Seven*. The group of children is diverse and there is a true spirit of collaboration in which all efforts are necessary, and the centrality of masculinity and heroism thus becomes interrogated. Equally, it is within this environment that the hero role becomes reimagined, with a potential for a feminised iteration appearing through the character of Marion. Ultimately, Berna's novel challenges the standard ideals associated with the masculine hero role, and this predominantly occurs through the poverty of the banlieues in which the novel is set. It does this whilst representing the gendered structures and expectations of 1950s France.

It is important to quickly establish the ways in which *Le Cheval sans tête* engages with normative views of gender and masculinity to get the full scope of what Berna's novel achieves. The mixed sex group is on a basic level predominantly

a white male space headed by a boy named Gaby, who is quickly established as leader with the first sentence of the book declaring the gang to be '[l]a bande à Gaby' (Berna, 1995 [1955]: 7; 'Gaby's band'). This is similar to both Blyton novels where male characters are also the first to speak to establish underlying male dominance. Likewise, many of the scenes in the book, for example at the market towards the end of the First Chapter (22-23), are focalised from Gaby's perspective. Gaby decides the rules and activities, and fulfils other important leadership tasks, often to suit his own agenda. Indeed, Berna initially explains that Gaby imposed a rule of accepting nobody over the age of twelve, with the reasoning that 'on devient bête comme ses pieds à partir de douze ans' (10).[34] Yet, with the age restriction threatening Gaby's own membership in the group, he lifts it secretly (10). Though at the end it is a collective decision, articulated (with authority) by Marion, that reaching twelve is not in fact a 'raison pour nous séparer' (215),[35] it is Gaby who mainly guides all such decisions and generally is in command throughout the novel. When the horse is later stolen, he directs the other children as to their tasks, and they return to him for debriefing. Equally, when the band discovers new information that may explain the theft of the horse, Gaby commands Fernand to go immediately home to retrieve the relevant items (111); he often forbids the group from doing certain things without his authority (119), and he takes leadership in dividing up the group to complete different tasks (59). His leadership also seems to include other typically masculine values such as bravery, as he holds the record for the longest ride on the horse without breaking, at 35 seconds, making him something of a legend (10). As with Blyton's novels, the initial structuring of the narrative and the framing

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[34] '[Y]ou become daft as a brush from twelve years old.'
[35] '[R]eason for us to separate'.

techniques thus present an expectation of masculine dominance that is suggestive of the wider conservative attitudes of the 1950s.

The second-in-command is Fernand, who is the proud owner of the headless horse and thus has an elevated position in the group. He is the second to be introduced in the story, also in the very first sentence, when Berna tells us that the whole group are 'réunie […] devant la maison de Fernand Douin' (7).[36] Fernand is the character who the reader sees most often by himself; at the end of the First Chapter, the narrative follows Fernand to his home, where he discusses repairing the horse with his father (29-31). Gaby and Fernand, as their early introduction into the story suggests, are two of the main characters of the novel, and the ones that play the biggest roles in advancing the early narrative.

The boys of the group mostly dominate the story, with even the more important girls within the group referred to in a diminutive way; Marion, an important older girl within the group, is for example named 'la petite Marion' (34; 'little Marion'). Bonbon, the youngest boy of the group, also has a more important place in the story than some of the girls, and it is he, rather than one of the older girls, who undertakes the important job of lookout at the end of the horse's route, with the aim of watching for oncoming traffic and thus avoiding collisions.

There are some gender stereotypes reinforced within the dynamics and roles played by the members of the group (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 26). Upon discovering their new hideout place, the children set about making it more homely, and this domestication of the wild space leads to some gender stereotyping. This occurs in a way that is largely reminiscent of Janet, the domestic goddess in *The Secret Seven.* Boys carry out the 'building' work, constructing a small make-do oven

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[36] '[R]eunited […] in front of the house of Fernand Douin'.

to cook with, and girls, namely Marion, bring items that might be used to cook (100). Gaby brings provisions, as if fulfilling some hunter-gatherer role (102). Meanwhile, the girls do the majority of the 'cooking' in their hideout: 'Marion mit une casserolée d'eau sur le feu pour préparer le bouillon' (100).[37] The two other girls dish up the food, meaning the preparation and serving of food is done entirely by the female members of the group: Berthe and Mélie 'firent le service avec adresse et célérité' (104).[38]

Yet the acknowledgements of gender normativity are not the main driving force for the novel's plot or intrigue. Indeed, the main momentum of the novel comes from radical moments in which both boys *and* girls act as heroes, and in which masculine expectations are discarded in the name of collaboration. This, as already mentioned, happens primarily through the environment in which the novel is set, in which the children are more self-reliant and independent than their contemporaries in Blyton's England, bonded by a mutual need to thrive. In their deprivation, the children unite over the toy horse, which binds the group together in solidarity, demands that the children mix, share equally regardless of sex, and sometimes allows for the girls to become daring leaders rather than the boys. Although the headless, hand-me-down horse frequently breaks during the children's antics (9), as disadvantaged members of society they are united in this 'sport exclusif et farouche' which serves to reinforce 'la grande solidarité qui unissait les membres du clan' (10).[39] Fernand, on the Christmas morning when he receives it, is described as being 'muet et paralysé de ravissement' (8)[40] because he is so awestruck by the

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[37] 'Marion put a pan of water on the fire to prepare the broth.'
[38] '[S]erved up quickly and skilfully'.
[39] '[T]his fierce, exclusive sport' and 'the great solidarity that united the members of the clan'.
[40] '[M]ute and paralysed with delight'.

horse. Yet even as it unites the children, the horse itself, in its broken state, speaks of the lack experienced by each of them.

It is important initially to consider what the horse symbolises within the novel and how it can open avenues for a gendered reading. On the one hand, the state of the horse is a symbol of the children's lack of power and status in the world, one which binds them together in pursuit of enjoyment, with no heed paid to the judgement of others. The children in the novel, Nières-Chevrel rightly identifies, are united *for* and *by* this horse, and are, at least initially, not united *against* anything as one might expect in a detective novel (2019: paragraph 19). The children do not explicitly go seeking crimes like the Seven, but rather Berna's youths solve them out of a necessity to retrieve what unites them. The horse is so laughably dilapidated that it is considered shameful; at the end of the novel, this is one of the barriers that the children face in recovering the headless horse. Indeed, when the criminals are caught, they are in fact too embarrassed to admit to stealing such a seemingly pointless and sorry item. As police officer Sinet tells the unhappy children in the final chapter of the novel, the criminals confess to having stolen one hundred million francs – 'ils en sont même assez fiers' (199) – yet the horse is something they regret bitterly: 'ils ne veulent pas entendre parler du cheval […] Le cheval les poursuit comme un remords' (199).[41] Sinet explains that the criminals do not wish to pick up more years in prison for having stolen such a worthless item: 'ils n'ont pas envie de ramasser cinq ans de plus pour un cheval de quat' sous...' (200).[42] The adult officer specifically vocalises this to the children as a means of bridging the gap to their 'innocent' worldview.

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[41] '[T]hey are even quite proud of it' and 'they don't want to hear about the horse […] the horse follows them like remorse.'

[42] '[T]hey don't want to pick up another five years for a horse of four cents.'

Indeed for the children, the horse is the centre of their universe and works to remind us of the way that their economic environment binds them together, playing a 'rôle fédérateur' ('federating role') within the story (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 20). The novel is thus founded upon a principle of opposition between value and appearance (paragraph 45) that further brings into relief the background of the children and its effect for their shared behaviours and values. At points throughout the novel, the children are presented with the opportunity to sell the horse for a lot of money, as it contains the key to finding the one hundred million francs recently stolen by criminals. In the Second Chapter, when the horse has just been repaired, Fernand's father recalls having been stopped by men who offered him five thousand, and then ten thousand francs for the horse; like most other adults in the story, he is confused, because the horse is materially worth little: '[j]'ai cru qu'il voulait plaisanter; mais non, c'était sérieux' (40).[43] Monsieur Douin's first reaction is to believe that Marion and Fernand, present at the time, are interested in selling the horse for this money, and he swiftly replies: '[m]on garçon, il faut bien te mettre dans la tête que ton cheval ne vaut pas ça. Il ne vaut rien!...Rien!' (41).[44] Of course, Fernand is not interested in the money, but is rather concerned at being able to keep his greatest treasure, the horse. '[D]'un air rageur' ('angrily'), he replies: '[l]e cheval est à moi […] Je ne le vendrais pas pour dix mille francs, non même pour le double. Il peut toujours me courir après, ton bonhomme!' (41).[45] When the stolen money is found, the children pay little attention to it: it is the horse, their source of joy, that interests them more than the lure of money and power. When the children are

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[43] 'I believed he was having a laugh; but no, he was serious.'
[44] '[M]y boy, you must get it in your head that your horse is not worth that. It's worth nothing!...Nothing!'
[45] 'The horse is mine […] I would not sell it for ten thousand francs, not even for double that. Your chap's not going to get anywhere with me!'

accused of theft at various points throughout the novel, Berna is quick to confirm

that the children would never steal. As for Gaby, 'il en était incapable, et il n'y avait

jamais eu de voleurs dans sa bande' (20).[46] When confronted at the end of the novel

by the press, who are desperate to get a sensational story out of the children, the

children once again confirm that they would never do such a thing. In a

disappointing turn for the excited journalists, all of the children, besides Bonbon

who took a single item, empty their pockets to reveal nothing (183-185). In rejecting

the money in favour of their treasure, the horse, one might argue that the children not

only maintain an image of innocence but equally they reject patriarchal, capitalist

power structures that prioritise monetary value in favour of a more intimate, personal

kind of value. The children's upbringing becomes an important factor in their

rejection of the status quo.

The dissolution of gender norms seems evident even from the beginning of

the novel, the initial scenes depicting the group about their dangerous daily activities,

with the girls throwing themselves into the activities just as much as the boys: '[l]es

filles se lançaient dans la pente comme des enragées, leurs cheveux fous rebroussés

par le vent de la course' (42).[47] The girls seem to equally enjoy the somewhat

dangerous activity, and are not told that their behaviour is unladylike or

inappropriate at any point. They each eagerly await their turn, in particular Marion,

who is described as having experienced many injuries because of her daredevilry,

having 'renversé le vieux M. Gédéon en traversant la rue Cécile' (7), and pages later

as having 'laissé deux dents dans le tunnel du Ponceau' (9).[48] The girls are equally

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[46] 'He was incapable of it, and there had never been thieves in his gang.'
[47] 'The girls launched themselves crazily into the hill, their wild hair brushed back by the wind of the race.'
[48] '[B]owled over the old Mr Gédéon as he crossed rue Cécile' and 'left two teeth in the Ponceau tunnel'.

excited by the concept of a fast and dangerous ride on the horse, with Amélie

enthusiastically declaring that 'Tatave a fait un de ces vols planés, il fallait voir ça!'

(14).[49] None of the girls miss out on their chances to veer dangerously down the

street on the rickety horse, and there are few conversations about gendered

expectations that appear in other similar texts, such as *The Famous Five*'s references

to George's preference for activities that are supposedly for boys. A similar regard

for gender norms is visible in *Les Six Compagnons* (1961) by Paul-Jacques Bonzon;

before the boys decide to let Mady join their gang, they express extreme reluctance

simply because of her gender, and it is only when she is declared acceptable that she

is admitted. Berna's novel makes fewer specific references to the gendering of the

children and how this impacts their activities and behaviours, and the main emphasis

is on the togetherness of the group. Nières-Chevrel similarly notes that there is no

significant sexed difference in the language through which both boys and girls are

visually presented (2019: paragraph 26).

There are a number of other occurrences where the children of the banlieue

appear less constrained by normative models of sex roles. Some examples include

when Fernand explains that Mélie, one of the girls of the group, has seen that the

picture house near where they live is showing a 'grand film de cow-boys' (35; 'great

cowboy film'). Cowboys and action films might be considered subjects of male

enthusiasm, a concept similarly reinforced in the cinema escapades of the boys in

The Six Bad Boys in Chapter Two of this thesis, but it is Mélie who voices interest in

the film and mentions it to her friend. Later, a shady man from the market, Roublot,

who is involved in the theft of the horse, offers Fernand an electric train as a

consolation gift. While this is a considerable prize for a disadvantaged child of the

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[49] 'Tatave did one of those glides, you should have seen it!'

time, Fernand completely rejects it: '[p]euh! riposta Fernand d'un ton dédaigneux. Les copains et moi, nous avons passé l'âge de jouer au petit train. Des locomotives, des vraies, il y en a plein les voies de l'autre côté de la rue' (88).[50] Whilst Fernand does cite age and proximity to railroads as a reason for rejecting the offer, it is interesting nonetheless that a young impoverished boy would reject such an explicitly gendered toy. There is also far less insistence on the strength and resilience of boys than is seen in other books of this time: it is interesting that only the boys, and not the girls, cry within the novel (specifically Gaby [210-211], Fernand [30; 64] and Bonbon [15; who is however the youngest]). It is unusual and somewhat radical that a book would depict boys crying and not girls, when gender norms typically depict girls as more emotional and sensitive, and boys as tougher, or as needing to appear tougher.

Berna's text might be considered something of a radical working-class re-envisioning of the typical Blyton text. Unlike the middle-class white hero groups of Blyton's texts, Berna's text focusses on an economically deprived collective with a more diverse cast of characters, including a black boy, like Criquet Lariquet, a Spanish boy named Juan, the overweight boy Tatave, children of a range of different ages, and both boys and girls filling leadership roles. The inclusion of a black character and a Spanish character makes contextual sense considering the post-war immigration from French African colonies, and Spanish members of the immigrant population who had fled Franco's Spain at the end of the Civil War. The diversity of the heroes can therefore be considered an accurate representation of a cross section of the French banlieue population at this time. Berna's novel takes Blyton's detective

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[50] 'Pooh! Fernand retaliated in a disdainful tone. My friends and me, we've passed the age of playing with little trains. Locomotives, real ones, there are plenty of those on the tracks at the other side of the road.'

formula beyond the stereotypical all-white spaces in children's detective, mystery, and adventure novels in its inclusion of a diverse cast of heroes and with this comes a reimagining of heroism, gender roles and masculinity.

One of the main focal points for the analysis of this novel must be Marion, a strong tomboy girl and the group's treasurer (17). She sharply draws into question the concepts of heroism and masculinity and how the two interrelate, and she does this in a comparable and yet distinct way to George of *Five on a Treasure Island.* In a testament to her power as a truly heroic character, she has been described as a '[m]agnifique héroïne, méconnue et sans descendance' (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 29).[51] Marion is the third character to be mentioned within the novel, under the title of 'la fille aux chiens' (7; 'the dog girl'), and she is a key and complex character who takes on many of the leadership responsibilities and guides the group through stormy waters when trouble arises. She frequently commands the narrative focus and attention of her clanmates, and demonstrates many of the typical boy hero qualities, as a determined, resilient, decisive and brave leader. She is someone who the boys of the group, namely Gaby and Fernand, go to for advice, and she is mature, serious and respected by all. When Gaby mentions being hungry, for example, the whole group turns to Marion to await her assessment of the situation: '[i]ls se retournèrent vers Marion, qui était la trésorière de la bande' (17).[52] When Tatave breaks the horse in Chapter One, Marion does not laugh with the others. Instead, her thoughts go to considering the seriousness of the damage: '[t]ous les gosses se mirent à rigoler, sauf Marion et Fernand' (16).[53] Indeed, in many unexpected situations it is Marion who exercises leadership and becomes the hero. She has a

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[51] 'Magnificent heroine, unrecognised and without descendants'.
[52] '[T]hey turned towards Marion, who was the treasurer of the band.'
[53] '[A]ll of the children started laughing, except for Marion and Fernand.'

significant amount of power for a girl character, and demonstrates immense bravery,

a certain aggression in situations that call for it, and tenacity in the pursuit of justice.

Marion admirably uses her authority to bring the band back together after the

theft of the horse. She is quick to remark that they must find a new activity, as she

fears the disappearance of the horse will lead to the breakup of the group, and

promptly commands the narrative, declaring a search for a new activity:

> je vais essayer de trouver quelque chose pour remplacer le cheval. Il faut
>
> réagir. Si chacun commence à laisser tomber les autres après l'école, la bande
>
> sera bientôt réduite à zéro...Ce serait dommage! Il n'y a pas dix gosses dans
>
> tout le patelin qui se soutiennent autant que nous. C'est une force! (85).[54]

Indeed, Marion is a decisive and capable girl who takes action when her friends will

not and who maturely and perceptively describes the strengths of the band besides

their attachment to the horse. Moreover, Marion succeeds in finding a replacement

for the horse and she is thus largely responsible for keeping the band together; she

finds an abandoned building whilst exploring, and the group name it their hideout

(99) or 'notre club' in Gaby's words (100). It is partially this that keeps them

together despite their sadness at their loss. Marion acts the determined leader and

hero, solving the issues that arise for the group and taking responsibility.

Marion more closely resembles the detective hero than any of the group's

other members and is 'la figure héroïque' of the novel (Nières-Chevrel, 2019:

paragraph 27; the heroic figure'). She is hugely perceptive, with eyes described as

'[d]es yeux de chat' ('cat's eyes') that enable her to 'se guider partout sans lumière'

(126).[55] Berna describes her as a 'fille clairvoyante' (126; 'clairvoyant girl') and

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[54] 'I will try to find something to replace the horse. We must act. If everyone begins to give up on the others after school, the band will soon be reduced to zero...It would be terrible! There are no ten kids in all the village who support each other as much as us. We're a force!'
[55] '[G]uide herself everywhere without light'.

'rien n'échappait à son regard perçant', as we see in the market scene when she detects that Roublot, an old nemesis of the children 'a peur [de quelque chose]' (24).[56] She is, moreover, generally one of the first to spot potential trouble; in Chapter Two, like Fernand, she witnesses two suspicious looking men nearby (43), and the following chapter is able to perfectly describe the men who stole the headless horse, when all other descriptions by the children have been unhelpful: '[elle] les croqua en deux mots, de la façon la plus saisissante: - Pas-Beau, le grand, avait une sale tête de renard […] Pépé, le plus petit, une sale tête de bouledogue' (76).[57]

With a ready band of loyal dogs ready to help her, Marion also makes a formidable opponent in dangerous situations. As she explains to Fernand: '[q]uand je siffle en traversant le Faubourg-Bacchus, j'en ai tout de suite cinq douzaines dans mes jupes' (28).[58] In heroic fashion, Marion saves the day on several occasions by calling upon her dogs. In the Second Chapter, when the children are approached by men wishing to buy the horse from them, Marion scares them away. Hugo, 'le braque' (a 'hunting dog') attacks one of the men, whose pain and fear is quickly evident: '[il] se mit à hurler de terreur en gigotant sous les morsures' (48).[59] On the next page, Marion recalls her dogs, and the brutality of their attacks is evident, with one dog described as having 'babines rouges de sang' ('chops red with blood'), and the men soon leave, 'boitant' (49; 'limping'). In the Sixth Chapter, moreover, it is Marion who saves the day when the children are ambushed by the criminals who stole the horse; she takes control and sneaks out of the building (142) to round up her

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[56] '[N]othing escaped her piercing gaze' and 'is scared [of something]'.
[57] '[She] cracked them in two words, in the most striking manner: -Ugly, the big one, had a nasty foxy face […] Gramps, the little one, had a nasty bulldog face.'
[58] 'When I whistle crossing the Faubourg-Bacchus, I instantly have five dozen in my skirts.'
[59] 'He started howling in terror, squirming under the bite.'

dogs (150-156), who then save the children from the danger of the criminals until the police arrive.

Demougin describes Marion as a 'garçon manqué' ('lacking boy'), stating that in Berna's works as opposed to those of his wife, Jany Saint-Marcoux, boys are front and centre (2011b: 95). I dispute this claim because it suggests that Marion only mirrors masculine behaviours and is not feminine; rather, I believe that the character is interesting because her heroism is perhaps the answer to the question of what might constitute a truly feminine heroism. Indeed, 'Marion réunit des compétences "féminines" de sorcière-guérisseuse et une fonction "masculine" de chef de meute' (Nières-Chevrel, 2019: paragraph 29),[60] which might be thought impossible given the masculine structuring of the hero narrative. Her skilful healing and empathy for other people and creatures highlights a more stereotypically feminine aspect of her character, but one that is turned into a source of power in leadership and in conflict. Marion cares for ill, abandoned dogs in the area and rehomes them to the best of her ability in what Berna terms a 'humble apprentissage de la bonté' (19; 'humble apprenticeship of goodness'): 'Marion les recueillait sans s'effaroucher de leurs maux ni de leurs plaies, les retapait à force de soins, avec une habileté de sorcière, et les casait chez les cheminots de la vieille ville' (18).[61] Marion takes on a surrogate mother role here, caring for the dogs as if they are her own and in their very darkest moments, and there are moments throughout the novel where the affection of the dogs towards their carer is evident; in this act she shares remarkable qualities with Tidou of Bonzon's *Les Six Compagnons*. When standing in front of her house, the narrator remarks that '[l]es douze chiens de Marion

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[60] 'Marion reunites "feminine" competences of witch-healer and a "masculine" function as pack leader.'

[61] 'Marion collected them without being alarmed at their illnesses and wounds, made them better with care, with the skill of a sorceress, and housed them with the railway workers of the old town.'

gémissaient de tendresse au fond du jardinet' (85).[62] Within the same scene,

Marion's general empathy becomes evident in her offer to train a dog for her friend,

Fernand, who has been upset since the theft of the horse. Before hugging her friend,

she tells him that with a dog, '[t]u te sentirais moins seul à la maison […] Et puis, un

bon chien à la maison, ça fait réfléchir les gens' (86).[63] Marion clearly understands

the empathy that caring for other creatures brings, and expresses this here to

Fernand, all whilst taking action to resolve a situation and offering her care towards

him too.

      In the process of healing, Marion introduces a training mechanism that

ensures the dogs' loyalty to her, providing her with extra force when she requires it:

'[e]lle ne les relâchait jamais sans leur avoir fait subir un petit dressage très doux qui

les mettait à sa dévotion: Marion avait un coup de sifflet particulier que les éclopés

n'oubliaient pas' (18-19).[64] Marion is not only strong, adventurous and capable, all

qualities typically associated with heroic masculinity, but equally she is caring and

nurturing; indeed, Berna describes her as embodying 'la conscience de la bande'

(126; 'the conscience of the band'). This mixture of both stereotypically nurturing

feminine and heroic masculine features is best demonstrated towards the end of the

novel: '-[s]i mes chiens avaient mangé le sixième [criminel], il en serait sûrement

resté quelque chose, ajoutait Marion avec un sourire angélique' (174).[65] I would

argue that this quotation perfectly embodies both sides of Marion: the sweet, caring,

serious girl who always wishes to do the right thing, and her more violent tendencies

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[62] 'Marion's twelve dogs whined with tenderness in the little garden.'

[63] 'You will feel less alone at the house […] And then, a good dog in the house, it makes people think.'

[64] 'She never released them before having made them undergo some gentle training which made them devoted to her: Marion had a particular whistle that the lame dogs did not forget.'

[65] 'If my dogs had eaten the sixth [criminal], there would surely have been something left, added Marion with an angelic smile.'

when in pursuit of justice, as well as her mischievousness. The way Marion gains

loyalty from her dogs draws the masculine power and authority of her character

towards more stereotypically feminine tendencies, and into a possible imagining of

feminine heroics.

Like *Five on a Treasure Island,* Berna's *Le Cheval sans tête* is a text that

reflects the complex gendered landscape in the post-war period by at once providing

gender neutral structures and engaging girls in heroic roles, while equally reinforcing

an underlying masculine dominance. Like the other two texts, there are structural

suggestions of masculinity in the group being, for the most part, headed by male

characters and the plot largely stemming from events happening to the male

characters. For example, a male character receives the horse that becomes the centre

of the plot. What differentiates Berna's text from Blyton's, however, is that the

female heroism portrayed within Berna's text radically decentres masculinity within

heroism by creating a form of it that is reliant upon feminine values and skills,

namely caregiving and healing. In so doing, Berna's text probes deeply at the

meaning of masculinity and heroism and their interrelations. Moreover, there is a

marked contrast between the situation of the French text within a deprived, inner-city

banlieue, versus the middle-class spaces that populate Blyton's novels. The shared

poverty of the group is another unifying factor that helps to erase gendered

boundaries, meaning the children are forced to work together and share in a way that

the privileged children of the British texts are not. The novel reflects patriarchal

structures and normativity still dominant in French society in the 1950s, while

suggesting changes occurring underneath the surface; Simone de Beauvoir's *Le

Deuxième Sexe* was published six years ahead of *Le Cheval sans tête*, while women

had contributed to the war effort in important ways. In the decades that would

follow, and especially in the wake of Mai 1968, feminist publishers would produce anti-sexist children's fiction, for example Éditions des Femmes and Sourire qui Mord (Heywood, 2020: 207).

Conclusion

Each of the texts analysed within this chapter utilises a popular narrative form and in so doing interrogates the boundaries of masculinity and provides a glimpse into the wider gendered landscape of the mid-century. The group when constituted as a central character becomes an arena for questioning the 'essence' of masculinity within two of the texts. The lack of a single, explicitly gendered protagonist within the text itself and as signposted within its title – instead replaced by a group of friends who are all central characters – translates to both male and female characters becoming enfranchised within the text itself. The best examples of this are George of *Five on a Treasure Island* and Marion of *Le Cheval sans tête*. These characters take on arguably as much leadership within their groups as the male characters. While George embodies heroic masculinity as well as any boy, Marion's heroism is distinctly and radically feminine, which I would argue makes Berna's text less conservative in terms of its presentation of masculinity; rather than simply shifting accepted masculine behaviours onto a female character, it offers a complete reinterpretation of a masculine archetype in a feminine light.

Why might this be the case? Berna's text was published more than a decade after *Five on a Treasure Island*, and six years after the appearance of Beauvoir's vital text that acted as catalyst for later Second Wave ideas. Equally, it could be argued that the differing experiences of Britain and France during war, and particularly the feminisation of France during the Occupation, contributed to a feminine imagining

of heroism; as will be visible in Chapter Three, France abounded with texts centring feminised and romanticised male characters such as Tistou, whose power nurtures and creates life, and the little prince of Exupéry's famous story. Britain, meanwhile, never underwent this same experience and maintained a more solitary image.

In *The Secret Seven*, meanwhile, the group provides only an illusion of equal participation. The contrast between the two Blyton texts in this regard may stem from *Five on a Treasure Island* being published during the war itself, and thus in an atmosphere of temporary upheaval in societal order. Its cousin, *The Secret Seven*, was published after war had ended and a desire for normality manifested in a return to normative tradition that is directly reflected within its reinforcement of normative gender roles throughout.

All three texts, regardless of their more radical characters, draw sharp attention to the conservative gender ideologies that were dominant across the mid-century by creating structural and narratological suggestions of male dominance that prevail. Typically, this is evident within the prioritising of male voices early in the texts and with male leadership characters. The books each reflect an era where a growth in youth cultures, commercial publishing and technological improvements to print in the post-war combined with a complex gendered landscape, a celebration of children's fiction as a source of hope and equally a concern for the material being given to children. Each text is, as a whole, a product marketable to both boys and girls, and provides often significant glimpses of female enfranchisement that is however underscored by the patriarchal background of its time; the excitement and radical potential are kept firmly in check by the wider need to feed current societal ideals to children. However great the transformation of gender roles was during war, this change was temporary, and the immediate post-war period reaffirmed tradition

largely in the same way that these texts demonstrate the constant presence of

masculine dominance.

Chapter Two

Masculinity in the Family Unit

This chapter examines the family unit and masculinities within children's literature of the mid-century. It explores the different roles assigned to family members and asks how parent-child relationships within the texts implicate teachings of gender roles, and specifically masculinity. It examines these factors in light of the complex evolution of the family unit from 1940-1970. World War Two separated parents and children, taking men away to the front, children to faraway places through evacuation efforts, and temporarily moved many women into the public roles vacated by men fighting in the war. The late to post-war years brought some advancements in women's rights that meant opportunities beyond the home were expanded, but at the same time marriage rates increased and a baby boom occurred across Europe, suggesting a return to tradition and normative family values. This chapter considers texts published against this historical landscape and considers how the portrayal of family structures affects images of masculinity. More specifically, the chapter aims to understand how, in the selected texts, the nuclear family reproduces patriarchal ideals and hence normative approaches to gender, and the extent to which these values are challenged or upheld by characters and narrators.

We can best understand the relationship between the nuclear family and normative gender roles through the two distinct arenas of 'public' and 'private' which, in this context, refer to employment and state affairs, on the one hand, and to reproduction and the domestic sphere on the other. It is this system of separation, reduced to its basic qualities, that produces a family unit that reiterates male dominance through capitalist industrial society (Chodorow, 1978: 10). Sociologists such as Talcott Parsons and Robert F. Bales, whose mid-century work was

contemporary to many texts studied in this thesis, suggested that capitalist society required role specialisation, with different domains best suited to certain gendered traits; men needed to be 'aggressive, ruthless and intellectual' to succeed in an environment of economic competition, while women were better suited to 'expressive roles' that involved caring for others emotionally and physically (Bradley, 2008: 16). The hierarchical nature of such thinking meant that women's roles as mothers have been 'taken for granted' due to the 'seemingly natural connection between women's childbearing and lactation capacities and their responsibility for child care' (Chodorow, 1978: 3).[66]

It was the idea that these socially elected roles were inherently incompatible that provided justification for the dominant ideology of the nuclear family in the 1950s (Bradley, 2008: 16-17). By assigning public roles beyond the family home to men, and private ones relating to domestic upkeep and childcare to women, the nuclear family works to ensure the continuity of the patriarchal system. This keeps men in a position of power and denies women access to those forms of power traditionally located in the public sphere, as Nancy Chodorow notes:

> Women's mothering determines women's primary location in the domestic sphere and creates a basis for the structural differentiation of domestic and public spheres. But these spheres operate hierarchically. Kinship rules organize claims of men on domestic units, and men dominate kinship.

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[66] The thesis that biological essentialism creates specific expectations of maternal care for children is supported by Elisabeth Badinter's vital work *L'Amour en Plus* (1980), a historical analysis of maternal practices. In her work, Badinter ultimately concludes that 'l'instinct maternel est un mythe' since there is 'aucune conduite universelle' to motherhood dictating that such an instinct exists, citing the 'extrême variabilité' of maternal behaviour as evidence (383). Translation: 'the maternal instinct is a myth' since there is 'no universal conduct' to motherhood. She cites the 'extreme variability' of maternal behaviour as evidence.

Culturally and politically, the public sphere dominates the domestic, and

hence men dominate women (1978: 10).

Psychoanalytical theory proposes that this specific organisation of the family has

repercussions for the development of the child, who develops primarily in relation to

the mother. According to *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978):

The infant's mental and physical existence depends on its mother, and the

infant comes to feel that it does. It experiences a sense of oneness with her

and develops a self only by convincing itself that it is in fact a separate being

from her (78).

The monopoly of the mother in the child's early life can be interpreted as a

significant source of power, a point that Dorothy Dinnerstein makes in the title of

The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World (1976), which refers to the

folk saying '[t]he hand that rocks the cradle rules the world' (1987: 28). It is the

mothering of children that largely comes to determine who they become, and in this

way, 'women's mothering reproduces itself cyclically' (Chodorow, 1978: 7). It is the

mother-child relationship that produces daughters with 'mothering capacities and the

desire to mother' and sons 'whose nurturant capacities and needs have been

systematically curtailed and repressed' in preparation for public life (7). In this way

the sexual division of labour and patriarchy continuously reproduce themselves.

We might consider Sigmund Freud's Oedipus complex to understand how

psychoanalytical theory influential during the focal period views the relationship

between gender, psychosexual development and family relationships. The Oedipus

complex originating in Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) proposed that

young boys have a sexual desire towards their mother and are in competition with

the father for her. The competition leads to the boy's fear of castration by the father,

who is stronger and superior to him. The successful resolution of an Oedipus complex is theorised as vital to a boy's psychosexual development and concludes with the boy coming to identify with his father and separate from the mother: '[b]oys achieve their "masculinity" only by separating themselves from the mother and denying the emotional, intimate world she represents' (Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon, 2002: 59). Indeed, boys must reject 'their earliest experiences of helplessness and emotional need' and 'live an alienated existence which rejects feeling in favour of work' (59).

With the family explored in terms of patriarchy and masculinity, we now turn to examine the historical context pertaining to the family during the focal period. As discussed in the Introduction, material changes brought about by World War Two temporarily adjusted the gendered order, and families became separated as both British and French men were called forth to assist in the war effort. Many women in both nations ventured beyond the confines of the private sphere in larger numbers to fill the roles left by men fighting in the war, bringing about a brief shift in gender role distribution. The responsibilities of British women during World War Two were vast, from 'running households and fighting a daily battle of rationing, recycling, reusing, and cultivating food in allotments and gardens', to 'war work', filling such roles as 'mechanics, engineers, munitions workers, air raid wardens, bus and fire engine drivers' (Gov.uk, 2015). The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), formed in 1938, gave women a variety of roles in the war, from cooks to drivers and expanding as the war progressed (National Army Museum, n.d.) and sometimes including life-threatening work; 335 ATS members lost their lives during the war years with countless injured (Hawkins, 2021). By 1943, around 56,000 women were serving with anti-aircraft units, despite being forbidden to fire guns (Hawkins, 2021).

In France, the impact on women's employment was less than that of the previous war because women's employment in munitions factories was curtailed to nine months (Omnès, 1997: 62-63, cited in Diamond, 2013: 45). However, the change was still significant: while eighty women worked at the Chatellerault arms factory in August 1939, this number had increased to over 1,000 by summer 1940 (Lombard, 1987: 326, cited in Diamond, 2013: 30). After France's defeat, factory production stopped and the Vichy family policy returned women to the home, with the only exceptions being 'war widows, single women, women supporting their family, wives of non-demobilized soldiers and women occupying jobs which were traditionally put aside as female jobs' (32). The Vichy regime emphasised the importance of the woman's place within the domestic sphere and in October 1940 the *Married Women's Work Act* halted married women's employment in the public sphere if husbands could provide for the family (32), though the law was challenging to implement in practice (34). Women represented around 7-12% of the Resistance according to Hanna Diamond's sources (2013: 99).[67]

Evacuation movements separated families apart in both nations but left differing imprints. Young people in France were evacuated predominantly from the Parisian inner-city banlieues, but the memory of these evacuations is commonly forgotten (Lee Downs, 2016: 121). Evacuation experiences differed due to the administrative nature of the British scheme, while the French government relied on urban families who had retained ties to their countryside relatives (123). French children sent through administrative procedures were a minority made up particularly of immigrant children and those without rural relatives, while the British

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[67] However, these changes did not necessarily spell out a leap forward in the feminist cause; as Claire Andrieu explains, '[w]omen resisters were not feminists' and 'most women in the thirties, forties and fifties devoted themselves to being housewives and mothers' (2000: 16).

working class were 'firmly ensconced in urban and industrial neighbourhoods for many generations and by the mid twentieth century had far fewer living ties to the land' (123-124). The British memory of evacuation was thus one of infinitely more alienation and isolation from the family for the child evacuee. Meanwhile, Laura Lee Downs explains that evacuations constituted 'a pivotal moment' in the development of theories surrounding childhood emotional development and maternal bonds in Britain (123). Such debates came to the forefront of the public mind amid the vastly differing experiences of children during evacuation, with questions as to 'the consequences for their future stability as citizens in a democratic society' that were implicated in discussions of social policy in the post-war years (123). This question of child emotional development in terms of their familial relations and separation from home is an important consideration in understanding gender within the family unit in texts written for children. The cultural memory of family separation may have influenced the approach to family relations within children's texts produced around this era.

In many cases, this separation of the nuclear family unit was not temporary, and by the end of World War Two hundreds of thousands of children were missing, orphaned, or homeless, with over 340,000 lost children being traced by the International Tracing Service between 1945-1946 (Zahra, 2009: 45). While lost children were only a proportion of missing individuals, they 'held a special grip on the postwar imagination', and arose at the centre of bitter conflicts at a time when 'ideals of human rights, the family, democracy, child welfare, and the reconstruction of Europe at large' were emerging (45). During the Blitz, over 7,000 British children were killed and another 7,000 seriously injured, with many others losing parents and siblings (Imperial War Museum, n.d.). In France, the infant mortality rate was

double its prewar rate in 1945, and the following year 1.3 million children were homeless (Zahra, 2009: 46).

During the late war to post-war period, most Western countries experienced a Baby Boom, overturning more than a decade of falling fertility rates (Macunovich, 2002: 1). The cause of this spike is often attributed to World War Two; with the war putting a pause on marriages and the creation of families, the optimism that came with the end of conflict, the liberation of occupied countries and post-war healing contributed to a rise in birth and marriage rates (Van Bavel and Reher, 2013: 268-269). The Baby Boom is a significant factor in understanding family life during this period, especially as it contrasts with other, apparently more emancipatory changes occurring at the time, for example French women gaining the right to vote in 1944, and the publication in 1949 of a seminal feminist text, Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe*.

In France, the subject of fatherhood permeated political discourse throughout the interbellum and wartime periods; concerns about social reform and national identity were tied up with gender and in particular fatherhood, which was at the heart of sociopolitical discourse during the late Third Republic and the Vichy regime (Stromberg Childers, 2003: 3). This can be seen within the change of motto from the 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' ('liberty, equality, fraternity') of the Third Republic to the 'travail, famille, patrie' ('work, family, fatherland') of Vichy France, in which the language relating to paternity directly replaces that of brotherhood. Reconstruction after the war also gave a primary role to fatherhood, with French legislators attempting to place men in specific gendered roles with the aim of protecting the family and nation (3). Fathers in France were considered so significant that they were attributed a special title, one that finds no direct translation in English; '*père de*

famille', meaning 'father of a family', is 'an expression that symbolized the father's unique collective and relational identity' and a concept that was 'closely linked to concrete political agendas and social policies (4). Yet the expectations surrounding manhood were 'inconsistent and imprecise', with few men able to live up to them (3).

In Vichy France, the relationship between paternity and masculinity was a difficult one (5). Within this profoundly conservative regime, fatherhood was at once a deep expression of one's masculinity and simultaneously suggested weakness (5). Leadership schools such as the Chateau d'Uriage and the Chantiers de la jeunesse solidified a veneration of masculinity and held in high esteem the 'ethics of physical and mental fitness, obedience to authority, and disdain for weakness common to fascist rhetoric elsewhere' (5). Yet within such schools, family ties were seen as largely incompatible with duties in the public sphere (5).

A significant concern within the paternalist discourse of the late Third Republic, in the years just preceding the Occupation, was that of pronatalist discourse and its implications for men. Whilst women took on much of the blame for the population decline in France during this period, the pronatalist narrative was equally used to question the virility of French men (Stromberg Childers, 2001: 93). In the late 1930s, Alliance nationale pamphlets 'contrast[ed] the robust, manly, and military appearance of growing populations such as Germany's to the diminutive characterization of declining populations such as that of France' (93). While this discourse was most strongly felt in France, Great Britain was also affected by such a narrative. Mere weeks before the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, Kristen Stromberg Childers writes, the German population was represented as having 'the

hypermasculine bearing of a Nazi party member,' with Britain 'appear[ing] decidedly foppish and, like France, less capable of projecting manly strength' (93).

Having established the complex history of the family unit during this period, it is important to understand how it relates to the genre of children's literature. Ann Alston observes that family is a vital consideration within English children's texts, so much so that even if the family is largely absent or marginal, it still sits in the background of these texts, 'its ideology informing the attitudes of the characters and the development of the plot' (2008: 2). Family, Alston believes, is a central interest of children's books; it is 'the ideal, the epic end-point of the Odyssean journey of the fiction, at which home and family are recovered […] true happiness it seems is impossible without the love and support of a dedicated family' (1).

Family indeed has a historically central role within children's fiction in Britain and France, and was a key generic component of the popular domestic fiction of the nineteenth century, which largely developed through Hachette's Bibliothèque rose illustrée collection beginning in 1856 (Brown, 2008: 41). Hachette published the works of the Comtesse de Ségur, best known for *Les Malheurs de Sophie* (42). Throughout the years of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire, bourgeois society was strongly rooted in an ideal of family, with children's care and education becoming central concerns (39). Within the climate of this period, family-oriented and economically prosperous, children's literature boomed in France, and the domestic novel took hold (39), bringing with it an increased opportunity for women to write and enter the public arena using their experiences as mothers in aid of the fiction they wrote (40). As a result, the genre became particularly associated with a female readership, despite the novels often having male protagonists (41). While the genre existed in Britain, the stronger tendency was towards the fantasy tradition

which 'took root most quickly and deeply' in England; few if any countries could

rival the numbers of children's fantasies being created in Britain over this period,

with many of the greatest names of late Victorian children's fiction writing in a

tradition of fantasy, from Charles Kingsley to Beatrix Potter (Carpenter, 1985: 32).

A genre of domestic realism for children did exist in Britain but according to

Humphrey Carpenter was more overshadowed by the fantasy tradition (32).

Nevertheless, Mary F. Thwaite describes the domestic genre – similarly to the

French – as one 'firmly anchored to its period', in which 'methods of education,

social habits [and] prevailing attitudes' are all imbedded (1972: 142).

How have the challenges and changes around the family unit over the past

century influenced the portrayal of family within children's literature? Alston

explains that the depiction of family in children's books remains 'deeply

conservative' (2008: 1). Despite the pressures and challenges it has faced, the

nuclear family 'is culturally still promoted as an ideal and the norm in children's

literature and in other texts aimed at a juvenile audience' (2). She remarks that the

most extraordinary part of her study of nineteenth and twentieth-century children's

texts is the striking similarities between images of family across time (2). In a

chapter on texts published between 1920 and 2003, and thus the most pertinent to

this thesis, she remarks that there has been 'no revolution' in the representation of

family during this time with the theme of family having 'maintained its centrality

and significance' (67). In fact, patterns continue to repeat themselves within the

genre, whether this be 'the child as saviour of the adult' or 'the cliché of the four

children who constitute the ordered family' (67). Ultimately, while writing styles

have changed over time, religious doctrine becomes less pertinent within texts and

the treatment of children alters considerably as social attitudes change, some subtexts

remain remarkably consistent, namely that children should be brought up in a loving home preferably by two parent figures (135). Alston concludes that while children's fiction has expanded to make way for the changing of family structures, those families that do not subscribe to the 'ideal' most often become othered (135). Children's literature continuously 'attempts to instil in its readers certain values which dictate how families should be: loving, respectful, preferably with two parents, contained in domestic harmony and sharing wholesome homecooked family meals' (2).

Within this chapter, I examine how family life in children's texts intersects with gender roles. Broadly, it analyses the relationships between characters within family units or adoptive families, and the specific family structures portrayed, and how these relate to the reproduction of masculine behavioural expectations within children's literature. The chapter achieves this in a variety of ways. Firstly, it explores how fictional representations of parental labour (including emotional labour) might both reflect and subvert normative maternal and paternal roles. Additionally, it examines how fictions present the formative role that parents play in shaping the gender identity of their children. With masculinity as my focus, the subsequent discussion will pay particular attention to the relationships between fathers and sons. With this in mind, the chapter explores depictions of both normative and unconventional families, analysing how gender influence works differently across these texts. The first text to be examined is Enid Blyton's *The Six Bad Boys* (1951). Unlike the Blyton texts discussed in the previous chapter, *The Six Bad Boys* is relatively unknown, but is a rare example of Blyton writing in a social realist mode; the novel provides an interesting perspective on how differing family lives directly affect the gendered behaviours of children. The French texts are 'Le

Gentil Petit Diable' from *Contes de la Rue Broca* (1967) by Pierre Gripari, a more fantastical and Edward Lear inspired nonsensical take on family that, however, makes a pertinent commentary on father-son relationships and paternal legacy and responsibility. Finally, *Les Six Compagnons de la Croix Rousse* (1961) by Paul-Jacques Bonzon, a novel akin to the detective fiction of Blyton inspiration, uses a boy hero with surprisingly maternal characteristics within an otherwise normative family.

The Six Bad Boys (1951)

The Six Bad Boys is an atypical Blyton novel, and one that is seldom mentioned even in longer analyses of the Blytonian oeuvre. It represents what Barbara Stoney terms 'an unusual attempt […] at social realism' (2006: 20) for an author whose most famous works are typically adventure, detectives or even fantastical stories.[68] While its popularity pales beside her serial works, it made waves in juvenile care circles upon its publication, and thus its relative neglect in academic study is alarming; in a 1951 letter, the author expressed surprise that her recent release had involved her in 'all kinds of Marriage Guidance councils…N.S.P.C.A. affairs & goodness knows what' (Blyton; cited in Maunder, 2021: 287). Yet the novel reflected experiences in Blyton's own life, including family dysfunction during her childhood (56) and in her later life the pressures of contemporary change to the gendered order and family unit; the author sometimes felt 'torn between the competing demands on her time', as a housewife and mother but also a hugely successful and prolific author (32). Bob Dixon describes the work as exemplifying 'the most advanced stage Blyton achieved in her writing', a stage that does, however, still reinforce many of the privileges

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[68] Blyton also attempted social commentary in *The Family at Red Roofs* (1945).

found throughout other Blyton works and shows in Dixon's opinion a 'rather mechanical' understanding of sociological concerns (1978: 71). It is perhaps for this reason that *The Six Bad Boys* is less well-known than those of Blyton's works covered in Chapter One, very little studied academically (Maunder, 2021: 34) and one of the few of her works to not be translated into French.[69] As Anita Bensoussane explains, the book differs from the typical middle-class Blyton book: '[t]here isn't a cook, a maid or a gardener in sight, and all the children attend the local day-school. The setting is no rural idyll, but a canal-side town (Lappington) with […] streets of "half-tumbled-down" terraces' (n.d.). In this respect, its environment is more comparable to French novels like Berna's *Le Cheval sans tête* or Bonzon's *Les Six Compagnons* than the typical Blyton novel. The novel's discussion of serious matters within the family unit implicates masculinity significantly.

The book follows two boys with very different family circumstances who move in next door to the Mackenzie family, as each becomes progressively unhappier with their own life at home. They eventually join a gang, the Terrors, who get into trouble causing mayhem around their town, trouble so serious that it ends with the juvenile courts. In this novel, Blyton demonstrates how families and their circumstances can affect the behaviour of children and in many cases behaviour that is specifically gendered. Written and set in the 1950s, the novel is reflective of conservative attitudes that venerate the functional nuclear family and normative gender roles as the pinnacle of civility. In *The Six Bad Boys*, normative masculinity develops best within a nuclear family in which its members know their assigned gender roles, in which mothers are doting, remain within the domestic sphere, and

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[69] The novel was, however, published in German under the title of *Treffpunkt Keller* (Bensoussane, n.d.), roughly translating as 'basement meeting point'.

are at the service of the family, and in which fathers work, provide, take control, and steer sons towards better behaviour. The novel is perhaps most interesting when it examines deviations from this pattern, as in its focus on single-parent families and families in which normative roles are tested (for example, the mother working or being cold and unfeeling for her children). In both cases, these departures from the normative bring about deviant behaviour that causes disruption to the gendered order. My analysis of this chapter aims to understand how masculinity is presented through this model, in which three contrasting families live alongside one another and the boys within these families develop differently largely dependent upon these factors. The consequences of what the novel considers inappropriate family life for a child are serious, and this is something that Blyton clearly signals in an introductory note:

> It is written for the whole family, and for anyone who has to do with children. It is written […] to explain some of the wrong things there are in the world, and to help to put them right.
>
> I love children, good or bad. I know plenty of good ones – and I have been to the Juvenile Courts and seen plenty of bad ones. One of the finest magistrates of these Courts is the well-known Mr. Basil Henriques, who deals so wisely and kindly with all the delinquent children brought before him (Blyton, 1968 [1951]: 5).

Blyton's admission that the book is written for more than just children is an indication that she considers the subject matter more serious than is standard within her novels. Indeed, she declares the novel partially intended to raise awareness of family troubles and their consequences for children. She maintains this seriousness with a mention of Basil Henriques, a magistrate of the Juvenile Courts at the time, to

whom the novel is also dedicated. The changes in gendered behaviour witnessed within the novel, then, are intentionally signposted from the beginning and are attached to a specific social message. Unlike adventure novels such as *The Secret Seven*, in which the gender dynamics are an integral yet tacit part of the plot, *The Six Bad Boys* is a novel in which a message about gendered behaviour is explicitly expressed by Blyton.

Blyton evokes the complex relationship between juvenile delinquency and family life by directly associating the Juvenile Courts with what she calls 'bad' children, with relatively little consideration of the surrounding context that has led them to this point. Blyton's book details several different injustices suffered by children within their family life, and yet her perspective in the front matter of the book seems to highlight a need to recognise and treat the symptoms of misbehaviour rather than resolve its causes. The book is initially introduced with a focus on punishment, and seems to blame the children for their behaviour, something equally maintained by the title of *The Six Bad Boys,* which constitutes an immediate judgement of the boys outside of relevant context. It might seem strange, moreover, that such a central position in the book's front matter is dedicated to a magistrate and not to the suffering children. Given the way the book unfolds, however, I would argue that Blyton's purpose here is to show that this is the exact problem with quick judgements of 'badness'.

Indeed, the book aptly portrays how children are adversely affected by dysfunction within the family unit. Basil Henriques emphasises this in his foreword, which appears in some editions:

[t]he description of the workings of the minds of Bob and Tom is […] absolutely brilliant. It shows why the broken home causes children to go

wrong, and the gradual deterioration of both boys is told in a manner which I

have never seen surpassed [...O]ld and young alike will be deeply grateful to

Enid Blyton for a most remarkable and enthrallingly interesting book

(Henriques; cited in Bensoussane, n.d.).

That a family without the biological mother or father of the child being present is

considered 'broken' is a testament to the normativity in attitudes towards families in

the 1950s. Equally, however, the above quotation also emphasises the book's

recognition of the need to 'treat' the causes of bad behaviour, beginning with the

children's neglectful parents. Towards the end of the book, the magistrate who deals

with the main characters concludes that the crimes of the young boys would not have

occurred if they were better cared for at home.

Overall, the book makes conservative commentaries about childcare, family,

and gender that reflect the post-war climate in which the book was produced and

published. While the book questions parental authority in a way that appears bold, in

so doing it primarily points fingers at mothers. As I will argue, the main focus of *The

Six Bad Boys,* and the cause of the 'dysfunction' seen within the two families, comes

down to paternal absence and maternal neglect. Both central 'dysfunctional' families

within the novel display these elements, though these problems stem from normative

expectations as to how families 'should' be. These expectations, as established in the

introduction to this chapter, come from a patriarchal system that favours certain

gendered roles and behaviours as a means of preserving male dominance and female

subservience.

The focus on family is clear even within the structure of the novel, with many

of the chapter titles throughout relating to family and home life: 'Two Families

Move In' (7), 'Bob and His Mother' (33) and 'A "Home From Home"' (94). Themes

of family and home permeate the entirety of the novel and the plot takes place largely within the scope of the domestic sphere. As most of the narrative revolves around the idea that a functional and normative nuclear family is the best for a child's growth and development, it is in keeping that the Mackenzies are the first of the three families to be introduced. They are, in Maunder's words, the mouthpiece for Blyton's own views and 'seem straight out of one of the parenting manuals of the time' (296). Structurally, the novel begins and ends with them; they constitute normality and stability before the main events of the plot begin and end, and they are thus the first and last image of family presented to the reader. Though the narrative focalisation switches between the three families and is in the omniscient third-person style, the novel is filtered largely through the lens of the Mackenzies. As a symbol of this within the text, the First Chapter depicts the Mackenzies literally observing the two other families through their window as they move in, watching 'eagerly' (8) to observe the spectacle of dysfunctional families. This family is thus established as the ideal for which all families should strive, and an air of righteousness accompanies each description of them. They are the counterpoint to the problems in both Berkeley and Kent households and they provide solace for the boys of those families, Tom Berkeley and Bob Kent, who suffer and are led astray because of their home lives. The Kents consist of a single widow and her son, Bob, while the Berkeleys are an example of a dysfunctional nuclear family.

The way in which each family is introduced makes their specific character evident from the beginning. The novel begins with Mrs Mackenzie at home with her children, solidifying the mother's place as in the domestic sphere from the first page. The father is absent, presumably in his own righteous place in the public sphere, the breadwinner for the family. The Mackenzie family consists of mother, father, eleven-

year-old twins Donald and Jeanie, seven-year-old Pat, a cat, and a dog who, vitally, all get along, with no serious arguing occurring between them. The twins Donald and Jeanie are best friends and, although they sometimes exclude their younger sister, for the most part they understand the importance of including her, with Jeanie readily including Pat in Chapter One: "'[l]ook, Pat – can you see them?'" (8). Healthy relationships are depicted between mother and children; within the first few lines Jeanie and Donald are calling upon their mother to share their excitement of their neighbours moving in – '[t]he van has come, Mother' (7) – and are holding a civilised discussion. Furthering this image of domestic harmony, it is Jeanie, the elder girl, and not her twin brother, who is expected to play at housewife and clear away after breakfast with her mother (7). Though she is clearly reluctant to help given the ongoing excitement – 'Jeanie ran to help, trying to be as quick as possible because she wanted to go back and watch' (7) – she carries out her chores without complaint, seemingly aware of her responsibilities and cooperating with the rest of her family. It is equally Jeanie who is asked to be polite and neighbourly and to go offer tea to their new neighbours, as if to reinforce the feminine expectation to be the smiling and charming housewife at the service of others (10).

The Berkeleys are a nuclear family like the Mackenzies, consisting of mother, father, two girls and a boy, Thomas Berkeley, who is one of the central characters. The Berkeley family composition is, importantly, identical to that of the Mackenzies, even containing the same number of children with the same gender ratio. Yet it is clear even in their initial scenes that status as a nuclear family is not all it takes to be like the Mackenzies. As if to foreshadow the problems to come, the Berkeleys are immediately in conflict from the moment they enter the narrative, with the Mackenzies watching the spectacle from their window: '[t]he boy [Tom

Berkeley] pushe[s] past his sisters', his 'mother shout[s] something crossly at [him]', and '[o]ne of his sisters g[ives] him a sharp push […] and he pushe[s] her back' (9). We are continuously invited to share in the Mackenzie family's perspective, with the story beginning with the family sharing their opinions on the newcomers, as Donald admits that he 'do[esn't] much like the look of that boy' (9).

This chapter ends with Donald and Jeanie visiting them to offer them a pot of tea. The scene is presented from the viewpoint of the Mackenzie twins, who initially wait outside the house and hear lots of commotion going on from within, a 'great deal of noise' (11) coming from loud voices and the moving of furniture. In this moment, the twins are presented as physical outsiders to the domestic chaos of the Berkeleys, simply observing and listening in to what they can from their own position of comfort. When Mr and Mrs Berkeley eventually greet the twins, the adults are 'sullen' and 'angry' respectively, with Mrs Berkeley speaking 'stiffly' (12). Mrs Berkeley is particularly rude, and when the twins leave they share their thoughts further. Jeanie describes Mrs Berkeley as a '[h]orrid woman' and Donald comments that he did not like Tom (13). All the while, the twins are described as ringing the bell 'politely' (11) and thus maintain their image of moral superiority. Blyton's narrative structuring continuously imposes the Mackenzie perspective as the objectively sound and sensible one.

Among the Mackenzies' values is a reverence for the mother, and Blyton soon reveals that this is not shared by the Berkeley children. When Tom explains how his mother sold his railway set, the other children are shocked to hear that Tom considered selling his mother's beloved items in retaliation: '[w]hen she sold my railway set I'd a good mind to take one of her brooches myself and sell it!' (19). The children's response is that this is a terrible attitude: '[a]ll the others looked at him,

shocked and disbelieving. What a dreadful thing to say! "Don't you love your mother?" said Pat […] "You couldn't do a thing like that to her!"' (19). The Mackenzie children have a clear reverence for the mother and the love and care she represents, while Tom's experiences may have made him hostile towards his parents. The fact that Blyton has seven-year-old Pat Mackenzie voice concern on Tom's behaviour in the second example makes it even clearer how he has been affected by his family life, as he must be reminded of good manners by a younger child. What is clear from this initial comparison between the two families is that behaviour of the children appears to correspond to the family circumstances. As the novel progresses, this becomes a more specific commentary on masculinity and boyhood.

The final family, the Kents, are the last to be fully introduced, with the first view of them being of a 'good-looking woman with the equally good-looking boy walking up to the front door of the cottage near by' (10). What is most noticeable against the framework provided by the Mackenzies is the lack of a father, and without an immediate explanation the circumstances of the Kents seem ambiguous. The absence of the father would raise questions in the original 1950s context of the novel, and before we learn of Bob's circumstances one wonders whether it is the result of a family rupture and broken home, of the kind Henrique refers to in his foreword, or whether Mrs Kent might be a war widow.

The next impression the reader receives of this family occurs when Bob comes to the Mackenzie household requesting a pot of tea. Little is said at this point of the potential problems faced by this family, but there are suggestions that Bob's behaviour might become questionable. Bob Kent is described as '[a] very good-looking boy' with 'thick and unruly' 'dark curly hair', 'bright, cheeky eyes and a smile that won Pat's heart at once' (14). His appearance is suggestive of wildness

and trouble, from the dark messiness of his hair to the glint in his eye. A seemingly exemplary boy, however, he initially always maintains politeness and warmness, and even sticks up for Pat, whose older twin siblings call her a 'baby' (14). Yet there is an air of daredevilry about him, and upon meeting him, Mrs. Mackenzie 'secretly wonder[s] what kind of things Bob would be "up to." He had a bold look about him – she thought he would dare to do a good many things he ought not to do' (16). Upon his departure, we are left with the perspective and thoughts of the Mackenzies, and in particular Mrs Mackenzie, who reflects on this charming but potentially troublesome boy.

One of the first hints about Bob's behaviour at this early point comes when he asks the Mackenzies to play cops and robbers with him in Chapter Two. He interestingly designates himself as the burglar and tells the Mackenzies to act as policemen. Not only does this subtly suggest that he has a proclivity for trouble and identifies with a troublemaker, but it also foreshadows the later, more serious, events of the novel, where Bob does get into trouble with the police and must go to the Juvenile Courts. In this way, Blyton's story seems structured to spell out Bob's fate as a foregone conclusion, emphasising why the family dysfunction issues of the novel are so important; in his current situation, the novel's structure suggests, there is no ending for Bob but trouble. Equally significant in this scene is Bob's response to the criticism of Tom by the Mackenzies. The Mackenzies claim: 'I saw him push [his sister] over just now' (17), and Bob immediately disregards this and carries out the same behaviour: Bob claims, '*I* might push a sister over if she was stuck-up' and then 'shoved past Thomas' on his way back into the school after lunch break (17). The two boys fall into similar behaviour patterns from an early stage and connect over this; Bob grins at Tom, who 'gave a sudden grin too' (17), and it is through this

shared mischievous expression that the shared outcome for the two boys is further set in stone.

As the novel advances, Blyton describes how the three families become friends, but her narrative returns to the moral perspective of the Mackenzies, allowing the reader to eavesdrop on Mr and Mrs Mackenzie as they sit in their home, with Mrs Mackenzie darning socks in true housewife fashion (21). Blyton describes Mrs Mackenzie's disapproval of Mrs Berkeley's behaviour as a wife, but her dislike comes specifically from the families going against the ideal happy family image, and not as such from personal dislike:

> Mrs Berkeley is so discontented […] They had a big house, and because her husband lost his job and had to get one not so good, she is very bitter. She thinks he is no good and she told him so (20).

Mr Mackenzie's reply is something of a social commentary on the role and expectations of wives. He remarks that this is '[v]ery disloyal of [Mrs Berkeley]' and proposes that his wife's reaction would be very different if she were in the same position: '[y]ou'd not say a thing like that about me if I lost my job and we had to move!' (20). To the Mackenzies, Mrs Berkeley is disgraceful for prioritising material things over devotion to her husband.

The Mackenzies also propose that normative family structures would solve the problems experienced by the Kent family, with its lack of a father. Mr and Mrs Mackenzie agree that Bob would be 'all right in a proper family' (21), implying that a single parent family is not 'a proper family' while a traditional nuclear one is. The Mackenzies do admit that their own family is not perfect; the twins are such good friends that Pat is often left out. Yet the parents discuss the issue civilly, attempt to find a solution and despite the fact that '[f]amilies *are* difficult' vow that they can

never be 'too difficult to handle if you face the problems' (22). As if to highlight the differences, the narrative then switches sharply to the Berkeley family, where exchanges are hostile, defensive and result in tears. Mr and Mrs Berkeley are quick to deflect blame rather than work together to find a solution. The narrative juxtaposes the completely different families to bring into relief the contrast between a functional nuclear family and a dysfunctional one. The chapter ends, finally, with Bob contemplating his admiration for Mr Mackenzie and his own lack of a father.

It is through Bob's situation that Blyton draws attention to the necessity of a father figure and makes clear the assumed norm of the nuclear family over single parent families. Indeed, Jeanie asks if Bob's father is coming soon, and it is here that we learn, from Bob himself, that his father died last year (15). The role of the father in the growth of young boys into upstanding men is established from the beginning of the narrative, but not all families have an able, present and willing father, and this is what separates the desirable and harmonious Mackenzies from the Berkeleys and Kents. The entirety of this scene is again focalised through the Mackenzies, as their perspective filters this information to the reader. To Donald, Jeanie and Pat, the thought of having no father is 'dreadful', but what is especially interesting is the way in which this information is conveyed:

> They loved their own father very much – he was cheerful and loving, and
> also strict, but they didn't mind so long as he loved them. They thought it
> must be dreadful not to have a father to say "Yes, you may" or "No, certainly
> not!" or to take them to the Zoo or on a picnic with mother (15).

For the Mackenzie children, and presumably for Blyton herself, the ideal father is someone who is loving but, importantly, also 'strict' and a person who gives

permission or denies it. The role of the father as someone who lays down the law is a vital refrain within the novel, and it is particularly key in the story of Bob Kent.

In Freudian fashion, the novel frequently insists upon the father as a central power figure, and as the performer of discipline; thus, Bob's absent father means he is unable to be properly disciplined as the mother has insufficient authority over the boy. When Bob and Tom sneak into a cinema later in the novel, Bob receives a caning from the headteacher, and Tom from his father (68). Both Mrs Kent and Mrs Berkeley harshly scold the boys for their actions too (68), but neither mother is responsible for corporal punishment; this is firmly in the men's domain. Mrs Kent makes frequent reference to the importance of fathers specifically punishing their sons: '[i]f your father had been alive he would have whipped you many a time for your disobedience' (36) and '[i]f your father was alive he'd give you a good hiding!' (52). In a scene involving the use of corporal punishment, Mr and Mrs Mackenzie discuss the role of the father and establish Mr Mackenzie as a perfect example of a good one, again established as the social and moral compass that the other families should follow:

> "[Bob] wants a father like *you* […] He could do with a spanking now and again. He's a nice boy, but too big for his boots, sometimes. He just wants keeping in order. Like you keep the twins in order!" […]
>
> "Poor Donald! He got a whacking last week, didn't he, for borrowing my bicycle without telling me, and putting it back in the shed covered with mud! But he knew he deserved it."
>
> "Well, you're his father, and if fathers can't keep their boys on the right road it's a poor look-out for the boys!" said his wife. "Anyway, he

knew he'd earned the whacking. He won't borrow things without asking

again!" (22-23).

The father figure in a traditional nuclear family is thus established as powerful:

someone to be loved but also feared and respected, and who will carry out the

punishment, particularly of boys. This is the figure that the boys in the story should,

according to the book itself, grow into, and for this to happen, the father should be

present and able to teach. The father, in other words, must be present to teach his

sons how to be more powerful than his female peers, and for obvious reasons this is

a job less suited to being carried out by a subservient woman.

Bob's lack of a living father is a fundamental catalyst for his behavioural

decline. The narrator quickly points out that the absence of Bob Kent's father may

influence his experience of boyhood, making it different to that of the other boys.

This is clear when Bob explains that he 'like[s] to look after things' (15); it seems

that there are extra societal pressures on Bob that do not usually fall to young boys,

as Bob tries to become the 'man' of the family. The novel pays close attention to the

power dynamics that influence the sexual and gendered development of boys in a

way that is reflective of Freudian ideas. Bob is thus presented as existing in a liminal

space between boyhood and manhood brought about by his father's death. He is at

once a child, immature, irresponsible and in need of nurture, and equally a growing

boy trying his best to be strong, to fill his father's shoes by 'be[ing] the man of the

house' and taking care of his mother:

he tried to run the whole place, and lay down the law – trying to be the man

of the house! […] He had a strong, determined nature, and no father to check

it. He loved his mother and wanted to look after her, and the last thing his

father had told him was to play the man and run things for his mother. So

Bob got in the coal – but expected to go with his mother everytime she went to the cinema. He took her early tea in the morning – but turned on the wireless full blast at all hours of the day if he felt like it, and glared when his mother turned it off. He fetched the papers for her – but stayed out as late as he liked at night! (26-27).

What differentiates this concluding segment of the chapter concerning the Kents is that it is much shorter than the previous two sections concerning the Mackenzies and the Berkeleys, and the focalisation, while starting with Bob's own thoughts and emotions, soon zooms out to the authoritative voice of a third-person narrator. The narration here seems intended to emphasise Bob's loneliness in his situation. His mother is described within this same section as listening to Bob 'with half an ear' (26), and her lack of interest seems mirrored in the impersonal narrative mode, which is specific about the emotions of the Kents. Bob's interactions with his mother, moreover, are so curtailed by her lack of interest that the Kents only constitute a few paragraphs as opposed to the longer sections used to describe the Mackenzies and the Berkeleys.

The specific wording of 'play the man' within this excerpt draws attention to performative ideas of gender such as those set forth by Judith Butler, who suggests that gender is a performance that, through repetition, comes to appear essential (2006: 192). Blyton's reference to 'play[ing] the man' suggests that expected masculine behaviours are largely socially constructed and not innate, especially not to Bob who lacks the necessary male role models. Though his mother does not pressure him to take on this role, it appears to be Bob's inner personal sense of duty as a growing man that he would readily do so, and the transferred legacy of male responsibility is clear in the communication between father and son described here.

As I will suggest, a similar sense of legacy is seen in Gripari's 'Le Gentil Petit Diable' in which the son becomes a disappointment for not following in the footsteps established by the father. Though we do not find out the circumstances of the death of Bob's father, Blyton's novel, published in the aftermath of World War Two, reflects the common circumstances of wives at this time coming to terms with a life without their husbands. While his mother undergoes this struggle, and tries to take on control of the family, she is in a continuous battle with her young son, who also feels the need to take control in the place of the father, and this creates a power struggle between the two. As Mr and Mrs Mackenzie identify from their judicatory standpoint, Bob 'bosses his mother around' because 'he thinks he's got to be the man of the house' (20) while Bob's mother 'gets tired of his domineering ways, and pushes him off' (20). Emphasising the boy's desire to fill his father's footsteps, the phrase 'man of the house' is repeated in both this excerpt and the previous one.

The gendered conflicts between Bob and his mother become most noticeable when Mrs Kent suggests that she may not be home at lunch soon, as she may be getting a job:

> "Don't do that," said Bob, suddenly filled with panic, though he didn't know why. "I like to think of you at home all day. I don't want to think of an empty house – and no fire – and no kettle boiling. Don't you get a job, Mum. I'll do anything you want me to. I won't even ask to come home to dinner, if you won't get a job. Can't you wait a few years till I'm old enough to earn money for you?" […]
>
> He looked round the cosy room – the fire burning brightly, the table laid for tea, flowers here and there. He had a sudden vision of it cold and

empty, with no bustling sounds coming from the kitchen. He didn't like it at all (53).

Bob's panic comes from his mother departing from the traditional image of a housewife, leaving him anticipating some level of personal loss. The imagery evoked here – fires burning, kettles boiling – creates an impression of domestic warmth; a similar image is evoked in the hideout of *The Secret Seven*, a haven in which the children take on traditional gender roles. As Bob even says later in the novel, this is where he feels she belongs: "'I don't want any money you earn!" he said in a trembling voice. "I'd rather have you here at home, where you belong'" (83). Framed by Blyton as an abandonment of the home, Bob's mother's decision to work threatens the normative image of family; after all, for men to maintain power, women must be kept to the domestic sphere, in the service of men. Not only this, but the threat of his mother leaving the home and abandoning the creation of a comforting environment for the child is suggestive of the aforementioned psychosexual theories of male development by insisting that Bob is ripped away from the sensitive and caring world of the mother. While this is a necessary part of male development, Bob must undergo it before he is ready. Bob is so appalled by the idea of his mother getting work that he even offers to get a job himself when he is old enough, and this is considered preferable to his mother going out to work. In a reflection of fears in post-war Britain as to the consequences of evacuation and separation from parents on the stability of children as future citizens as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the greater focus is on the effects on the child and thus Mrs Kent's own desires for independence are disregarded.

To his dismay, Bob finds out that his mother has accepted a job (70). Mrs Kent reveals that she will have to leave for work before he leaves for school, and that

she will not be back in time for tea (71), leaving her son without his mother for most of the day. On the morning that her job begins, Blyton evokes imagery of a miserable, lifeless household seemingly in need of a mother to keep it lively: '[s]he didn't light the fire, because there would be nobody in the house all day. The sitting-room was cold and cheerless' (71). The same imagery returns frequently and figures centrally in Bob's misery: '[the house] stood silent and dark […] Bob hated the look of it. It should have had lights shining from it, the glow of a fire, smoke from the chimney, and cheerful sounds when he opened the door' (74). Despite the misery associated with the empty household, Mrs Kent seems happier than she has in a long time, clearly thrilled at the thought of gaining some independence. She 'smiled brightly', attempts to kiss Bob, and even laughs (72), things she rarely otherwise does. Blyton writes that Mrs Kent feels some sadness and anger at Bob's surliness, but reassures herself that '[h]eaps of mothers worked these days. Why shouldn't she?' (72). However, this seeming understanding of Mrs Kent's situation is but a fleeting, temporary insight into her struggles, as we find out near the end of the novel when Bob is taken away from his mother for good due to assumed neglect.

What is equally fascinating, from a gendered perspective, is that Bob is clueless as to what he should do, in his mother's absence, when faced with the breakfast table. It seems incomprehensible to him that he, a boy, should be carrying out the roles typically associated with housewifery: 'Bob sat and stared at the breakfast things. Who was supposed to wash them up? He was, he supposed! […] All kinds of small problems crowded into Bob's muddled mind' (72-73). Again, Mrs Kent has abandoned all normative semblance of motherhood and, by allowing the reader a glimpse of Bob's inner confusion, Blyton suggests that she is failing Bob, thus reinforcing the notion that domesticity is a maternal and female imperative. In a

phenomenon that might remind the reader of Susan's eventual femininity excluding her from Narnia in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Mrs Kent's neglectful nature coincides with an excessive self-interest and focus on beautification: '[s]he looked younger and prettier as she learnt ways to beautify herself. She bought herself gay clothes, and looked bright and cheerful. She enjoyed her new life' (82). As beautification occurs, Mrs Kent moves further away from a homely image of motherhood. Blyton's only imagining of single, working motherhood is, it seems, one in which the mother resents her child, and in which the child becomes neglected: 'Bob was the only thing that spoilt her pleasure' (82). Meanwhile, Bob is envious of the family life of the Mackenzies, as he watches them through the window, an image of domestic harmony that is juxtaposed with earlier descriptions of his own home.

> The whole family was there. Mr. Mackenzie was sitting in his chair smoking his pipe, with Pat on his knee telling him something. Mrs. Mackenzie was darning, listening to something that Jeanie was telling her. Jeanie was drawing at the same time, and near her was Donald doing his homework.
>
> The fire burnt cheerfully. […]
>
> Bob drank it all in as if his mind was thirsty for what he saw. Then he turned away, envy in his heart. […] They didn't know how lucky they were! Bob kicked his way back to Hawthorns, looking sullen (76-78).

Blyton contrasts the cold emptiness of Bob's home with the warm, loving atmosphere of the Mackenzie household. Again, the motif of peering through the window is repeated, as in earlier scenes where the Mackenzies look out on the neighbouring families. While the Mackenzies look out together on the dysfunctional families surrounding them from the domestic haven, in this circumstance Bob peers in, outside by himself and isolated from any sense of family. The window is

repeatedly a symbol used to contrast and compare the three families, amplify their differences and the seemingly separate universes that the families occupy, only in this case we witness what Bob sees from the other, unhappier side.

Compelled by his problematic home life, Bob's behaviour declines and he begins to show off: '[s]omething mad entered Bob that morning. He irritated the teachers intensely. He was cheeky and disobedient' (44). As we see in the character of Harry, who 'had enjoyed [Bob's] antics immensely but […] could see trouble ahead for anyone who was getting as far beyond himself as Bob' (45), an element of mischievousness might be considered a key part of boyhood. This is especially the case in the representation of boyhood in children's books such as those by Enid Blyton, where trickery and adventurousness are frequently considered admirable traits. Yet Bob's behaviour crosses a boundary, from quintessential boyhood tricks and into a cry for help. Failing to receive the attention he desires from his mother, he seeks it from others by turning himself into a spectacle. Equally, failing to gain control of his home life with his mother, he creates a situation in which he might feel in control of the way others react to him and treat him; indeed, Bob has been struggling to create the warm and friendly response in his mother that he senses so often in Mrs Mackenzie, and by acting in this way, Bob receives the approbation of his classmates. Nevertheless, while such bold behaviour is not a bad trait in itself, Bob's morals and behaviour have clearly been tarnished by his experience at home. Dishonest and scared, he hides from the headteacher when sent out of class, and fails to own up to his actions (46-47).

Bob's moral decline is even more apparent when, on returning from school to an empty house, he loses control and ruins the home that has become so unwelcoming to him. He throws the breakfast items from the table, kicks and spreads

the ashes from the fire, and causes chaos, even laughing as items break (84-85). Bob

has become so taunted by this image of an empty home that his only thought is to

destroy it, creating a physical manifestation of the very 'broken home' he inhabits.

It is interesting that at this point the narrative focalisation briefly switches

from Bob to Mrs Kent, as her mind spirals trying to work out what has happened to

her home. The fact that the narrative depicts her innermost thoughts specifically at

this moment, as she contemplates her ruined home, suggests that Mrs Kent's biggest

priority emotionally is her material wealth, and not her son's welfare. Mrs Kent

equally struggles to fathom that her son would do such a thing to her, as if she has

paid little attention to Bob's gradual deterioration and feeling of abandonment: '[n]o,

he couldn't do a thing like that to her!' (85). The ignorance of the mother and the

focalisation of this scene appears constructed to place blame on Mrs Kent and to

evoke sympathy for Bob.

When Mrs Kent goes to confront her son, who has sought refuge at the

domestic haven, the Mackenzie household, Bob is cheeky and disrespectful to his

mother, saying: '"I might do it again, if I get that feeling"' (85). While the reader is

drawn to feel sympathy for Bob, his behaviour is also controlling. Bob, the 'man' of

the house, feels he can control his mother, and even reiterates this directly as a

threat: '"I warn you, Mum – I might break things again," he said, not really meaning

it, but just to punish her and frighten her, and stop her from bringing her friends

home and expecting things to be nice for them' (86). Realistically, we cannot hold

Bob, a ten-year-old boy, to the same standards as a grown man, but it is important

nonetheless that the boy feels he can – and indeed does – assert control over an adult

woman. Even at this early stage in his life, masculinity is associated with power and

control over female members of the family, not to mention the aggressiveness that

can be felt in Bob's threats to his mother. Without a father there to take the main position of power in the household, Bob undergoes a tough Oedipal struggle and instead tries to fill it. Yet again though, the narrative evokes sympathy for Bob and paints Mrs Kent as a cruel and neglectful mother; her decision from this point is to lock Bob out of the house while she is out, and Blyton remarks that Bob is thus left 'cold and hungry and tired' (87).

It is within discussions of working motherhood that *The Six Bad Boys* has been termed 'dispiritingly retrogressive'. This was the view of Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig in their history of girls' fiction, *You're a Brick, Angela!* in 1976: '[t]his is perhaps Enid Blyton's nastiest story; she has taken, unusually, a "topical" theme and sentimentalized it, bringing to the problem of juvenile delinquency an attitude dispiritingly retrogressive' (cited in Bensoussane, n.d.). Though Bensoussane disagrees with the assessment of the novel as 'nasty', she does admit that *The Six Bad Boys* is 'hard on working mothers':

> [t]here is […] no suggestion that any kind of compromise could be reached […] Surely the issue is not that Mrs. Kent should be there for Bob twenty-four hours a day, but that there should be *someone* there for him after school and during the holidays […] Blyton appears to condemn all working mothers […] This is despite the fact that Enid Blyton worked long hours herself when her children were young — at home, yes, but shut away in her study! (n.d.)

Again, the novel places blame on mothers and grants little importance to their circumstances, especially considering Mrs Kent lost her husband only the previous year.

Tom's experiences equally expose the trauma of paternal absence, with Mr Berkeley leaving the home after disputes with his wife. It is the male party who is

able to leave, whilst the mother is consistently expected to be present, as is the case with Mrs Kent, who is seemingly selfish for wishing to have employment and thus be less frequently present in the home; concern for the wellbeing of the family must strictly be the central concern of a mother. The shame associated with the father leaving is so great that Mrs Berkeley tells her children they must lie, a further indication of how a dysfunctional family life leads to the children in the story making negative moral choices: '[t]hey had to promise her not to tell anyone their father had gone away because of a row. They were to say he was on a visit' (79). The children miss their father hugely, again emphasising how fundamental the father figure is to a family's stability and wellbeing: '[i]t certainly *was* awful! They missed him much more than they had ever dreamed they would. They kept asking their mother where he was, and if he was coming back' (79).

It is Mrs Berkeley who disrupts family life most by complaining about the supposed downgrade in lifestyle the family have experienced by moving, and like Mrs Kent, she is depicted as being concerned with the material rather than with being a good mother: 'although the children were quite used to the smaller rooms and garden, Mrs. Berkeley wasn't! Her husband began to feel that for the rest of his life he would hear moans and groans about the lovely house they used to have!' (54). Discontented women are again a main cause of family breakdown; this is particularly interesting in light of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which was published just a decade later. Friedan's work described the plight of housewives discontented with their lives, which she termed 'the problem that has no name' (1963: 13). Though, within the narrative, both Mrs Berkeley and Mrs Kent are depicted as being unforgivably selfish towards their families, she and Mrs Kent are united by this similar longing for more that was identified by Betty Friedan a decade

later. Blyton, however, seems to dismiss this as a shirking of womanly and motherly responsibility towards children.

The domestic breakdown of the Berkeley family highlights how terrifying and damaging family disputes can be for children. For the first time, we see Tom and his sisters somewhat united through their fear at the situation in their household: '[t]he Row that night was never forgotten. The three children were already in bed when it happened, but they could hear the raised voices downstairs and they were frightened. Suppose Mother threw something at Dad? She did get so angry sometimes' (56). The row is heard from the perspective of the children, but most frequently Tom, and thus brings into focus the consequences of this event for his development and behaviour. Moreover the word 'Row' is capitalised, and figures in the chapter title ('The Big Row'), highlighting the significance of this event; it is the turning point in Tom's story, and from this moment onwards he becomes a difficult child. This scene is a harrowing one, with suggestions that the argument could even reach violent levels. The children are terrified, described as 'shiver[ing]' (56). The girls are 'huddled together', and for the first time, we see the Berkeley children in solidarity: '[t]hey all put their arms round one another for warmth, and for once in a way the three were united' (56). Even more harrowingly, this scene has a basis in reality; these parts of the book were 'largely autobiographical' and saw Blyton 'reliving unhappy times from her own childhood' (Bensoussane, n.d.). When Blyton's biographer Barbara Stoney showed this section of the novel to Blyton's brother Hanly, "he was obviously very moved. 'Yes,' he said, wiping a tear from his cheek, 'that's us, it is exactly what happened. I never knew she had written about it all'" (1998; cited in Bensoussane, n.d.).

The author's own chilling memories inform this scene and assist the novel's intended purpose; having endured it herself, Blyton is viscerally aware of the seriousness of family dysfunction. It is in this scene, with the evocation of specific terminology such as 'broken home', that the true intentions of Blyton's novel are most clearly expressed. As Mr Berkeley explains, a 'broken home' is:

"a home like ours where the parents don't pull together, where they quarrel in front of the children, and where everyone takes sides against somebody else. It says in the Bible that a house divided against itself cannot stand. It must fall. A broken household, a broken home, makes children go wrong, it ruins them […] Poor kids, they never get a chance of settling down in peace and serenity. They're not happy. One of these days they *will* go wrong, as so many children do in an unhappy home" (57).

That Mr Berkeley is the one to express this, and Mrs Berkeley so unwilling to accept or listen – '"how dare you say that our children will go wrong!"' (57) – is again telling of who is 'at fault' in this situation and who holds the true power. The specific utilisation of the term 'broken home' is again associated with children going 'wrong' here.

Finally, with a '[s]lam!', Mr Berkeley leaves (57), and Tom immediately begins to take on the same role – man of the house – that Bob has been attempting to fill: 'Hilda and Eleanor began to cry. Tom gave them a rough hug. He wanted to cry too, but he was a boy, so he stared fiercely down the stairs and wondered desperately what to do' (58). Even in this time of immense trauma, Tom decides it is his duty as a growing boy to be strong and resilient, to figure out the next steps, and protect his sisters. Mr Berkeley comes back later that night, but the damage is already done, with Tom acting out at school the next day. Whilst his sisters are simply tired and

subdued at school (59), Tom, like Bob, turns to rowdiness and silliness. He is quicker than his sisters to become aggressive when faced with difficulties, whilst the girls are considered more likely – or expected to – stay quiet in their moments of trouble: '[a]s for Tom, he was like Bob. When things went wrong he went wrong too, and was silly and rude and showed off' (59). This is an indicator of the differing ways in which family problems are expected to affect boys and girls.

The following chapter sees Bob and Tom finding distraction together. They decide they would like to go to the cinema, but do not have enough money for both to go. In their desperation to forget their troubles – '[i]t's warm in there, and you can forget everything except the picture' (62) – they commit their first of several crimes: sneaking into the cinema without paying, and into a film for over sixteens only. That their decision comes from their desperation to escape their home lives and leads them to committing this first crime emphasises what a deep effect a so-called 'broken home' will have on boys and their subsequent development into men. It is equally interesting that the boys escape their troubles by seeing an action film clearly aimed at an older male audience. This film intended for older boys may indicate two possibilities: either it could set them back on the desired path to manhood, or it may represent the way in which their home lives are depriving the boys of their childhood innocence:

> [i]t was an exciting picture, the boys thought. There was plenty of shooting and chasing and hiding. […] They glued their eyes to the picture, clenching their fists at the shooting parts, and hardly breathing when a great chase was going on (63).

When they are discovered and confronted by the manager, the behavioural decline of the boys is further emphasised when they lie about having paid an entrance fee,

leading to disappointment from the manager (67). Blyton writes, forebodingly: '[t]hat one, stupid lie was the beginning of a lot of trouble' (67), foreshadowing the trouble to come for the two boys. The manager implies that Bob and Tom have gone beyond the tomfoolery and pranks expected of young boys, and, by lying to him, have started to truly 'go wrong': 'I'd have let you off with a scolding for being a couple of stupid little idiots. But if you're going to lie about it too, that's another thing' (67).

Chapter Thirteen sees the introduction of the Terrors gang, and the beginning of true trouble for Tom and Bob. The Terrors' hideout, a cellar beneath some 'half-ruined old houses' (87), becomes a home from home for Tom and Bob during their familial struggles. Most interestingly, the cellar is directly beneath some physically broken homes which serve as literal manifestations of the homes the boys have come from. The Terrors are made up of Len, Jack, Patrick, and Fred, who are the remaining four bad boys referenced in the book's title. The gang is something of a haven for the boys, allowing them to simply be boys and enabling them to forget about disturbances at home. They bring toys and items stereotypically associated with boyhood, such as comics and engines, and play boyish games, including spies (87) and pranks (88).

The gang is made up entirely of children with problematic home lives of various kinds: lacking fathers, suitable homes, and 'caring' mothers. With a lack of reliable male authority and maternal warmth, the boys instead stick together, and in the absence of a suitable home, the boys find this with each other, feigning the bravery and strength associated with masculinity in another performance of manhood:

"[w]e aren't afraid of nobody!" said Patrick. It wasn't true, of course. They were afraid of their teachers, the "coppers", one or two shopkeepers who shouted at them – and Patrick was terribly afraid of his father. But they liked pretending they were quite fearless. For a little while they felt grand and on top of the world! (88).

The boys make their cellar into a cosy home from home, and Bob begins to steal from his own mother, though he himself denies that this is stealing: '[t]aking things from my mother isn't pinching' (97). This, importantly, is an action reprimanded by the Mackenzie children at the beginning of the book. He takes a table, kettle, cups and plates, a stool, glasses, a rug, an oil stove, food and drink and cushions to the hideout (95-97), and it soon becomes welcoming as their own houses are not, warm with the glow of a 'true home' and filled with the things lacking in the absence of Bob's mother:

[t]he oil-stove was a tremendous success. It warmed the little cellar immediately, and the red glow it gave out was very pleasant [...T]he boys munched happily, felt warm, and read their everlasting comics (96).

Indeed: '[t]he boys thought it was the cosiest, finest place in the whole kingdom. "It's really a *home*," said Jack. "That's what we've made it – a home!"' (100). This hideout indeed becomes the haven that Bob craves, with its clear warmth and domesticity contrasting to the cold house he has escaped.

In the following chapter, we see a further diminishing of the boys' morals as the gang decides to steal money to go to the cinema. At first, Bob 'felt uncomfortable. What was Patrick proposing?' (101). Bob advises Tom against joining Patrick in his raid of the newsagents but Tom, in an effort to appear tough to the rest of the gang, goes along. Afterwards, the boys are all excited, considering this

theft something of an adventure: '[i]t was all very well to play and pretend they were spies or burglars, up against detectives or policemen – this was the real thing!' (102). This importantly relates back to the earlier scene in which we witness Bob Kent elect to be the robber in a game with the Mackenzies, and shows a clear decline in the boys' behaviour; with no guidance, the game develops into reality and they experience boyhood in the 'wrong' way, carrying out real thefts and causing real trouble. Tom equally takes great pride in having avoided authority: '"[a] copper came along, and nearly spotted me," said Tom, proudly. "But I hid behind a dustbin and he went on. Patrick was as slippery as an eel. He went in at that window like a shadow"' (102). Most of the boys are at first nervous about carrying out a real theft, and clearly question the morals behind it. Yet, with little to lose at this point, all of them unhappy with their family life, and having succeeded at not being caught, the boys become excited.

The lack of secure and healthy family life experienced by these boys is most keenly felt near Christmas, a time typically spent with family. Bob's mother goes away and, left without a family, Bob spends his time in the Terrors hideout, decorating it festively, bringing a small Christmas tree, 'with its decorations and parcels', '[t]wo or three packets of food', '[a] bag of mince-pies' (117), ginger beer and books to read (118). The cellar is exactly like the festive home that Bob desires so much: '[h]olly gleamed there with red berries, and paper chains and loops and garlands of red and green hung around the walls. Paper bells hung down from the roof, and silver balls glittered here and there' (118). In another abdication of her maternal responsibilities, Tom's mother has decided she 'didn't feel like Christmas' and 'had made very few preparations for it' (116). Bob waits for the gang to meet in the hideout on Christmas Eve, but the gang's crimes are finally discovered after

some stolen money is found and the police become involved (120). The alarmingly named chapter, 'The Police!' (121) depicts detectives questioning each of the boys in the gang, after which they are told they will appear before the Juvenile Court. Bob is ripped harshly from his self-made home.

As if by paternal necessity, Mr Berkeley returns to stand by Tom in the Juvenile Court (129). In a discussion between Tom and his parents, in which Mr Berkeley asks '[h]ow could you do these things?' (131), the moral of the story is poignantly and emotively set forth by a child figure:

> "[y]ou and Mother can take the blame! What sort of a home do you think this has ever been for me – or for the girls? Nagging and bickering and rowing in front of us ever since we can remember! No peace, no pulling together like the Mackenzies. I've hated my home for a long time, and so have you, Dad, or you wouldn't have cleared out. I just did what you did – cleared out too, every evening" (131-132).

At this point, Mr Berkeley decides that the right thing for him to do is to return and to make a home for his child (132-133) – a functional nuclear family is again presented as the solution to all problems. Mr Berkeley even shows remorse for having left in the first place, saying that if he had been there, this might not have happened (132). At this point, Tom clearly struggles with his emotions, his 'mouth beg[inning] to tremble', but in stereotypically masculine style, he is adamant that he must remain tough: '[h]e pursed it defiantly […] Tom was being a "tough guy" – he wasn't going to give in, or say he was sorry' (132). Tom even begins to embrace his supposed destiny as a means of punishing his parents for the trauma they have made him endure: '[a]ll right – if he was so bad, so mean, so much of a villain, he'd *be* one!' (132). We later see Tom playing tough again, and this time Blyton emphasises

that the 'broken home' he has grown up in may have done permanent damage. Tom is:

> defiant, but mostly because he could see that it was hurting his parents, and he was trying to punish them for having made him miserable. He *was* sorry now for his share in the escapades, but he wasn't going to say so. No, he was going to strut and be a "tough guy" and defy everyone (136).

Chapter Twenty-One depicts the court scene, with further explanations about how the unhappy home lives of the boys have led them to bad behaviour and crime. Tom is sent away to a school in the country for 'six months at least' (145), with his return conditional upon the headteacher giving good reports of his behaviour and the Berkeleys providing a 'good and happy home for him to come back to' (145). They conclude that '[i]t is not altogether his fault that this boy has gone wrong, and that is why we are not punishing him as severely as we might' (145). In the face of leaving his family, Tom finally softens the 'tough guy' act and hugs his parents, his 'surliness vanish[ing]' (149). Clearly, Tom's act constituted protection against the harm he has experienced, and faced with a better future, he becomes a gentler and kinder boy.

The magistrate is 'gentler' with Bob (149), having 'reports about Bob's mother before him – and many a time before he had had similar reports of children going wrong because their mothers had left them in order to go out to work' (149). It seems that Mrs Kent's decision to work is, according to the novel and the magistrates within this chapter, considered morally worse than the constant disruption of the Berkeley household and the abusive relationship between mother and father. It is at this point that the damning of working mothers is most clearly felt, in the decision that Mrs Kent is 'worse' than Mrs Berkeley. Bob's mother is 'hard-

faced and determined' in front of the court (149) and is adamant 'not to be blamed' (146). Mrs Kent shows little remorse and does not want Bob, so it is decided that Bob will be sent to another home. The solution to Bob's dilemma, as might be expected, is that he will move in with the Mackenzies (152), who are, for the final time, depicted as the perfect nuclear family. In a final show that this is the right path for Bob in terms of his development into a man, Bob promises to Mr and Mrs Mackenzie that he will be like 'another son, a big strong one, who'll never say no, whatever you ask him to do' (153): a perfect image of obedient, resilient and confident masculinity.

The final chapter of the novel, entitled 'One Year Later', depicts Bob in his new home with the Mackenzies. Bob is happier than ever: he is developing well (154) and loves his new home. Again, essentialist and normative perspectives on gender are reinforced, as Bob says that Mrs Mackenzie is a '*real proper* mother' (154-155). Bob gets on well with his new siblings, and believes himself part of 'a family now' (156). This chapter also sees Tom returning home for good, having made good progress at school. This time, however, he returns to a nuclear family more in keeping with the Mackenzies, in which there is a determination to work together. The boys' behavioural problems, in this way, are solved, and they become functional young men.

The Six Bad Boys, published in 1951, is a text emblematic of the traditional family attitudes in post-war Britain and is vastly different to the French texts analysed within this chapter. The utter contrast between depictions of family life could owe itself to the decade that separates the texts, with the two French texts coming at a time when Second Wave ideals were developing and becoming more mainstream. While the other texts acknowledge the importance of the nuclear family

but ultimately undermine these ideologies, however subtly, Blyton's text strongly reinforces them, just as *The Secret Seven* in the previous chapter uses the group character to reinforce gender roles. Indeed, it is a text in which family structure comes to directly affect the ways in which masculinity manifests and in which role distribution within the family is firmly policed. A clear link is made between normative family structures and 'good' development of masculinity, and the narratological devices and structural plotting of the text reinforces the functional nuclear family as most desirable; similarly to the texts in the previous chapter, in which male voices appear first as a means of emphasising underlying male dominance, in this novel the Mackenzies are prioritised in a similar way to highlight the primacy of the nuclear family. Blyton's novel presents a range of family arrangements in a way that serves to reinforce a patriarchal agenda, according to which mothers are expected to stay within the home and fathers are expected to exert control and carry out punishment. In this way, the novel is keenly aware of the changes underneath the surface of a conservative society, with Mrs Kent being an example of a woman wishing to find her identity outside of the realm of motherhood, work outside the home, and centre her own needs. Yet the text suggests danger for boys whose families do not conform to the nuclear ideal, and is particularly hard on working mothers like Mrs Kent, suggesting they have a greater responsibility towards their children. Mothers, however, can never punish their boys – this is the prerogative of the father, and a key attribute of the development of masculine identity, best articulated in the Freudian ideas explored at the beginning of the chapter. A far different approach to the nuclear family is witnessed within the following text.

'Le Gentil Petit Diable' (1967)

The stories that make up Pierre Gripari's *Contes de la Rue Broca* (*Tales of Broca Street*) contrast significantly to the other texts examined within this chapter. While *The Six Bad Boys* and *Les Six Compagnons* display realism of varying degrees of grittiness, Gripari's tales tend towards the fantastical, comparable to fables in their combination of abstract fantasy and moral roots. This is in the same vein as many other influential French children's texts from this time such as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* (1943), Jean Giono's *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres* (1953) and *Le Petit Garçon qui avait envie d'espace* (1949), and Michel Tournier's *Sept contes* (1984). Gripari's stories combine fantasy elements (including characters such as mermaids and giants), humour, and the nonsensical in a fashion reminiscent of Edward Lear's nonsense poetry, with seemingly unrelated items, objects, and locations, and absurd rhymes scattered throughout; bizarre-sounding stories such as 'Roman d'amour d'une patate' ('Love Story of a Potato') are evidence of this nonsensical style. Yet, like Lear's nonsense, the tales often have hidden messages undermining deeply held social beliefs and structures.

Gripari has remained a well-known author even after his death in 1990, and his unique literary style combined with the early loss of his family at nineteen years of age (Camero Pérez, 2005: 69) makes his texts an interesting focus for a chapter on the family unit. *Contes de la Rue Broca* were particularly successful with some tales being adapted for television and cartoon, though the tales were initially rejected by seventeen Parisian publishers (Martin-Conrad, 2001: 9) before finding a home with Table Ronde, and were published in many languages, but not in English until 2013 (Ellis, 2013: 31). The stories mention and engage with real-life locations such as Paris, where the author was born and died, and depict fictional locations on the

fringe of society that are nonetheless representative of Parisian streets. Gripari's mix of real locations with fantastical elements, delivered in a humorous style while retaining a moral core, often provides a subversive view of normative beliefs and structures. Indeed, however abstract these stories may be, there are still many occasions upon which the tales engage with real world institutions and themes including gender, religion and family, which is certainly the case in 'Le Gentil Petit Diable'.

Described by Gillian Lathey as a 'journey that doubtless offended some Catholic sensibilities in the France of 1967' (2013: 227), 'Le Gentil Petit Diable' is a story that explores intersections of religion and gender. In so doing, it shows how religious ideals that implicate gender can bring about specific familial relations and place expectations on boys. It tells the story of a young devil who is expected to follow a set path defined by his family to become an archetypically 'bad' and 'evil' devil. However, he leaves Hell after deciding he does not want to pursue this path and instead wants to be a 'gentil petit diable' ('nice little devil'). It is this story that inspires the cover art for the volume of *Contes de la Rue Broca* consulted within this chapter, depicting a smiling, friendly-looking red devil on his knees as if in prayer, light shining upon him. Ultimately, the story ties together the nuclear family, patriarchal primacy, Christian morality, and masculinity and depicts a character that attempts to escape from and resist these social identity pressures to become what he truly wants to be. In the words of Anne Martin-Conrad, many Griparian characters like the little devil speak to a need to 'tenez bon envers et contre tout, travaillez,

devenez ce que vous êtes, à la fin vous obtiendrez ce que vous avez voulu et même au-delà' (2001: 9).[70]

Gripari's story seems to emphasise the constructed nature of such gendered and religious values, and suggests that there is ultimately no objective 'right' or 'wrong' identity as religious and social ideologies would suggest. Gripari's fantasy:

> s'imprègne toujours d'humour et d'ironie pour tordre le cou aux idéologies
> [...] Sa contestation de la religion, le mythe, l'Histoire ou la littérature est une
> contestation toute personelle, qui tout en faisant oeuvre d'intercompréhension
> et invitant le lecteur à adopter le point de vue proposé, ne prétend nullement
> imposer une pensée ou prêcher une quelconque doctrine [...] L'écrivain va, en
> général, à contra-courant des idées de la Doxa et des statutes établis, suivant
> une technique de déconstruction en une manière que l'on pourrait dire
> postmodern (Camero Pérez, 2005: 70).[71]

Carmen Camero Pérez goes on to write that Griparian fantasy subverts the standard form by substituting fear with laughter (72), and in particular does so through the treatment of sinister fantastical creatures (73). In the case of 'Le Gentil Petit Diable', this is done with the devil character, and is done in a way that undermines religious and gendered ideals of family.

France has legally been a secular state since religion and public affairs were separated in 1905, after decades of gradual separation of Catholicism from education, law, and public life generally. Yet the country's heritage is deeply

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[70] '[H]old on against all odds, work, become what you are, in the end you will obtain what you wanted and even beyond.'

[71] '[Is] always imbued with humour and irony to twist the neck of ideologies [...] His contestation of religion, myth, history, or literature is a very personal one, which all while promoting mutual understanding and inviting the reader to adopt the proposed point of view, never claims to impose a thought or preach amy doctrine [...] The writer goes, in general, against the ideas of the Doxa and established statutes, following a deconstruction technique in a way that one could say is modern.'

Catholic, with Catholicism remaining deeply ingrained in French culture, and by the end of the 1950s 80% of the French population still identified as Catholic (Portier, 2012: 22; cited in Ferrara, 2019). As a homosexual, Gripari's sexuality was at odds with the values and teachings of Catholicism, values in which French society was still firmly entrenched despite its legal status as a secular state by this point; it therefore makes sense that his texts question heteronormative structures inherent in Catholicism, such as the nuclear family. The period during which the tales were published equally witnessed a huge amount of change and conflict in religion in France, with the end of the Algerian War drawing a sharp increase in immigration to France from the African colonies (MacMaster, 1997: 189).

In the case of 'Le Gentil Petit Diable,' Gripari shows how religious and didactic ideals are equally tied up with patriarchal directives on the importance of the nuclear family and of normative gender roles. Gripari's devil protagonist escapes the pressures of the nuclear family to find a new, surrogate family that is more accepting of his true self, while the text gently and humorously mocks oppressive social structures. 'Le Gentil Petit Diable' is not the only tale concerning religion visible in the collection, with another notable example being 'Le Petit Cochon futé', a story in which a child God is permitted to create his first world. This story is similarly notable for its subversion of normative Catholic values, with the initial sentences introducing 'une maman Dieu' (2007 [1967]: 87) in contrast to the accepted image of God as male and a father figure. Not only this, but the existence of multiple gods or a family of gods is at odds with the monotheistic structure of Christianity.

The structures of European children's literature have other significant links to Christian values too. The 'hero versus villain' and 'good versus evil' binaries that are prevalent throughout much of children's literature, notably, are reflective of the God

versus Satan moral dynamic of Christianity. Margery Hourihan's *Deconstructing the Hero*, which examines the hero narrative that is central to Western culture and the qualities it inscribes, describes this dynamic (1997: 1). Hero narratives present some of the 'fundamental dualisms' that 'have shaped Western thought and values' including 'the superiority of humans to animals, free men to slaves, men to women, reason to passion and soul (or mind) to body' (2). Moreover, 'Christian thought largely mirrors these values, and links them to concepts of good and evil' in which '[t]he hero always embodies the superior terms […] as he adventures forth on his quest and encounters evil monsters, dragons, witches and their like' (2).

Equally noteworthy in a discussion of masculinity, Christianity is patriarchal, dominated by male figures of power and authority such as God and Christ, and Christian values consistently bring with them moral teachings that implicate gender. In the Old Testament, Adam is made in the image of God, whilst Eve, known often as the temptress who led Adam to sin, is made from man's rib. 'Le Gentil Petit Diable' contains a host of powerful, male figures with religious importance, including Saint Peter, God, Jesus, a priest, the Pope, and the little devil's father, each referred to in the standard familial and patriarchal terms of Christianity, for example 'mon père' or 'my father' (22). In contrast, far fewer female figures of any real significance or weight appear within the text. One exception is the Virgin Mary, 'la mère de Dieu' (26; 'the mother of God'), who does, however, command respect and fear from the little devil, who in her presence 'avait si peur qu'il n'osa souffler un mot' (26).[72]

Within the teachings of Catholicism, sex is strictly to be within marriage and for the purpose of procreation, and thus contraception is forbidden (Prost, 1988: 148-

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[72] '[W]as so scared that he dared not breathe a word'.

149). Marriage is not dissolvable: not because it is a contract, but because God unites

the husband and wife (149). In the nineteenth century an extra dimension was added

to this by French Catholics; family came to be considered the 'cellular base of

society […] a natural reality, existing prior to the state and superior to it' and 'the

locus wherein social discipline is inculcated: the individual learns there to submit to

collective constraints' (149), and the search for happiness comes in submitting to this

natural order (150). The Bible's teachings equally provide a specific image of how

men should comport themselves, and these teachings often relate to how they should

act in relation to women and the family unit. Much of the Bible's teaching

specifically relates to the individual roles of men and women in God's eyes, and

particularly their role in the creation and raising of children. Many direct quotations

from the Bible emphasise a normative view of family. These include homophobic

teachings forbidding men to lie with men, which it names 'an abomination' (The

Bible, Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9); teachings dictating that

men should provide for their relatives (1 Timothy 5:8); and warnings against acting

in ways seen as unsuitable for one's sex: '[a] woman shall not wear a man's garment,

nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an

abomination to the LORD your God' (Deuteronomy 22:5). It also states that 'the

husband is the head of the wife' and that wives should 'submit in everything to their

husbands' (Ephesians 5:23-33). Christianity, then, sets up an image of masculinity

that is inherently patriarchal and which often places women in subordinate

positions.[73]

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[73] In Victorian Britain, Christianity combined with conceptions of virility to create the concept of
Christian manliness, which highlighted both the virility of the healthy male body and morality (Vance,
1985: 1).

'Le Gentil Petit Diable' achieves a number of different things within its relatively short length. The text displays many of the normative beliefs related to the nuclear family and the gender roles it prescribes, with fathers and mothers acting in expectedly stereotypical ways. Yet it does this with the intention of undermining these qualities: firstly by comically ascribing these Christian values to a family of devils who might be expected to exemplify the opposite of Christian teaching and secondly, by drawing attention to the socially constructed nature of identity rather than divinely ordained nature of identity, particularly in its focus on a devil who eventually obtains a place as an angel in heaven.

Gripari's story makes important intertextual connections to other popular works of children's fiction even within its title, which bears close resemblance to the popular book by the celebrated Comtesse de Ségur, entitled *Un bon petit diable* (*The Good Little Devil*), published a century prior in 1860. Ségur's novel is similarly comedic in nature and also engages topics of family, upbringing, Catholicism and correct masculine conduct. It follows a boy named Charles who strikes back at his abusive aunt by 'attaching pictures of demons to his buttocks' to prevent spankings and causing mayhem at his 'exaggeratedly horrid boarding school' (Heywood, 2011: 72). The novel, according to Sophie Heywood, 'celebrate[s] the boy's anti-authoritarian streak', but ultimately concludes with the boy settling down as a 'good Catholic' (72). Gripari's story shares many qualities with the popular novel not only in title, but equally in its depiction of a rebellious, indeed devilish, male character who in some ironic fashion becomes an exemplary Catholic.

The fantastical qualities of the novel are established immediately in the use of the phrase '[i]l était une fois' (7), an archetypal phrase of fairy stories. In keeping with this, the narrative voice is a third person who tells the tale from a position

outside of the story. While the narrator relates to the reader of the story by using the inclusive first-person plural, the inhabitants of the story are distanced, being described as 'eux' (7). As a result, within the story's initial paragraphs, reader and narrator are allied as spectators who observe the characters from a different world. Although the social and familial structures within the story are very similar to those in the real, non-fictional world, the reader is invited to observe them with a more objective lens and thus see them with less bias, with their flaws too. Equally interesting is that the narrator describes the central character as 'notre petit diable', with the possessive determiner indicating some initial sympathy with and relation to the central character.

Family is clearly established as a central theme from the beginning with an early description of a stereotypical, heterosexual nuclear family made up of devils. This family consists, of course, of a mother, a father and a son living together in their home, Hell. The devils, particularly mother and son, are described in comically archetypal diabolic terms, with the little child devil 'tout rouge, avec deux cornes noires et deux ailes de chauve-souris' (7).[74] His father, rather unconventionally for a devil, is a 'grand diable vert' and his mother, more stereotypically, is 'une diablesse noire' (7).[75] The near-cartoonish image of devils is in keeping with the nonsensical and comedic tone of the *Broca* stories, but equally constitute a mockery not only of a much-feared figure within Christian teachings, but of the sanctity attached to the nuclear family and the normative roles that come with it. There is a notable subversiveness in the devils forming the kind of nuclear family unit that is often central to Christian teachings and that reinforces the heteronormativity that is

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[74] '[A]ll red, with two black horns and two bat wings'.
[75] '[G]reat green devil' and 'a black she-devil'.

fundamental to Catholicism. The devils, supposedly the antithesis of all that is 'good', ironically constitute a stereotypical nuclear family. Of course, this nuclear family is not a perfectly functional one, which is a vital quality in a 'proper' nuclear family (as suggested by Blyton in *The Six Bad Boys*); Gripari's family of devils is dysfunctional because the son is not willing to fulfil the legacy set forth for him by his father, and runs from the pressures he faces. In a similar way to the Berkeleys of *The Six Bad Boys*, this story tells the tale of a breakdown within the traditional nuclear family.

As in other texts examined within this chapter, the roles of mother and father are clearly distinguished, with the father taking a leading role in the education and punishing of his son. Indeed, the devil father tasks himself with bringing up the devil child to be an upstanding member of society in Hell, meaning he must raise him to be wicked and terrible, the difficulty being that, as the story's title suggests, his son wishes to be a 'gentil petit diable'. The power and control exerted by the father is evident even in the initial paragraphs of the story, with the 'papa' devil the first of the parents to be introduced, and the voice that interrogates his son on his return from school each day: '[c]haque soir, quand il revenait de l'école, son père lui demandait […]' (7).[76] Papa is mentioned far more frequently at this stage as if to represent his dominance. He is the character whose voice we hear the most, and he is the mouthpiece for normative values. The father takes charge, punishes and scolds the child for his transgressions, which include going to school, doing his homework, and behaving himself (8). He directs the family, particularly in concerns related to family legacy and the metier of the son, which is clearest when 'son père lui dit […]

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[76] '[E]ach evening, when he returned from school, his father asked him […]'

j'ai décidé de te retirer de l'école et de te mettre en apprentissage' (9).[77] The father's authority over his family is evident in these initial paragraphs when he interrogates his son and we see a series of straight and to the point replies, ordered in quick, neat lines in a nod to the control the father exerts: 'Oui, Papa […] Non, Papa' (8).

In an attempt to 'correct' his behaviour, the devil father, in charge as usual, sends the little devil to 'la Grande Chaufferie Centrale' (9; 'the great, central heater') to begin work, where he must keep the fire lit upon which a great cauldron boils sinners. Note that 'papa' specifically takes his son out of school and instead sends his son to work, indicating the central role of fathers in generating income, providing means for the family, and going out into the public sphere and bringing up their sons to do the same. The devil in charge at the Chaufferie is also male, as is evident from the masculine term used: 'le Grand Contrôleur' (10; 'the great controller'), further reinforcing the authority of male figures in the story and in the public sphere.

One of Gripari's first remarks, moreover, is that the little devil's desire to be good is to 'le désespoir de sa famille' (7; 'the despair of his family'). It is vital to the overall happiness and success of the family unit that the son follows in the father's footsteps, suggesting the primacy of patriarchy even in Hell, as a further reflection of the reader's own world. As a patriarch, the father is eager to protect the reputation of the family in wider society, and the son's potential for work in the future, both of which are under threat by the son's 'misconduct', and he frequently expresses concern for this legacy: '[q]u'est-ce que j'ai bien pu faire à la Terre pour avoir un enfant pareil ?' (8).[78] There is a clear feeling here that, as an upstanding citizen who abides by the standards set by society, the father devil is deserving of better than

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[77] '[H]is father punished him' and 'his father said to him […] I've decided to take you out of school and put you in an apprenticeship'.

[78] '[W]hat on earth have I done to deserve such a child?'

what his son gives him, as he also speaks of the sacrifices he and his wife have made
so that their son could have a bad life and become a terrible devil: 'depuis des
années, ta mère et moi, nous faisons des sacrifices pour te donner une mauvaise
éducation, pour te prêcher le mauvais exemple, pour essayer de faire de toi un grand,
un méchant diable !' (8-9).[79] In straying from the path set for him by his family, the
little devil does not fulfil his duty as a growing young man. The mother, meanwhile,
is simply an emotional background figure. She has no dialogue at all within this
story, and is only mentioned briefly as crying (9), reinforcing the emotional and
nurturing role of mothers, their expected sensitivity, and their seeming unsuitability
for taking charge and asserting power, as is similarly emphasised in the two other
texts within this chapter.

The narrative standpoint of the story, which takes the position of an observer
from the reader's own world, allows for a questioning of the moral systems both
within the story and within the reader's world. Within the story, Gripari creates an
inverted reflection of the 'real world', in which the same structural formations are
populated by devils rather than human beings. Hell, the narrator explains, is typically
seen as a bad place; 'ce n'est pas comme chez nous' and it is even 'le contraire' ('the
opposite') of where the reader lives (9), at least in terms of the moral systems in
place: '[c]'est pourquoi, en principe, les diables sont méchants. Pour eux, c'est bien
d'être méchant' (9).[80] This remark draws into question Christian values by
suggesting a subjective approach to morality that is jarring given the abundance of
religious imagery in the story. Rather than expressing any certainty that Hell is
absolutely bad as one might expect in a text using such symbolism, Gripari rather

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[79] '[F]or years, your mother and I have made sacrifices to give you a bad education, to provide a bad
example for you, to try to make of you a great, wicked devil!'
[80] '[I]t's not like where we live' and 'it's why, in principle, devils are wicked. For them, it's good to be
wicked.'

appears to suggest that Hell is bad to us only because of our values, whilst for the devils living in Hell, it is 'good' to be 'bad'. Indeed, the little devil's crime, rather than straying from a devout Christian path, is in wishing to be devout. This reversal of religious values helps to highlight the constructed and subjective nature of all religious values and social expectations. The fact that this family of devils is doomed to misunderstand one another, and eventually is broken up, exposes the flaws in the primacy of the nuclear family and produces possibilities for new types of family. Indeed, at the end of the story, when the little devil enters heaven, he finds an entirely new 'family'. All of this creates space for Gripari to question the identity pressures placed upon the little devil, both religious and gendered. Christian values combine with patriarchal pressures to create an identity that is imposed upon the devil from the beginning. In this story, the external narrative focalisation facilitates this ambiguous approach to moral systems. While the narrator patently has their own beliefs and background, and thus the overview cannot be directly objective, they make efforts to provide a more balanced view that considers the direct societal influences that the devils experience.

The little devil eventually escapes from Hell in search of a new home and family more in line with his own inclinations. The differences in morality between Hell and the representation of the 'real world' instantly become clear as he causes fear among the public (12) and comes across an old lady who quickly repents and vows to stop sinning when she sees the appearance of the devil: 'Non! Non! Pitié, mon Dieu! Je ne le ferai plus!' (13).[81] Indeed, while being a devil and being bad is considered 'good' in Hell, just the sight of the devil is a sign to the old lady that she has sinned. As a further reflection of this, the devil later comes across a priest and

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[81] 'No! No! Please, my God. I will not do it anymore!'

asks him what he should do at his young age to be good, and the priest's answer

further draws attention to the false sanctity of religious, moral and gendered roles

and values: '[o]n obéit à ses parents, dit le prêtre, sans réfléchir' (15), to which the

devil replies that he cannot as this will force him to be 'bad'.[82] Gripari shows that the

true complexity of morality goes beyond the supposed binary often enforced by

religious doctrine and the patriarchal institution of family; the values put forth by

and prioritised by the nuclear family are not always those that lead to the most moral

or suitable outcome, and surviving outside of this structure is perfectly achievable.

Such values prioritising the nuclear family and what it represents, however, are

firmly intact in a patriarchal society with Christian heritage, as the priest remarks

that one should do this so naturally that you would do it 'sans réfléchir' ('without

thinking'). He equally explains that the devil's specific and complex situation is not

familiar to him, having never heard of a situation in which obeying one's parents is

not the best course of action for a child: '[c]'est bien la première fois que j'entends

parler d'un cas pareil…Au moins, tu est sincère?' (15).[83] Even after this point, the

priest still is not sure whether to believe him (17). It is important that a priest should

vocalise this complexity because it emphasises the inner conflict within this

important religious figure, and depicts a Christian representative experiencing this

same moral conflict that carries throughout the message of the story.

Eventually the priest tells the little devil to go to the Pope, who is equally

baffled and awed at the occurrence of a 'good' devil: '[c]omme c'est beau!

murmura-t-il d'une voix émue. Presque trop beau pour être vrai ! C'est bien la

première fois, à ma connaissance, qu'une chose pareille arrive' (18).[84] The escalation

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[82] '[O]ne obeys one's parents, said the priest, without thinking.'
[83] '[I]t's the first time I've heard anyone speak of such a case…that is, are you being honest?'
[84] '[H]ow beautiful! he murmured, his voice emotional. Almost too beautiful to be true! It's the first time, to my knowledge, that such a thing has happened.'

of this situation to the Pope, the head representative of the Catholic church, demonstrates that religious and patriarchal values are so deeply held that circumstances outside of the norm are not typically considered. While he is moved by the situation, he feels able to only speak for men, so the Pope chooses to send the little devil directly to heaven to see God.

As if to demonstrate the artificiality of social and religious values, the devil, something believed so fundamentally evil, finds it easy to reach the realm of God, and can do so by simply flying there whilst singing a simple song told to him by the Pope: '[à] peine l'avait-il chantée trois fois qu'il se trouvait devant une grande porte blanche avec un homme devant' (19).[85] One would think that there would be more barriers against the Christian manifestation of evil itself reaching heaven. Whilst he must take tests in order to become an angel, moreover, and Saint Peter is 'ébranlé' ('shaken') to see a devil present to take the tests (19), there are no real barriers to the devil's ascension to heaven. He passes the tests effortlessly; neither his appearance nor his birth have any bearing upon his aptitude for the tests and suitability for being an angel in heaven. It is simply his intent that dictates his fate, and this is particularly revealed in the letter he writes to God during the dictation section of his entrance exams; he confesses that he is not able to hear what God is saying, but that he has faith and wishes to be good, and this is all that is necessary for him to pass the test: *'Je suis bien triste, car je n'entends pas un mot de ce que vous dites. Cependant, [...] je vous aime beaucoup, [...] je voudrais être gentil pour rester près de vous, même si je ne devais être que le dernier de vos anges'* (25; emphasis in text).[86] The ease

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[85] '[H]e had hardly sung it three times when he found himself before a big white door with a man standing in front of it.'

[86] 'To the good Lord, I am very sad, because I do not hear a word you say. However, since I must write, I will make use of it to tell you that I love you greatly, that I would like to be nice to stay close to you, even if I would have to be the last of your angels.'

with which a devil manages to pass the tests set before him, when he himself is the antithesis of all Christian values, suggests that many of these values are given a false sense of importance. The irony of a devil passing the tests intended for angels undermines the importance of religious doctrine, and thus many of the gendered beliefs that come with it; the nuclear family and its associated normative values become similarly undermined by the devils constituting a stereotypical nuclear family unit. The text continues to throw confusion and doubt on the deeply held values associated with Christianity, gender, and family within this section.

Passing the tests with his faith, the devil is promptly introduced to the other angels, who become his new family. The Virgin Mary even tells the other angels to 'le traiter comme l'un des vôtres' (29),[87] making clear the movement of the devil from an unhappy and dysfunctional family unit into a new and alternative extended family unit, which gives him far more happiness. In a final, ironic twist on the moralising, didactic intent of fables and children's stories, the narrator notes that if one ever visits Hell, to 'évitez donc toute allusion au petit diable rouge. On considère là-bas que cette histoire est de mauvais exemple pour les jeunes, et l'on aurait tôt fait de vous faire taire !' (31).[88] This is one final nod to the subjective nature of morality and in particular the values that are passed down through families; while the devil is a terrible example of expected conduct in Hell, he is a perfect example of good morality and expected conduct in Heaven, regardless of his upbringing. There is no commentary on the specific behaviour of the devil, only that he is considered a bad example where he comes from. No mention, yet again, is made to the mother of the little devil, with the only comment being about the father's reaction, again

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[87] '[T]reat him like one of your own.'
[88] '[S]o avoid all allusion to the little red devil. There, they consider this story to be a bad example for young people, and they would quickly make you be quiet!'

reinforcing the dominance of the father throughout the text: '[q]uant à son papa diable, quand il apprit ce qui s'était passé, il se mit à hocher la tête' (29).[89] The story thus leaves us with an image of a father's legacy broken, and reinforces the specific relationship between father and son within the family unit. The son's departure from his expected masculine role weighs most heavily on the father, whose responsibility it is to keep his son disciplined and raise him into an upstanding man.

In conclusion, 'Le Gentil Petit Diable' is a short story that explores the constructed nature of social, religious and gendered ideals by portraying a family that at once reflects real-world heteronormative structures in a somewhat fantastical setting. The narrative voice is designed to give a semblance of objectivity and thus allow the reader to see structures prominent in the real world with a less biased lens. In utilising a family of devils that adhere closely to a gendered ideal vital to Catholicism, Gripari portrays these structures in an ironic light. In so doing, he exposes the fragility of such ideals and how morality and socially acceptable behaviour are entirely relative to surrounding context. Like *The Six Bad Boys*, the story draws attention to Freudian ideas, namely the significance of the father-son relationship in the development of masculine identity. The little devil's relationship with his father is key to his masculine identity; it is through following his father's orders and footsteps that the devil is expected to gain his identity, and upon rejecting this legacy he becomes rejected by his family. Yet equally like *Les Six Compagnons*, Gripari's tale rejects many of the ideals of the nuclear family, though in a far more explicit way than Bonzon's text which is not driven by a social message, instead choosing to simply portray family relations that show some deviation from conservative ideals. The story ultimately explores how the behaviour of boys and

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[89] '[A]s for his father devil, when he learned of what had happened, he started shaking his head.'

men is dictated by religious ideals which emphasise the functional, traditional nuclear family unit and the patriarchal gender roles that come with it, with the authority of the father and the subservience of the mother.

Les Six Compagnons de la Croix-Rousse (1961)

The many titles inspired by Blyton's internationally renowned detective books include Paul-Jacques Bonzon's *Les Six Compagnons* series (1961-1994) comprising thirty-eight instalments with some published posthumously as continuation novels by other authors. The series was published by Hachette, French publishers of Blyton's *Five* in the 1950s, and was released within their Bibliothèque verte collection for adolescents. Blyton's fiction, as explored in Chapter One, inspired a whole generation of children's novels with its simple but addictive design depicting children, blessed with significant levels of freedom, venturing into dangerous but exhilarating adventures. The specific focus and structuring of these novels is particularly relevant to the family orientation of this chapter, bringing about a space in which children have considerable agency. Thus, their relationship with their parents is not a central focus of the narrative; faced with adult characters who are clueless and incapable, the child protagonists are granted a level of independence away from the home (Brown, 2008: 269). As Brown notes, the children's 'relative freedom from adult intervention and control was enviable and empowering for the young reader of the time' (268-269). As Brown writes, Bonzon's novels are more androcentric than Blyton's titles (270) but take forward the same format offered by Blyton in previous decades.

Les Six Compagnons de la Croix-Rousse follows Tidou, who moves to the city of Lyon after living in the country, and deeply misses his dog who he has to leave behind due to restrictions in his new accommodation. He creates a plan to get the dog back after feeling depressed at his absence, but the dog goes missing along the way. He and his friends set in motion a plan to find him, coming up against crooks and criminals. In stereotypical children's detective story fashion, the book ends with the children succeeding in their plans and the news becoming widespread in the local community, with police and press encounters and newspaper articles dedicated to the children's story. Like *Le Cheval sans tête* the entire story of the novel does not initially stem from a pursuit of justice as might be normal in the detective novels of Blyton fame, though justice does come into play when the group apprehend criminals. Rather, the story appeals to a maternal imperative: a desire in Tidou to be reunited with a creature he deeply cares for. The protagonist goes to great lengths to be reunited with Kafi, in a dynamic comparable to the boundlessness and unconditional determination associated with normative images of maternal love.

The effect of the detective adventure structure in the case of *Les Six Compagnons de la Croix-Rousse* is not that the parents are completely distanced from the protagonist, though they do not play a central role in the progression of the plot. Rather, expected relations between family members are less central than in other texts analysed within this thesis, and there is a significant – though by no means complete – divergence from heteronormative gender roles within the central character. Tidou has a far closer relationship with his mother than father, and this has a considerable bearing on his behavioural development. While the parents largely fit with heteronormative gender roles associated with the nuclear family, the central character displays many stereotypically feminine and maternal characteristics as well

as some heroic masculine ones, but his gendering is ambiguous, despite the story featuring mainly male protagonists.

The plot separates Tidou from Kafi, his beloved animal, and in so doing denies its protagonist an outlet for a nurturing, emotional relationship and reveals how societal pressures work against a boy's expressing of the caring, gentle disposition stereotypically associated with femininity. It is only by going against the wishes of his parents that Tidou is able to reclaim his dog and embrace a caregiving role that departs from the typical image of heroic boyhood. One might argue that the genre of the novel, which demands that a group of children are given agency outside of their family, enables Tidou to distance himself from his family, to retrieve his dog, and to develop an identity that departs from the masculine ideal represented by his father. In a Hachette printing of the text, even before the main story begins, we get an idea of these qualities in small character blurbs that draw attention to Tidou's mixture of feminine and masculine traits. He is specifically described as being a hero: one who is both perceptive and cunning. Yet he is also sensitive, loving, and shares a deep bond with both his dog and the only girl in his group with whom he has an effortless understanding: '[m]alin, perspicace, sensible…Tidou, c'est le héros! Inséparable de son chien, Kafi, il est aussi particulièrement proche de Mady, avec qu'il s'entend à merveille et qu'il comprend à demi-mot' (Bonzon, 2014 [1961]).[90] Tidou immediately appears sensitive, nurturing and emotionally-inclined, while many of the boys and masculine characters in similar detective books of this kind resist emotional expression; indeed, in *Five on a Treasure Island* George does so precisely because she wishes to avoid being associated with femininity. In contrast to

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[90] 'Smart, perceptive, sensitive…Tidou is the hero! Inseparable from his dog, Kafi, he's also particularly close to Mady, who he gets on with amazingly and who he understands intuitively.'

the Blyton texts in which mothers and girls are more likely to take on caring roles, within Bonzon's novel it is a group of boys who occupy themselves with caring roles.

In contrast to the other two texts examined in the chapter, Bonzon's novel is written from the first-person perspective of the main protagonist. Tidou's thoughts and emotions are thus a large part of the narrative and the driving force behind how the reader perceives the story. Because the reader is constantly situated within Tidou's mind, his principal concerns and worries are always evident and these concerns often come from a desire to nurture. His emotionality brings him a closer bond to his mother, whose values he closely shares. Besides his own emotions being a significant part of the story, Tidou's narration also pays close attention to emotional cues of other characters. In an early discussion between his parents, for example, his mother sighs (15; 'ma mère soupire'), his father tiredly falls back into a chair (14; 'il se laisse tomber sur une chaise') and Tidou notices that his mother is 'anxieuse' awaiting a response from the father (14). The story also begins with Tidou's emotions and nurturing spirit taking centre stage, as he recounts the circumstances under which he was forced to give up his beloved dog and confesses his depressed emotional state. The first sentence, '[c]e jour-là, je ne l'oublierai jamais' (9),[91] dramatically brings the reader into the protagonist's state of mind. The chapter ends with emotive language such as 'désespéré' and 'chagrin' (17; 'hopeless' and 'grief').[92] This emotional atmosphere continues into the Second Chapter with the use of pathetic fallacy to emphasise Tidou's sadness at the changes in his life; while the sky is a 'couleur bleu lavande' (21) in their country home, the

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[91] 'That day, I will never forget it.'
[92] 'Hopeless' and 'grief'.

family have 'laissé le soleil loin derrière [eux]' and are greeted by rain upon arriving in Lyon, described as a 'grise et triste' (23).[93] The Second Chapter similarly finishes with Tidou's emotional state, as he attempts to hide his tears (26).

In order to best understand what specific parental influences affect Tidou's behaviour, it is important to analyse the dynamics and behaviours of the parents. While Tidou's parents are not significant contributors to the progression of the novel's plot, they fall into normative maternal and paternal roles from the First Chapter, in which we learn that the family is moving across the country. The reader is also told about the circumstances that brought Kafi into Tidou's life; a Moroccan man offers the puppy to the family, being unable to take it with him but not wishing to kill it (10). The text notes that the Moroccan, a salesman, even offers some of his most precious goods to the family for them to take the puppy from him, but that the mother refuses, the implication being that this mother is not materialistic, and has a sole goal of caring for life, in contrast to the 'negligent' mothers of *The Six Bad Boys*, Mrs Berkeley and Mrs Kent.

Tidou's mother shares the same care for others as her son and is highly sensitive to her child's emotions, exhibiting an emotional vulnerability and awareness that are quintessential traits of essentialist views of motherhood. This is clear in the early stages of the novel, such as when the mother is '[é]mue' (10; 'moved') knowing her son loves animals and wishing to take the dog home as a result. Her feelings, moreover, are evident before any other details about her are revealed, as the fact of her being moved by her son's love for animals is the first detail we receive about her. When the family learn that they must leave Kafi behind, Tidou appeals to his mother in an attempt to change this, knowing that she is the

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[93] 'Lavender blue colour', 'left the sun behind [them] and 'grey and sad'.

more sensitive parent and the one more likely to give in to her son's desires: '[j]e regarde maman, la suppliant des yeux de parler à ma place' (16).[94] Moreover, Tidou believes he can confide in her more than in his father. This is evident later in the novel when he is missing Kafi and feels the need to tell someone: 'quand maman vient me dire bonne nuit, j'ai envie de tout lui dire' (51).[95] As a further show of the emotional sensitivity of the mother and her desire to care for life, Tidou notes that she would similarly be pleased to get Kafi back after having left him behind: 'au fond d'elle sa joie de revoir Kafi serait presque aussi grande que la mienne' (52).[96] Keenly aware of the emotions of others, she is also quick to sense Tidou's disappointment when he is unable to find Kafi as he hoped: '[i]l me semble que maman devine ce qui me tracasse' (77).[97] However dangerous his adventures are to save Kafi, Tidou's mother is quick to defend him from his father. While the father stands for the stricter implementation of rules, she has a deeper understanding of her son's heartache and immediately jumps to his defence:

> [n]e gronde pas Tidou, s'écrie maman ; oui, il a fait revenir Kafi…mais si tu savais… ! Regarde comme la pauvre bête est maigre…Rassure-toi, nous n'allons pas le garder ici, il a déjà sa niche, toute prête, dans une maison abandonnée…les amis de Tidou ont promis de s'en occuper. (197)[98]

Like Tidou her immediate concern is for the wellbeing of the dog, and as a testament to expected maternal dedication, any lengths seem acceptable to ensure Kafi's safety. While keeping him in an abandoned house is not ideal, the vital focus is on

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[94] 'I watch mother, begging her with my eyes to talk in my place.'
[95] '[W]hen mother comes to say goodnight to me, I wanted to tell her everything.'

[96] '[D]eep inside of her, the joy of seeing Kafi again would be just as great as mine.'
[97] 'It seems to me that mother could tell what was bothering me.'
[98] 'Don't tell Tidou off! Mother cried; yes, he got Kafi to come back…but if you knew…! Look at how thin the poor creature is…Rest assured, we're not going to keep him here, he already has his kennel, all ready, in an abandoned house…Tidou's friends have promised to look after him.'

the dog's immediate health and the necessity to keep him alive. Equally, the mother's necessity to reassure the father that his rules have not been breached reinforces the authority of the father.

Unlike Mrs Berkeley of *The Six Bad Boys*, Tidou's mother is the uncomplaining and dedicated mother and wife, accepting changes in material circumstances with ease and attempting to cheer up her husband when he tells her the news that their new house will not be as grand as their current one: 'ce n'est pas le rêve, mais il faut bien que nous partions. Plus tard, nous chercherons quelque chose de mieux […] Dès que nous serons plus à l'aise, nous verrons…tu as bien fait' (15).[99] Even at this early point, Tidou's mother demonstrates an unwavering dedication towards her family in spite of the drop in wealth, unlike Mrs Berkeley who becomes hostile towards her husband due to their change in material circumstances.

While she accepts these circumstances gladly in support of her husband, she is still deeply concerned with the upkeep of the home in normative maternal fashion. Tidou's mother displays the most concern with the change in living conditions and is more eager to see their new home than to eat after their journey (25), concerned more with the living circumstances of her family than with taking care of herself. She also appears to hold back tears, as she attempts to remain strong for her children, again putting their needs first: 'car maman, elle aussi, a les yeux humides' (26).[100] Tidou's mother is keenly aware of the behavioural expectations placed on mothers to carry on and remain dedicated to their families regardless of material circumstances.

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[99] '[I]t's not the dream, but we must leave. Later, we will find something better […] as soon as we're more comfortable, we will see…you did well.'
[100] '[B]ecause mother, she too has misty eyes'.

Her primary concern is the safety and care of her family, as also seen previously when she rejects the offer of material goods when asked to take the dog with her.

The mother is also the parent most closely associated with the children. Tidou's mother is nearly always seen with her youngest son, Géo, who requires constant supervision by his mother rather than his father, in accordance with a typically gendered division of roles: '[j]e trouve maman seule avec Géo' (173).[101] Indeed, one of the first descriptions of the mother mentions her maternal duty to watch over her children: 'Maman, qui nous guette, avec mon petit frère Géo, qui n'a que quatre ans' (14).[102] That the mother 'guette' ('watches over') her children equally points to the expectation that women be attentive mothers, whilst the father is granted more excusable absences from his family life. This again contrasts particularly to Mrs Kent in *The Six Bad Boys,* who is rarely home and is thus considered a negligent mother, and Mrs Berkeley, who is wrapped up in her own worries and simply has little true concern for her children's wellbeing. There are some hints within the text, however, of the struggles that motherhood brings with it. Bonzon suggests the difficulty mothers face in concerning themselves with multiple children of differing ages, and it is this struggle that enables Tidou to slip by unseen and carry out some of the tasks that might otherwise be impossible with his mother's full attention: 'maman ne s'aperçoit pas que je suis en retard' (68).[103]

In this role, as well as watching the children, she must take care of them when they are sick and act as a nurse and healer to them whatever their age: '[o]ccupée par Géo qui souffre d'une rage de dents' (68).[32] It is also Tidou's mother who rushes him to the pharmacy when he gets bitten by a dog, showing far more

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[101] 'I find mother alone with Géo.'
[102] 'Mother, who watches over us, with my little brother Géo, who was only four years old'.
[103] '[M]other doesn't notice that I'm late.'

concern than the father. She becomes 'blême (32; 'pale') and 'affolée' (33; 'distraught') upon seeing the injury, and 's'écrie' (32; 'cries out') in shock, then rushes to get Tidou's bite seen, all while still being occupied with the youngest child in a further reinforcement of the expected multitasking of motherhood: '[e]lle jette vivement son manteau sur ses épaules, passe le sien à mon petit frère qu'elle n'ose pas laisser seul dans l'appartement, à cause de ses fenêtres si hautes au-dessus de la rue' (33).[104] The portrayal of the complex balancing of tasks required of mothers might be considered a rarer and more progressive element of the text's depiction of parental duties in that it depicts a reality and not an ideal of effortless caregiving. Indeed, according to Ann Oakley, in the 1950s, just a decade before the publication of this novel, many of the women consulted as part of her study felt that they had been 'misled into thinking childbirth is a piece of cake and motherhood a bed of roses' (1979: 6). Finally, Tidou's mother also puts him to bed at night, brings him his 'chocolat au lait' (70; 'hot chocolate') in the morning and wakes him up. Her main concerns, always, must be with the care of the children and the home, and it is these qualities that are central to the normative depiction of motherhood that she demonstrates.

The character of Mady's mother, although a less frequent presence in the novel, reinforces the same maternal imperatives. She is depicted as having strong maternal instincts from the moment she enters the narrative, fretting about Tidou as he waits outside in the winter chill, hoping for a glimpse of Kafi; she is immediately concerned for the child regardless of his status as a stranger. She insists that she take care of him, helps him to stand, and makes him a hot drink: '[t]u ne peux pas rentrer

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[104] 'She quickly throws her coat on her shoulders, passes his coat to my little brother, who she does not dare leave alone in the apartment, because of the windows that sit so high above the street.'

chez toi dans cet état, viens boire quelque chose de chaude' (102).[105] She equally
demonstrates motherly dedication to her daughter Mady, who is unable to stand or
do anything for herself because of her disability. Mady's father, meanwhile, is
mentioned at a few points throughout the text, but does not play as great a role in the
story as her mother. Even when Mady receives lifechanging news at the end of the
book, he is already in his own righteous place, at work: '[e]xcusez mon mari, il a
déjà dû repartir au travail' (215-216).[106]

Indeed, Tidou is surrounded by demonstrations of maternal care, which he
then replicates in his interactions with his dog; his dedication towards Kafi is the
main thread of the novel and its plot. He frequently describes Kafi in terms of parent
and child, for example in how he raised him, 'au biberon, comme un enfant' (11).[107]
He also describes a collective feeling of being 'mauvais parents qui fuient en
abandonnant un enfant' (23)[108] upon leaving Kafi behind, and before departing for
their new town, Tidou even lays fully clothed on the floor beside Kafi to be closer to
him rather than lay in his own bed (18), as if comforting a child. Tidou is deeply
emotional at the thought of losing his dog, struggling with leaving him behind,
unable to finish his sentence, and evidently anxious: 'les mots s'arrêtent dans ma
gorge. Je me mets à trembler comme une branche d'amandier dans le mistral'
(16).[109] Indeed, Tidou goes through great emotional turmoil thinking about what his
dog might be going through in a reflection of maternal selflessness: '[p]auvre Kafi !
Il a certainement compris qu'on ne l'emmènera pas' (20).[110] He has nightmares
concerning the potential fate of his lost dog, moreover, and his concerns appear to

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[105] 'You can't go back home in that state, come drink something hot.'
[106] 'Excuse my husband, he already had to leave for work.'
[107] '[B]y bottle, like an infant'.
[108] '[B]ad parents who flee, abandoning a child'.
[109] 'The words stop in my throat. I started shaking like a branch of an almond tree in the mistral.'
[110] 'Poor Kafi! He certainly understood that we are not bringing him.'

come from a place of love and care that might be interpreted as maternal, as he worries about Kafi frightened, going hungry, and imagines him crying out, as if a baby to its mother: '[j]e vois un endroit sinistre où Kafi, enfermé dans une cage sans nourriture, avec d'autres chiens qui s'entredéchirent, m'appelle désespérément – un cauchemar affreux' (87).[111]

What is particularly significant about Tidou, however, is that despite being such an emotional and (according to the values of the time) 'feminised' character, he is aware of the 'necessity' imposed upon him socially to be strong and resilient as a male. Indeed, there is an obvious struggle between his desire to express his emotions, and his awareness that his masculine identity is at stake. He attempts to hide his tears whenever he feels the need to cry and hides his strong emotions generally out of a sense of masculine obligation, something that he does constantly throughout the novel: '[j]e suis […] bouleversé […]M]on père me demande à plusieurs reprises pourquoi je ne tiens pas en place sur ma chaise. Je cache mon émotion en parlant de ma blessure qui me brûle' (51).[112] References to tears, but specifically a need to disguise them, are extremely common in descriptions of Tidou: 'pour ne pas avoir à cacher mes larmes' (77), 'pour ne pas laisser voir mes larmes' (26), '[l]es sanglots me montent à la gorge. J'ai le plus grand mal à me retenir de pleurer' (74), and '[mes yeux] sont si souvent tristes' (108).[113] This need to remain resilient is also clear when he returns to school after being bitten by a dog, and despite his 'bras douloureux' (39; 'painful arm') he seems more concerned with what his classmates will say about his absence:

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[111] 'I see a sinister place where Kafi, closed in a cage without food, with other dogs tearing away at each other, calls me desperately – an awful nightmare.'
[112] 'I am […] upset […] during the meal, my father asked me several times why I can't sit still in my chair. I hide my emotion talking about my burning wound.'
[113] 'So I don't have to hide my tears', 'so my tears would not be seen', 'sobs grow in my throat. I feel the greatest struggle to hold back from crying' and '[my eyes] are sad so often.'

> [q]uand je reviens au collège, avec ce gros pansement qui dépasse de ma
>
> manche gauche, je me sens gêné, honteux. Que vais-je dire à mes amis s'ils
>
> me demandent une explication ? Car je ne veux pas avouer que je me suis fait
>
> mordre par un chien; c'est trop stupide. (39)[114]

Tidou's preoccupation here is not with his real, physical and emotional pain, but instead of how he might seem weak to his peers, as if he has some awareness of how his injury might invalidate his masculine identity. As will be evident in Chapter Three of this thesis, injury can complicate feelings of masculinity severely. The extreme visibility of his handicap in particular makes Tidou's supposedly 'lesser' masculine status more obvious to his peers, creating further social pressure.

Equally, one can argue that Tidou's close bond with the girl of the group is another sign of his awareness of his social standing as a young man, as he has a somewhat chivalrous relationship with her. Mady's description even specifically states that '[l]es garçons feraient tout pour elle!' (7).[115] Mady's disability limits what she is able to do and leaves her fate in the hands of the boys of the group: '[e]lle est malade, dit la mère à mi-voix, elle ne peut pas se lever, elle doit rester toute la journée allongée sur cette chaise' (104).[116] Her disability in many ways might be considered a further, forced feminisation of her character, as she is essentially stripped of agency within her own life, and most interestingly restricted entirely to the domestic sphere. Later in the novel, the boys come together and construct a wheelchair for Mady with the intention of taking her out to be a part of their adventures: '[i]ls t'ont construit un fauteuil roulant, ils viennent te chercher pour

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[114] 'When I go back to school, with this great dressing that passes my left sleeve, I feel embarrassed, ashamed. What will I say to my friends if they ask me for an explanation? Because I don't want to admit that I got myself bitten by a dog; it's too stupid.'

[115] '[T]he boys would do anything for her!'

[116] 'She is unwell, said the mother softly, she can't get up, she has to remain on this chair all day long.'

t'emmener en promenade!' (128).[117] It is this act by the boys that creates most of her happiness. Simply put, without the boys of the group, Mady cannot live the life she wants to; she is dependent upon chivalrous boys to have any agency. The novel ends, moreover, with Tidou using money given to him as a reward for stopping criminals to send Mady to his old house in Reillanette, where her healing might improve: '[c]'est trop beau!...Maintenant, je suis sûre de guérir vite, très vite…grâce à vous tous' (217).[118] Mady even explains that, with this act, her fate is placed entirely in the hands of the boys in her recognition that this is 'grâce à vous tous' (217).

Tidou's father, meanwhile, is almost the antithesis of those qualities seen in the mother, and he is depicted as in charge of the management of the family. The entire plot of the novel is set in motion when the father 'veut quitter le village' because 'la région est pauvre, la vie de plus en plus difficile' (13).[119] This suggests that the father is in charge of the financial status and general survival of the family, themes also associated with fatherhood in *The Six Bad Boys*. It is moreover the father who arranges for the family to move across the country in search of better opportunities, and who finds a home for them to live in (13). The father seems depressed at the concept of not being able to support his family in the expected way, according to his socially defined role as father, and 'se force à sourire pour remercier maman d'accepter si courageusement d'être mal logée dans une maison sale' (15).[120] On the whole, far more frequent reference is made to him working than the mother, including in the description of the circumstances that have forced them to move: '[l]e petit atelier de tissage, le seul existant dans la région et où travaille mon père,

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[117] 'They have constructed a wheelchair for you, they came to find you to take you for a walk!'
[118] 'It's too beautiful!... Now I am sure to heal quickly, very quickly…thanks to you all.'
[119] '[W]ant to leave the village' because 'the region is poor, and life more and more difficult.'
[120] '[F]orces himself to smile to thank mother for so courageously accepting being so badly housed in a lousy house.'

menace de fermer ses portes' (13).[121] She later suggests that if they want more money, 'je ferai quelques heures de ménage' (15)[122] emphasising the merely ancillary nature of paid female labour. This later becomes clarified when Tidou's mother finds a job:

> [m]a mère […] ira voir une dame qui, lui a-t-on dit à l'épicerie, cherche une femme de ménage. En effet, la vie est difficile à Lyon. Chaque quinzaine, le salaire de mon père est meilleur qu'à Reillanette, mais le loyer beaucoup plus élevé que là-bas. De plus, dans cette région froide et humide, se chauffer coûte très cher…et plus de jardin pour fournir les légumes. Maman a donc décidé de faire quelques heures de ménage, l'après-midi, pendant que Géo ira à la maternelle. (107)[123]

Not only does this again reinforce that female work is an option and not a necessity, but it equally hints at female labour being the domain of families that had financial struggles or were working class. Bonzon hints at this in the admission that heat and rent are expensive in their new city, and that this is partly the reason for the mother beginning work. This brings into consideration the way in which class might affect the gender roles of families; among the lower classes, the need for women to work might bring about a more equal playing field in terms of gendered roles and expectations. Chapter One of this thesis similarly considered how this could be the case in *Le Cheval sans tête*. Moreover, this excerpt draws attention to the balancing the mother must then do of her maternal roles and her work, which demand that she

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[121] 'The little weaver's workshop where my father works, the only one existing in the region, was threatening to close its doors.'

[122] 'I will do a few hours of cleaning.'

[123] 'My mother […] is going to see a woman who, she was told at the grocer's, is looking for a cleaning lady. Effectively, life is difficult in Lyon. Every fortnight, my father's wage is better than at Reillanette, but the rent is a lot higher than there. What's more, in this cold and humid region, heating is very expensive…and less garden to provide vegetables. Mother therefore decided to do a few hours of work, in the afternoon, when Geo goes to nursery.'

must only work when the children are at school or nursery. This consideration is left entirely in the hands of the mother, whose principal responsibility is childcare, while the father working is an immediately obvious fact. His absence from the home is natural and to be expected, as are his longer working hours, with the father returning home extremely late on some days: '[m]on père ne rentrera pas avant dix heures et demie' (174).[124] Finally, Bonzon specifically mentions that the mother's work remains within the realm of feminine responsibilities, in that she is a cleaner; even when she is working, she takes care of the domestic sphere, reflecting a period in which tradition still held strong in spite of wartime increases in women's work.

As opposed to the mother, the father is firm on imposing rules and is less emotionally open than the mother. An early example of his strictness comes when he speaks to the fact that dogs are disallowed in their new home: 'absolument impossible. Pas de chiens dans la maison, la gardienne a été catégorique' (17).[125] When Tidou asks him about their new living circumstances, moreover, the father gives very little in response and, perhaps intimidated by his authority, Tidou 'n'ose pas le questioner davantage' (14).[126] While the mother becomes frenzied with worry about her son's injury, the father, meanwhile, is initially happy to dismiss concerns about him after being told that everything is fine: '[s]oulagé de voir qu'en effet ce n'est pas très grave, mon père se contente de hocher la tête' (36).[127] When he does speak up about it, moreover, it is to punish, and maintain control and order, as when he chastises Tidou, showing very little sympathy for what he has endured:

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[124] 'My father would not get home before half ten.'
[125] '[A]bsolutely impossible. No dogs in the house, the guardian was categoric.'
[126] '[D]idn't dare to question any further'.
[127] '[R]elieved to see that, in effect, it's not very serious, my father contents himself with nodding his head.'

[à] ton âge ! Tidou, comme si tu ne savais pas qu'on ne doit jamais caresser un chien inconnu. On dirait que tu le fais exprès. Nous n'avons donc pas assez de dépenses, en ce moment, avec notre installation ?...Et tout ça, bien sûr, à cause de Kafi. (37)[128]

One might argue that Tidou's father is attempting to teach him to maintain the strength and resilience expected of men in policing his behaviour, in contrast to the emotional and sympathetic response shown by the mother. He marks his words clearly with a violent act – 'il se met à frapper du poing sur la table' (37)[129] – to further signify his power.

In conclusion, *Les Six Compagnons* offers a reversed image of parental relations to the ones seen in the other texts in this chapter, and this is partially enabled by the detective story form. While the underlying foundations of the text similarly highlight normative gendered roles within the family, the actual relationships that Tidou shares with his parents diverge from the prioritising of the father-son bond seen in the other two texts. There is a relative distance between parent and child in stories of this kind due to the increased agency of central characters; in Bonzon's novel, this distance enables different relationships to take root to the ones seen in the other novels. *Les Six Compagnons* might thus be compared to *Five on a Treasure Island* in its utilisation of the detective story to bring about different character relations, as with George's heroic role in Blyton's story. In *Les Six Compagnons*, the relationship between mother and son is more significant than the one between father and son, and it is perhaps for this reason that Tidou is a more fluid character in terms of gendered behaviour; he is more openly emotive even

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[128] '[A]t your age! Tidou, as if you didn't know that you should not pet an unknown dog. One might say you did it on purpose. As if we don't have enough expenses, at the moment, with the move?...And all that, of course, because of Kafi.'

[129] '[H]e starts banging his fist on the table.'

as he recognises his responsibility as a male to keep these emotions in check publicly. Indeed, Bonzon's text demonstrates the frequent acts of repression required to sustain masculine behaviour. Its first-person narrative voice means that the reader is a constant witness to the changeability of Tidou's innermost thoughts and feelings, even as he fights to hide them externally. On a foundational level, parental roles do generally remain stereotypical, with mothers concerned with childcare and the domestic sphere, and fathers standing as figures of authority concerned with work and finances. Yet Tidou's affinity with his mother's values means he is a maternal character in his own right, and his heroism comes more from his nurturing soul than his crime-solving ability. Tidou thus shares qualities with the male protagonists of French novels that will be analysed in the following chapter, particularly Tistou whose heroism is a nurturing one; the similarity of the names of these characters itself constitutes an indicator of their shared qualities.

Conclusion

While each text understands the link between family structure and masculinity in a different way, what unites them is a recognition, either overtly or subtly, of the roles expected to be assumed in mid-century France and Britain by mothers and fathers. Generally, mother figures have more emotional roles, and are expected to mainly stay within the home and take care of children and domestic concerns, including cleaning, cooking, and staying within the family home to make it warm and welcoming. This is clearest in *The Six Bad Boys,* in which mothers fulfilling this duty are a key component in the replication of the social order and effective masculine identity being instilled in boys. In the case of 'Le Gentil Petit Diable', the mother is less present, yet her presence within the family unit is key to that family

being considered a 'healthy' and 'functioning' one, and yet Gripari equally

demonstrates that not disrupting the social order is however an entirely subjective

topic depending on social, religious or otherwise understood belief systems; there is

no decisive and objective moral indicator of either way being right or wrong. Father

figures are more likely to be excused from family concerns, as is the case in Blyton

and Bonzon's texts where fathers are often absent due to work, or are able to leave a

dysfunctional family because the children are not their primary responsibility. They

consistently stand for authority, order, and punishment in all three texts in a

reflection of Freudian theory, and they take care of financial concerns and of the

running of the home generally. Each of the texts demonstrates an understanding that

discipline of young boys is the domain of fathers, though in the case of *Les Six*

Compagnons this again plays a less significant role. Equally vital to note is that the

two French texts acknowledge normative gender roles in the parent figures but depict

central characters who depart from gendered expectations in some way, while the

British text bluntly puts a stop to any deviance. This might be attributed to the novel

being published a full decade before the French texts, during a post-war period of

reconciliation of the family unit in the wake of war, while the 1960s saw a wider

dismantling of family units, with the pill becoming legal in Britain and France the

same year as the publication of 'Le Gentil Petit Diable.' All three novels demonstrate

that family structure and the behaviour of parents both have a significant bearing

upon the development of their child whether for better or for worse, and gendered

behaviour and more specifically masculinity are severely impacted by circumstances

and upbringing. The norm is also demonstrably a heterosexual nuclear family, even

if, for example, in the case of Gripari's text, a new adoptive family is found; each

text engages with this accepted norm and its effect on the development of masculine

identity in children, regardless of whether there is an active attempt to undermine said ideals. In this way, the texts are deeply engaged with the changing family arrangements ongoing throughout the war and the post-war period, making reference not only to parental absence in the wake of war, but equally to the challenges to the nuclear family that would come with women's liberation.

Chapter Three

War and Masculinities: Violence, Trauma and Healing

This chapter interrogates how the theme of war influence images of masculinity within children's texts published between 1940 and 1970. It aims to fill a research gap, since existing scholarship on representations of war in children's literature has paid relatively little attention to the construction of masculinity, and moreover has been almost solely concerned with English-language texts, as opposed to my own comparative approach. The chapter considers the most significant event of the focal period, World War Two, and its various physical and psychological consequences for men. It uses this context to ask how the theme of war affects the portrayal of masculinities within children's texts. It does this considering both how the war effort intensified the imperative to demonstrate the attributes commonly associated with masculinity, and by exploring the necessary healing and reconstruction that took place in the decades following its devastating trauma. The time frame of this thesis, 1940-1970, covers most of World War Two (1939-1945) and the post-war period of reconstruction. My aim is to analyse the images of masculinity within texts in terms of these major events and to consider how the memory of the Great War affected attitudes towards masculinity going into World War Two. As already touched on in the Introduction and Chapter Two, World War Two caused a significant disturbance in the gendered order, separating families, sending more women into the public sphere to fill jobs typically undertaken by men, and separating children from their parents. While previous sections have established many of the key contextual details, this chapter will focus on establishing the more specific consequences of war for masculinity and masculine identity.

World War Two was undoubtedly 'a point of rupture' in conceptions of gender and more specifically masculinity (Robb and Pattinson, 2018: 3). It took millions of lives, killing an estimated 3-4% of the global population between 1939 and 1945 (O'Neill, 2024). While many civilian men, women and children died during the war, military deaths accounted for over a third of total deaths in France and over three quarters in the United Kingdom (National World War Two Museum, n.d.). War has been conceived of as a central site in the formation of masculinity, with '[m]ilitary virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance' being 'repeatedly [...] defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle' (Dawson, 1994: 1; cited in Robb, 2015: 7). As this introduction will demonstrate, there was certainly a desire for strength, resilience and violence among British and French men fighting in World War Two, yet the ideology of virility promoted to troops masked a far more complex reality.

In Britain, World War One recruitment techniques had paid close attention to martial traits and conceptions of manliness and chivalry in two primary ways: by emphasising the attractiveness of soldiers to women, and by emphasising the honour associated with protecting one's mothers, wives and daughters from the enemy (Grayzel, 2010: 264-265). Indeed, '[m]asculinity and militarism were intimately linked', with war 'call[ing] on young men to be "men" – physically fit and active, armed and ready for danger and excitement, unfettered by sentimental ties to home or even self-preservation' (264). According to Susan Grayzel, this pressure exerted through propaganda was internalised by many, with letters and memoirs suggesting the anguish many felt at potentially not living up to this standard (264). The 'industrial-scale slaughter' of World War One, however, 'undermined faith in this martial masculinity' (Robb, 2015: 7), and in Britain the focus of masculine identity

changed to 'an Englishness at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more private' (Light, 1991: 8; cited in Robb, 2015: 7).

In France, there was a severe disconnect between the myth of masculinity and the reality for many French veterans. As Luc Capdevila explains, the armed volunteer had become central to the virility myth despite this only applying to a small number of French military men (2001: 434). Many veterans became pacifists and were 'inclined to not identify the masculine ideal with the image of the soldier', with war 'no longer the perfect setting for a manly adventure' (433). Instead, war threw into sharp relief the fact that military men were simply 'ordinary men' with many of the same human failings as any other citizens (433). Besides this, however, many conservatives still 'sang the praises of wartime adventures' and 'energetically espoused the mythology of war and manhood on the battlefield', and as the outlook became gradually bleaker into the late 1930s, some left-wing parties equally began to promote a martial masculinity once again (435). Such attitudes, Capdevila explains, encouraged resistance to the Nazi Occupation after defeat in 1940, and as the struggles of the Resistance and Free French spread, so did a 'virility cult' (435):

> Between 1940 and 1944 the idea of the fighting man changed in the collective imagination: the statuesque poilu, standing guard over the nation from his vantage point on the Maginot Line, gave way to the heroic, armed patriot – be he SAS commando or soldier in the Second Armoured Division. This re-moulding of the standing soldier into an active warrior was not due only to a change in the nature of combat: the adulation of the partisan testified to the mythology of maleness reverting to an image of aggressive virility. (435)

During the Occupation, there existed a contrast between the mobilisation appeals which centred on 'images of maleness' and the changes in conceptualisations of virility that had occurred during the interbellum in France. These appeals were often 'contradictory' and 'offered multiple images of masculinity', but equally 'reinforced the virility myth by linking it with images of voluntary action and the celebration of warlike virtues' (427).

There were many theories as to the reason for France's defeat, and one of these, expounded by the collaborationist Vichy government but also by some Resistance figures, was that French soldiers lacked conviction and courage due to the absence in inter-war France of a properly virile, patriotic spirit. The commander of the French army, General Gamelin, blamed defeat on the fact that the French soldier 'did not receive the moral and patriotic education during the years between the wars which would have prepared him for the drama in which the nation's destiny will be played out' (1940, cited in Millington, 2020: 10). Général Charles de Gaulle, who assumed leadership of the Resistance, believed that his generation had won victory in 1918 thanks to the 'virilité de leur jeunesse' ('virility of their youth'), but that this had since been lost (Capdevila, 1998: 608). Indeed, the supposed national decline of the people during the inter-war period, which had brought about this defeat, was put down to a process of feminisation 'qui […] réduisait les Français en un peuple-femme' (608).[130]

In Britain, the dominant popular memory of war is that of 'Britain as a nation of plucky underdogs who stood united together, laughing in the face of the much more powerful Nazi war machine' (Robb, 2015: 7). In reality, many British recruits enlisting had little clue as to why they were fighting at all (French, 2000: 3), and

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[130] '[W]hich […] reduced the French to a woman-people'.

there was 'no rush of volunteers to enlist' (7). In July 1942, after the establishment

of the General Service Corps, the task of forming British men into war-ready

combatants was a tough one, with 'military authorities fac[ing] a formidable task in

transforming peace-loving civilians into men prepared to kill' (2). Enthusiasm about

entering combat was at a minimum among recruits, with very few men displaying a

clear aptitude for the 'combatant role' (1-2). General Montgomery, who became one

of the heroes of World War Two, wrote in a letter to the Chief of the Imperial

General Staff that '[t]he trouble with our British lads is that they are not killers by

nature' (1942, cited in French, 2000: 2). A significant object of military training was

thus to 'defuse powerful taboos against killing fellow human beings' (7). With many

ordinary, peaceful men taking up arms to assist in the war effort and thus facing

death, trauma and significant injury, the expected behaviours of legions of young

men thus changed; those men mobilised were 'allowed, and even encouraged, to kill'

bringing about significant 'shifts in idealised conceptions of malehood' (Robb and

Pattinson, 2018: 3).

The difficulty lay in preserving a vital distinction between British and Nazi

models of masculinity. On the one hand, there existed the conceptualisation of a

specifically British 'temperate masculinity' that '[c]ombin[ed] good humour and

kindliness with heroism and bravery' (Rose, 2003: 196). This was, however, an

'unstable mix' of qualities; '[p]ushed too far in one direction, it could uncomfortably

resemble the hyper masculine Nazi enemy' (196). Equally, '[p]ushed too far in the

other direction, it could slide into effeminacy' (196). The Nazis represented the

brutal and the cruel extreme; British soldiers would engage in violence in the face of

danger but to avoid the excessive degree of the 'horrors and violence' of Nazism

(196).

This distinction becomes especially evident in the comments of writer, critic and broadcaster J.B. Priestley in his June 1940 Sunday Postscript (2003: 154). There, Priestley compared the depiction of the British and German military in two films: the British film *The Lion Has Wings* (1939) aimed to depict British airmen as 'likeable human beings, cracking jokes with their wives and sweethearts', in contrast to the 'gloom and threats' and 'destruction and death' of the Nazi propaganda film *Baptism of Fire* (1940; Priestley, 1940, cited in Rose, 2003: 154). Priestley's analysis emphasises the variation and instability of masculine identity during wartime. Men on all sides of the conflict were expected to become soldiers, carry out acts of violence and be courageous in the face of danger. Yet there is a distinct contrast here between the more domineering and forceful voice of Nazi masculinity and the comparative good humour and humanity ascribed to British men.

The differing experiences of France during the war had specific implications for conceptions of masculinity, with the 'experience of defeat, occupation and collaboration […] provok[ing] a crisis in the masculine identity of Frenchmen' (Capdevila, 2001: 424-426). For four years, France remained occupied by the Nazis, with '[t]he appeal to virility [being], in every shape and through every medium, […] part of everyday reality for the French from 1940 to 1944' (427). The Vichy regime under Maréchal Philippe Pétain attempted to restore France's virility by reinstating more traditional and conservative gender ideologies. This was evidenced by the authority of the paterfamilias, which was present even in the replacement of the motto 'liberté, égalité, fraternité' ('liberty, equality, fraternity') with 'travail, famille, patrie' ('work, family, fatherland'). As in Britain, the battlefront was predominantly the domain of men, and there was a sense of duty attached to masculinity upon which the success of the nation during wartime depended, a feeling that was

somewhat tarnished given France's defeat during the war. After the eventual recovery of French towns and cities, Charles de Gaulle celebrated '[l]es viriles acclamations de nos villes et de nos villages' (1970: 468, cited in Capdevila, 1998: 607).[131] Both the Vichy regime and the post-war governments committed to economic and ideological reconstruction emphasised the importance of a renewed French spirit of virility which 'permeate[d] the messages given out by cultural and political elites seeking to lay the foundations of national renewal and purge the traumas rising from France's crushing defeat in summer 1940 (Capdevila, 2001: 426).

Beyond this demand for a specific performance of masculinity, experiences of war devastated men's mental wellbeing, and often worsened or strained their relationship with their masculine identity. On the one hand, many men were excluded from an active role in the war, with disabled or older men finding themselves 'removed from this omnipresent image of the warrior heeding the call to arms' (Grayzel, 2010: 264), which in turn had a negative effect on their sense of their own virility. One recruiting poster discussed by Grayzel emphasised the supposed honour of going to war for one's country, and the importance of feeling pride in one's role. It featured an older man patting the back of a younger man, claiming he wishes he could go too (264). Indeed, '[t]o be out of uniform was to reveal one's inability to take part in the national defense [sic] and became a badge of dishonor' (264).

Another vital consideration is that of the material and technological reality of war and the consequences particularly for the experience of the (usually male) soldier. During World War One, with the introduction of new weaponry including

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[131] 'The virile acclamations of our towns and villages'.

chemical-gas shells and machine guns, traumatising and gruesome wounds and deaths became more commonplace, as did the newly recognised 'shell shock': a contemporary name for the trauma experienced by soldiers during war. From 1915 onwards, 'the brutally injured male body had become an icon of the war' (270). Injury and trauma were deeply gendered concepts and had a significant impact upon masculinities and their interpretation: '[s]ome interpretations of shell shock – the exhibition of symptoms associated prior to the war with "hysteria" – have insisted that the ailment itself had everything to do with gender, that "shell shock was the body language of masculine complaint"' (270). Shell shock had a dramatic impact on men's conceptions of their own masculine identity.

War, perhaps unsurprisingly, is a recurring element in children's fiction of the war years and the following decades. One reason for this is that war can be considered a turning point where childhood abruptly ends, as emphasised by Rosie Kennedy in *The Children's War* (2014), which concerns World War One. Kennedy quotes historian A.L. Rowse, who explains that the beginning of war 'had a strange significance […] It was a symbolic day. For the first time I became aware of the outer world, a world beyond the village and the town' (1942: 97, cited in 2014: 1). The author Beatrice Curtis Brown describes a similar phenomenon of childhood ending with the realisation of a world beyond that of one's knowing: '[i]nfancy […] stopped with the war at least, home, London, became something different with the war. (28-29; cited in Kennedy, 2014: 1).

Experiences of war are recognised by these writers as vital moments in the transition of child into adult, in which the child's world becomes expanded, altered and less innocent. I would argue that the traumatic experience of war being so at odds with Western conceptions of childhood innocence is precisely what brings into

relief the child's identity; it challenges the growing child's perception of the world and at the same time highlights the key facets that constitute the Western ideology of childhood. Brown's words bring to our attention a contradiction in the genre of children's literature; on the one hand the genre claims that adulthood and childhood are distinctly separate stages of life by providing a discrete body of literature for a specific age-defined target audience. Yet on the other hand, it encourages children to learn, grow, and thus acquire the qualities of adulthood. It 'work[s] ambivalently [. . .] both to move children past innocence and encourage them to keep on being innocent' (Nodelman, 2008: 167). War is a significant topic within this genre because it is a site at which childhood is truly interrogated, and it was a key site of development in the lives of those British and French children growing up during or after the war years, many of whom were separated from their parents and experienced this time of 'innocence' in an unintended and often difficult way.

The topic of war has been a notable subject of children's books since long before the 1940-1970 focal period of this thesis, but there is a marked difference in the tone with which it is treated even across the twentieth century. In British children's literature, Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox mark a significant contrast between 'The Human Shields', a 1914 story from *The Dreadnought and War Pictorial,* and fiction about war published towards the end of the century (2001: 3). While the former is underpinned by clear 'moral conviction', titles such as Robert Westall's *Gulf* (1992) and Bernard Ashley's *Little Soldier* (1999) are marked by 'complex ambiguities' which demonstrate:

> almost a century of erosion of the moral high ground on which Bill Stubbs [a
> character from this story] planted his cockney boots: the disenchantment and
> economic hardship which followed the war to end all wars; the growth of the

Third Reich; a second, less jingoistic, world conflict with its subsequent

revelations of genocide; and Hiroshima, Korea, Vietnam, the Falklands, the

Gulf and the Balkans. And, scarcely more than rumours of war to North

Americans and Europeans, the atrocities and struggles for freedom in

Rwanda and East Timor. (4)

The variety of ways in which war is approached in British children's literature of the

1940s-1970s, a spectrum from the representative and realistic to the abstract and

fantastical, is indicative of this transition. World War Two was acknowledged in

literature for even the youngest readers in colourful picture books for example *Boo-*

Boo the Barrage Balloon (1943) and similar titles. The war was also a common topic

in comics for children of all ages, with one instalment of the *Beano* from 1942 telling

a story of a planned invasion by Hitler (22). A recurring image of British children's

fiction published since 1940 is evacuation, with Lee Talley remarking that 'over one

hundred works of children's fiction, drama, and nonfiction take evacuation as their

central focus or a powerful frame' (2022: 195). A good portion of children's books

published within this timeframe deal with war in a historically representative sense,

where the war depicted is an image of a 'real' one, as is the case with Michelle

Magorian's *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1981), Nina Bawden's *Carrie's War* (1973) and

Ian Seraillier's *The Silver Sword* (1956). Each of these narratives portray or mention

a war that is a representation of World War Two. A portion of this literature was

particularly jingoistic, such as the *Biggles* series (1932-1999) by W.E. Johns. Such

novels idealised the national pride associated with fighting for one's country, and

highlighted the bravery and resilience expected of men rather than the actual reality

of war. Such novels and media could act as a persuasive force in terms of convincing

children of their role in the war effort.

Meanwhile, other British texts depict war in a more metaphorical, fantastical sense, with fictional wars between fictional factions. Examples include J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* (1973). This was particularly the case in the post-war period, a 'time for looking forward rather than returning to the horror of war' (Agnew and Fox, 2001: 34). Agnew and Fox argue that a majority of children's literature published in the Allied countries during this time was 'not much concerned with the war or its aftermath', with narratives providing 'escape from everyday life [...] through fantasy, historical and science fiction novels' (36). This point is valid in that the wars depicted in the fiction of the authors cited here – for example, Alan Garner, Susan Cooper and Joan Aiken – are not historically representative, but the prevalence of conflict in these fantastical texts perhaps serves as a reminder of the inescapable reach of the memory of war. The significance of the theme within children's literature is evident in the way it defies the boundary between realist and fantastical texts and fill a significant space in both. Perhaps the most interesting example of how children's novels engage with war is *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), which is set during World War Two evacuations but takes the reader into a fictional world where separate wars are taking place between various factions.

Meanwhile in France, the consequences of the Occupation meant that World War Two had a far different impact on children's literature than the 1914-1918 war. Print and press were censored by German authorities, and many publishers either relocated out of Paris, were requisitioned, bombed, or operated with a reduced list (Brown, 2008: 161). Due to limited records brought about by destruction of publishing houses there is little concrete information about the actual status of the

publishing industry during this time (161). Yet Brown observes that, in contrast to

the prevalence of war in British children's texts of the time, war and conflict were

largely absent from French children's texts (161). She notes that this is in contrast to

the Great War (161), which 'loomed large in children's books and magazines and

could be seen in everything from *abécédaires* ('ABC books') to songs and moral

tales (153). Titles such as *Alphabet de la grand guerre 1914-1916. Pour les enfants

de nos soldats* (1916) were commonplace and 'encouraged even the very young to

feel involved in the struggle' (153). By contrast, during World War Two, publishers

'played it safe with a mixture of escapist works like fairy tales, animal stories, and

traditional Robinsonnades' (161). This was to some extent a result of the desire to

escape the humiliation of the Occupation but was also due to the political and moral

complexity of the situation in occupied France: in Brown's words, 'in 1914 there

was a clear enemy [...] against whom patriotic sentiment could be mobilised' (161)

while the same could not as clearly be said for the 1939-1945 war; the armistice

between Germany and Pétain in 1940 muddied France's own self-image by

'br[inging] into force a policy of collaboration' (161-162).

The relative absence of texts referring to the war, however, did not mean that

they were non-existent, and, just as in Britain, war was treated both in realistic and

fantastical styles. Colette Vivier's *La Maison des quatre vents* (1946) is a story set

under the Occupation and a reality of 'constant uncertainty, fear and deprivation,

rationing, the presence of soldiers in the streets, and antagonism between

neighbours' (167). Serge Dalens' *La Mort d'Eric* (1943), set in 1940, is a

particularly subversive realist text in that it is explicit in its 'depiction of the horrors

of warfare' informed by the experiences of the author, and Dalens even ends his

story with the death of his young hero 'in grim circumstances' (165). The

development of the series itself mirrors the loss of innocence brought about by the event of war: while the first in the series, *Le Bracelet de vermeil* (1939), resembles the archetypal scouting novel, the later instalments feature older characters and do not hide from the gritty reality of conflict (165).

A more common way of expressing sentiments pertaining to war in French literature was through metaphorical, symbolic, abstract and fantastical media. In particular there was a tendency in the post-war period towards works 'marked by a nostalgia for childhood and a rural past and a longing for a safe, calm existence lived close to nature' (Brown, 2008: 171). In the wake of the significant trauma caused by the Second World War in France, the response was largely to return to that state of pastoral pre-war innocence in a way that largely incorporated idealised visions of childhood. Brown thus notes the importance of distinguishing 'books that overtly addressed and sought to appeal to young readers from those portrayals of childhood intended to satisfy adult longings for escape from a dreary and uncertain world' (171). In the case of Marcel Pagnol's *La Gloire de mon père* (1957) and *Le Château de ma mère* (1958), a dual audience might be concluded from the combination of 'gently ironic and nostalgic tone and the romantic depiction of the innocence and freedom of childhood' with a clear 'attempt to capture a child's view of adult relationships' (172). Similarly to Pagnol, many of Henri Bosco's works closely follow this format and take place in the Provençal countryside and contain an atmosphere of nostalgia (172). *L'Enfant et la Rivière*, published in 1945, is an escapist work and a central text in Chapter Four of this thesis. Brown describes Bosco's 'fictional world' as 'one of strange beauty with primitive religious undercurrents inhabited by sinister gypsies, poachers, fanatical hermits, and enigmatic, tormented adolescents' (172). Meanwhile, Jean Giono and Maurice

Druon created works that resembled each other in their peaceful, nature-oriented approach to conflict resolution. Perhaps the most famous of all works to embody a desire for tranquillity and peace in the wake of wartime devastation is *Le Petit Prince* (1943), a fantastical story in which a pilot crashes his aircraft in a desert and meets a young boy who shares stories of his life. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's famous novel was importantly published during the war and draws on his own experiences, Exupéry also having been a pilot during World War Two. The initial plane crash with which the story opens closely resembles an experience in the author's own life. *Le Petit Prince* is a tale that tells of many of the various struggles of war, not least with the somewhat difficult separation of the pilot and the prince from their home planets.

The educational and influential capacities of children's literature become particularly significant when acknowledging subjects such as war, where national conceptions of pride and conflicting ideologies are brought to the forefront of the public mind. Indeed, as Karin Westman writes, 'during times of war […] the ideological work of "children's literature" carries greater weight and has a wider reach' (2009: 216; cited in Galway, 2015: 100). Whilst some children's literature is limited to a relatively simple, unweighted contextual consideration of war, other texts are more clearly driven by a moral or ideological agenda, be this a desire to 'actively cultivate a sense of patriotic duty and pro-war sentiment in young readers' (Galway, 2015: 100), or to convince them that war is not a solution to human problems. This is not only the case when the book is representing an image of a real, historically occurring war; fantasy books can equally rally children to patriotism and to pro- or anti-war sentiment that has real world repercussions. The Narnian wars,

for example, can emphasise the brutality of warfare as vividly as any text representing real world conflicts.

This chapter, then, will analyse masculinity in relation to war in three texts or series of texts published throughout the 1950s, when the memory of war was still fresh, and the effects still felt. It aims to give a broad overview of the relationship between the representation of war and that of masculine identity, exploring how expected wartime behaviours such as violence, aggression and martial prowess are depicted, while also examining the emergence of ideas about healing, trauma, and rebuilding. It also discusses the depiction of the consequences of war for the behaviour of male characters (and female where relevant), while asking how the violence, healing, and trauma pertinent to war are represented in more symbolic ways in texts that are more fantastical or abstract in nature.

Each of the authors of the selected texts importantly have some experience with war, and this is one basis on which they were selected. C.S. Lewis fought in World War One and took in evacuees during the Second World War, but his return to service was rejected. Jean Giono was a pacifist after the horrors of his experiences in World War One, and was imprisoned at one point as a Nazi sympathiser as a result. Maurice Druon was called up for military service in World War Two and was a member of the Resistance. There are many other pertinent texts that might have been included in this chapter, but due to limitations in space not all could be included. The most significant omission is Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* (1943), which is a key example of a text that explores many of the strong sentiments associated with war and whose author was equally engaged in the war effort. This is not to dispute the importance of this much-celebrated fable, but rather to enable a more direct link to the historical contexts that drive the thesis within the

limited space, and to bring to critical attention to lesser-known texts that are especially revealing in this context. Saint-Exupéry's much-loved story bears comparison with those of Druon and Giono, studied below, and where pertinent these similarities will be highlighted to show recurring stylistic and thematic tendencies in French children's fiction of the period.

The first text to be analysed will be *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis (1950-1956). Although this popular series has attracted considerable critical engagement, existing critical work tends to lack analytical perspectives that hinge on historical context and in particular images of masculinity; the larger focus, as will become evident in the following pages, is on Lewis' representation of women, which is a topic of considerable controversy. The *Narnia* novels are at once aware of the gendered boundaries of war and are clear in suggesting that wartime violence is a masculine duty; yet what Lewis shows is perhaps more concerned with the gentle and loving ways through which hurt can be remedied: ways that are often demonstrated by the female characters. The French texts are *Tistou les pouces verts* (1957) by Maurice Druon and *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres* (1953) by Jean Giono: two stories that use nature as a powerful allegory for post-war healing. *Tistou*, like *Narnia*, is a fantastical novel that does not directly depict World War Two. Instead, it brings about consideration of how conflict might be resolved through peaceful means, and promotes a feminised version of masculinity that is powerful after the devastation of the previous decade. Jean Giono's text directly pertains to World War Two but, in an unsurprising fashion given the trauma of Occupation for the French, sees the war from afar and speaks of the healing qualities of nature as carried out by a powerful pacifist character. Each text in its own way demonstrates a complex understanding of the nuance of war for masculine identities,

provides some challenge to violence as a means of resolving difference, and shows a sensitive awareness of the damage caused by war and the necessity to heal and rebuild.

***The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956)**

The Chronicles of Narnia (1950-1956) are some of the most well-known and influential children's books of all time, and they serve as inspiration for many fantasy novels that came after them. They are a key example of children's fantasy books that depict fictional wars which resonate closely with the contemporary context of the World Wars. Many books in the series depict battles or wars of some kind, of varying sizes, in which the boys are expected to take on roles involving violent acts while the girls are frequently more distant from battle and confined to healing and caring roles. Indeed, even when battles are not the central concern, the *Narnia* books are filled with discourses related to healing and trauma, both in relation to people and to environments. In particular, while the *Narnia* novels are often filled with destructive battles reminiscent of wartime combat, there is equally a great overarching focus on healing from the trauma of war, and making efforts for peace, rebuilding and prosperity. The latter is especially emphasised in the many verdant landscapes we see throughout the series and the struggle to protect them, which is a core element of my argument in this section.

As a famous British series, the Narnia novels have received far more critical attention than the two French texts analysed within this chapter, though the existing material tends to focus on femininity, rather than on masculinity and its relationship with war. Lewis, Monika Hilder writes, is 'one of the most celebrated, well-loved, and, in some quarters, despised authors of the twentieth century' (2012: 1). This

controversial reputation pertains in many cases to the way in which the author portrays women; Hilder's own work on the series, *The Feminine Ethos in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia* (2012), is concerned with this topic. Specifically, rather than analysing the issue of masculinity in its own right, this topic becomes involved mainly in discussions of how Lewis portrays femininity, which is often described as problematic. Lewis is frequently described as ambivalent towards women, having created very few detailed female characters in his earlier works (Fredrick and McBride, 2007: 36); at his worst, he is described as an outright misogynist (Hilder, 2012: 2). Since the 1960s, a wide range of critics have denounced sexism in his works, among them Stella Gibbons, Doris T. Myers, Margaret Hannay, Kath Filmer, John Goldthwaite, Jean Graham and more (2).

His portrayal of Susan Pevensie is particularly controversial, with much critical work focussed on what is termed the 'Problem of Susan'. This term was coined in a 2004 short story by British fantasy writer Neil Gaiman, which tackles the vague resolution of Susan's story. It references the fact that Susan loses her connection with Narnia seemingly because of her increasingly sexualised feminine interests, which are depicted as vain in *The Last Battle* (1956): '[s]he's interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations' (Lewis, 2001: 741). Other titans of British children's fantasy such as J.K. Rowling and Philip Pullman have expressed disappointment with the conclusion of Susan's story, and the so-called problem the character presents for readers is one of the most common topics of discussion with regards to gendered analysis of the series. Karin Fry's chapter on gender in the Narnia books, for example, takes its title from a specific quotation relating Susan's femininity to her disappearance from the land of Narnia: 'No Longer a Friend of Narnia: Gender in Narnia' (2005), whilst Andy Gordon's article

entitled '"No Sex Please, We're Narnians": Turkish Delight, *Twelfth Night,* and the Problem of Susan' (2020) echoes Gaiman's reference to Susan as a 'problem'. Masculinity tends to figure mainly as a point of comparison when analysing femininity, female characters and the difficult relationship that women have with war and battle within the series, as in Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride's 'Battling the Woman Warrior: Females and Combat in Tolkien and Lewis' (2007: 29). Fry, for example, initially argues that female characters are only typically considered 'strong' in the series if they possess masculine traits and interests, including adventuring and fighting, whilst soft, feminine characters like Susan are dismissed at some point within the narrative (2005: 155).

It is firstly important to note that this criticism does not necessarily take into account the relative conservatism of attitudes towards gender in Britain in the wake of World War Two. As Michael Ward points out, it is potentially anachronistic to judge Lewis by contemporary standards of gender representation (cited in Hilder, 2012: 1). With this in mind, some critics – Roger Lancelyn Green, Walter Hooper, Kathryn Lindskoog, Corbin Scott Carnell, Nancy-Lou Patterson and more – even suggest that the author 'affirmed females' (Hilder, 2012: 2). Monika Hilder's work meanwhile argues that Lewis' work has been vastly misunderstood, espousing a 'theological feminism' that 'celebrates a distinctly "feminine" heroic ethos that overturns the culturally privileged ethos associated with the "masculine" (4). Hilder's argument resonates closely with parts of my own analysis of the series, which concerns itself with healing and rebuilding from the conflict of war and the implications of a feminine heroics. While the observation that women tend to be more distant from immediate battle in the series is valid, this thesis follows in the footsteps of Ward and Hilder by placing the books firmly in their historical context.

Whilst it is important to be aware of the criticism that identifies Lewis as unfavourable towards female characters, my chapter is more concerned with the representation of masculinity, men, and war – though this will include consideration of how female characters perform masculinity in relation to war.

C.S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) is the first novel in the narrative timeline of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* although one of the last to be published. In broad terms, it is an environmental story, telling of an abundant, growing and healing landscape in the Other World, and an evil man (Uncle Andrew) who wishes to pollute and dominate it. Lewis juxtaposes two male characters performing masculinity in contrasting ways that relate closely to the distinction between British and Nazi masculinities that was prevalent in British culture during the war: the character of Digory represents a temperate masculinity that is courageous but selfless, while Uncle Andrew embodies the aggressive and domineering dimension of virility. The book depicts the initial creation of Narnia and emphasises an abundant and fertile natural world, and one of the main themes and plots of the novel links the protagonist's morality with his desire to heal his sick mother. For this reason, the novel is recognised as a somewhat 'feminine' work; drawing on Michael Ward's influential *Planet Narnia* (2008), in which Ward relates each *Narnia* volume to a heavenly body of cosmology, Edward James writes that *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) is 'about love, creativity and fertility, all aspects of Venus' (2012: 72). The overarching healing narrative resonates powerfully with the necessary rebuilding and healing of the post-war period, and in doing so the novel also asks important questions about masculine behaviour during war. While not specifically relevant to this chapter, it is also important to briefly acknowledge that *The Magician's Nephew* engages with discourses of colonialism and imperialism that in turn influence its

environmental discourses. At the beginning of the novel, we learn that Digory's father is working away in service of the British Empire. Acknowledging this fact allows us to understand the novel's plot as an imperialist conflict for possession of land.

War brought into sharp relief man's relationship with his surrounding environment, and the treatment and conceptualisation of land equally has its own significant relationship with conceptions of manhood. Broadly speaking, the themes of land and property have always been masculine domains; female land ownership is a fairly recent phenomenon, and for a long time, only men were landowners under the dominant patriarchal systems of the West, with women unable to hold equal power or titles in this regard. In the UK, for example, it was not until the Married Women's Property Acts in the late nineteenth century that married women could own and control property in any instance; previously, any property became her husband's upon marriage (*Married Women's Property Act 1882*). Considering this context, the destruction of landscapes during conflict mirrors the wider disturbance of masculine identities caused by war, in which land, an entity owned by men and even representing male power, becomes devastated, weakened, and transformed. Land will thus be a central theme when analysing this series and in particular the first volume.

The Magician's Nephew is set around fifty years before its publication, prior to both World Wars (Glasner, 2014: 58), and Lewis signals the temporal distance between the reader's timeline and the novel's timeline from the beginning: '[t]his is a story about something that happened long ago when your grandfather was a child' (11). Similarly to the beginning of 'Le Gentil Petit Diable', analysed in the previous chapter, the phrasing of this introductory sentence is reminiscent of the fairy-tale

trope 'once upon a time', evoking mystery and wonder for this distant period. For an author writing in the 1950s, after the trauma of both wars, this period at the beginning of the twentieth century might seem mythological, viewed with a sense of yearning for a time of prewar peace.[4] Lewis himself fought in World War One (James, 2012: 63) and would have been a child at the turn of the twentieth century, making this act of harking back to a time of peace especially poignant. Lewis projects nostalgia for his own childhood, writing, as if from memory, that 'meals were nicer; and as for sweets, I won't tell you how cheap and good they were, because it would only make your mouth water in vain' (11). The friendly, chatty first-person voice used here can be interpreted as that of the author recounting their own memories, connecting with his own remembered identity as a child and relating to the child reader. The alignment of pre-war calm with childhood evokes a Romantic vision of tranquillity and innocence. From the start, the narrative framework of *The Magician's Nephew* depicts a sense of nostalgia for a distant era, as the narrator reflects on and longs for a prior time of peace.

Lewis also writes that 'Mr Sherlock Holmes was still living in Baker Street and the Bastables were looking for treasure in Lewisham Road' (11) during this time, further dating the setting to the early twentieth century through intertextual reference. More significantly, however, the reference to the 'Bastables' relates to Edith Nesbit's children's adventure novel *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899) and its sequels. This reference firmly situates the story within the world of children's literature and in so doing adds a further atmosphere of childhood innocence to the early story. Lewis' references to other popular children's texts through a first-person voice may resonate closely with the child reader and generate their trust.

At the beginning of the novel there is a demonstrable lack of concern for the emotions of boys and men that mirrors the wartime pressures on men to be strong, stoic, and resilient. Even in the First Chapter of the book, Polly teases Digory for 'blubbing', and Digory argues that she would also be miserable in his circumstances:

> if [she'd] lived all [her] life in the country […with] a river at the bottom of the garden, and then been brought to live in a beastly Hole like this […] And if [her] father was away in India. (12)

Polly acts as the mouthpiece for the criticism of Digory's unmasculine behaviour in a way that parallels the behavioural pressures felt by men during war, and the female voice used reflects the pressure to do one's part in the war effort to protect one's wives, daughters and sweethearts. Even in these early stages nature becomes a significant theme; Digory's distress is related to separation from a specific environment and lifestyle, from a tranquil pastoral haven to a 'beastly Hole', which we soon find out is the city of London. The war brought about many instances of displacement, taking many British men and children away from their homes to join the war effort or be evacuated respectively, and it led to the devastation and destruction of many cities and homes. In its early stages, the novel opens a conversation not only about environment and nostalgia for a previous time, but equally about the trauma of displacement felt by so many during war.

As the first volume in a cycle of books based on biblical allegory, the novel presents the initial creation of Narnia, drawing significantly on the story of Genesis. In his early depiction of Narnia, Lewis presents a beautiful, green, abundant land, a radiant sun revealing the landscape:

a valley through which a broad, swift river wound its way, flowing eastward

towards the sun. Southward there were mountains, northward there were

lower hills […] The earth was of many colours: they were fresh, hot and

vivid. They made you feel excited. (62)

Narnia is a vibrant natural place bursting with life and evoking feelings of joy and

tranquillity. As Aslan, the creator, roams the land, it continues to flourish. Lewis

describes 'the valley gr[owing] green with grass[…] spread[ing] out from the Lion

like a pool' and 'r[unning] up the sides of the little hills like a wave' (64). The fluid,

continuous growth described here highlights the ready abundance, fertility and

serenity of the Narnian landscape. The rapid, constant growth is equally evident in

the growth of the trees, which are described as 'spiky thing[s] that threw out dozens

of arms' which became 'covered […] with green and grew larger at the rate of about

an inch every two seconds' (64). This state of blossoming life continues for several

pages, the length and detail of description emphasising the rich abundance of the

natural world. In these initial imaginings of Narnia, Lewis presents a happy, peaceful

natural world, an Arcadia or Utopia to parallel a state of prewar peace and

innocence.

This state of bliss does not last long, however, as Uncle Andrew and Jadis,

the White Witch, soon disturb the peace. These hypermasculine, power-hungry

figures invade the Arcadian paradise in a striking parallel to a wartime invasion. The

character of Uncle Andrew is designed to evoke disgust in the reader, being self-

serving, greedy, and yet ultimately cowardly, invading and tainting the Narnian

landscape for his own benefit. In the Second Chapter, Digory is appalled when he

learns of his uncle's experimental magic which has the capacity to send living

creatures, including his friend Polly, to other worlds. Andrew is boastful of his

supposed wisdom – referring to '[m]en like me, who possess hidden wisdom' (19) – and ignores Digory's pleas whilst boasting of his power and success. Andrew is agitated when interrupted by his nephew's concerns for his lost friend: '[h]ow you do harp on that!' he cries when Digory is persistently worried about Polly's fate, '[a]s if that was what mattered!' (20). Lewis explains that 'Digory was disliking his Uncle more every minute' (20), creating a contrast between Andrew's exploitative immorality and disregard for life and the comparatively good-natured attitude of Digory, whose main concerns are selfless. From these initial negotiations, Lewis's presentation of Andrew is damning; he is power-hungry, unfeeling to the point of cruelty, aggressive in his greed, and lacking the courage and bravery that would make him a more acceptable male figure. Andrew is comparable to a wartime dictator and mirrors the hypermasculine aggression of the Nazis in British culture; he is concerned with progress only, regardless of the ethics and morals involved, and has utter disregard for life. The narrative is structured in such a way that it consistently compares Digory and Andrew and pits them against one another, with two of the chapters specifically entitled with both character names – 'Digory and his Uncle' and 'Digory and his Uncle are Both in Trouble'. As with the national conceptions of masculinity that were commonplace throughout World War Two, Digory's more temperature masculinity is presented as the preferable choice to the dictatorial aggression of Andrew.

The aggression, power and violence and disregard for life inherent to war contrasts to the Romanticised, pastoral images of nature that are 'deeply entrenched in Western culture' (Garrard, 2004: 33). Indeed, these images have, '[s]ince the Romantic movement's poetic responses to the Industrial Revolution […] decisively shaped our constructions of nature' (33). According to this perspective, rural life is

idealised, and humanity presented in a harmonious relationship with the natural world (33). Nature denotes a seemingly unpolluted physical force embodied in plants and wildlife that is pure and calm in contrast to the complexities and pollution of urban life. Rural environments are pictured as a healing, rejuvenating retreat from the disease and contamination of the city. There are certain influential images of nature and natural environments in Western culture that act as foundations for this. Indeed, the Biblical story of the Fall from Grace in Genesis conflates a fall from innocence and a fall from an abundant, natural world, a story that *The Magician's Nephew* is based on: '[t]he initial lapsarian moment, or loss of innocence, is the decline from garden to desert' (Merchant, 2004: 12). The link between nature and innocence equally means that there is a common link between childhood and nature; nature imagery is particularly significant in children's literature of this era because it doubly frames the purity of the prewar period, connecting this both to a pastoral idyll and to the innocent child figure. Indeed, Karín Lesnik-Oberstein sees the child-nature connection as one forged by the Romantic idealisation of childhood (1998: 208-217; cited in Rudd, 2009: 242). The Romantic image of the child, especially common in French children's works of this period, 'found a new impetus after the middle of the century in the wake of the horrors of the first half' (Brown, 2008: 238), and is perhaps most famously illustrated by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* (1943). The child thus became a 'vehicle for the mediation of reflection' (238), and in the case of war brought about new ideas towards conflict resolution and in turn masculinity.

The characterisation of Andrew becomes especially important when he enters Narnia during its creation and is presented with opportunities for exploitation. During Narnia's genesis, the land is so abundant with life that anything planted in

the ground may grow, even an inanimate object; a bar from a lamp post that Jadis uses as a weapon, for example, grows into a full lamp post after falling to the ground, mirroring the growth of a tree: '[i]t was a perfect little model of a lamp-post, about three feet high but lengthening, and thickening in proportion, as they watched it; in fact growing just as the trees had grown' (67). The lamp post also lights up, as if becoming a living thing (67). Upon realising the potential of Narnia's abundance, Uncle Andrew 'rub[s] his hands harder than ever' (67) and commences a monologue that further paints him as a self-serving and greedy dictator. Within this section in particular, Andrew is the mouthpiece of a violent and dictatorial masculinity, with the first-person voice used as a means of emphasising the self-serving nature of his approach:

> I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth [...W]hat has America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury 'em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. They'll cost nothing, and I can sell 'em at full prices in England. I shall be a millionaire. (67-68)

Uncle Andrew is solely interested in exploiting Narnia's natural resources for his own financial gain. His:

> sole relation to the landscape is that of possessor; [he] want[s] to dominate the world, or exploit it for wealth and power, and [is] willing to kill any part of it [...] if it will benefit [him] to do so. (Dickerson and O'Hara, 2009: 95)

It is equally interesting that some of Andrew's desires should include growing objects that can be used in a war effort, for example 'battleships', as if in anticipation of the coming wars and a sign of the violent potential of Andrew's way of thinking.

There are, then, further direct hints of violence and warfare in his speech that threaten to pollute the peaceful land, and items that draw the reader's attention directly back to the wartime context. Indeed, while war itself is not a direct concern of *The Magician's Nephew*, it sits constantly in the periphery, as is evident in instances such as this, and in the dynamics of violence and healing seen throughout the novel.

The historical significance of this desire to invade, appropriate and exploit might further be explored in Andrew's question: 'what has America to this?' (67). In the British imagination, America has long been associated with power, capitalism and industry. These attitudes have roots in British imperialism and empire in the seventeeth and eighteenth centuries, before America declared independence in 1776. Early modern political theorists such as John Locke viewed America as a 'political Genesis', 'the beginning of civilization' or 'the second Garden of Eden; a new beginning for England should it manage to defend its claims in the American continent' (Arneil, 1996: 1). Even in the early modern imagination, America was a land of opportunity and freedom to be exploited, the ultimate image of potential power and capital. This image was renewed during World War Two:

> [i]n contrast to the rising fortunes of the United States, the old economic powers of Europe including Britain lay in ruins. As World War II came to a close in 1945, Britain faced severe economic problems that would persist throughout the immediate post-war years. Nazi bombing campaigns had destroyed more than 200,000 homes during the war and made another 250,000 uninhabitable. Even though Britain was a victor in the war, shortages and rationing persisted until 1954. (Lyons, 2013: 8)

In Andrew's imagining, Narnia is the equivalent of the blank slate offered by America. It constitutes an opportunity to exploit the natural world anew particularly relevant to the time of the novel's publication, when Europe lay in devastation.

Where Andrew's immediate motivation is materialistic and self-serving, Digory rather thinks of finding a means of healing his ailing mother, and spends much of the novel in search of this. Andrew, predictably, is dismissive, telling his nephew that Narnia 'isn't a chemist's shop' (68). By contrast, Digory's selflessness is highlighted in his angry, 'savage' response to his Uncle's greed: '"[y]ou don't care twopence about her [Digory's mother]," said Digory savagely' (68). The more violent embodiment of male power – that represented by the colonising figure of Uncle Andrew – is contrasted with Digory's altruistic goals based in healing. Digory, peace-loving and respectful of the landscape and creatures around him, is quick to object to the exploitative nature of his uncle's approach to Narnia. This distinction between Andrew and his nephew powerfully comments on differing masculinities in the wartime context, and a desire for kinder, pacifist-based approaches to masculine identity in the post-war era. The moral distinction between these two approaches is particularly noticeable in their treatment of Aslan, the Christ figure; where Andrew seeks to kill Aslan, lamenting the absence of a gun to hunt with (67) – '[t]he first thing is to get that brute shot' (68) – Digory readily and bravely approaches the lion for aid despite fearing him (68). As the series continues and Aslan's status as an allegory for Christ is increasingly emphasised, characters' attitudes towards Aslan tend to identify them as either 'good' or 'evil' and see them praised or punished accordingly.

The story ends with Digory healing his mother by bringing the Apple of Life to her, another symbol recalling the abundance of the Garden of Eden. That a fantasy

story with a male protagonist should end with an act of healing based in nature rather than the defeat or death of an enemy, or a battle of some kind, shows the ultimate act of heroism to be in preserving and respecting life – an important sentiment in the wake of any war. Digory moves away from the industrial landscape of London and closer to nature in his family's return to the 'great big house in the country' with its river, woods, and 'mountains behind it' (105), marking an alignment with the healing power of nature, whilst equally reflecting the Narnian landscape and its healing capacity. The final chapter also sees a distinct shift in gender structures. Digory's father is able to return from India permanently, with enough money to retire, meaning the patriarch figure is reinstated and the nuclear family reconstituted. In the context of war, with the huge loss of male life, this is significant, suggesting a potential for the healing of families previously torn apart. The dominant focus here is on healing and on moving away from a violent and devastating past. Indeed, the story ends on a positive note denoting a possibility of changing attitudes, as Andrew 'had learned his lesson' and 'became a nicer and less selfish old man' (106).

The challenges to a dominant, heroic wartime masculinity depicted throughout the novel and which are crystallised here could reflect war's capacity to change attitudes towards masculinity, observed most clearly in Britain after the horrors of World War One, but perceptible too at least in some children's literature of the years after World War Two. Qualities such as heroism and bravery remain valued, but are made more 'temperate' and balanced with traditionally feminine, healing-based qualities. Generally speaking, the exploitative and dominating masculine qualities are presented as a punishable, 'hypermasculine' extreme, following that embodied by the Nazis according to British wartime culture. A similar preference for a more temperate masculinity is present in the following novels.

Set during World War Two and published five years after its conclusion, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) depicts the adventures of the Pevensie children during evacuation. It is, like *The Magician's Nephew*, a healing narrative, but one far more directly concerned with war than the previous novel. As with the previous volume (narratively speaking), there is a focus on environments and the desire to heal them. Indeed, the tyrannical rule of the White Witch is marked from the beginning of the text by the lifeless, wintery landscape: beautiful but devoid of the fertility that characterised Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew*. When Edmund enters Narnia for the first time, he feels 'as if he were the only living creature in that country. There was not even a robin or a squirrel among the trees' and '[e]verything was perfectly still' (122). Narnia's recovery from the Witch's tyranny comes with the melting of the snow and a transition from winter to spring. There is a parallel between the recovery from the White Witch's rule and the need to regrow and heal after wartime trauma and destruction. This emphasis on the regrowth and healing of a place previously subject to devastation marks a move away from destructive and violent qualities of wartime masculinity.

The Pevensie boys, like wartime soldiers, engage in violence in their struggle to liberate Narnia from Jadis, and this is seen as a vital and specifically male role. Peter's first battle is a significant event in the configuring of his masculinity, with Aslan even telling other creatures to stay back and '[l]et the Prince win his spurs' (170) and prove his masculine strength and bravery. Yet Lewis also depicts the true sentiments of war; Peter is not the epitome of effortless stoicism, but rather, he 'did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick' (170). However, Peter is filled with a sense of duty in true heroic soldier fashion, and goes on to do the deed that brings him so much fear: 'that made no difference to what he had to do' (170).

Heroically, Peter 'rushe[s] straight up to the monster and aim[s] a slash of his sword at its side' (170). Yet, again, Peter is no effortless soldier, with his first strike missing the wolf he must battle. Lewis depicts the terror of going up against an enemy, remarking on the 'flaming' eyes of the wolf and its 'mouth wide open in a howl of anger' (170). Yet Peter is able to carry out his duty and 'though all this happened too quickly for Peter to think at all – he had just time to duck down and plunge his sword, as hard as he could, between the brute's forelegs into its heart' (170). Lewis does not shy away from depicting the horror of such battles, portraying the wolf struggling horrifically as it lurches between life and death: 'the Wolf seemed neither alive nor dead, and its bared teeth knocked against his forehead, and everything was blood and heat and hair' (170-171). Battle seems far from a glowing, heroic event here, and is depicted in all of its gory and gruesome detail. Peter feels 'tired all over' and wipes the sweat from his forehead, shaking alongside his sister Susan (171). The moment after, however, Peter is declared a hero for taking the life of an enemy. Even so, Lewis does not forget the grim reality of war, with Aslan reminding Peter that he must clean his bloody sword before he can be knighted 'Sir Peter Wolf's-Bane' (171).

Not long after this event, we see the final battle that concludes the book. The Narnian allies are eager to join in, aware of the glory that comes with fighting a battle for a good cause. Aslan remarks that '"if the Witch is to be finally defeated before bedtime we must find the battle at once"' with a centaur replying, '"[a]nd join in, I hope, sir!"' (190). While Lucy and Susan, the girls, join Aslan to gather forces, it is the boys who must participate fully in the battle, with Peter and Edmund already fighting when the girls arrive: '[t]here stood Peter and Edmund and all the rest of Aslan's army fighting desperately against the crowd of horrible creatures whom she

had seen last night' (191). It is important here that we should see this battle from the perspective of the girls; in a parallel to the gender roles during World War Two, the girls view the war from afar and their role is to provide support from the periphery of the battle. Lewis is quick to draw attention to the losses associated with war, noting that there are 'statues dotted all over the battlefield', these being creatures that the Witch has turned to stone. Peter and Jadis are mid-battle when Aslan and the girls arrive, with the true brutality of war revealed:

> [i]t was Peter [the Witch] was fighting – both of them going at it so hard that Lucy could hardly make out what was happening; she […] saw the stone knife and Peter's sword flashing so quickly that they looked like three knives and three swords. (191)

As a heroic masculine character, Aslan throws himself into the battle readily, and we see a brief description of the battlefield in which the various tools of destruction and violence of the fighters is emphasised: 'dwarfs with their battleaxes, dogs with their teeth, the Giant with his club (and his feet also crushed dozens of the foe), unicorns with their horns, centaurs with swords and hoofs' (191).

The next chapter sees the resolution of the battle. Lewis emphasises the destructive scale of battle on both sides, with the Narnians as well as the Witch's forces responsible for taking many lives. Indeed, '[m]ost of the enemy had been killed in the first charge of Aslan and his companions' (192). Peter's experience of battle interestingly appears to have transformed him from a boy into a man; war is commonly recognised as a turning point in childhood as mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, but in this case it is seen specifically as a turning point in a boy's childhood, proof of his manly capabilities in the face of great danger: '[i]t was strange to her to see Peter looking as he looked now – his face was so pale and

stern and he seemed so much older' (192). Edmund is depicted as similarly heroic for throwing himself headfirst into battle with little regard for his safety and taking multiple lives in the process, as well as for his strategic mind which in the end turns the battle in their favour:

> "[i]t was all Edmund's doing, Aslan […] We'd have been beaten if it hadn't been for him. The Witch was turning our troops into stone right and left. But nothing would stop him. He fought his way through three ogres to where she was just turning one of your leopards into a statue. And when he reached her he had the sense to bring his sword smashing down on her wand instead of trying to go for her directly and simply getting made a statue himself for his pains. That was the mistake all the rest were making. Once her wand was broken we began to have some chance – if we hadn't lost so many already. He was terribly wounded. We must go and see him" (192).

Yet war also leaves Edmund severely injured and close to death. Indeed, by the time the others find him, Edmund is 'covered with blood', 'his mouth was open', and 'his face a nasty green colour' (192). The reality of war, then, is not one of effortless glory, but one of severe loss and trauma.

For all the focus on battle and the masculine duty in war, it is ultimately not this element that is most glorified, but rather a feminine role, and specifically that of Lucy's healing potion, which rescues the Narnian allies from the brink of death (192-193). When she first receives the gift from Father Christmas, alongside a dagger, the cordial's immense value is emphasised by its encasement in a precious diamond vial and its natural properties, being 'made of the juice of one of the fire-flowers that grow in the mountains of the sun' (160). That healing is so crucial is highlighted in the fact that Aslan's role in the battle – that of the Christ figure himself – is also one

predominantly related to healing, as he returns life to those made into statues by Jadis (193; see also 187-191). It is equally vital that Lucy should be with Aslan when he restores these statues (187-191) and at the moment when he is resurrected after Jadis sacrifices him (177-181). That Lucy is closely associated with all of these moments further reinforces her healer status.

Lewis' identification of the girls primarily with caring and healing roles can be understood as an expression of the essentialist view of gender so evident, for example, in some of the Enid Blyton novels discussed. However, this binary model is at least inflected in the Narnia novels both by the value accorded to these traditionally feminine functions – Aslan himself fights but is primarily a healer and life-giver – and by the way in which girls are shown performing masculinity successfully. Lucy in particular demonstrates physical courage and actively participates in conflict resolution, and in later volumes girls are even given opportunities to participate in battle. In *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), for example, Prince Corin describes Lucy as 'as good as a man, or at any rate as good as a boy', and this is favourably compared to Susan's more conventional behaviour, that of 'an ordinary grown-up lady' who 'doesn't ride to the wars' (290).The narrative emphasis on the carnal horror of war as well as its nobility also undermines any straightforward glorification of martial virility.

In *The Last Battle* (1956)*,* Lewis draws on the themes of nature, regrowth, and healing presented over the previous six volumes to emphasise the significance of the destruction of nature during what is aptly named *The Last Battle,* a volume that depicts the end of Narnia itself. When the evil monkey Shift falsely rules Narnia, he willingly destroys the Narnian landscape, commanding the felling of trees to sell to the Calormen, marking a valuing of wealth and power over respect for the natural

world: '[h]alf a dozen splendid tree-trunks, all newly cut and newly lopped of their branches, had been lashed together to make a raft, and were gliding swiftly down the river' (678). The destruction caused by this deforestation is serious, as portrayed in the deaths of the dryads, spirits associated with trees; the felling of the trees is tantamount to murder, described in shocking, graphic detail considering the child readership. It might almost be described as a genocide of Narnian creatures comparable to the traumatic loss of life during war:

> "[a]-a-a-h," gasped the Dryad, shuddering as if in pain – shuddering time after time as if under repeated blows. Then all at once she fell sideways as suddenly as if both her feet had been cut from under her. For a second they saw her lying dead on the grass. (677)

This dramatic description of a dryad's death vividly conveys the destruction of life to the book's readers. As personifications of nature, the death of the dryads allows Lewis to suggest an equivalence between the loss of the environment and the loss of a human life. This is underscored when the King calls the felling of the trees 'murder' (677). Yet again, this scene demonstrates a Narnian favouring of nature, peace, and innocence above conflict, violence and destruction, highlighting the devastating consequences of Shift's hunger for power. The death of the dryad combines into one graphic scene the destruction of both life and environment that occurred during World War Two and emphasises the devastation caused by a lust for power as embodied by Shift.

Equally, heroism, and achievement in *The Last Battle*, particularly for the male characters, takes the form of their reclaiming the land from this devastation and exploitation, and using violence only where necessary to protect Narnia; the boy hero Eustace, for example, is not unblinkingly brave, and experiences doubt and fear

that deviate from the expectations of a masculine soldier hero. He has feverish moments of confusion and disorientation comparable to a trauma-induced illness suffered by troops during war: 'Eustace could never remember what happened in the next two minutes. It was all like a dream (the sort you have when your temperature is above 100°)' (732). He cannot and does not wish to remember who and what he has killed: '[t]he Fox lay dead at his own feet, and he wondered if it was he who had killed it' (732). The experience seems traumatic to him, as 'his heart [was] beating terribly' and he 'hop[es] and hop[es] that he would be brave' (732). It is not Eustace's willingness to kill his enemies that makes him a hero, but rather his reluctance to do so. Eustace presents the traumatic reality of war rather than the idealised expectations typically embodied by heroes. Masculine virtue appears to reside not in one's ability to resiliently withstand violence and trauma, but in recognising that such destruction is nothing to be celebrated, and must only be used when there is no other choice available.

In conclusion, the *Narnia* series is a healing narrative that reflects on the consequences of war for masculine identity through its use of the fantasy genre. Like many other texts presented in the thesis, normative gender roles underpin the story, and in many instances Lewis presents a binary, conservative view of the roles of women and men in times of conflict, with boys and men predominantly engaging in battle and women watching from a distance and carrying out auxiliary and healing roles. This links it to many other British and French texts analysed throughout the other chapters of the thesis, in which women carry out similar tasks; in Chapter Two, for example, *Les Six Compagnons* and *The Six Bad Boys* both depict the duty of mothers as care and nurture. Similarly, in *The Secret Seven* as well as the texts to be analysed in Chapter Four, action is equally the concern of boys. However, while

there is a certain amount of glory associated with fighting for a good cause and overcoming one's enemy, Lewis is equally quick to describe the emotional and physical consequences of war: the terror of entering battle, the trauma it can bring, and the devastating injuries that can come from it in a reflection of the fracturing of masculine identity during World War Two. Cumulatively, the *Narnia* novels place greater emphasis on the necessity to heal and rebuild and do this primarily through the theme of nature which is a refrain throughout the series. Narnia is a land that is, over the course of seven novels, variously created, invaded, exploited, colonised, captured and then freed, stripped of its life and renewed into abundance, and ended. Its story is one that mirrors not only the fate of war-torn countries, but equally experiences of men during war. Ultimately, the central concern of the texts is less on the violence of battle and instead on the recovery from it. The greatest attention is paid to the terror felt by men fighting in war, for example, and the injuries and deaths caused by war, the recovery of Narnia from violent forces and the subsequent restoration of the land to its former peace and abundance. The last statement here, of restoration of land, is a theme that is expanded on in greater depth in the French texts to follow.

Tistou les pouces verts (1957)

Tistou les pouces verts (1957) follows the story of a boy named Tistou who discovers he has 'pouces verts' ('green thumbs') that allow him to grow plants overnight. In essence, *Tistou* is a bildungsroman or coming-of-age story about a young boy overcoming the devastating effects of war, destruction, and violence with kindness, empathy, and healing. Tistou's ability is the opposite of a violent and destructive power in the typical military hero fashion which emphasises 'aggression,

strength, courage and endurance' (Dawson, 1994: 1; cited in Robb, 2015: 7). Tistou

is indeed courageous and persistent, but he never uses his power for violent ends,

only wishing to improve the quality of life of those around him, defusing rather than

causing conflict and having selfless aims rather than desires for personal power and

gain. After World War Two, Tistou's approach might seem a welcome pacifist relief

in a post-war world struck by injury, destruction, and shell shock, instead fuelled by

a desire for peace and unity above hostility. Tistou's story can be considered a

healing narrative; its overarching themes and plots depict people and environments

healing and growing to become healthier, happier, and more moral.

Published in the decade after the celebrated story *Le Petit Prince,* there are

important parallels between the prince of Saint-Exupéry's celebrated tale and Tistou,

particularly in the empathy and intuitiveness of the two characters, and the teachings

and qualities they embody. As in *Le Petit Prince, Tistou* is a story in which a child

challenges adults and their systems, with the third person narrative voice

predominantly focalising Tistou's perspective as a means of emphasising his

questioning of adult beliefs and behaviours, particularly in relation to war and

punishment. Similarly, Saint-Exupéry writes in the opening pages of his story that

'[l]es grandes personnes ne comprennent jamais rien toutes seules, et c'est fatigant,

pour les enfants, de toujours leur donner des explications…' (2017 [1943]:

loc34).[132]

Druon structures Tistou's tale predominantly in the form of discrete lessons,

which take place under the supervision of different staff in Tistou's father's wealthy

household. They focus on subjects including gardening, business, wealth, health, and

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[132] 'The grown-ups never understanding anything on their own, and it's tiring, for children, to always give them explanations.'

law and order. Yet this structure is somewhat ironic: the lessons focus on Tistou's

education, but the eventual revelation in each is that Tistou, rather, has something to

teach adults. The narrative focalisation consistently draws on the character's

thoughts and supports Tistou's process of introspection as he considers and

challenges the information given to him by his teachers. In his initial lesson, the

'leçon d'ordre' (Druon, 2017 [1957]: 55; 'lesson of order') with Monsieur

Trounadisse, Tistou witnesses the despair of the prisoners in the local jail. He

questions the effectiveness of traditional approaches to law and comes to believe in a

gentler approach that prioritises rehabilitation rather than punishment. While this

chapter is not directly about war, it might be considered a useful commentary on

approaches to other situations where wrongdoing must be addressed, and where

traditionally accepted solutions are considered ineffective and questioned. The prison

is described in a way that draws attention to its sombreness and the lack of hope it

represents:

> [i]ls longèrent le mur et parvinrent devant une haute grille noire, hérissée de
>
> pointes piquantes. Et derrière la grille noire, on voyait d'autres grilles noires,
>
> et derrière le mur triste, d'autres murs tristes. Et tous les murs et toutes les
>
> grilles étaient également surmontés de piquantes. (59)[133]

That Tistou can see multiple layers of 'grilles noires' and 'murs tristes' from his

position emphasises the layers of entrapment experienced by the prisoners, while the

dark coldness and hopelessness of the environment is emphasised in the repetition of

the colour black and the 'tristes' walls. The recurring imagery of spikes, which

Tistou describes as 'vilains piquants' (59; 'dreadful spikes') suggest an inherent

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[133] 'They walked along the wall and came to a high black railing, bristling with sharp spikes. And
behind the black railing, one could see other black grates, and behind the sad wall, other sad walls.
And all of the walls and all of the grates were also capped with spikes.'

violence to the prison environment in contrast to the male protagonist's gentler, pacifist approach. Tistou uses deceptively simple logic when questioning the effectiveness of this environment and suggests a more radical approach to delinquency: '[s]i cette prison était moins laide, dit Tistou, ils [les prisonniers] auraient peut-être moins envie de s'en aller' (59).[134] To his tutor's dismay, Tistou's approach in this scene favours 'healing' the prisoners of their supposed malice, aiming to better them as people rather than use any heavy-handed punishments. He appears to ignore Trounadisse's explanation that prisoners are placed in jail not to reform them, but 'pour l'empêcher de nuire aux autres hommes' (59): '[i]l guérirait sûrement plus vite si l'endroit était moins laid' (60).[135] Tistou finally concludes that traditional approaches are misguided, while his tutor writes that his pupil '*est à surveiller de près; il se pose trop de questions*' (60; emphasis in text).[136] The latter quotation in particular expresses the fear that Tistou is questioning tradition and authority, vital themes during a time of war when so much was thrown into disarray, from gender arrangements to conflicts based on fundamental moral differences. Tistou decides he must question authority and make radical change to this environment for the greater good in a reimagining of tradition.

     The radical nature of Tistou's approach is emphasised in the following section, when Druon describes how the moon and stars watch over Tistou's journey to the prison that night, protecting him like guardians:

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[134] If the prison were less ugly,' said Tistou, 'they [the prisoners] would have perhaps less desire to leave it.'

[135] '[T]o stop him from harming other men' and 'he would surely heal more quickly if the place was less ugly.'

[136] '[T]o be monitored closely; he asks [himself] too many questions/ has too many doubts.'

[à] peine aperçut-elle [la lune] Tistou, dans sa longue chemise blanche […]

qu'elle se donna vite un grand coup de polissoir en se servant d'un nuage qui

se trouvait à portée de sa main.

"Si je ne veille pas sur ce garçon-là, se dit-elle, il ira finir le nez dans

un fossé."

Elle reparut, plus brillante que jamais, et elle adressa même un

message à toute les étoiles de la Voie lactée […], afin qu'elles envoient leurs

meilleurs rayons.

Ainsi, protégé par la lune et par les étoiles, Tistou, moitié marchant,

moitié courant par les rues désertes, arriva sans encombre […] jusqu'à la

prison (63-64).[137]

The cosmic guidance Tistou receives on his way to the prison emphasises the

importance of his task and his affinity with the natural world on a larger scale. Penny

Brown's articulation of the 'special child' is relevant to the novel as a whole, but

particularly here, as Tistou is presented as almost cosmically selected for his task and

guided by the universe to complete it. The special child is a: 'Romantic image of the

child as a being endowed with special powers of intuition and empathy with nature'

and it 'found a new impetus after the middle of the [twentieth] century in the wake of

the horrors of the first half (Brown, 2008: 238). The special child could be seen as a

reaction to the untold death and devastation of World War Two, and a literary

formulation aiming to help bring about a new age focussed on learning from but

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[137] 'The moon is rather favourable to people who take a walk during the night. No sooner had she
spotted Tistou, in his long white shirt, in the middle of the lawn, than she quickly gave herself a good
polish, using a cloud within reach of her hand. "If I don't watch over this boy," she said, "he'll end up
with his nose in a ditch." She reappeared, shinier than ever, and she even addressed a message to all
the stars in the Milky Way, so that they would send their best rays. Thus, protected by the moon and
stars, Tistou, half walking, half running through deserted streets, arrived without difficulty at the
prison.'

leaving behind the pains of the past; such a trope resonates with the idealistic views of Paul Hazard on the healing potential of children's literature. The selflessness and moral imperative of Tistou's task is reinforced by angelic imagery, suggested through a continued use of the colour white and bright light imagery, from Tistou's 'longue chemise blanche' (63; 'long white shirt') to the moon's brilliance and the stars of the Milk Way, who send their 'meilleurs rayons' (64; 'best rays'). The titular character of *Le Petit Prince* is similarly a 'special child', and is described as having 'cheveux tout dorés' (de Saint-Exupéry, 2017 [1943]: loc221; 'all golden hair') that similarly gives an impression of angelic innocence and brilliance; Tistou, almost identically, has hair that is 'blonds et frisés au bout' (25; 'blond and curly at the ends').

Tistou achieves his goal of growing flowers around the prison, which is then described in terms of royal splendour, 'transformée en château de fleurs, en palais des merveilles' (65)[138] in a direct contrast to its previous sombreness. In a clear emphasis on the radical change effected by Tistou, Druon describes the surprise of the townspeople at hearing the 'fabuleuse nouvelle' ('fabulous news') in terms of 'stupeur' ('stupor'), 'effarement' ('alarm') and 'bruit' (65; 'noise'). Indeed, the changes send shockwaves through the local population, who gather in front of the previously sad walls, now a hub of life and beauty: 'le grand mur couvert de roses et les grilles changées en charmilles' (65).[139] The flowers cover all areas of the prison, and cacti replace the spikes that Tistou disliked previously (66). From 'tige' (65; stem) to 'chèvrefeuille' (66; 'honeysuckle'), Druon employs a wide lexical field relating to plants and flowers to emphasise the drastic change, and this change is

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[138] '[T]ransformed into a castle of flowers, into a palace of marvels'.
[139] '[T]he big wall covered with roses and the grates changed into bowers'.

shown most noticeably in the transformation of the prisoners themselves. Their behaviour and mood improves so much in their new environment that they forget about their entrapment, stop repeat offending and, even when freedom is presented to them, do not wish to leave, because they 'avaient plaisir à contempler ce qui les entourait' (73).[140] Their violent, aggressive tendencies are erased under the influence of this healing force – 'les méchants perdirent l'habitude de se fâcher et de se battre'– and the prison is cited as an example for the rest of the world (73).[141] In this example, then, Tistou reimagines existing approaches to conflict by refusing to engage in it, and instead by making efforts to restore peace, and to help others to flourish and grow.

In Chapter Ten, Tistou is again under the supervision of Monsieur Trounadisse for a bizarrely entitled 'leçon de misère' (75; lesson on poverty). This chapter has a significant connection to the post-war rebuilding struggles in France because it takes place in what translates as a 'slum' in English. With the Occupation having wrought havoc in France, the country scrambled to rebuild and combat a severe housing shortage which saw 'homeless families [seeking] shelter in partially destroyed buildings, under bridges, or in rapidly growing shantytowns' out of necessity (Nasiali, 2014: 434). 'In Marseille the squatters occupy!' (1946, cited in Nasiali, 2014: 434), declared the headline of the *Monde Ouvrier* a year after the end of World War Two, after six families illegally occupied a vacant house. Nasiali writes:

> as the provisional government deliberated comprehensive plans for postwar
>
> reconstruction, many families grew increasingly desperate and began to

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[140] '[F]ound pleasure in contemplating what surrounded them'.
[141] '[T]he villains lost the habit of getting angry and fighting.'

organize and attend local meetings. Building on their shared experiences of everyday life, a movement was taking shape. Although many had begun illegally occupying buildings out of necessity, squatting became a political statement and part of an evolving agenda. Squatters argued that housing was both a human and a citizenship right. (434)

The slums were not only an effect of the war, but equally a politically charged image in post-war France, one bringing about a wider discussion about human rights to shelter. Druon's imagining of an attempt to heal this particular environment is thus especially significant. The destructive potential of war is emphasised in the depiction of the slums and the apparent misery they cause for those living in them.

Monsieur Trounadisse expresses very little understanding for the struggles of the poor, declaring that '[c]ette zone des taudis est un fléau' and explaining the 'dangers' of poverty: 'un fléau est un mal qui atteint beaucoup de gens, un très grand mal' (76).[142] War has the potential not only to cause destruction to environments, but to equally destroy lives and cause untold illness, poverty and misery. Tistou, a radical force for good, intends to reverse the effects of war. He begins planning his actions as soon as sees the poor living conditions suffered by those in poverty; these include '[d]es chemins étroits, boueux, malodorants' (76), 'des cabanes si trouées, si branlantes […] au moindre vent, que l'on avait peine à croire qu'elles pussent tenir debout' and '[l]es portes […] rapiécées, ici avec du carton, là avec un vieux morceau de boîte à conserves' (77).[143] As with the prison environment, the slums are portrayed in a way intended to create a contrast with the later transformation caused by Tistou.

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[142] '[T]hese slums are a scourge' and 'a scourge is an evil that affects lots of people, a great evil'.
[143] '[N]arrow, muddy, foul-smelling streets', 'huts so filled with holes, so shaky at the least wind, that one wondered how they stayed upright' and 'doors patched up, here with cardboard, and there with an old piece of tin can'.

Druon emphasises the difficult living circumstances in the slums, writing that the huts are too small for their number of inhabitants, and thus meaning the people become stifled and unwell: they 'avaient mauvaise mine' and are 'serrés les uns contre les autres, et sans lumière' meaning they become 'pâles…comme les endives que Moustache fait pousser dans la cave' (77).[144] It is interesting here that Druon should use a plant metaphor to describe the stifled growth of human beings, which might serve as a reminder that, however powerful their abilities might be, able to cause untold and devastating levels of destruction, humans first and foremost exist as living things as plants do, and require the same amount of nurturing and care, a vital message in the post-war era after so many families had been left decimated. Druon also appears to suggest that there is a pattern to be broken, and that destruction and violence in turn brings about further destruction and violence. Indeed, Tistou witnesses the violence, aggression and trauma that appear to be caused by these living standards, seeing 'un homme battre une femme, et un enfant s'enfuir en pleurant' (78).[145]

Tistou then grows flowers in these poorer areas of town and in so doing encourages economic growth and prosperity (80): a particularly pertinent feature in the post-war context of rebuilding and healing. His actions solve unemployment and lead to the redevelopment of a previously deprived area, and the building of 'un grand immeuble de neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf beaux appartements, avec cuisines électriques, où tous les anciens locataires des taudis pourraient se loger à l'aise' (81).[146] Unlike Uncle Andrew of *The Magician's Nephew*, Tistou does not

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[144] '[L]ooked rough'; 'pressed against each other, and without light' and 'pale…like the chicory that Moustache grows in the cellar.'

[145] '[A] man beating a woman, and a child running away, crying'.

[146] '[A] large building of nine hundred, nine hundred and ninety-nine beautiful apartments, with electric kitchens, where all of the old tenants of the slums would be able to live comfortably'.

wish to profit or gain power or wealth from the redevelopment, and only wishes, ultimately, to heal and improve people's lives, and to make them happier. His empathy for people with vastly different life experiences to his own seems particularly poignant after a time of significant tensions between differing populations and ideologies that lead to so many deaths and so much destruction.

As a further emphasis of the healing focus of Tistou's narrative, in the following chapter Tistou uses his ability at a hospital. The hospital environment notably does not have the same sombre appearance as the prison and slums, perhaps in symbolic terms because it is already a place of healing and growth, in contrast to the oppressive environments seen previously. Indeed, it is 'très grand, très propre et pourvu de tout ce qu'il fallait pour soigner les maladies' and has '[d]e larges fenêtres [qui] laissaient entrer le soleil' and 'murs […] blancs et brillants' (83).[147] The hospital is further associated with nature and healing in Druon's hint that Docteur Mauxdivers ('Mauxdivers' being a combination of the words 'maux divers' meaning 'various illnesses') resembles Tistou's gardening tutor and confidante, Moustache (83). Druon explains his choice to associate the two in the text itself, when the doctor explains that the two resemble each other because '[ils s']occup[ent] l'un et l'autre de soigner la vie' (84),[148] one caring for plants and another for humans.

When describing the struggles faced by doctors, Druon uses a battle metaphor, suggesting that the true challenge and heroism is not in taking life but in preserving it: '[ê]tre médecin, c'était livrer sans cesse une bataille' (84).[149] The concepts of healing power and the destruction of war are juxtaposed in this sentence to suggest the difficulty, and yet equally the necessity of Tistou's pacifist approach.

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[147] '[V]ery big, very clean and equipped with all that would be necessary to heal illnesses' and has 'large windows which let the sun in' and 'shining white walls'.
[148] 'They both are occupied with caring for life.'
[149] 'Being a doctor was to incessantly give battle.'

In an extension of this battle metaphor, Druon acknowledges the seeming ubiquity and inevitability of illness and its constant readiness to attack healthy bodies:

> [i]l y avait la maladie, toujours prête à entrer dans le corps des gens, et de l'autre la bonne santé, toujours prête à s'en aller. En plus il y avait mille sortes de maladies et une seule bonne santé. La maladie se mettait toute espèce de masques pour qu'on ne la reconnaisse pas […] Il fallait la déceler, la décourager, la chasser et en même temps attirer la bonne santé, la tenir serrée, l'empêcher de s'enfuir. (84)[150]

Druon's description evokes an image of warfare against illness, which is presented as a cunning enemy who wears different masks to 'trick' humans into illness. Yet despite the prevalence of illness in human life, however distressing it may be, Druon reveals that Tistou has never fallen ill in his life: '[u]n cas très rare de bonne santé, un cas exceptionnel' (85).[151] One might argue that Tistou is resistant to illness because he is life incarnate, healing and growth being so integral a part not only of his magical ability but also of his selfless character. Tistou seems like the perfect example of a figure one might idolise in a post-war period characterised by a need to heal from devastation.

When Tistou meets an ailing girl who has lost her hope for life, moreover, his flowers provide a means of restoring this hope, and ultimately bringing about her recovery from this 'battle' against illness. Initially the girl laments being restricted to her sickbed, telling Tistou that he is lucky when he tells her that he has a garden, and wondering if her health would improve if she had access to one herself, thus

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[150] 'There was illness, always ready to enter people's bodies, and on the other hand good health, always ready to leave. What's more, there were a thousand types of illness and only one good health. Illness put on all sorts of masks so that one doesn't recognise it […] One had to find it, discourage it, hunt it and at the same time attract good health, hold onto it tightly, prevent it from fleeing.'
[151] 'A very rare case of good health, an exceptional case'.

equating nature with healing power: '[s]i j'avais un jardin, peut-être aurais-je envie de guérir pour aller m'y promener' (86).[152] The girl seems depressed at her life in the hospital, where her state is not improving (88), and Tistou comes to the conclusion that in order to heal, the little girl must have a desire to get better and see the next day; she must have hope, but, as Tistou knows, there is no medicine that restores hope (89). By growing flowers in her hospital room, Tistou restores the girl's love for life, and she heals quickly: '[l]e soir même, ses jambes commencèrent à remuer. La vie lui plaisait' (90).[153] The doctor also tells Tistou that in order to care for people, 'il faut les aimer beaucoup' (89).[154] A focus on healing, then, is one associated with hope, love, and peace, and Tistou's flowers provide a way of bringing this about. This hospital episode shows the potential impact of Tistou's unconventional performance of masculinity, enabling him to make a profound positive impact on the life of a little girl by restoring not only her health to her, but also her desire to live. Rather than taking lives to end a battle (this time against illness) to become a hero, Tistou's alternative form of heroism comes in restoring life damaged by said battles.

The ultimate defiance of expectations of masculinity in wartime, however, comes in Tistou's engagement in a war between the Vazy and Vaten nations, in striking relevance to the post-World War Two context. From the moment war is suggested as a possibility, Tistou forms an extremely negative image of it:

> [l]'idée que Tistou se fit de la guerre fut celle d'une chose pas propre
> puisqu'on n'en parlait qu'à voix basse, une chose laide, une maladie des

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[152] 'If I had a garden, perhaps I would want to get better to be able to go walk there.'
[153] 'The same evening, her legs began to move. Life pleased her.'
[154] 'One must love them a lot.'

grandes personnes pire que l'ivrognerie, plus cruelle que la misère, plus

dangereuse que le crime. (101)[155]

War is presented as the ultimate evil, worse than all other ills and adult vices. In a

reflection of the supposed innocence and triviality of children's concerns, Druon

implies that war is the domain of adults and not something that an innocent child

could be expected to understand. Like the other texts analysed in this chapter then,

Tistou seems to predominantly contain anti-war sentiments and a desire to push

dominant ideals of masculinity towards a desire for healing and away from the

stereotypical violence of war.

Despite his youth, Tistou tries to learn all he can about war. He realises its

destructiveness when his gardening tutor, Moustache, recalls having an entire garden

ruined and prevented from ever growing again:

[j]'ai vu mourir en deux minutes un jardin plein de fleurs. J'ai vu les serres

sauter en mille morceaux. Et tant de bombes tomber dans ce jardin qu'il a

fallu renoncer pour toujours à le cultiver. Même la terre était morte. (103)[156]

War is the antithesis of life and growth, so much so that it can appear to permanently

stop all growth. Moustache's account moves Tistou, and the loss of his garden is so

traumatic that it is comparable to the loss of a human being. Hearing his account,

Tistou feels tears come to his eyes, 'resta un instant silencieux' and 'réfléchissait'

(103),[157] trying to imagine the garden and remember it as if in mourning. Moustache

also tells Tistou of other losses, another character having lost his country, another

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[155] 'The idea that Tistou had of war was that of an unclean thing, since one only spoke of it in a low voice, an ugly thing, an adults' illness worse than drunkenness, crueller than poverty, more dangerous than crime.'

[156] 'I have seen a garden full of flowers die in two minutes. I have seen greenhouses fly into a thousand pieces. And so many bombs falling into this garden that one had to renounce cultivating it forever. Even the earth was dead.'

[157] 'Stayed silent for a moment' and 'reflected'.

her son, and others still their limbs (103-104). Having heard traumatic tales of war in

a stark reminder of its devastating destructive potential, Tistou resolves to do what

he can to stop it from occurring, showing courage and empathy despite his youth and

inexperience: '[q]ue pourrait-on faire pour l'empêcher de passer?...se demandait-il'

(104).[158]

Nevertheless, Tistou learns that the adults are reluctant to stop war because

they financially benefit from it. Monsieur Trounadisse, one of Tistou's teachers,

takes Tistou to his father's cannon factory to teach him about this. Trounadisse

boasts of the destructive capacity of the cannons, which is seen as something to be

celebrated and admired. This serves as a further reminder of the indescribable

devastation, death, and destruction that war can bring about, not only to human life

but to environments too: '[i]ls peuvent démolir, à chaque obus tiré, quatre maisons

grandes comme la tienne' (110).[159] In response to this, rather than celebrating the

power of his nation, Tistou shows empathy, imagining himself and his friends

without their homes: 'à chaque coup de canon, quatre Tistou sans maison, quatre

Carolus sans escalier, quatre Amélie sans cuisine' (110).[160] He is further confused

when Trounadisse admits that weapons are not just being sent to their friends, the

Vazy nation, but also to the Vatens, and his father's motivation is thus revealed to be

entirely financial: '[les Vatens] sont aussi de bons clients' (111).[161] When Tistou

admits that he finds these business practices 'affreux' (112; 'awful'), he receives a

double zero mark for the lesson, rejecting his father's glorification of war and being

punished for this. War and the devastation it brings are normalised, and this

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[158] 'What could one do to prevent it from happening? He asked himself.'
[159] 'They can demolish, with each shell fired, four big houses like yours.'
[160] 'With every cannon fire, four Tistous without a home, four Carolus without a staircase, four Amélies without a kitchen.'
[161] 'They [the Vatens] are also good clients.'

normalisation and even glorification of war, Tistou feels, must be rejected in place of peaceful, pacifist arrangements. The supposedly naïve figure of the child constitutes a new hope in this sense.

In response, Tistou prevents war from physically taking place by tying up the weapons and equipment of both sides with his flowers. Druon spends several pages explaining the consequences of Tistou's actions, which bring entire countries to a standstill, and describing how plants have rendered useless the tools necessary for war:

> [l]a lierre, la vigne blanche, le liseron, l'ampélopsis des murailles, la renouée des oiseaux et la cuscute d'Europe formaient autour des mitrailleuses, des mitraillettes, des revolvers, un inextricable écheveau […], qu'aggravait encore la glu répandue par la jusquiame noire. (117)[162]

The long sentences and lists, using a wide lexical field relating to plants and flowers with complicated botanical terms, emphasises how completely Tistou has trapped the weapons using all manner of plants; indeed, '[p]as un appareil que la mystérieuse invasion eût épargné !' (119).[163] That the chosen term here is 'invasion', which denotes an aggressive interruption, is ironic, describing an intrusion that is, in reality, harmless, preventing rather than causing destruction. With no tools or weapons, 'la paix fut conclue sur l'heure' (121).[164] After all: '[o]n ne prend pas un pays avec des roses' (121).[165] Tistou's approach to conflict shows a potentially different path in the post-war era, and one that emphasises avoiding the trauma and destruction of war

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[162] 'Ivy, white vine, bindweed, wall-climbing ampelopsis, prostrate knotweed and European love vine formed around machine guns and sub-machine guns, revolvers, an inextricable tangle […], which further aggravated the glue spread by the black henbane.'
[163] 'The mysterious invasion had not left a single appliance untouched.'
[164] 'Peace was concluded within the hour.'
[165] 'One can't take a country with roses.'

and aims for unity among men. Indeed, in an educational supplement for the

Larousse edition of the text, Tistou is described as:

> [u]n héros vertueux, porteur de valeurs morales. Il lutte contre le mal sous
>
> toutes ses formes […] et sème le bien avec ses graines. Son courage se
>
> manifeste tout particulièrement lors de son combat contre la guerre.
>
> […L]orsqu'il fait disparaître les armes sous la végétation, il s'oppose non
>
> seulement aux grandes personnes en général, mais aussi et surtout à son père,
>
> directeur de l'usine. Tistou est donc un héros pacifiste, sensible aux malheurs
>
> d'autrui et porté vers l'action. (13)[166]

As well as drawing attention to the virtuousness of Tistou's character in his tendency

towards pacifism and peaceful conflict resolution, this analysis also draws attention

to Tistou's defiance of adults, particularly his father. Tistou's subversive power

undermines wartime masculine authority, which comes in the figure of Tistou's

father, the arms dealer and 'patriarch' figure. Tistou's father is also deeply associated

with traditional conceptions of hegemonic masculinity, as the owner of a successful

business and an important political figure. He can be seen, in the World War Two

context, as a member of the previous 'war generation', with Tistou representing the

younger generation and its new approaches and ideas. Tistou's use of his power for

pacifist ends represents a defiance of this traditional patriarchal figure and approach.

Interestingly, Tistou's father eventually heeds his message, deciding to 'transformer

l'usine de canons en usine à fleurs' (133).[167] That Tistou changes his father's

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[166] 'A virtuous hero, bearer of moral values. He battles against badness in all of its forms (poverty, illness, war…) and sows goodness with his seeds. His courage manifests itself particularly during his battle against war. In effect, when he makes the weapons disappear under vegetation, he opposes not only grownups in general, but also and especially his father, the director of the factory. Tistou is therefore a pacifist hero, sensitive to the unhappiness of others and drawn to action.'

[167] 'Transform the canon factory into a flower factory'.

approach towards war and violence suggests a reimagining of patriarchal power dynamics, and a potential for change to traditional values.

In conclusion, *Tistou les pouces verts* is a radically pacifist text that uses the theme of nature as a means of suggesting new, gentler and empathetic approaches to social and political issues including war. The story presents a child who tasks himself with bringing about peace, and never celebrates the glory of war, nor engages in any acts of violence like those expected of the boys of the *Narnia* world. As in the other texts of this chapter, the theme of nature is key in this emphasis on healing. On the one hand, it reflects the desire for a return to an innocent pastoral past after the trauma of Occupation, which is equally evident in *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres.* Yet it equally acts as a means through which Tistou can alter the world around him in a peaceful and non-confrontational way; the plants in some instances acting as physical barriers that, in the instance of war, directly prevent weaponry from being used, and in other instances simply altering the mindsets of the inhabitants by providing better environments. This is suggestive of the struggles felt in Europe in the post-war era to move on through the devastation of environments and homes caused by war. Druon depicts a young male character defying the masculine teachings and standards of masculinity taught to him by his adult role models and instead, ultimately, ends with the child teaching adults new approaches. The structure of the novel is particularly key in this, as the novel is, ostensibly, based on Tistou's learning but in fact results in the education of the adults. The story resonates closely with the post-war emphasis on rebuilding and healing, as well as the values set forth by Paul Hazard who saw children as the hope in an era of cooperation and understanding across nations. It closely resembles one of the most influential French children's books of the era, *Le Petit Prince*, and shares many

qualities with it. While nature is a key theme used throughout all three texts as a means of symbolising post-war healing and pacifist approaches to conflict resolution – *Narnia* is in many ways an ecological narrative that depicts the growth, exploitation and destruction of environments – it is the third text, *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres*, with which *Tistou* shares the most values. Like *Tistou*, *L'Homme* depicts an alternative masculinity whereby a pacifist central character cares for nature in response to the war.

L'Homme qui plantait des arbres (1953)

A text that works to similar ends as *Tistou*, though perhaps more subtle in its execution, is Jean Giono's short story *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres* (1953; *The Man who Planted Trees*). The story is internationally well known, has been translated into fifteen languages, and is the basis for an award-winning movie. Though this story is not specifically for children, it is often marketed as such by French publishers, and is available in children's editions including one by Gallimard published in 1983 (Comfort, 2011: 404).

L'Homme qui plantait des arbres is described by Keith Moser as a 'poignant and cautionary narrative' which has never been as relevant as it is now, '[i]n an age that is increasingly defined by an environmental calamity of epic proportions on a global scale' (2018: 107). The story, however, is initially set in the year 1913, and follows a man named Elzéard Bouffier who plants trees every day in the hopes of making the world a better place. War is the central theme of the story, but sits on the margins of the narrative. Indeed, its focus is not on violence, but on a desire to heal from the devastation that war inflicts. The time frame of the novel skips forward at times when the narrator leaves and then revisits Elzéard, and thus stretches as far as

1945, after World War Two. The story thus covers discourses related to regrowth in post-war and interbellum periods. As Kathy Comfort explains: '[w]ar punctuates the narration, providing a juxtaposition with Elzéard's implicit pacifism that the author's own anti-war stance during the Second World War undoubtedly inspired', a stance influenced by how deeply affected he was by his experiences during the Great War (2011: 405). Giono refused to serve in 1940 and was even imprisoned at the beginning of the Second World War as a result (Trout and Visser, 2006, cited in Comfort, 2011: 405). With this experience, Giono's text can be understood as offering a pacifist approach to wartime masculinity similar to that of Druon in *Tistou.* This is a particularly enlightening stance on wartime masculinity given the pressure on men to enlist in the war effort and fight for their country.

L'Homme is the work that Jean Giono was most proud of during his life, to the extent that he put no restrictions whatsoever on its reproduction. In the preface to the ebook edition, Thierry Crouzet, a French writer, quotes Giono: '[c]'est un de mes textes dont je suis le plus fier. Il ne me rapporte pas un centime et c'est pourquoi il accomplit ce pour quoi il a été écrit' (2013 [1953]: loc16).[168] Giono suggests here that the reproduction of peaceful values is far more important than any financial gain, in phrasing that is reminiscent of the negative image of Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew,* who wishes to exploit rather than negotiate peace.

The central focus of the text is the character of Elzéard Bouffier, who is particularly memorable; indeed the story was originally commissioned for a series as part of American magazine *Reader's Digest,* named 'The most unforgettable character I've met' (Moser, 2018: 108) and it was then later reprinted in *Vogue* under

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[168] 'It's one of my texts of which I am the proudest. It does not bring me a cent and that's why it accomplishes what I wrote it for.'

the title 'The Man Who Planted Hope and Grew Happiness' (Beckett: 2009; cited in Comfort, 2011: 404). Giono's central character thus embodies an exceptionally optimistic brand of heroism in the face of the devastation of war. When the typical expectation of men during wartime was some level of violence, Bouffier stands out for his radical and pacifist approach to conflict. Yet despite being so memorable, the protagonist himself received little critical attention, and Giono's story is frequently dismissed as merely a vessel for the 'reforestation project' around which the narrative is based (Comfort, 2011: 406). Bouffier is importantly seen through the eyes of an anonymous narrator who revisits on several occasions. The effect of this is that Bouffier is further isolated from the concerns going on in the wider world, lending greater focus to the mammoth healing project he undertakes and drawing his pacifism to the forefront of the narrative.

The potential religious connotations of Elzéard Bouffier throw into sharper relief his modelling of an 'alternative' pacifist wartime hero. The central character is a shepherd, drawing parallels with Jesus who is frequently named 'the Good Shepherd', and like a religious figure Bouffier is a guide for both his sheep and the people around him (406). Indeed, both the narrator and a 'capitaine forestier' learn more about their environment and how best to take care of it from Bouffier (406). The latter even admits that Elzéard appears to know more about his metier than he does himself: 'ce bonhomme en sait plus que moi' (loc150).[169] The structuring of the narrative suitably supports the guiding role of Bouffier in the story, as the anonymous narrator simply observes and learns from him; he is a lens through which to see the teachings of this unique hero figure. Like a religious figure, Elzéard is a spiritual leader who teaches those around him about a better path, one that distances

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[169] 'This gentleman that knows more about it than me.'

itself from the violence and chaos of the war and reaches towards more peaceful resolutions. Like Jesus, Elzéard's status as spiritual leader is also heavily bound up with his masculine identity. Religion is deeply concerned with specific masculine ideals and powerful, masculine leader figures such as God and Jesus, as seen in the discussion of 'Le Gentil Petit Diable' in Chapter Two. In Giono's story, religious parallels are used as a means of emphasising Elzeard's status as alternative masculine role model in a time when the violence of war was central in the national psyche. The central character is, as Giono writes, 'un athlète de Dieu' (loc147; 'an athlete of God'), described by Moser as 'an ordinary man who accomplishes extraordinary things due to his selfless altruism, dedication, and industriousness' (2018: 112).

Of course, Giono was not a religious writer, and the story is never extreme in its religious imagery, but his works do borrow from Catholic tradition (Comfort, 2011: 406). The story 'conveys a subtle spirituality and a strong connection between nature and religion' (406) giving it, according to Shepherd, 'le ton d'un parabole' (1994, cited in Comfort, 2011: 406; 'the tone of a parable'). Moreover, the name of the central character, Elzéard, is a 'latinized' version of the Hebrew 'Eleazaros' meaning 'God hath helped' (Clugnet, 1910; cited in Comfort, 2011: 407). The more common translation, however, is 'Lazarus' or 'Lazare' in French, the parable of whom is 'meant to teach that the New Testament God is a God of the living, not the dead and who shows compassion for all living organisms' (Comfort, 2011: 407). This is a message deeply relatable to Giono's own story, which emphasises compassion for, and the betterment of, the world: a message that recalls *Tistou,* in which nature is a means of achieving this betterment.

There are a variety of ways to interpret this singular text. Romestaing describes how '[l]a charge symbolique de chaque récit qui dépend en partie du lecteur, et les intrusions discursives du narrateur contribuent à rendre multiples les lectures possibles' (2009, cited in Comfort, 2011: 405).[170] As Comfort points out, this short tale 'brings together Biblical allusion, Provençal legends and tree symbolism, an amalgam that allows the text to be interpreted variously as a parable or a folktale as well as a conversationalist *nouvelle à thèse*' (2011: 405). My own reading, meanwhile, will further complicate the ecological themes of the text by looking at how they interact specifically with how the men in the story perceive war, and what this might say about wartime masculinity.

As with *The Magician's Nephew*, the story starts by looking back on a distant period when times were different, '[il y a] environ une quarantaine d'années' (loc24; 'around forty years ago'). The temporal framing of the narrative, as in Lewis' novel, lends some sense of nostalgia and idealism from the outset that carries throughout the text as we learn of Bouffier's peaceful project. Indeed, at the beginning of the story, the narrator describes having travelled through Provence and the Alps (loc24), through a desolate and still natural landscape described as 'landes nues et monotones, vers 1200 à 1300 mètres d'altitude' (loc29) and 'une désolation sans exemple' (loc31).[171] The narrator describes being so high up that these heights are 'absolument inconnues des touristes' (loc25);[172] it is an area, then, seemingly cut off from the civilized world and separated from the eventual conflicts that punctuate the narrative. The narrator recalls struggling to find water in this abandoned landscape

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[170] 'The symbolic charge of each story which depends in part on the reader's culture, and the discursive intrusions of the narrator contribute to multiply the potential readings.'
[171] 'Nude, monotonous lands, around 1200 to 1300 metres of altitude' and 'an unparalleled desolation'.
[172] '[A]bsolutely unknown to tourists'.

after three days of travelling, having found none the previous day but only abandoned houses 'sans toiture, rongées de vent et de pluie' (loc33): 'ces maisons agglomérées, quoique en ruine, comme un vieux nid de guêpes' (loc32).[173] He begins to lose hope of finding water when he is saved by Elzéard Bouffier, the only person to live in the vicinity, who offers him drink, food and shelter. These early stages set up the importance of landscapes to the story, and the impact humanity can have upon these landscapes. Moser writes that Giono uses a metaphor of sterility to show the effects of humanity upon the planet, specifically with relation to 'human-induced climate change triggered by deforestation' (2018: 112), although, as I will suggest, the same metaphor might equally represent the devastation brought about by war. Indeed, while Giono is often identified as a 'regional writer', whose work shows a deep emotional connection to the Provencal landscape, as Moser writes, Giono's concerns surpass this limited scope, and take on more universal themes (109).

The narrator learns more about Elzéard during his stay, discovering that he plants many trees every day, an activity begun after losing his wife and only son, after which he retreated into solitude to live a peaceful, slower life (loc83). The narrator explains that Elzéard believes the desolate landscape is 'dying' from a lack of trees: '[i]l avait jugé que ce pays mourait par manque d'arbres' (loc84).[174] He tasks himself with revitalising the landscape, having no other occupations (loc85). Elzéard considers his daily task to be fairly small, but he notes that these acts, carried out over a lifetime, might make a huge difference to the world around him. When the narrator recalls having said to Elzéard that the ten thousand trees he has already

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[173] 'Roofless, gnawed by wind and rain'; 'these collected houses, although in ruin, like a wasp's nest.'
[174] 'He had judged that this country was dying from lack of trees.'

planted will be 'magnifiques' (loc88; 'magnificent') in thirty years' time, Elzéard

reminds him of the scale of his endeavour:

> [i]l me répondit très simplement que, si Dieu lui prêtait vie, dans trente ans, il
>
> en aurait planté tellement d'autres que ces dix mille seraient comme une
>
> goutte d'eau dans la mer. (loc88)[175]

The text emphasises that true greatness is not the result of a single dramatic act, but

the product of a series of quiet deeds over a lifetime. This markedly less spectacular

model of heroism is based on small but consistent acts of kindness and goodness that

encourage growth, rather than on violently defeating one's enemies. In this respect,

Giono's text certainly differs from the dominant forms of wartime masculinity

prevalent during World War Two. Moreover, in his preface to the story, Thierry

Crouzet implores readers to offer 'ce texte de révolutionnaire' ('this revolutionary

text') to one's friends, encouraging them to 'changer le monde pour que nos petits

gestes en apparence inutiles s'accumulent' (Crouzet, 2013: loc12).[176] Not only does

the text promote an unconventional version of heroism, but it equally tries to show

how this attitude can be taught to those around us. The story could be interpreted as a

'nouvelle de formation' given that Elzéard's influence essentially teaches Giono's

narrator and brings about a change in attitude towards the environment (Comfort,

2011: 405).

Giono is starkly contrasted to the few villagers who live in this area, who are

vital in emphasising Bouffier's own relationship with the environment. Whilst the

protagonist lives a peaceful life and looks to the future, despite his hardships, the

villagers are stuck in a battle parallel to the wars occurring later in the story, and a

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[175] 'He replied very simply to me that, if God gave him life, in thirty years, he would have planted so
many others that this ten thousand would be like a drop in the ocean.'

[176] 'Change the world in order that our small, seemingly useless acts, accumulate.'

brutal struggle for survival (411). Their survival, as in a wartime situation, is their most immediate concern, and thus they consume without remorse, and destroy the environment and those around them rather than regrowing it in the way that Bouffier attempts to; the villagers burn wood to make charcoal (loc53) and live on what they hunt (loc163). Giono even describes them as 'sauvages […] à peu près dans l'état physique et moral des hommes de la préhistoire' (loc163),[177] presenting them as unsophisticated and angry people caught in a battle with the world around them and dependent on destroying nature to survive. Indeed, '[i]l ne 's'agissait pour eux que d'attendre la mort: situation qui ne prédispose guère aux vertus' (loc165).[178] Giono comments that even '[l]es plus solides qualités craquent sous cette perpétuelle douche écossaise' (loc56).[179] As a result:

> [l]es femmes mijotent des rancœurs. Il y a concurrence sur tout, aussi bien pour la vente au charbon que pour le banc à l'église, pour les vertus qui se combattent entre elles, pour les vices qui se combattent entre eux et pour la mêlée générale des vices et des vertus, sans repos. Par là-dessus, le vent également sans repos irrite les nerfs. Il y a des épidémies de suicides et de nombreux cas de folies, presque toujours meurtrières. (loc57)[180]

Life for the villagers is a constant fight that brings out only the worst in humanity, destroying their relationships and morale. Again, this internal conflict closely resembles a real war and the devastation it causes for communities and

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[177] '[W]ild […] close to the physical and moral state of prehistoric men'.
[178] '[F]or them, it was only about waiting for death: a situation that hardly predisposed one to virtue.'
[179] '[T]he most solid qualities crack under this perpetual Scottish shower'. The term Scottish shower is usually used to refer to hot and cold alternating, so signifying quick weather changes. This perhaps signifies a quickly changing, harsh and unpredictable environment.
[180] 'The women stew in bitterness. There is competition on everything, as much as for charcoal sales as for the church bench, for the virtues that fight amongst themselves, for the vices that fight against them and for the general, incessant clash of vices and virtues. Over there, the wind also irritates the nerves constantly. There are suicide epidemics and numerous cases of madness, almost always murderous.'

environments. Elzéard Bouffier's strategy, meanwhile, attempts to ensure long-term survival of the world and people around him, whilst the focus of the villagers is entirely dependent on the moment. This contrast between the villagers and Bouffier brings into sharp relief the unique heroism of the central character, which is the opposite of that prevalent in the world around him. While other men are fighting for their survival and stewing in hatred, Bouffier is sowing hope, and with him comes an approach to masculinity that is radical, uniquely potent, and hopeful.

The narrator describes how he and Elzéard parted ways, with World War One starting the year after their initial meeting. The narrator is quick to point out the stark contrast between peaceful nature and the violence of war: 'je fus engagé pendant cinq ans. Un soldat d'infanterie ne pouvait guère y réfléchir à des arbres' (loc93).[181] After being demobilised, the narrator feels a desire to 'respirer un peu d'air pur' (loc96; 'breath a bit of fresh air') after having witnessed 'mourir trop de monde' (loc100; 'too many people die'), referring to the damaging effects of war and trauma suffered by survivors of war. There is a suggestion that returning to the natural world unspoilt by the effects of war will provide something of a healing power for the narrator. The return to this desolate landscape represents a return to the healing power of the natural world, as well as to a distant world away from the chaos of war.

Elzéard, meanwhile, is still alive and strong – 'il était même fort vert' (loc101).[182] While war is ongoing and death and destruction widespread, Elzéard 'facilitates a natural renaissance; the only threat to his reforestation occurred during the Nazi Occupation, when wood was used to fuel automobiles' (Comfort, 2011: 405). Yet his area remains untouched and he remains blissfully ignorant of the

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[181] 'I was in service for five years. An infantry soldier could hardly think about trees.'
[182] 'He was even very well.'

devastation around him. By this point, the trees he planted in 1910 'avaient alors dix ans et étaient plus hauts que moi et que lui (loc104).[183] The narrator is in awe at the sight and is 'littéralement privé de parole' (loc105; 'literally speechless'). Upon seeing Elzéard's work, the narrator recalls the impact of small deeds carried out over a long period of time, remarking, movingly:

> [q]uand on se souvenait que tout était sorti des mains et de l'âme de cet homme – sans moyens techniques – on comprenait que les hommes pourraient être aussi efficaces que Dieu dans d'autres domaines que la destruction. (loc107)[184]

This idea reinforces a concept of alternative heroism, one that is fuelled by growth and not the destruction and violence expected of men during times of war. His work is compared to that of God, and as if to reinforce this, the narrator remarks again on the scale of the operation, which has resulted in a forest as far as the eye can see: '[i]l avait suivi son idée, et les hêtres qui m'arrivaient aux épaules, répandus à perte de vue, en témoignaient' (loc108).[185] To destroy Bouffier's work, he remarks, would take an extreme force of nature, reinforcing the remarkable power of man when used for positive, healing ends rather than violence; indeed 'il lui faudrait avoir désormais recours aux cyclones' (loc110).[186] His work equally brings life back to the surrounding area, with water flowing in places that were previously dry: 'en redescendant par le village, je vis couler de l'eau dans des ruisseaux qui, de mémoire d'homme, avaient toujours été à sec' (loc114),[187] and flowers have started to grow

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[183] '[N]ow were ten years old and were higher than us both'.

[184] 'When one remembers that all had come from the hands and soul of this man – without technical means – one understood that man could be as effective as God in other domains than destruction.'

[185] 'He had followed up on his idea, and the beeches that came to my shoulders, stretched out as far as the eye could see, were evidence of it.'

[186] 'One would now need to resort to cyclones.'

[187] 'Going back down to the village, I saw water flowing in streams, which, in human memory, had always been dry.'

where there were previously none (loc119). The forest is believed to have grown naturally and becomes a protected haven of life. The secret of the man's good deeds is kept, and he dies a happy and secretly heroic man. His act of heroism is long, requires constant commitment and endures even after his death, but he rarely takes the credit for it. It also constitutes an act of healing, in opposition to traditional heroes who often commit quick, aggressive deeds to earn their heroic status and achieve greatness. Bouffier's work brings about important change to the once-bitter village, showing how a peaceful, gentle and healing-based approach to communities and environments can effect real change over the course of a generation. The once divided, embittered town becomes revitalised under Bouffier's influence.

Like the other two texts in this chapter, *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres* puts forth an image of masculinity based on healing rather than violence in a way that recalls the characters of Tistou and Digory. Again, nature is central to the creation of this pacifist message, and the planting of trees over many years represents a slow and gentle change that has a significant impact. The story is suitably distanced from the trauma of war, with the narrative acknowledging ongoing conflicts in the periphery but never engaging in the violence of war directly. Similarly, the protagonist, Elzéard Bouffier, is only ever seen through the eyes of the narrator, as if to represent his isolation and separation from the world's troubles. It is almost as if this separation is representative of a post-war desire in France to be distant after being so claustrophobically close to hostile forces during the Occupation. Like *Tistou*, this is another French text that demonstrates an alternative heroism in the context of war, one not engaged with martial qualities but more concerned with caring for life and for the land.

Conclusion

The three texts in this chapter differ stylistically in considerable ways, but what unites them, French or British, is their shared insistence on the necessity of healing in the wake of war. This focus sees these authors discussing the complex consequences of war in terms of masculine identity; the destruction of land is evoked in a parallel with the mutilation of the male body, and the desire to return to a rural past mirrors a hope to heal from traumas and live in peace. These messages are conveyed through an attention to the natural world. This is particularly the case in the French texts, in which the male protagonists have a close bond with nature and are heroic because they care for and nurture life around them. These characters virtually never engage with the martial traits desired of men fighting in the war. Both *Tistou* and *L'Homme* place war at the peripheries of their narratives. Rather than directly engaging with battle scenes, they offer more distanced, meditative perspectives on dealing with the horrors of war. While *Narnia* does overall emphasise a cycle of healing, it evokes battle scenes in detail throughout the seven novels. The difference in French and British portrayals of masculinity and war can be linked to the differing experiences of France and Britain during World War Two. France's embarrassment and feminisation during the Occupation becomes symbolised by a wish to move far away from war within children's texts and reflect and learn without dwelling on the pain. After proximity with hostile forces, there is an understandable eagerness to gain distance from conflict. *Narnia*, meanwhile, while still a narrative of healing, is reflective of the plucky and solitary British pride. While Lewis does not shy away from the pain and trauma of war, his works remain drawn to the glory of battle, too.

Chapter Four

Masculinities in the Colonial Context

This chapter interrogates how imperialist ideologies and perceptions of race intersect with portrayals of masculinity in children's books, focussing specifically on Henri Bosco's *L'Enfant et la Rivière* (1945), René Guillot's *Tam-Tam de Kotokro* (1956) and Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964). It places these books in the context of Western imperialist ideologies of the mid-twentieth century, in which white European masculinities were often classified as superior to the masculinities embodied by men of other races. This way of thinking heralded white men as the pinnacle of civilised, enlightened Christian heroism, in contrast to the supposed savagery and stupidity of men of colour. As this chapter suggests, this dynamic is reflected, and occasionally contested, in children's texts of the mid-twentieth century. To explore this, this chapter considers the context of the declining British and French Empires and the simultaneous emergence of patriotic nostalgia for bygone glories, a quality that is reflected in the narrative focalisation and dominant voices within the chosen primary texts. The chapter reflects on these texts in light of major colonial events including the Guerre d'Algérie (1954-1962), the Suez Crisis (1956), the Brazzaville Conference (1944), the Brussels World Fair (1958), and the events of the Second World War and the role of the colonised territories within it. It examines how the coloniser-colonised power dynamic can affect the portrayal of masculine identity and explores how this can come to light through the author's choice of character focaliser and narrative framing techniques.

As imperialism is a system by which one nation exerts power and control over another, it is likewise a vital context in which to examine gender, which consists partly of a system of power relations that construct and reinforce gendered identity.

Raewyn Connell's articulation of hegemonic and marginalised masculinities is a useful tool for understanding the link between gender and imperialism. In Connell's work, 'hegemonic masculinity' is the dominant mode of masculine conduct that is reproduced to secure and ensure the continuation of patriarchy (2005a: 77). Hegemonic masculinity in imperial Europe might be understood as the idealised masculinity of white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian men. This dominant mode exists in relation to marginalised masculinity, in this case how the conceptualisation of masculinities of men of colour differs from that of the white, hegemonic ideal. The concept acknowledges the intersection of race, ethnicity and gendered identity and 'the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinate classes or ethnic groups' (80). Whilst, for example, black men may benefit from a patriarchal system, they are oppressed by other systems in place such as racism, meaning their experiences of masculinity are, generally speaking, necessarily different from those of white men.

We must first begin by considering the scope and influence of the British and French colonial empires and how these can involve children's literature. Both Britain and France were substantial colonial powers, reaching their peaks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Britain became and long remained the global imperialist superpower, commonly referred to as the empire 'on which the sun never sets' (Levine, 2007: 105). By the twentieth century, it encompassed forty-seven territories with a staggering population of four hundred million people, with a diverse mixture of cultures under its dominion (103). The French colonial empire, which started with the conquest of Algiers in 1830, also went on to become one of the largest in history, and at its climax in the 1920s-1930s was often named 'greater France' or 'la plus grande France' (Aldrich, 1996: 1). It stretched over 11 million

square kilometres of land and 100 million inhabitants, second only to Britain's own empire (1).

As many critics have noted, from the eighteenth century onwards children's literature bore the marks of empire. Bradford notes that '[t]o read children's books of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to read texts produced within a pattern of imperial culture' (Bradford, 2001: 196) while Richards observes that Britain was 'saturated in the ethos and attitudes of empire' (Richards, 1989b: 2), with British public schools and children's fiction fostering this same ideal (Kutzer, 2000: xv). In France, these attitudes were not quite as central, as empire was rarely the main preoccupation of the French, who were involved in other European conflicts at the time (Aldrich, 1996: 234). Even so, imperialism influenced French literature and art of the period (235), including many popular children's books.

On a theoretical level, children's literature can be understood as a 'colonising' genre in large part due to its 'impossibility', to use Jacqueline Rose's term. More pointedly, Perry Nodelman describes the relationship between author and reader as an inherently colonising one (1992: 29): children's literature appropriates childhood experience, in that the child is not typically the writer of the genre; this is the role of adult authors, who can only understand childhood from their past, often idealised experiences. Nodelman makes this point using Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism* (1978) which is based on the premise that the Western world depicts the East patronisingly and inaccurately because Europeans believe that the 'Orientals' are inferior to them, and 'are not capable of describing or analysing themselves' (29). Children are deemed similarly incapable of describing themselves (29), and are thus mostly voiceless in a genre intended for them, a 'colonised' subject (Kutzer, 2000: xvi). Evidently, there are significant differences in that the fact of

being a child is experienced by everyone, yet the similarities provide a meaningful pathway to providing an analysis of imperialism within children's fiction, and may have implications for the ways in which voice, narrative and perspective are utilised within texts. Indeed, Daphne M. Kutzer argues that the colonising dynamic of children's literature resulted in the promotion of empire to children as 'natural and good' through the adult voices that depicted it as such (xvi).

During the time of colonial expansion, adventure novels became popular among children, and these had a significant effect upon cultural perceptions of difference between Britain and France and colonised territories. These tales depicted heroic explorers in 'settings remote from the domestic and probably from the civilized […], which constitute a challenge to the central character' (Green, 1979: 23, cited in Kestner, 2010: 7). Adventure novels were said to have had the effect of 'ma[king] the empire more familiar to the French […and] romanticis[ing] colourful and distant places', whilst equally 'serv[ing] as propaganda for colonialist ideas' (Aldrich, 1996: 236). Similarly, empire provided the British with 'relatively easy access to exotic lands that promised adventure, romance, and riches beyond belief to those who chose to venture beyond England's shores' (Kutzer, 2000: 1). According to Edward Said, this exoticism surrounding perceptions of colonial territories is an age old 'European invention', by which the 'Orient' is othered and becomes 'a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences' (1979: 1).

Adventure novels were distinctly gendered, targeted predominantly at boys and said to have 'satisfied the[ir] robust instincts […] while at the same time teaching them' about ideal masculine conduct in particular (Richards, 1989b: 4). Indeed, dominant imperialist ideologies, combined with the popularity of adventure

novels, lead to the creation of an idealised image of imperial masculinity in Europe. The connection between this image of masculinity and adventure fiction is one frequently identified by critics. For instance, Linda Dryden describes adventure fiction as a genre in which 'heroes […] prove their manliness, assert English racial superiority, and plunder the land of its riches' (2000: 4); 'English', in this case, might equally be substituted by 'French' or 'European' due to the similarity of imperialist ideals and the general popularity of adventure fiction across Europe at this time. Along their journey, the central character, most often male, is expected to display and develop such masculine virtues as 'courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership and persistence' (Green, 1979: 23, cited in Kestner, 2010: 7). Indeed, the fundamental, underlying structures of adventure novels, including plot structures, settings, and archetypal characters and themes, might be seen as inherently supporting an image of imperial masculinity.

These values merged with a focus on physical capability in the wilderness that was emphasised in Britain particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century. At this time, '[w]ilderness, hunting and bushcraft were welded into a distinct ideology of manhood by figures such as Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the scouting movement for boys' (Connell, 2005a: 194-195). Scouting was targeted at metropolitan boys and represented an attempt to 'foster particular forms of masculinity' among them, due to fears that their constant exposure to women during child rearing would lead to their feminisation (195); this was a perceived threat to the integrity of their masculine identities. This combination of traits and ideologies is articulated by Connell, among others, under the name 'frontier masculinity' (2005b: 74-76). Frontier masculinity came about equally with the rise of American 'Western adventure' novels, which were popular in Britain and France. A key example of this

is American novelist James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), which presented 'struggles between the pioneers and the American Indians' and 'offered a seductive concept of individual freedom and heroism in exotic surroundings' (Brown, 2008: 26). The popularity of the genre in France led to a number of French writers such as Gabriel Ferry and Gustave Aimard writing their own similar novels (27).

Such images of masculinity were evident as early as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)*,* which was still popular in the nineteenth century and inspired a whole genre of imitation castaway narratives – the 'robinsonade' – in both Britain and France. The most famous of these is *Der Schweizerische Robinson* (1812) by Swiss author Johann David Wyss (28-29; *The Swiss Family Robinson*). *Robinson Crusoe* is frequently seen as an archetypal novel of British Empire and depicts an image of imperial masculinity; the titular character, according to James Joyce, a fan of the novel, is 'the true prototype of the British colonist […] the whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe: the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the slow yet efficient intelligence; […] the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity' (1964, cited in Roberts, 2000: xxiii). Joyce's summary encapsulates a specific image of masculinity based on resilience, physical and mental capability, but equally a capacity for coldness and cruelty. These qualities are importantly tied up with the 'Anglo-Saxon spirit' and 'well-balanced religiousness' in the character, which are important to the imperial ideal that held white, European Christian colonisers as heroic, moral, and superior to non-European, non-white and non-Christian men.

In contrast, the masculinities of the people native to colonised territories were seen as inferior to those embodied by the white colonisers. This insistence on their

inferiority, according to Said, was a key imperialist strategy, which found expression in what he termed 'orientalism': 'a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (1979: 3). Orientalism is a mode through which the West perceives itself as 'Self' and the East as 'Other', with the East constituting, Said argues, 'one of [Europe's] deepest and most recurring images of the Other' (1979: 1). Indeed, this perceived inferiority of the East was often used to justify European imperial exploits, as evidenced by the 'mission civilisatrice', which promoted the necessity of civilised European nations spreading their way of life to the 'savage natives' of colonised territories. This ideology was championed in the nineteenth century by French political leader Jules Ferry, who believed that the so-called 'higher nations' had a right and duty towards the 'uncivilised' to 'civilise' them. He made this clear in a speech of 1885, in which he declared that: '[i]l y a pour les races supérieures un droit, parce qu'il y a un devoir pour elles. Elles ont le devoir de civiliser les races inférieures' (1897: 210-211).[188] This concept of the 'civilising mission' was widespread throughout European and specifically British colonialism too, the term being borrowed from the French and applying many of the same principles (Mann, 2004: 4). It is through language that the powerful images of imperialist Britain and France became most concretely formed among their respective publics. The relationship between language and state is the topic of Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990), the aim of which is 'to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation' (3). Indeed, Bhabha argues, 'it is from those traditions of political

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[188] 'There are for the superior races a right, because there is a duty for them. They have the duty to civilise the inferior races.'

thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west' (1).

Christianity was a vital quality of European men in terms of the 'mission civilisatrice'. Christian values, regardless of denomination, were often used to justify colonial exploits, which were seen as providing enlightenment for those native peoples who 'needed' it. Missionaries felt immense horror at the cultures of those non-Christians and believed it their duty to 'bestow light on these "dark" places' (Cleall, 2012: 2). Doing so was simply seen as a means of practising and fulfilling the Christian duty. Nonconformist leader David Bogue summarised this sentiment in 1794:

> [w]e are commanded 'to love our neighbour as ourselves'; and Christ has
> taught us that *every* man is our neighbour. But do we display this love while
> we allow gross darkness to cover the Pagan and Mahometan nations, and are
> at no pains to send them the glad tidings of salvation through the sufferings
> and death of the Son of God? (Bogue, 1794; cited in Cleall, 2012: 1).

The horror and disgust with which the unenlightened native peoples were perceived by the West are perhaps best described by Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961):

> [t]he native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the
> absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit,
> the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the
> corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming
> element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the
> depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable
> instrument of blind forces […]The customs of the colonized people, their

traditions, their myths – above all, their myths – are the very sign of that

poverty of spirit and of their constitutional depravity. (1967: 32)

Fanon's description exemplifies the extent of the othering of colonised peoples, who

are considered corrupted, evil and devoid of morality due to their skin colour and

cultural systems. Little consideration is given to the cultural subjectivity of ethics or

moral systems which, as I will suggest, is a concern particularly in *Tam-Tam de

Kotokro* (1956; *Tom-Toms in Kotokro*). Taking Christian values to these 'dark' and

'mysterious' countries constitutes a purification of the supposedly dangerous cultures

that are found there.

Similarly, black African men were perceived as inferior to white European

men due to a number of alleged traits, one of which, importantly, was their supposed

lack of civilisation (Richards, 1989b: 89). These traits also included their 'preference

for tyranny or anarchy over parliamentary democracy', 'primitive paganism' and a

lack of an 'ordered and regularised system of trade, commerce and industry' (89).

These ideas have had a lasting legacy, as summarised by bell hooks: '[a]t the center

of the way black male selfhood is constructed in white-supremacist capitalist

patriarchy is the image of the brute – untamed, uncivilized, unthinking, and

unfeeling' (2004: xii). The trope of the 'savage' particularly embodied these traits,

and was used throughout nineteenth-century adventure novels, including in the

works of R.M. Ballantyne and G.A. Henty in Britain, and Gustave Aimard in France

(Hannabuss, 1989: 58). 'Savages' provided 'identikit villains' that could relate to a

wide range of native peoples, from native Americans to black Africans (58) and they

produced easy melodrama and excitement in texts whilst reinforcing white European

superiority (59).

Finally, native, colonised peoples have often been conceptualised within Europe as 'effeminate, or childlike' in contrast to the virility of the coloniser (Connell, 2005b: 75). The significance of this, of course, is that women and children have historically been seen as inferior to men and less physically and intellectually capable than them. Mrinalini Sinha's work draws attention to the contrast between the 'manly Englishman' and 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century: '[t]he Bengali *babu* was viewed as […] effeminate, bookish, over-serious, languorous, lustful and lacking in self-discipline' in contrast to the more competent and masculine Englishman (MacKenzie, 1995: vii).[189]

When British and French colonial Empires reached their peaks in the early twentieth century, the popular adventure narratives and racial stereotypes of children's fiction were still very much in evidence, as evidenced by some popular Anglophone and Francophone children's texts. Belgian cartoonist Hergé's *Tintin au Congo* (1931; *Tintin in the Congo*) is infamous for its caricatured Congolese characters, who are portrayed as stupid and, according to author Tom McCarthy, 'good at heart but backwards and lazy, in need of European mastery' (2011: 37). Similar ideas were equally evident in Jean de Brunhoff's *Le Voyage de Babar* (1932; *Babar's Travels*), which depicts the titular elephant character flying away on his travels and witnessing 'sauvages cannibales' (1932: 10; 'savage cannibals'), as well as Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Doolittle* books (1920-1952) and the jingoistic *Biggles* novels. A wide range of children's texts, both realistic and fantastical, engage with imperialist themes in a variety of implicit and explicit ways. Kutzer writes that images of empire in British children's texts were more likely to appear in realistic fiction prior to World War One, but that after this point they 'receded into the world

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[189] 'Babu' is a title given to men as a sign of respect in Bengal.

of fantasy' (2000: 129), due, perhaps, in part to the increased popularity of fantasy, but also to the 'increasing disquietude about empire and its effects […] that is perhaps too disturbing to look at realistically' (129).

Despite the enduring dominance of imperialist ideologies in Europe, and the success of both empires, the twentieth century equally saw their eventual decline. The colonies had been vital for both Britain and France during World War Two. During the Occupation of France, for example, Charles de Gaulle's government-in-exile was set up in London, but the colonial outposts proved vital to gradually regaining territory from the Vichy regime. Britain's colonies meanwhile proved vital to offsetting the strain on manpower and resources. Yet after World War Two, the gradual dismantling of these empires began, with prestige left irreparably damaged by the devastation of the war.

Over the following decades decolonisation took place, with European powers withdrawing, and most territories gaining independence. The Suez Crisis of 1956, in particular, highlighted Britain and France's declining colonial power. Meanwhile, India declared independence from Britain in 1947, Ghana in 1957 and almost all remaining African colonies by 1968. Equally, France had lost its Indo-Chinese empire by 1954, and the Algerian war of independence ended in defeat for France in 1962. All the same, the legacy left by empire was significant. The imperialist ideology and the national pride associated with empire endured in children's texts in Britain and France. The adventure genre that remains popular in the current day stems from its nineteenth century forebears which were built on an ideology of white supremacy. Equally, the fantasy genre that now plays a central role in children's adventure texts, popularised by British titans such as J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, often contemplates race and ethnicity in a substantial yet otherworldly way; texts

often involve the segregation of characters based on these traits. Some fantastical characters and beings, such as the orcs of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, are portrayed as evil partially because of their race, often in contrast to 'good' white heroes.

This chapter aims to understand the relationship between imperialism and masculinities within children's texts published within the focal decades. It examines the coloniser-colonised power dynamic and the images of correct masculine conduct promoted by British and French texts against the perception of the masculinities of colonised peoples. Equally, it draws attention to the complexity of those portrayals in the wake of decolonisation movements following World War Two; some texts, for example, portray a complex combination of humanisation of native peoples while eventually reinforcing white superiority, hinting at the array of feelings arising through independence movements. It equally explores structural, generic and narrative elements, looking at how the centred perspectives and voices of white characters depict the 'heroism' of the 'civilising mission'. My focus here is on texts from the 1940s-1960s rather than more obvious choices such as *Le Voyage de Babar*, *Tintin au Congo, The Story of Doctor Doolittle* and *Vendredi ou la vie sauvage,* which appeared in the adjacent decades. The period spanning the 1940s-1960s seems particularly interesting given that it marks the key years in the decline of colonialism following World War Two. It was during this time that much conflict occurred surrounding the desire for independence, especially given the contributions made by colonised peoples during World War Two; indeed, 300,000 North African Arabs fought in the Forces françaises libres during the time of Charles de Gaulle's government-in-exile, but at the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, de Gaulle made it clear he had no intention of liberating the colonies. The slightly later focus, which

avoids texts from the 1920s and 1930s (such as *The Story of Doctor Doolittle* and *Le Voyage de Babar)* and later texts like Tournier's *Vendredi* enables discussion of how memory and nostalgia for a dying empire became a part of British and French children's texts during this vital time and became part of the legacy of empire. The texts examined will be *L'Enfant et la Rivière* (1945) by Henri Bosco, *Tam-Tam de Kotokro* (1956) by René Guillot, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) by Roald Dahl, though reference will be made to other pertinent texts to widen the scope of the discussion. Each of the key novels selected takes a very different approach to the representation of imperialist dynamics. Bosco's novel is set in Provençal France, not a colonial territory, and yet it depicts imperialist ideology in the relationship between a white French boy and dark-skinned 'Bohemians', a people who were persecuted by the Nazis during World War Two. The second text, by Guillot, conversely depicts an actual French colony in Africa and represents a narrow period of history contained within a few months. The third text by Dahl takes a still more different approach and demonstrates a fantastical representation of colonial dynamics.

L'Enfant et la Rivière (1945) by Henri Bosco

Henri Bosco was a prolific French writer of children's literature, nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature four times and receiving multiple literary prizes during his life. He was mobilised during World War One as part of the 4th regiment of the Zouaves (HenriBosco.org), a class in the French Army until disbanded in 1962 (Patten Henry, 2007: 47). Unlike many of those written by René Guillot, whose work is discussed below, Bosco's text does not directly engage with colonialist history, and is not set in colonial African territories. The novel under discussion in this section,

L'Enfant et la Rivière (1945), was published in 1945, at the end of World War Two when the French colonial empire was in decline; 1945 saw demonstrations in Algeria demanding independence, in which thousands were killed (Reuters, 2005), as well as unrest in Indochina, with the First Indochina War beginning the year after in 1946. The story itself mirrors imperialist dynamics in many ways despite its lack of colonialist setting, and its plot hinges on the othering of a certain group of people who are perceived to be 'racially' different to the French protagonist.

L'Enfant et la Rivière is an adventure novel that evokes the excitement and danger of exploring new, forbidden territories and encountering foes. It is set in Provence, France, where Bosco himself came from (2013 [1945]: loc24), and follows Pascalet, a French boy '[qui] a le goût de l'aventure' (loc15)[190] and who longs to visit the nearby river but is forbidden to do so by his Aunt. This is partially because the river is viewed as dangerous, but equally because of the 'Bohemians' who live nearby, who represent a 'savage' other within the text. One day, Pascalet flees to the river, and goes on a journey during which he meets Gatzo, a prisoner of the 'Bohemians' who Pascalet helps to escape. The two boys embark on a journey in the wilderness together, bonding and learning through masculine 'scouting' survival activities such as fishing, foraging, and navigating, archetypal masculine activities according to the adventure novel and scouting traditions. At the end of the novel, the boys are like brothers, and Gatzo becomes a part of Pascalet's family. The book is well-known, was translated into multiple languages including English (as *The Boy and the River*) and was adapted into both a telefilm in 1981 and a comic in 2018. It was also both preceded and followed by other related novels following characters in the series, including *Hyacinthe* (1940) and *Bargabot* (1958).

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[190] '[W]ho has a taste for adventure'.

The masculinities of the characters in the novel are largely depicted in terms of concepts and stereotypes of racial difference and this happens through the first-person narrative structure that focalises the thoughts and feelings of a white boy. Pascalet's own sociocultural positioning means he pays close attention to conceptions of racial difference and the constant dynamic throughout the text is one of white subject and non-white object. Pascalet is the observer of the 'Other', closely mirroring imperialist dynamics in which the white European coloniser might observe native peoples with fear and curiosity. Simultaneously, throughout the story the boundaries between white and native masculinities are interrogated and blurred, and at times there is even a semblance of equality between white and native men. Yet there is no catharsis in this realisation, as the end of the novel brings into sharp relief a white dominance through the assimilation of a central native character into a white family perhaps echoing the cultural genocide of native peoples assimilated into white European ways of life. There is even a mention of Native American peoples in the book's plot synopsis, in which its grounding in conservative and imperialist racial attitudes is particularly evident; Pascalet and Gatzo are described as becoming 'perdus dans la nature et heureux comme deux petits Mohicans' (loc21).[191] This phrasing draws on romanticised stereotypes of Native American peoples with the aim of emphasising the innocence of the two boys. It evidences beliefs that have long existed in conceptions of otherness. Like many other marginalised populations, Native American peoples have, historically, been subject to monolithic portrayals that paint them as either wild, cruel 'savages', or, alternatively, as 'noble savages', uncorrupted by civilisation and thus considered innocent and naïve. The simile 'heureux comme deux petits Mohicans' emphasises the innocence of French

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[191] '[L]ost in nature and happy like two little Mohicans'.

boyhood but equally implies the equation of masculinity and boyhood with wilderness and adventure. It also directly engages stereotypes based on concepts of 'racial otherness' that persist throughout the book by implying the naïveté and intellectual 'inferiority' of non-white peoples. These are common traits in the portrayal of non-white, 'native' masculinities in Western culture.

Bosco's novel does not directly portray colonial society, but the contrast it establishes between the central white protagonists and the 'Bohemians', provides a useful perspective on the dynamics of imperialism and the way these intersect with gender. The word 'Bohémiens' ('Bohemians') broadly relates to people often seen as outsiders to society who lead nonconformist lifestyles; in France, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* from 1932 defines the related term 'bohème' as '[c]elui, celle qui mène une vie vagabonde' (L'Académie française: 150).[192] An equivalent term, for example, is often 'gypsy', which is used in the English translation of *L'Enfant*.

Though the precise origins of the word are hard to determine, in the past 'Bohemian' was commonly used to designate the nomadic Roma people (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), also known by the term 'gypsy'. Romani people were sometimes believed to have come from the Kingdom of Bohemia, linking these two terms together, or alternatively to have come from the Punjab region in India (Haider, 2020). The Roma people have long faced judgment and prosecution for their way of life, which differs from the norms of Western society; elimination of Roma peoples was part of the Nazi regime, and they were 'stripped of their citizenship rights […], forced into ghettos and deported as forced labour to concentration camps where they suffered from starvation, disease, freezing conditions and the brutality of the guards' (Haider, 2020). In Vichy France too, around 6,000 Roma people were interned in 31

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[192] '[H]e or she who lives a vagabond lifestyle'.

camps (AFP, 2016). The 'Bohémiens' of the novel thus have clear links to a people continuously racially persecuted throughout history. In Bosco's text, the Bohemians are racialised in a way that seems intended to heighten their perceived dangerousness and evilness, in a stereotype of savage 'native' masculinity. Moreover, they are always witnessed through the first-person narrative voice of Pascalet, the white boy who looks on in fear, observing the 'other' with fascination and horror. The Bohemians represent a constant threat to Pascalet from the beginning of the novel; his Aunt, Tante Martine, tells him that, at the river, 'il y a des trous morts où l'on se noie, des serpents parmi les roseaux et des Bohémiens sur les rives' (loc52).[193] Regardless, Pascalet is drawn to the river, as is traditional in adventure novels, in which the heroes bravely go beyond the confines of the domestic and overcome danger: 'la peur me soufflait dans le dos, mais j'avais un désir violent de la connaître' (loc53).[194] Pascalet is thus set up as a brave, white male hero in contrast to the danger represented by the Bohemian men, who Bosco later describes in unflattering terms that equate them to devils. The Bohemians in many ways constitute a spectacle to Pascalet's white perspective, and the descriptions that are given in many ways emphasises this; the men are described in devilish, monstrous, even carnivalesque terms that evoke a sense of simultaneous horror and curiosity. Bosco draws specific attention to the dark skin of the Bohemians in the description of their supposed monstrosity: 'Quatre hommes […] montaient [la barque]. Quatre grands diables, secs et noirs […] Des Bohémiens ! Cette fois, j'étais bien perdu, vraiment perdu !...' (loc271).[195] Pascalet's white perspective covers all the men with

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[193] '[T]here are backwaters where you can drown, serpents among the reeds and Bohemians on the banks.'
[194] '[F]ear breathed down my back, but I had a violent desire to know it.'
[195] 'Four men […] climbed onto [the boat]. Four great devils, thin and black […] Bohemians! This time, I was really lost, truly lost!...'

the same description, robbing them of any individuality, as is common within an imperialist setting and will be seen throughout the other two texts analysed within this chapter. Described as 'devils', the implication is that the men are morally wrong, and this is something that was prominent in colonial-era beliefs about 'native peoples' who required 'civilised Europeans' to correct their path.

The religious connotations of this description are particularly interesting when considered alongside the Christian motivation of the 'mission civilisatrice'. The Bohemian people are shown as living in an isolated and mysterious location forbidden to the protagonist – an otherwise uninhabited island further from Pascalet's home than he has ever previously wandered (loc243), and in a hut in the middle of a clearing (loc254). These details heighten the sense of danger and isolation from the civilised society Pascalet experiences. Like archetypal witches, the Bohemians are portrayed as closer to 'savage' animal life than to the 'humanity' of civilised society, as they live surrounded by various animals including chickens (loc258), a bear (loc267), a donkey (loc261), and two telltale, stereotypical witch familiars, animals perceived with particular superstition: a black cat (loc257) and a crow (loc264). As in *Tam-Tam de Kotokro*, this link to animals signifies the lesser status of the Bohemians, and signals a belief in their lack of intellectual capacity. Other signs of witchcraft in the scene include the presence of 'une grosse marmite, toute noire, sorte de créature étrange, avec deux petites oreilles et une panse rebondie' (loc256).[196]

The two people that Pascalet initially sees around the hut are moreover reminiscent of stereotypical tribal witches. They are described as wearing 'gros

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[196] '[A] large cauldron, all black, in the shape of a strange creature, with two little ears and a rounded belly.'

anneaux de cuivre aux oreilles' (loc260),[197] fashions typically associated with a stereotype of tribespeople in children's literature; the Lobi people of *Tam-Tam* are similarly described as having large piercings that were far from conventional in 1940s French society. Equally implying witchcraft, a little girl 'chantonnait à voix basse' (loc261)[198] as if casting spells or performing a ritual, and is shown talking to the crow that lands on her shoulder (loc264). The old woman she lives with is similarly described as '[u]ne vieille femme' who is 'maigre et farouche' (loc266),[199] words describing a stereotypical Western image of a hag or witch. She is depicted as ritualistically cutting a cock's neck over the fire as if in a sort of cruel sacrifice as perceived by white colonisers. Pascalet observes her with fear: '[s]aisissant un coq par le cou, elle l'égorgea sur le feu, en poussant des glapissements sauvages' (loc266).[200] As a confirmation of the associations with witchcraft generated here, the old woman is later called 'la vieille sorcière' (loc299; 'the old sorceress').

Direct depictions of skin colour are also drawn into this scene, especially significant since the story is focalised through a white boy's perspective, further suggesting a dynamic of white subject and non-white object: the girl is described as having 'une peau bistrée', 'bistre' referring to a brownish yellow made from burnt wood, suggestive of a brown skin colour, and 'yeux noirs' (loc259)[201] suggestive generally of a dark complexion. As a further signal of the little girl's othering within the book, Pascalet describes her as an 'étrange créature !' (loc260; 'strange creature'), the word 'créature' again implying the animalistic and uncivilised stereotypes of native peoples in European culture. The associations with witchcraft

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[197] '[L]arge copper rings in their ears'.
[198] '[H]ummed in a low voice'.
[199] 'An old woman' who is 'thin and wild'.
[200] 'Seizing a cock by the neck, she cut its throat over the fire, yelping wildly.'
[201] '[B]rown skin' and 'black eyes'.

might be understood as colonialist stereotypes of the religions and rituals of native peoples, and the perceived supremacy of Christianity. It is through a similar lens that the Bohemian men are understood, as is shown by their likeness to devils. They are seen as dangerous, superstitious and uncivilised in comparison to white, Christian men and boys, such as Pascalet.

We see further stereotypes of tribal cultures at play in the fact that the four men (the 'diables') are portrayed as having taken a young boy as their prisoner and bound him as if in sacrifice: '[c]'était un garcon de mon âge. On l'avait ligoté. Un des hommes le souleva et le chargea sur ses épaules' (loc273).[202] After witnessing this, Pascalet is paralysed by fear and dares not move for fear of being discovered and bound: '[j]e sentais la faim. Mais je n'osai pas toucher à mes provisions. Le moindre mouvement me semblait dangereux : un geste maladroit, une branche cassée, tout pouvait me trahir. Je serais découvert, saisi, ligoté !' (loc277).[203] The Bohemian men are thus further portrayed as monstrous and cruel: a source of terror to the child.

Pascalet struggles to acknowledge the humanity of the Bohemian men. When considering his isolation in his hiding place, he feels desperate to hear another human voice or see another human, a category from which the Bohemians appear to be excluded. Indeed, Pascalet's definitions of humanity seem largely dependent upon European concepts of civilisation. The first-person narrative voice further draws attention to the centring of white perspectives in the novel. No voice is given to the Bohemians, as only Pascalet's fear is important:

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[202] 'It was a boy of my age. They had bound him. One of the men lifted him up and placed him on his shoulders.'

[203] 'I felt hungry. But I did not dare touch my provisions. The least movement seemed dangerous to me: a clumsy gesture, a broken branch, everything could betray me. I would be discovered, seized, bound!'

[q]ue n'eussé-je donné pour entendre une voix humaine, pour voir une figure d'homme !...Mais quels hommes appeler à mon secours ? Ceux de l'île, sans aucun doute, enlevaient les enfants. Et quelle cruauté !...C'étaient des hommes, cependant…Ils possédaient une cabane ; une pauvre cabane, certes, mais qui abritait leur sommeil, humainement. Et ils faisaient du feu. De ce feu, les lueurs éclairaient par bouffées rouges le feuillage des arbres, non loin de mon refuge. Là brûlait un foyer ; une vrai foyer, avec ses braises et sa cendre chaude, sa marmite, sa nourriture, et sa rassurante clarté… (loc291)[204]

The Romani men, to Pascalet, are both human and inhuman. Their supposed cruelty, in kidnapping and binding children, makes them savage and beastly, yet their homely environment is domestic, comforting and human, a sign of Western, civilised society to the protagonist and one that reminds him of the home he misses during his moments of fear. The suggestions of witchcraft from the lonesome cabin and the cooking pot are more comforting in this context, constituting familiar signs of home. The fire, in particular, reminds Pascalet of a warm home environment, and it is this that draws him in, as well as the suggestions of comforting food that come with it. The humanity of the Bohemian men, then, is uncertain, and they still represent a mysterious and unknowable threat.

Another important racialised character in the novel is Bargabot, a poacher who sometimes visits Pascalet's family, mentioned when Bosco initially describes the Bohemians: 'plus noirs, plus secs que Bargabot' (loc271). He is portrayed as a fearful figure:

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[204] 'What wouldn't I have given to hear a human voice, to see a man's face! But which men to call to my aid? Those of the island, without a doubt, kidnapped children. And what cruelty! They were men, however. They had a cabin; a poor cabin, certainly, but one that sheltered their sleep, humanely. And they made fire. From this fire, lights lit up the greenery of the trees in red flashes, not far from my refuge. A hearth burned there; a real hearth, with its embers and its hot ashes, its cooking pot, its food, and its reassuring brightness.'

> [u]n grand, sec, la figure en lame de couteau. Et avec ça, l'œil vif, rusé. Tout
>
> en lui décelait la souplesse et la force : les bras noueux, le pied corné, les
>
> doigts agiles. Il apparaissait comme une ombre, sans bruit. (loc55)[205]

The danger associated with Bargabot is emphasised not only in his physical capabilities, but equally in his appearance. His figure is interestingly related to the blade of a knife, as if highlighting the potential violence he represents. His eyes are almost animalistic in their sharpness and liveliness, like an animal watching its prey. He is strong and capable, his leanness visible from his 'bras noueux' and his frequent physical exertion emphasised by the calluses on his feet. He is so skilled in movement that he is soundless and shadowlike. Yet the shadow simile evoked here might equally be seen as hinting at Bargabot's dark skin, which interestingly is not mentioned explicitly until later in the story, when we first meet the Bohemians. Some traits of frontier masculinity are again evoked here, as is the case with Yago of *Tam-Tam*; Bargabot embodies the physical capability and toughness admired as a part of frontier masculinity, but as he is not white he is viewed with an air of fear and suspicion rather than heroism. Indeed, Bargabot is at once a figure of admiration and fear for Pascalet, who describes him as:

> mon grand homme : je l'admirais. Pourtant ses yeux gris et rusés
>
> m'inspiraient de la crainte ; et, à cause de cette crainte, mon amitié
>
> restait cachée au fond de moi. Quand il était là j'avais un peu peur ;
>
> quand il n'y était plus, je le regrettais. Si dans la cour j'entendais glisser
>
> ses espadrilles, mon cœur se mettait à battre. Bien vite, il s'était aperçu

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[205] 'A tall, thin, man, with a figure the shape of a knife's blade. And with that, a lively and cunning eye. Everything about him indicated flexibility and strength: his sinewy arms, his calloused feet, his agile fingers. He appeared like a shadow, silently.'

de l'intérêt que je portais à sa personne. Mais par feinte il prenait des

airs indifférents qui me mettaient au supplice. (loc75)[206]

Pascalet views Bargabot with an exotic mixture of fear, admiration and mystery. He admires him, and even has a deep feeling of love towards him that yearns to be shown openly. The protagonist recognises how physically impressive and powerful his friend is, and in many ways wishes to be like him, like a son admiring his father, with a combination of terror and deep respect. However, any respect he feels must remain hidden, in large part due to the racial and cultural differences between the two of them. It is through Pascalet's inner voice that we hear of this admiration; the narrative framing of the novel sets up a space in which we witness the difficult relationship between the central character and native characters, and the contrast between the innermost feelings of Pascalet and the external social expectation. The mixed feelings towards Bargabot come in part from his imposing and intimidating stature, which is both admirable and terrifying to Pascalet. It is a mixture of this fear and sociocultural and racial taboo that prevents any explicit friendship from blooming between the two. Bargabot's skin colour is emphasised by Pascalet's later observations of his friend's similarities to the Bohemians, which serve to other Bargabot and emphasise his fundamental difference to the protagonist. Pascalet yearns to love him openly and proudly, but his own fear, as well as society's prejudice, prevents this from being acceptable.

Indeed, Bargabot is something of a 'forbidden' character; he tells Pascalet that he could teach him how to find the best fishing spots in the river, but Pascalet

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[206] '[M]y great man: I admired him. Even so, his cunning, grey eyes inspired me with fear; and, because of this fear, my friendship remained hidden inside of me. When he was there I was rather scared; when he was no longer there, I missed him. If in the courtyard I heard his sandals sliding, my heart started thumping. He noticed the interest I had in him pretty quickly. But he feigned indifference, which tortured me.'

tells Bargabot that 'on [lui] defend d'aller à la rivière' (loc69).[207] For Pascalet,

Bargabot represents the tempting but dangerous lure of adventure, partly emphasised

by his strange positioning within the text. Bargabot is at once the dangerous, non-

white savage figure, yet equally something of a companion to Pascalet. He is both

familiar and other, between the savage and civilised. Bargabot acts as a guide to

Pascalet's adventure and development, leading him into the world of adventure but

equally bringing him back later in the story to the safety of his home. Bargabot

appears to remain in this liminal space for the entirety of the text, neither welcomed

openly into Pascalet's family nor depicted among the Bohemians. This is perhaps

because he exists within the text for Pascalet's sake; he acts as a narrative device to

guide Pascalet through his adventures, between the domestic and the exotic. He

appears only when Pascalet has need of him and is an accessory to his development,

and, whilst appearing to humanise him, this actually reinforces white male

supremacy and imperialism: the development of a young white boy is arguably

depicted as more important than the life of a non-white man, who is merely there to

accommodate the white boy's development. Again, a similar theme is common

throughout *Tam-Tam* in the character of Yago.

The character of Gatzo, Pascalet's travel companion, equally occupies a

strange position in relation to conceptions of race and masculinity. Originally, it is

implied that Gatzo is a sort of 'other' character, perhaps Bohemian. We learn this in

the first scene in which Gatzo appears, which shows the Romani men carrying a

child tied to a post:

[à] un poteau, par les pieds, par les bras, on avait attaché l'enfant.

L'homme venait de le fouetter. La lanière du fouet avait marqué son

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[207] '[He] is forbidden from going to the river.'

dos, nu jusqu'à la ceinture. On voyait sur *ce dos de bronze* trois

longues raies noires de sang, quand la flamme s'élevait. *L'homme*

adressa des paroles violentes à l'enfant. Je ne les compris pas. Il

parlait une langue bizarre. L'enfant, loin de trembler, répondit à

son bourreau avec une telle colère que l'autre, derechef, le fustigea.

La lanière sifflante cingla la peau. L'enfant se tut. *C'était un bel*

enfant, robuste, plus grand que moi, plus fort aussi, un petit

bohémien sans doute. Sous le fouet, il serrait les lèvres et ses yeux

se fermaient de douleur, mais il ne gémissait pas. (loc304; my

emphasis)[208]

Whilst also emphasising the seeming cruelty of the Bohemians, who whip Gatzo and

attempt to scare him into submission, the quotation – the sections highlighted in

italics specifically – also establishes Gatzo's 'otherness'. He is described as having

bronze skin, as speaking a 'strange' language that Pascalet cannot understand, and,

according to Pascalet himself, is 'sans doute' a 'Bohemian' boy. All of these qualities

seem to distinguish him as a racial other, different to Pascalet, a white French boy.[209]

Throughout a large portion of the book, the reader is led to believe that Gatzo is a

Bohemian, thus suggesting that a sense of brotherhood is possible between the white

boy, Pascalet and the ethnically othered, Gatzo. Indeed, the two become friends and,

as in *Tam-Tam*, there is some semblance of equality between the two.

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[208] 'They had tied the child to a post by his legs and arms. The man had just whipped him. The strap of the whip had marked his back, which was bare to the waist. One could see on *this bronze back* three long lines of black blood, when the flame rose. *The man spoke to the child with violent words. I didn't understand them. He spoke a strange language. The child, far from trembling, responded to his torturer with such anger the other, once again, whipped him.* The whistling strap stung the skin. The child was quiet. *It was a beautiful child, robust, bigger than me, stronger too, a little Bohemian without a doubt.* Under the whip, he squeezed his lips and closed his eyes in pain, but he didn't whimper.'
[209] Pascalet's skin colour is not explicitly given within the text itself, but it can be assumed that Pascalet is indeed a white French boy. Moreover, the character on the front cover of many versions of this book is most often portrayed as white.

Gatzo is moreover presented, like Yago of *Tam-Tam*, as hugely skilled in survival in the wilderness, and the brotherhood that forms between the two boys is largely based on Gatzo teaching Pascalet about how to navigate the world around him. As we have already seen, when Gatzo is a prisoner of the Bohemians, he does not flinch despite being whipped, and is hardy and brave. He also, in a typically heroic fashion, will not be beaten down by his adversaries, and answers back when the men speak angrily to him. Unlike Pascalet, who is terrified from the very beginning of his adventure and remains paralysed by fear when he sees the Bohemian men, Gatzo never flinches in the face of danger. He is, one might argue, a better embodiment of idealised imperial masculine values than Pascalet, who only becomes braver and stronger through Gatzo's tuition. Gatzo is moreover described as perfectly adapted to the wilderness, with cat-like eyes that enable him to see better in the dark: '[m]ais lui, se dirigeait dans l'ombre, avec des yeux de chat étincelants, et il me tenait par la main' (loc343).[210] When Pascalet admits he is scared of them drowning in the currents, Gatzo reassures him that he is familiar with the water: '[n]e crains rien. Je connais l'eau' (loc349).[211] During their first night together, Gatzo steers the boat to safety, reassures Pascalet, and finds somewhere safe for them to sleep (loc367). The next morning, the two boys smile at each other, and this marks the beginning of their friendship: 'Gatzo m'aperçut et il me sourit. Sur cette figure sérieuse les traits durs tout à coup se détendirent et alors se forma ce sourire très tendre qui me bouleversa […] Et je lui souris à mon tour. Nous étions amis' (loc389).[212] Throughout the novel, Gatzo continues to guide the two of them through the dangers of the forest, and the two boys bond over masculine survival activities.

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[210] 'But he found his way in the shadows, with his shining cat eyes, and he took me by the hand.'
[211] 'Fear nothing. I know the water.'
[212] 'Gatzo saw me and smiled. On his serious face, the hard features suddenly relaxed, and so formed a very gentle smile that moved me […] And I smiled back at him. We were friends.'

Gatzo, for example, guides Pascalet through such tasks as fishing (loc457), making

fires (loc484), exploring (loc497), swimming (loc563) and tracking beasts (loc587).

Such activities are reminiscent of those associated with scouting movements, which

were especially popular in France after the Liberation.

Similar to the traditional adventure hero, Gatzo is serious and reserved,

saying little and acting almost entirely out of need and necessity, and never for

pleasure. He is stern and hardened from a life of difficulty, and is focussed only on

survival:

> [i]l parlait peu. Ses manières brusques m'étonnèrent d'abord, puis je
>
> suis m'y faire. […] Il avait l'amitié taciturne. […] Ses pensées
>
> s'appliquaient toutes à des besoins: pêcher, trouver un bon mouillage,
>
> tendre une toile contre le soleil, s'abriter, cuire le repas. Rien pour le
>
> plaisir de parler, quand il disait quelque parole. Et pas un geste vain.
>
> Chaque mot contenait une intention, chaque mouvement son utilité. Il
>
> était économe de son âme. Mais son âme était là. Je la sentais à mes
>
> côtés, toute close dans ce corps brun, et sans doute un peu sombre.
>
> Inséparable d'une vie violente, c'était sur un sang noir qu'elle vivait. On
>
> le devinait vindicative et fidèle. (loc402)[213]

Pascalet remarks that this is strange to him; his acts come with the desire for

pleasure, and being quiet is 'pour le plaisir de me taire' (loc409).[214] Gatzo

equally remarks, 'irrité' (loc413; 'irritated') that when Pascalet sleeps, he is

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[213] 'He spoke little. His abrupt manners shocked me at first, then I got used to them. […] His friendship was taciturn […] His thoughts all applied to needs: fish, find good anchorage, stretch a canvas against the sun, take shelter, cook the meal. Nothing for the pleasure of speaking, when he said a few words. And not a gesture in vain. Each word contained an intention, each movements its utility. He was economical with his soul. But his soul was there. I felt it by my sides, all enclosed in this brown body, and without doubt a bit dark. Inseparable from a violent life, it was on black blood that it lived. It seemed vindictive and loyal.'
[214] '[F]or the pleasure of being quiet'.

restless: 'tu gâtes ton sommeil…' (loc415).[215] Gatzo, meanwhile, is characteristically purposeful with his sleeping, closing his eyes and thinking of nothing, and focussing only on rest. Indeed, every act for Gatzo is one of necessity for survival, as is often the case for the adventure hero. Gatzo is stern, tough and unemotional, and thus stereotypically masculine. Pascalet's dreaminess and fear codes him as more stereotypically feminine. There is also a very explicit and repeated reference to the fundamental differences between the two friends in the phrase 'sang noir'; a similar phrase, 'raies noires de sang', is used in a previous excerpt. That such language is used consistently to refer to both the Bohemians and Gatzo highlights the way they are othered within the text. The mentions of dark blood not only hints at their darker skin colour, but equally suggests that the difference between Bohemians and the white Europeans reaches beyond the skin, to the essential qualities of their being and character.

Yet we later learn that Gatzo's blood is realistically not black as the text describes. Rather, he is a white French boy who was kidnapped by the Bohemians, and all perceptions of him have entirely been constructed by his supposed racial identity. He would be perceived just like Pascalet, if it were not for his upbringing and the stigma associated with him. Indeed, in the final part of the book, Gatzo and Pascalet come upon a village, where a marionette show depicts a story of a child stolen by the Bohemians, a story that it turns out is that of Gatzo. A young child eats a fruit bewitched by a Bohemian sorcerer and faints, forgetting his past in the process (loc944). He is then depicted living among the Bohemians, and is said to have become bad from the poisoned fruit: '[a]ussi n'a-t-il plus un bon sentiment.

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[215] 'You spoil your sleep…'

C'est maintenant le pire garnement de la tribu : il ment, il jure, il triche, il vole, comme l'on respire, et pour un rien, il met la main à son couteau. Tout le monde le craint' (loc950).[216] The interesting implication here is that the Bohemians, the monolithic evil 'other' class of the novel, have turned this innocent child into something of a monster, or at the very least a monster according to Western values of childhood: a liar, a thief, and an immoral trickster. The repetitive structure – 'il ment, il jure, il triche […]' – reiterates the true extent of his immorality and emphasises to the reader that the child will truly 'met la main à son couteau' with very little cause. He has equally forgotten his parents, who live in misery, 'très malheureux' ('very unhappy') at the loss of their son (loc952). Yet they maintain some small hope that he will return, leaving the door open for him always, in case he comes back (loc957). Instead, the Bohemians come one night to steal from them, with the lost son in tow, who then sees the old man and woman and recognises them as his parents (loc968). At this point the show ends, after which Bosco depicts Gatzo coming to the realisation that Grand-Père Savinien, the man who has travelled with his show since the disappearance of his own grandson (loc977), is his grandfather:

> [a]lors on découvrit Gatzo. Il pleurait avec une sorte de fureur
>
> contre lui-même. Il avait honte de pleurer sur ces trois cents têtes
>
> sensées, ébahies de le voir là-haut ruisselant de larmes. Mais il
>
> pleurait, quoi qu'il en eût ; et, d'en bas, son grand-père Savinien,
>
> pétrifié par l'émotion, le regardait d'un air inexpressif, tant il lui
>
> paraissait inexplicable que l'enfant perdu lui tombât du ciel. […] Le
>
> grand-père ne disait rien ; l'émotion lui avait coupé la parole. Il

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[216] 'Also, he no longer had any good intention. He is now the worst rascal of the tribe: he lies, he curses, he cheats, he steals, like others breathe, and for the slightest thing, he reaches for his knife. Everyone fears him.'

regardait toujours son petit-fils […] Et Gatzo […] le regardait aussi,

tout en pleurant. (loc1012)[217]

The semblance of equality between the Bohemians and the French people is thus broken, and the brotherhood is, it seems, simply between two white French boys. No ethnically othered character is truly given an individual story and identity, because Gatzo is not in fact a Bohemian boy at all. The case is similar in *Tam-Tam,* in which Yago essentially becomes a 'white' man in his later life, following white European customs. Little more is said of the Bohemians, meanwhile, who are still considered savages, and who are now known only as kidnappers of children, as the fable depicted with the marionettes attests: this is the mythology of the Bohemians within the story itself, and it is the impression that lingers throughout the novel, particularly after we find out that Gatzo is in fact French. Gatzo goes to live with Pascalet, further reinforcing his belonging to white European culture and the erasure of his Bohemian identity. Another vital interpretation of this ending, as mentioned earlier, is that *L'Enfant* closely mirrors the assimilation and genocide of native cultures under white European imperialism; like native peoples, Gatzo is ushered firmly into white French society.

Of course, the conclusion of the story is far from clear cut, with the ending creating more questions than it answers. The discovery that Gatzo is a white French boy and the obscuring of his identity throughout the story is fundamentally unsettling and draws attention to questions about the essentialism of racial identity, yet the story still ends with an affirmation of white dominance. *L'Enfant et la*

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[217] 'So we discovered Gatzo. He cried with a sort of fury towards himself. He was ashamed of crying in front of these three hundred reasonable people, who were dumbstruck to see him up there streaming with tears. But he cried anyway; and, from below, his grandfather Savinien, petrified by emotion, watched him blankly, so inexplicable it seemed to him that the lost child had fallen to him from the sky […] The grandfather said nothing; emotion had seized his words. He was still watching his grandson […] And Gatzo, watched him too, crying all the while.'

Rivière, in conclusion, is a text that interrogates the boundaries between racial conceptions of masculinity, suggesting a potential for kinship and brotherhood between boys of differing racial identities. It asks what truly constitutes racial identity in the character of Gatzo and creates a complex image of racial and gendered identities. Bosco curiously creates a space in which racial boundaries and prejudices are blurred. Pascalet admits to secretive pride and admiration for his formidable acquaintance Bargabot, the mysterious character existing on the fringe of his life, and he creates an intimate friendship with a supposed Bohemian boy. Yet equally Bosco crafts a story in which the white character is central, with all of the events of the story funnelled through his eyes, prejudices and worldview. Characters such as Bargabot, in terms of narrative structure, exist largely to facilitate Pascalet's own journey, rescuing him when needed for example. We might conclude that this – perhaps confusing – image of relations acknowledges shared ground within masculinities, but ultimately concludes by reinstating white imperial power as a foregone conclusion at this period in history. Published in 1945, right at the end of World War Two, perhaps the complexity we see in the articulation of potential brotherhoods between men of different races speaks of the declining influence of European imperialism at the time of publication. It echoes a world in which the French empire was still powerful, but faith in the empire was crumbling after the efforts of the colonies throughout the war. It resonates with a world in which the French empire still held huge power, but demands for liberation were growing louder. A similar sentiment is seen within the next text, also French, which demonstrates this same mixture of messages.

Tam-Tam de Kotokro **(1956)**

A prolific author of children's novels, René Guillot published more than one hundred

works for youth during his life, building a substantial reputation before and after his

death in 1969 (Gnocchi, 2016: 1) and winning multiple awards. In 1964, he became

the first French author to win the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Medal for *Le*

Grand Livre de la brousse (1964; Gnocchi, 2016: 2),[218] as well as winning the Prix

du roman d'aventures in 1946 and the Prix Jeunesse in 1950 (1-2). Guillot's novels

frequently take place in Africa, inspired by a key period of his life following his

move to Senegal in 1925, when it was a key base in the French West African

colonies (2). He remained in Senegal for over two decades (2), and his oeuvre

reflects this in the omnipresence of Africa throughout, from *Contes de la brousse*

fauve (1945), to *Contes et légendes d'Afrique noire* (1946), *Au pays des bêtes*

sauvages (1948), and *Kpo la panthère* (1955).[219] He was known to some as the

'Kipling saintongeais' (2), gaining this name having built a reputation as a popular

author of works in imperial settings like his predecessor; Guillot shares Kipling's

attachment to his native province, which features frequently in his works, but equally

features colonial settings recurringly within his writing (2).[220]

Such is the case for the text discussed here, *Tam-Tam de Kotokro* (1956),

which was published in the Bibliothèque rouge et Or in 1956 just a year after Berna's

Le Cheval sans tête. It has received little scholarly attention, however, and is less

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[218] As far as I am aware, this title, which translates into English as *The Big Book of the Bush*, was not translated into English. However, information about Guillot's published titles is scarce.

[219] Again, information on translated Guillot works is difficult to come by, so English translations of some of these works are uncertain. However, they translate as (in order): *Tales of the Wild Bush*, *Tales and Legends of Black Africa*, *In the Land of Wild Beasts*, and *Kpo the Leopard*. The latter was definitely translated into English. Many of Guillot's folk tales were translated into English, but the specific equivalents are difficult to track with the lack of information available. However, two examples of English titles is *Tales of the Wild* and *Tales of Africa*.

[220] He is known as the 'Saintongeais Kipling', referencing Saintonge, a former French province where Guillot was from. Guillot is attached to his 'native province'.

heralded than some of Guillot's other books such as *Crin-Blanc* (1959; *The Wild White Stallion,* 1953), a widely translated novel adaptation of a 1953 film by Albert Lamorisse (1). In an article that reflects on Guillot's forgotten 1930s books for adults, Maria Chiara Gnocchi considers the potential reasons for the disappearance of the colonial novel, writing that these texts 'souffrent du contexte qui les a vus naître' (10)[221] and have been forgotten in the wake of decolonisation. Those colonial novels that have survived, Gnocchi writes, have done so 'au prix de renier quelque peu leur contexte original' (10).[222] As we will see, Guillot's text is often idealistic about the French Empire in a way that is now unpalatable. Despite its relative lack of recognition, however, the book was translated into English under the title of *Tom-Toms in Kotokro* in 1957, indicating that it was likely highly anticipated as another of Guillot's children's works.

Tam-Tam, as sometimes recommended on its cover, is intended for readers from twelve years of age: a slightly older readership than that of many of the books analysed in this thesis. Thus, as one might expect, it contains more frightening elements than one might expect of a book for a younger audience. The book's plot is steeped in the excitement and mystery of the adventure novel tradition, with Africa used as the exotic but dangerous backdrop typical of the many adventure novels that preceded it. It depicts the development of a friendship between two boys against the exhilaration of discovering new places. It does this through the eyes of a white European boy whose perspective might be intended to provide a viewpoint through which white European readers can access and experience this putatively mysterious land. It also, of course, is a subtler means through which white subject status is

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[221] They 'suffer from the context in which they were born'.
[222] They have done so 'at the price somewhat of renouncing their original context.'

maintained, and the white European experience centred even within a text about Africa.

The novel is set in the French West African colonies, and specifically in the Lobi territory, in the French colonial Haute-Volta ('Upper Volta'), which is in the south-west of what is modern day Burkina Faso. It follows the story of Janek, a Polish boy, and his father as they flee Europe after fears of Nazi pursuit. Janek's father is 'parmi les premiers savants de la science atomique' (1956: loc135)[223] and his work is coveted. Fearing for the security of his family and his life's work, he decides that their best hope is to flee and stay with a friend named Marlow. Marlow is a powerful white coloniser figure and a friend of the family who lives in the Lobi territory.

Contextual clues within the novel place its events within a period of a few months in the late 1930s. A character named Kling is said to have been in 'la guerre d'Espagne' (loc1163), the Spanish Civil War that ended in April of 1939. The book also makes references to World War Two being close or inevitable, and it eventually begins at the start of Chapter Twelve (loc2289). The same chapter also depicts the white colonisers discussing the implications of the war, and even makes reference to the eventual Occupation in their observation that: '[a]près la Pologne, ce sera le tour de la France' (loc2292).[224] These specific contextual details mean that the book must take place in the few months between April and September of 1939.

The novel was also published two years after the beginning of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), a time when the French Empire was being directly challenged to grant independence to its colonies. Though this context does

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[223] '[A]mong the first scholars of atomic science'.
[224] 'After Poland, it will be France's turn.'

not feature in the novel, the wider context of imperial decline arguably informs the presentation of masculinities, as it does in the conclusion to Bosco's novel. It is especially vital to interrogate whether Guillot upholds the image of the superior, civilised European man at a time when the authority of the French Empire was under threat.

These contexts mean that the novel deals very directly and explicitly with imperialism, and not in a symbolic way. Even the title of the book is a specific contextual detail, referring to a tradition among the Lobi people, who use drums called 'tam-tams' ('tom-toms') to communicate messages over long distances. This method is in fact acknowledged as faster than the method of the colonisers, who use 'coureurs' ('runners') to carry messages. Through this 'mystérieux télégraphe sans fil' (loc457) and 'code secret' (loc458), 'les nouvelles se répandent, bien plus vite que par coureurs' (loc459).[225]

Guillot's novel is a knowledgeable attempt to portray colonial Africa in a realist and not a stereotypical manner. It mirrors the adventure narratives that popularised images of frontier masculinity in the previous century, and which continued to be popular well into the twentieth century, and is obviously targeted at boys, with two main male characters, and containing only one named female character, who soon becomes irrelevant to the story. It moreover centres the development of a friendship or brotherhood between two boys who bond over the aforementioned masculine activities associated with adventure, hunting, and exploration. The native characters are not reduced to stereotypes as they are in earlier children's adventure novels such those by R.M. Ballantyne and G.A. Henty. Rather

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[225] Through this 'mysterious wireless telegraph' and 'secret code', 'news spreads, much more quickly than through runners'.

than contrasting heroic, civilised white European men with stupid, savage, childlike 'natives', Guillot presents a more nuanced image of masculinities in the colonies although, ultimately, his book reinforces and concludes with white dominance, in a similar fashion to *L'Enfant*. Indeed, Guillot's novel similarly depicts a complex mixture of humanising portrayals and imperialist gaze that might reflect the rupture in the power of empire occurring during the mid-century.

Despite the nuanced and detailed depictions of Lobi peoples, the imperialist gaze is nonetheless omnipresent as Guillot, a white European man himself, uses the first-person point of view of a white European boy to tell the story, meaning the narrative is fundamentally controlled by the voice of a white male. The telling of the story is funnelled through the eyes of a white character perceiving native tribes. However central native characters might be, this is ultimately the story of a Polish boy. Tying into this, the plot of the narrative also frames Africa in a way that reinforces the white coloniser's power by presenting the African colonies as an escape from the 'more serious issues' of Europe and as an exotic location existing for the benefit of white men. Chinua Achebe makes a related argument in his seminal work 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' (1977), which highlights the 'othering' of Africa and native African people in *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe writes that part of the racism of Conrad's novel is its use of 'Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril' (2016: 21). In the case of Guillot's story, Africa is not a battlefield, but occupies this same positioning in being defined by its use and perception by white men, and it is through this lens that Africa is viewed for the entirety of the book. The links between *Heart of Darkness* and Guillot's work are further

enlightened by Maria Chiara Gnocchi's account of Guillot's forgotten novels for
adults of the 1930s, particularly his *Le Blanc qui s'était fait nègre* (1932; *The White
who Made Himself a Negro*), which Gnocchi writes is perhaps 'l'une des premières
réécritures en français de *Heart of Darkness*' (2016: 7).[226]

The story features a host of named white male characters, meaning the
narrative is further framed in a way that favours the white coloniser's perspective.
There are few named 'native' characters who have a significant role in the book, the
only central Lobi character being Yago, who spends more time among white men
than among his tribe, and is nevertheless viewed from Janek's perspective. Thus,
Yago is always an object, and never a subject in a story that deeply involves him, his
homeland and his culture. The novel thus favours the voices of white colonisers and
imitates the imbalance of power seen within the colonies.[227] The native peoples get
few opportunities to be explored in greater depth, beyond descriptions of their
differences to white Europeans, and almost appear to be present for the benefit of
Janek, the protagonist of the book, and his education. After all, the novel's blurb
describes the tale first and foremost as 'celle de Janek Grabski, jeune polonais'
(loc4). Yago is introduced as a secondary feature, and, despite being named as one of
the 'deux héros' (loc9) of the novel, is ultimately part of the plot of Janek's story,
similarly to Bargabot in Bosco's novel.

The friendship shared by Janek and Yago reveals however that there is
common ground between white European and black African men, and that bonds are
possible between them, so much so that Janek and Yago carry out a Lobi ritual that
binds them as hunting brothers: '[a]u Lobi, les chasseurs à travers la brousse

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[226] 'One of the first rewritings in French of *Heart of Darkness*'.
[227] The Polish never had any formal colonial territories, but his image as a white European is still clear
when contrasted to Yago. There is still a racial dynamic to the text regardless of Janek's nationality.

chassent toujours à deux. Ils sont frères de chasse jusqu'à leur dernier jour' (loc862).[228] The pact is intimate, shared only between two close, trusting friends, and is serious and sacred, sealed in secret with the blood of a sacrificed animal: '[p]ersonne jamais n'a été témoin du pacte qu'ils ont scellé, sur l'autel des ancêtres' (loc863).[229] The rite requires the boys to touch one another on the chest with blood from the sacrifice to become truly joined, 'pour n'avoir plus qu'un même cœur' (loc860).[230] That the bond shared is one related to hunting hints that the masculinities embodied by the Lobi people share some of the desired qualities of frontier masculinity, which emphasises strength and capability in the wilderness. The brotherhood of these two boys highlights the common ground between masculinities, in contrast to other monolithic presentations of cannibalistic savages.

The story also emphasises the skill of the native Lobi men such as Yago, who is a capable young hunter that Janek describes as being the same age as him, but 'un peu plus grand et plus fort' (loc554),[231] suggesting the superior virility of the native boy. He is well equipped, carrying a hunting whistle and suitable weapons, and has the appearance of a soldier when he meets Janek and his father, proud, disciplined and an image of martial virility: '[i]l déposa ses armes à ses pieds, dans le sable, et, très droit, très fier, nous regardant bien en face, il appliqua sa main à plat sur sa poitrine, en signe de salut' (loc554).[232] At this point, a reader might already assume that Yago is skilled in frontier-related activities like hunting and exploration, but the extent of Yago's capability, intuition and attunement to his natural environment

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[228] 'Among the Lobi, hunters in the bush always hunt in twos. They are hunting brothers until their last day.'
[229] 'No one has ever been witness to the pact that they have sealed, on the alter of the ancestors.'
[230] '[T]o have one heart'.
[231] '[A] bit bigger and stronger'.
[232] 'He placed his arms at his feet in the sand, and, very straight and proud, looking us straight in the eye, placed his hand flat on his chest in salute.'

becomes particularly clear over the following pages. He even appears to embody many of these traits better than the white European men. In so doing Guillot challenges imperialist race relations, interrogating the status quo by suggesting that a native African boy could be a superior performer of frontier masculinity than Janek and his father. Yago stops the father and son, for example, and requests silence as he perceives things beyond their senses: '[u]n doigt sur les lèvres, il demandait de faire silence. Le garçon, l'oreille tendue, devait entendre, sur la mousse, des pas imperceptibles pour nous' (loc578).[233] Meanwhile, in a reminder of the dominant party, the white characters watch him carry out this action. While Yago's skill is the focus and he is detached from monolithic stereotypes of savagery, he is nonetheless perceived from the coloniser point of view, always watched and consumed, similarly to Gatzo who also demonstrates his skill to the white character.

Yago's ability to track animals gives him the upper hand on some occasions, for example when he and Janek discuss Marlow's elephant hunt. Yago reveals that it is not a problem if Marlow does not invite them to come with them, as he knows the path of the elephants as well as the organiser himself, if not better than the white colonisers generally:

> je les entends marcher, de loin, derrière les collines…Pas lui [Marlow]. Pas
>
> les blancs…Je t'apprendrai. Tu verras. C'est comme si tu entendais marcher
>
> dans le ventre de la terre. (loc1386)[234]

He imitates the sound of the creatures he hunts with expert knowledge to draw them in (loc583) and is able to strike out independently. Yago is a highly trained huntsman and is further humanised in his presentation as a friendly, happy and likeable

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[233] 'A finger on his lips, he asked for silence. The boy, ear held out, must have heard, on the moss, steps imperceptible to us.'
[234] '[I] hear them walking, far away, behind the hills…Not him. Not the whites…I will teach you. You will see. It's as if you heard walking in the stomach of the earth.'

character. The description of his eyes as 'laughing', in particular, draws attention to his personable and happy character: '[s]es yeux riaient. Un beau rire franc et vif' (loc552).[235] He also befriends all manner of animals including monkeys (loc547) and panthers (loc836), and by the end of the novel, has made a career from training elephants (loc2545). He is initially shown playing a game of drafts in the sand with a monkey, again presenting him as unthreatening, and a friend to all manner of people and creatures (loc547). Yago, then, is an extremely capable hunter, knowledgeable about wildlife, able to navigate the local environment effectively, and thriving in the wilderness. Thus, the so-called 'savage natives' are in fact extremely capable in *Tam-Tam*, and there are many things that white Europeans might learn from them. A power imbalance in favour of the white narrators, however, consistently reinforces their control.

Guillot's text further humanises native peoples by describing the nuances of the cultures of colonial West Africa using a ready vocabulary of dialect-specific lexis relating to the practices of African tribes. The use of these suggest that Guillot has some level of genuine understanding of the cultures that he describes and ties in with the evident attempts to humanise Yago and emphasise his skill. Examples of vocabulary used include 'soukala' relating to the dwellings of the Lobi people, 'dolo' meaning a type of millet beer of sub-Saharan African peoples, and 'M'Bélé M'Bélé' which is a name given by characters to a type of elephant native to the region. This level of detail allows Guillot to move beyond the caricatured understandings of these cultures that were dominant at the height of empire. Similarly, Guillot describes the variety of people and tribes when Janek and his father arrive in Bobo Dioulasso, a town in Burkina Faso. His depiction of the town provides a sharp contrast to more

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[235] 'His eyes were laughing. A pleasant smile, honest and bright.'

monolithic and minstrel-esque presentations of native peoples, going into fine detail

about the individual qualities of each tribe and giving each a sense of individual

recognition:

> [l]es bergers Peuls aux longs cheveux bleus, les paysans Bobos aux
>
> faces carrées tailladées de cicatrices, les Touareg dans leurs voiles,
>
> les femmes avec leurs cotillons de feuilles vertes ou leurs tabliers de
>
> cuir…Une foule de nègres, de toutes les couleurs du noir: le noir bleu
>
> de la Côte-d'Ivoire, le noir rouge du Soudan, le noir vert du Niger.
>
> (loc355)[236]

Despite language now considered problematic ('nègre'), the diversity that Guillot

presents in many ways serves to humanise the native peoples.

To return to the complex combination of nuanced representation and

reinforcement of colonial dynamics through narrative structure, however, these

sections must also necessarily be interpreted as positioning colonised peoples as a

spectacle for the viewing and entertainment of white Europeans. This concept was

pervasive at the time of publication; human zoos, for example, exhibited 'primitive'

people to the European public, and a Congolese village was infamously presented at

the 1958 Brussels World Fair, just two years after the publication of *Tam-Tam*.[237]

These descriptions also emphasise the 'otherness' of the native peoples according to

European colonisers, particularly through their appearances ('le noir bleu […], le

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[236] 'The Fulani shepherds with long blue hair, the Bobo peasants with square faces slashed with scars, the Tuareg in their veils, the women with their green leaf skirts or their leather aprons…A crowd of negroes, of all colours of black: the blue-black of the Ivory Coast, the red-black of Sudan, the green-black of Niger.'

[237] For more information on the 1958 Brussels World Fair specifically, see Boffey (2018) and 'human zoos', see *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires* (2008) by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boëtsch, Eric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire and Charles Forsdick.

noir rouge […], le noir vert'), in a way that objectifies the native people and scrutinises them; the white characters are never subject to this same scrutiny.

Native protagonists are also compared to animals in a way that reinforces the imbalance of power and the dominance of the coloniser's gaze. When Janek and his father first arrive in the Lobi territory, Yago guides them to Marlow's soukala where they will be staying. On the way, they see a silhouette in the distance: 'nous avons aperçu, devant nous, la silhouette cassée en deux d'un noir qui s'enfuyait en boîtant. Il était de petite taille' (loc690).[238] What Janek initially believes to be a black man is, rather, an ape called Niki, who is one of the animals that Marlow keeps at his home, drawing on an age-old racial refrain comparing black men to apes. This example also draws attention to the potentially problematic associations of Yago's links to the animals, which he befriends and sleeps alongside in Marlow's soukala. These instances continue the trend that links the two together in a more subtle way, and seems less innocuous when viewed in the light of Janek's mistake. What becomes clear in these moments within the text is that there is a constant struggle to maintain the humanity of the non-white characters with the text veering towards the reinforcement of white supremacy, a struggle that continues to reflect the changing status of the French empire in the 1950s; the Haute-Volta region where the book takes place changed administrative status over the decades prior to the publication of the novel.

Furthermore, Guillot structures the narrative in a way that suggests that the 'civilising mission' of empire has positively impacted Yago's life. While much of the novel creates an impression of brotherhood between white and native men, the overriding narratological and structural sentiment is one that most cleanly asserts

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[238] '[W]e saw in front of us the broken silhouette of a black, who fled limping. He was small in size.'

white European male authority. Indeed, Yago is respected by the white colonisers to a large degree, but this respect comes at the price of his Lobi identity. Rather than being equal on his own terms, Yago's transformation moulds him into an image more closely resembling the 'civilised' white man. We learn that Yago, who had the Sleeping Sickness,[239] was saved by the colony doctor after being abandoned by the Lobi tribe, and was taken on by Marlow at a young age (loc963). This act seems to represent the beginning of Yago's journey to civilisation, and, as a further symbol of this journey, he loses his birth name and is given a new one under Marlow's care (loc963). This change signifies the first step in the transformation of Yago's identity.

At the end of the novel, Yago's journey to 'civilisation' is further evidenced by the fact that Yago wishes to become 'le grand blanc de Kotokro' ('the great white of Kotokro'), which is the name given to Marlow by many of the native peoples. His success is equated with becoming the equivalent of a white man, even according to his own words: 'après le chef, c'est moi qui serai le grand blanc de Kotokro' (loc2116).[240] The small semblance of equality here in Yago's ability to 'become' a white man is ultimately replaced by the implication that white masculinity is superior to native masculinity; Yago cannot be successful as himself and must be civilised fully to be acceptable to the colonisers, and this means becoming 'white'. When Janek returns to see Yago years later, Yago is shown using a typewriter to write up reports. He has been 'civilised' by white Europeans, and, though still engaging with animals as he used to, appears more removed from the skills and cultures of his native land. Instead, he is more at ease with Western tools and roles previously foreign to him, as he writes up reports on a typewriter: 'j'aperçus une

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[239] The Sleeping Sickness is a parasitic disease that devastated Africa in colonial times. More specific information about the Sleeping Sickness epidemics can be found in Daniel R. Headrick's paper, 'Sleeping Sickness Epidemics and Colonial Responses in East and Central Africa, 1900–1940' (2014).
[240] '[A]fter the boss, it's me who'll be the great white of Kotokro.'

machine à écrire portative, toute neuve […] –Des papiers…, toujours des papiers…, dit-il en riant' (loc2534).[241]

The process by which Yago was saved equally hints at this imbalance of power. During routine check-ups for the Sleeping Sickness, Janek's father points out a young native boy abandoned at the side of the road to the colony doctor. He is described in a way that draws attention to his youth and the gravity of his illness to evoke sympathy in the reader for the boy himself, and thus for the 'humanitarian' aims of imperialist intervention: '[l]e dos au mur, la tête affaissée sur l'épaule, et la face grise où s'éteignaient d'étranges yeux blancs, sans regard, un jeune garçon était assis. Il pouvait avoir six à sept ans' (loc903).[242] The doctor explains that the boy has been abandoned by his tribe because:

> [c]'est la coutume […] L'enfant est voué à la mort […] Pour qu'il
> entreprenne le grand voyage, ils ont posé près de lui des vivres, des bananes,
> une gourde de bière de mil, comme pour quelqu'un qui entreprend une
> longue randonnée. (loc908)[243]

This is a Lobi ritual, as acknowledged by the doctor himself, who explains it to Janek. Regardless, the doctor decides that he must intervene to try to save the boy, despite the low odds that he can be saved at such a late stage in the sickness: '[i]l y a une chance sur cent, mais il est peut-être possible de le sauver' (loc911).[244] This entire process is voiced by a white doctor and the Lobi are never provided with an opportunity to vocalise the importance of their customs or make their case. The

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[241] '[I] saw a portable typewriter, brand new […] "Papers…, always papers…," he said, laughing.'
[242] 'Back to the wall, his head on his shoulder, and with a grey face where strange white eyes dwindled, expressionless, a young boy was sat. He seemed around six or seven years old.'
[243] 'It's the custom […] The child is vowed to death […] So that he can undertake the great journey, they have left near him supplies, bananas, a gourd of millet beer, as for someone who is undertaking a long journey.'
[244] 'There's a chance in a hundred, but it's perhaps possible to save him.'

apparently 'right' course of action is only voiced and explained by the character who epitomises Western, European ideologies centring science, modern medicine and specific approaches to child wellbeing and safety. We see the reaction of the native peoples only through the eyes of white colonisers. As soon as he takes the boy, local women make their anger clear, and 'gesticulaient avec de grands gestes'.[245] The doctor says, mournfully, that the Lobi custom towards late-stage sufferers of the Sleeping Sickness is 'barbare' (loc915; 'barbaric'), channelling the reader's perception of the Lobi through an asymmetrical view. The Lobi are furious and fire poisoned arrows at the colonisers in revenge, and the doctor mutters that the people are 'sauvages' (loc931; 'savages'). In the Western worldview, saving the boy's life is the correct course of action, and is morally necessary, but saving the boy also reinforces colonialist control through intervention without consent. The Lobi retaliation hints at two possibilities: either that these customs are so important that the Lobi are willing to fight back, as they are so terrified of not following them; or that they are furious at the continued interference of colonisers. Lobi beliefs were indeed considered superstitious by European, Christian colonisers (Hawkins, 2002: 168-170), and this lack of comprehension of Lobi customs might have meant that interfering to save a life was seen as the right or logical course of action to a colony doctor. Either way, the interference of the colony doctors serves as a reassertion of their power and in many ways a reassertion of the supposedly humanitarian aims of the 'mission civilisatrice'.

When the doctor intervenes, and the native people retaliate, one of Marlow's men is hit with an arrow and shortly after dies, and Marlow is furious. He recognises that the Lobi are not slaves, and are in fact tough and resilient, calling them 'de rudes

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[245] '[G]esticulated with big arm gestures.'

hommes, nos gaillards du Lobi' (loc943).[246] Lobi men might in fact be more

physically skilled than the white colonisers, yet Marlow still considers himself in

control, believing the Lobi people to be in need of punishment and refinement,

depriving them of their independence and subjectivity, and likening them to children:

> [i]l faut leur faire voir qu'ils ont aussi affaire à des hommes […] Des
>
> représailles, et tout de suite…, sévères. Ils nous ont tué un homme.
>
> Ils savent ce que c'est que le prix du sang. Si nous n'allons pas le
>
> leur demander, nous perdrons la face. (loc944)[247]

This is one of the only hints in the entire book of the brutality of colonialist practices,

but the emphasis on the young boy's state appears to highlight the 'humanity' of the

colonisers who attempt to save his life. The book thus creates further conflict in

approaches to imperialist ideology, between the seemingly positive outcomes of

colonisation versus the reality of brutal practices. Ultimately, however, the story

seems to quickly disregard the brutality, which is rarely mentioned again. Indeed, it

seems forgotten given the success Yago goes on to achieve.

Moreover, the 'head white' coloniser character in the book, 'Marlow', carries

the same name as the narrator character of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*,

which follows Charles Marlow as he journeys up the Congo River. The fact that

Guillot chooses the name 'Marlow' seems unlikely to be a coincidence given the

shared subject matter. *Tam-Tam* interestingly seems to attempt to shine a more

humanitarian light on colonialism and on the 'Marlow' character; when Janek returns

to visit Marlow and Yago years later, at the end of the story, Marlow is still presented

as a loveable friend to Janek and Yago, described as 'mon vieil ami' (loc2476 and

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[246] '[T]ough men, our Lobi fellows'.

[247] 'We must make them see that they are also dealing with men […] Retaliation, and straight away…, severe. They killed one of our men. They know what the price of blood is. If we do not go ask them for it, we will lose face.'

loc2480; 'my old friend'). Little comment is made about Marlow's previous threats towards the native peoples, or about the fact that Marlow is being carried in a chair, as if a king or emperor, by black African boys (loc2477), yet again reiterating the imbalance of power between white and black men. Marlow then introduces yet another white character, John (loc2483), who is never again mentioned, but the black boys who carried Marlow remain known only as '[l]es noirs' (loc2477; 'the blacks'). While there is some attempt to humanise African tribespeople and shine a new light on the Marlow character, there is a strong overriding current of imperial sympathy. The character of Marlow is expanded to emphasise the benefits of empire for the natives and justify the civilising mission.

To conclude, *Tam-Tam de Kotokro* is a complex novel that, published amidst the Algerian War, spells the mixed sentiments of the crumbling of an empire, at once suggesting a potential for a humanised and complex image of black men but eventually returning to a belief in the civilising mission. The superiority of white European men is sustained throughout, and the entire novel is framed with this in mind; the first-person perspective is that of a white boy, and Africa is essentially a playground for white men escaping their own worries in wartime Europe. The novel provides an illusion of equality between white and black men through the friendship between the two central characters, the detailed descriptions of the colonised peoples, and the articulation of Yago as strong and more capable than many white men. He perfectly assumes the masculine behaviours of frontier masculinity and is highly skilled, his abilities viewed with a sense of awe and excitement. Yet ultimately the text leans towards white dominance and more often makes a spectacle of and fetishises the colonised peoples of the Lobi tribe; the imperialist gaze is all-encompassing even though at times it appears to disappear under the sentimental

depictions of brotherhood between races. The people of colour in *Tam-Tam,* moreover, are never given any semblance of greatness in their own right, and are mostly defined in relation to white characters. Similarly to *L'Enfant,* the novel ends with an assimilation of a black tribesperson into white European ways of life and an erasure of native cultures, and similarly to the Oompa-Loompas of Dahl's text which follows, there is a genuine, evident depiction of the imperial project as humanitarian. The result of this is that, despite any recognition of the physical prowess and strengths of native men, white masculinity still ultimately dominates and assimilates the masculine identities of native peoples which are perceived and observed like a spectacle for the consumption of European men.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (1964)

Roald Dahl's life, similarly to Guillot's, was punctuated with links to colonial Africa, as he worked for Shell in Tanganyika (modern day Tanzania) in the 1930s and travelled to Nairobi to complete RAF training upon joining (RoaldDahl.com, n.d.). He is a renowned British children's writer, and is internationally translated and studied within children's literature criticism. One of his most famous and popular works is the focal text for this section, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), which was, however, published several months earlier in the United States. The work inspired three films in 1971, 2005 and 2023, as well as numerous other stage, radio, and video game adaptations. Its French translation *Charlie et la chocolaterie* was published by Gallimard in 1967.

Dahl's novel, like the other two books examined in this chapter, presents a multifaceted image of masculinities within an imperial setting, published at a time when decolonisation was underway and reflecting on imperial memory. In Dahl's

case, this is done in a less direct fashion than, for example, Guillot, as the story combines a number of genres and imprints colonial structures and ideas onto a moral story about a deprived family and a fantastical new world. The novel contains its own colonial landscape, one hidden within the walls of a British factory, which is run through a working relationship that more closely resembles a slave and owner relation than a legitimate working contract. Wonka is a mythical colonial leader who imports his workers in shipping containers like any other commodity, and his quest in handing out golden tickets is to find an heir to his factory, an heir who, in the end, is a white boy. Meanwhile, the hero is not the standard adventure hero; he is feminine, quiet, selfless, passive, and overcomes challenges by not acting at all and thus avoiding misdeeds. The result is a story that at once reinstates the idea of white supremacy while offering prescriptions about moral conduct for children. Charlie is the picture-perfect white child who causes no fuss for adults and does as he is told, a perfect vessel for carrying on an imperialist legacy without question. In this way, and with the surrounding context of a dying empire, Charlie's lack of agency and willingness to follow tradition and law makes him the perfect hero for this covertly imperialist tale.

The genre of Dahl's book is difficult to pinpoint because it does not appear to strictly adhere to the conventions and archetypes of any one genre, containing elements of realism, fantasy, moral tale, and adventure. This leads to a text that is at once 'both indulgent and didactic' (Honeyman, 2007: 210). The novel's combination of separate genres, some of which aspire to enjoyment value and others for their moral values, creates a text that encodes masculinities in a unique but powerful way, in terms of morals, class, and ideologies of race. The choice of a chocolate factory for a didactic tale is particularly apt because food is so charged with moral value in

Western society. As Susan Honeyman notes, '[f]ood lures convey cultural expectations and challenges, providing fictive opportunities for self-expression or disempowerment' (196). Perhaps the most pervasive moral tale in Western culture, that of the Fall from Grace in the Garden of Eden, is, if we are to understand it on its most rudimentary level, a story about the risks of not resisting food (195).

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is not as explicit in its engagement with the genre of fantasy as, for example, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but might still be considered in these terms. It features a child's adventure into a new and wondrous place, the 'timeless utopia' (Keyser, 2017: 404) represented by Wonka's chocolate factory. The children are awestruck by the incredible marvels that lie within Willy Wonka's factory. The factory is equally a fantasy in the sense that it appeals deeply to children's love of sweets and food, which Honeyman terms 'the currency of childhood' (195). At the same time, the location is not entirely exotic and new at all, as Charlie has lived nearby to it his whole life. A factory might also be considered part of a familiar, industrial environment in Britain, a place that holds little excitement for a child. All the same, this one contains the wonders of a fantastical land with miracles within that are explained neither as magical nor as scientifically possible.

Throughout, the text moralises on acceptable behaviour in children by contrasting naughty, privileged boys and girls with the deprived, near-angelic character of Charlie Bucket. While such moral imperatives are not uncommon in fantasy works, here they come from other traditions, too. Dahl draws on ideas of imperialist masculinities by incorporating adventure novel traditions that insist upon the superiority of civilised, white, European men. Like the imperialist adventure texts that came before it, Dahl's book also contains a journey populated with

challenges (though moral ones, and not intellectual or physical ones), with a prize or reward at the end as is often the case within this genre. Indeed, the text is as much a cautionary tale about the dangers of greed as it is an adventure novel. As Honeyman notes, Dahl both 'tempts and teaches[,] advocat[ing] both an appetite for chocolate and restraint, all the while tying in an idealized capitalist work ethic (alongside what appears to be slave labor in the factory)' (195).

Honeyman's comments about 'slave labor' are not uncommon in criticism of Dahl's text. Such remarks are typically levelled at the presentation of the Oompa-Loompas. The Oompa-Loompas are indeed something of a slave class, transported from an exotic location to work in Wonka's factory and possessing questionable working rights. A closer analysis of the text, however, reveals that there are other suggestions of imperialism too, which permeate the entire novel. The textual history of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, moreover, reveals the troubled past of this popular children's text, which has long had a difficult and changing relationship with concepts of race and imperialism.

As with the other books in this chapter, Dahl's protagonist is white, yet this was not always the case; the original, early draft of the novel, named *Charlie's Chocolate Boy*, featured Charlie as a black boy. All the other children who visit the factory were white. However, Charlie did not remain black because Dahl's agent suggested readers would ask 'why' he was not white (Siddique, 2017). The fact that there needed to be justification in the 1960s for a black protagonist is perhaps evidence of the othering of non-white people influenced by imperialist ideology even at a time when many of Britain's territories had gained independence. It is possible to see the early draft of the novel as reflecting on these processes of othering. Within it, the children enter the 'Easter Room', in which 'there are life-size candy molds of

creatures, and one of these life-size molds is shaped like a chocolate boy' (Keyser, 2017; cited in Russo, 2017). Wonka helps Charlie to get into the mould, which has interested him, but when he gets distracted the boy becomes trapped, covered in chocolate, and nearly suffocates (Keyser, 2017; cited in Russo, 2017). He is unable to be seen or heard until Charlie later manages to alert Wonka of his presence (Keyser, 2017; cited in Russo, 2017).

While the linking of a black child to chocolate might be considered racist in itself, *Charlie's Chocolate Boy* clearly makes some attempt to understand the experiences of black people. To an extent, this earlier draft reflects much of the marketing for chocolate in the twentieth century, which was heavily linked to racial stereotypes and 'imperialist fantasies' that 'connect[ed] brown skin with brown chocolate' (Keyser, 2017; cited in Russo, 2017). Other sweet foods commonly used racist images or stereotypes of black people for advertisement material: 'advertising and commodity culture granted a potent afterlife to the notion that the black body was a fungible, manipulable, even edible object' (Keyser, 2017: 406). The commodification of black people for the consumption of white people has a long history in the Western world. As Kayla Wazana Tompkins writes: 'eating culture […] played a significant part in the privileging of whiteness during the nineteenth century' (2012: 2). The chocolate mould, in Catherine Keyser's words:

> dramatize[s] the violence that results from the superimposition of stereotype
> on a living subject […] Dahl registers that the commodification of black
> bodies and of tropical ingredients renders racialized children profoundly
> vulnerable. (2017: 404)

Charlie's Chocolate Boy thus seems an attempt by a white British author to centre the experiences of people of colour at a time when the colonial legacy and racial

stereotypes still pervaded British culture; in doing so, it reveals 'the nightmare underbelly of racialization' (404). It is interesting, then, that in the final version of the text, Dahl appears to reverse this. Perhaps the change of Charlie from a black to a white character occurred in part because the agent thought it unlikely that white British readers would be able to sufficiently empathise with Charlie's experiences of racism. The decision to change Charlie's skin colour reinforces whiteness as an important facet of British national identity in the 1960s when the book was published and simultaneously looks back to a tradition of adventure fiction that had for decades privileged whiteness.

Nevertheless, Charlie is clearly distinct from the archetypal male hero of imperialist adventure fiction, and it is within his character that it becomes particularly clear that Dahl has created a text that amalgamates several genres. It might be argued that Charlie is not a 'hero' at all despite his morality and the journey he undertakes, because of his lack of agency throughout the story. This lack of agency is reinforced by the fact that he is not the narrator of the story; rather, the narration is in the third person. Charlie's perspective does not drive the narrative and he is not in control of how it is presented, though the story's events do follow him as the central character and the narrator sympathises with him. Indeed, he is more in keeping with the character of a moral tale than an adventure. His lack of agency feminises him, making him an unconventionally inactive hero. It is arguably his deprived economic background that makes this the case. As a family living in abject poverty, the Buckets cannot afford the same opportunities as the rich, who buy as many of Wonka's chocolate bars as possible to increase their chances of finding a ticket. Despite his efforts to buy as many bars as he can, the fact that Charlie manages to find a ticket is largely a matter of luck, so reduced are his chances. As

Grandpa George explains, the race for the Golden Tickets is largely a battle of class and privilege that seems, by its nature, intended to exclude impoverished children like Charlie: '[t]he kids who are going to find the Golden Tickets are the ones who can afford to buy bars of chocolate every day. Our Charlie gets only one a year. There isn't a hope' (2022 [1964]: 42). Dahl similarly describes the meagre circumstances in which the family live:

> [t]he house wasn't nearly large enough for so many people, and life was extremely uncomfortable for them all. There were only two rooms in the place altogether, and there was only one bed […I]n the winter, freezing cold draughts blew across the floor all night long, and it was awful. (15)

Crowded, cold and uncomfortable, the Bucket family struggle to meet their basic needs with one chapter even entitled 'The Family Begins to Starve'. It is this lack that is vital in defining Charlie's morality and his gendered identity. Charlie's class and economic circumstances appear to rob him of any agency, and it is this lack, along with his 'moderation, obedience, and willingness to work' (Honeyman, 2007: 210) that distinguishes him as the model child.

Charlie is indeed the epitome of moderation and obedience, but I would dispute the specific terminology used for the third quality: a 'willingness to work'. Honeyman's articulation of this makes some sense given that Charlie in no way expects to be given charity and is the only child to not demand anything of Wonka throughout the entirety of the visit. Yet the term 'work' implies a sense of agency that Charlie does not demonstrate (though his work ethic would undoubtedly be good). Rather, it is Charlie's passivity that is celebrated: obedience and selflessness. These qualities, and the lack of action taken by Charlie, are what distinguish him so positively, especially since he is faced with a form of temptation that none of the

other children experience: unlike Charlie they do not go to bed with a 'horrible empty feeling in their tummies' (16). While the other children continuously disobey Wonka, Charlie is the only perfectly behaved child, and this passivity ensures that he is deemed a suitable heir for Wonka. The passivity displayed by Charlie also makes him stereotypically feminine in contrast to the conventional hero typically found at the centre of adventure narratives.

At the end of the novel, Mr Wonka confesses to wanting a child as his heir because a grown-up 'won't listen to me […] He will try to do things his own way and not mine […] I want a good sensible loving child, one to whom I can tell all my most precious sweet-making secrets' (185). Charlie exactly fulfils these criteria. It is interesting that Dahl should put forward an image of good and sensible children as those who listen to adults and do not 'do things [their] own way'. Here is a telling instance of an author of children's literature creating an idealised image of a child. As Jacqueline Rose notes, '[t]here is no child behind the category "children's fiction", other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes' (Rose, 1984: 10). This is not to say that Dahl exclusively advocates for listening to grown-ups; indeed, in many of his stories, such as *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), adults (such as Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge) are immoral and abusive, and do not know best. Yet in this story, it is Charlie's obedience and goodness that wins him the prize, qualities which he evidences by not acting, and this behaviour ensures that good things happen to him. These are rarely the result of Charlie's own actions, and are instead *dei ex machina*. Charlie's lack of agency means he is the only child who does not interfere with the factory's operations and cause trouble for Wonka, making him, in the eyes of an adult reader, the ideal child. The novel thus reverses the typical narrative structure of

the adventure novel, in which the agency of the protagonist is what often ensures they can take on the challenges of the new, exotic environment and succeed. This lack of agency, however, is important to the continuation of the imperialist agenda in this story; it is Charlie, thoroughly obedient, who will not question the dynamics of the factory and who will continue to operate it as Wonka pleases, making him the perfect heir to his legacy.

Willy Wonka, meanwhile, conforms well to an image of imperial masculinity. This is most clearly shown in his relationship with the Oompa Loompas, his force of workers. From early in the book, before the reader has even met the Oompa Loompas, there is an air of mystery around their identity that is part of local legend. Their secret identity alone is reminiscent of the mystery of far-off places and the peoples inhabiting them that was pervasive in adventure fiction and culture generally at the height of empire. In Chapter Four, tellingly entitled 'The Secret Workers', we see Grandpa Joe telling Charlie the mysterious story of how, because of spies, Wonka closed the factory and let his workforce go (29). Months later, Wonka's factory starts again, but no workers have entered the factory and no-one knows who is working within (30-31). All Grandpa Joe can tell Charlie is that they are, from the shadows he sometimes sees in the factory windows, '*tiny* people, people no taller than my knee' to which Charlie replies that '[t]here aren't any such people' (31). That the Oompa Loompas seem at first small, indeed '*tiny*', people is reminiscent of the imperialist belief that people native to colonised territories were 'lesser' than white European colonisers.

In a further early signal of imperialism, we learn that the factory is warm because '[Wonka's] workers are used to an *extremely* hot climate […] They can't stand the cold! They'd perish if they went outdoors in this weather! They'd freeze to

death!' (83). The preferred climate of the Oompa Loompas again seems to mirror the contrast between temperate Europe and the hotter climates of colonial territories in Africa and Asia. This association is continued when the children enter the first room in the factory. The children are met with a natural landscape that is suggestive of imperialist adventure stories, which often feature exploring unknown lands including wild natural environments. Dahl describes a lush, green world that evokes the magic and wonder of exploration, but within the confines of a domestic British setting, as we are reminded by the 'mass of enormous glass pipes' (130):

> [t]hey were looking down upon a lovely valley. There were green meadows on either side of the valley, and along the bottom of it there flowed a great brown river.
>
> What is more, there was a tremendous waterfall halfway along the river – a steep cliff over which the water curled and rolled in a solid sheet, and then went crashing down into a boiling churning whirlpool of froth and spray.
>
> […] Graceful trees and bushes were growing along the riverbanks – weeping willows and alders and tall clumps of rhododendrons with their pink and red and mauve blossoms. In the meadows there were thousands of buttercups (87-89).

The types of plants and trees mentioned here are not particularly specific species, meaning that the natural environment described could feasibly be European, African or Asian. This vagueness is suggestive of the huge reach of the British Empire, which, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, was so vast that it was termed the empire 'on which the sun never sets' (Levine, 2007: 105). We might also compare Wonka's factory to a greenhouse, which can be interpreted as a microcosm of empire.

Indeed, greenhouses are environments that aim to imitate hotter climates, allowing the British, for example, to grow plants not able to flourish in the usual climate. Botanical gardens like Kew Gardens 'played a critical role in generating and disseminating useful scientific knowledge' (Brockway, 1979: 450) in the nineteenth century, and 'had a period of intense activity in the service of Western colonial expansion' (461). Wonka's factory, like the greenhouse which is made to imitate climates of hot and tropical countries, represents at once both domestic British setting and exotic faraway territories, and equally the removal of these species from colonial territories for use and consumption by the British.

It is here that we meet the Oompa-Loompas, who are yet again introduced as 'tiny men […] no larger than medium-sized dolls' (92) in another sign of their supposed and innate inferiority. Their diminished status is again suggested by Charlie who asserts that 'they can't be *real* people' (92), immediately throwing into question the humanity of the Oompa-Loompas. It is vital that the white male protagonist, Charlie, should state this, reinforcing his superior white European standpoint. Equally, as the eventual heir to the factory he will be in charge of the Oompa-Loompas, and his insistence that these tiny men from a foreign land cannot be real people is reflective of a true imperialist leader ideology. Native peoples under colonial rule were often the targets of dehumanising commentary, described variously as beasts, animals, and savages and often stripped of human status, as I have already shown in this thesis. In spite of the fact that Mr Wonka defends his workers, stating '[o]f course they're real people […] They're Oompa-Loompas' (92), the respect within the relationship does not stretch far enough that the Oompa-Loompas get anything beyond basic rights.

While in modern editions of the novel the Oompa-Loompas have 'rosy-white' skin (101), earlier editions provide a clear testament to their links to colonised native peoples: when the book was first published, the Oompa-Loompas were 'depicted as African pygmy people' from the jungle (Gershon, 2020). Dahl was forced to change this in the 1970s, when he was criticised for depicting a black pseudo-slave class under the power of a dominant white man. That the Oompa-Loompas were originally black Africans is perhaps the clearest sign of all that Dahl's depiction draws on an imperialist coloniser-colonised dynamic. In a further reference to stereotypes of primitive, tribal African people, the Oompa-Loompas are also shown as wearing 'deerskins', 'leaves' or, for the children, 'nothing at all' (96), a trait shared by the native peoples of the two other texts examined within this chapter.

The imperialist connotations of the Oompa-Loompas, even with the change to skin colour, continue when one examines their name and mannerisms. The name 'Oompa-Loompa' might be seen as a stereotypical nonsense name meant to satirise tribal cultures as they were perceived by European countries at the height of empire. None of them, moreover, have personal names; they are a monolithic class without individual identities as is commonplace with depictions of native peoples, especially in Bosco's text. An interesting interpretation of both the historic racism and monolithic presentation of the Oompa-Loompas is added when one considers the 2005 film adaptation directed by Tim Burton, in which Deep Roy, an Anglo-Indian actor, played the parts of all 165 Oompa-Loompas. This decision only serves to reinforce the imperialist suggestions of a monolithic pseudo-slave class evident in the original text.

The 'cheerful, diminutive Oompa-Loompas' (2017: 404), as Keyser describes them, are also deprived of humanity and made into a spectacle through their means of

communication; they are never actually shown speaking, only, on occasion, giggling in response to Wonka's commands (e.g. 103) and immediately carrying out these commands. Their silliness and simpleness are intended to be both endearing and diminutive, and can be read as likening them to children, in a patronising diminishing of their intelligence as (supposedly) adult humans. Moreover, states of 'animatedness' in characters of colour can contribute to their racialisation, constituting 'ugly categories of feeling reinforcing the historically tenacious construction of racialized subjects as excessively emotional, bodily subjects' (Ngai, 2005: 125). Wonka also, somewhat patronisingly, clicks to summon his workers to him, as if to summon slaves (e.g. 101 and 126). When the Oompa-Loompas do communicate, they do so through the medium of song (see 104-105; 127-129; 147-148; 171-174), presented it seems for the entertainment of Wonka and the visitors, and representing something of a spectacle. This is reminiscent of *Tam-Tam de Kotokro*, which similarly presents ethnic 'others' as a spectacle as the white Europeans perceive the variety of skin colours and cultures of the various tribes.

Some of the jobs that the Oompa-Loompas perform for Wonka imply an inherent inferiority because of the potential danger they involve. An example of this is when Wonka tells the visitors about his 'Hair Toffee' which stimulates new hair growth (116). He confesses to trying the sweets out on Oompa-Loompas, through which he finds out that the sweets 'work[] too well' (117): 'I tried it on an Oompa-Loompa yesterday in the Testing Room and immediately a huge black beard started shooting out of his chin, and the beard grew so fast that soon it was trailing all over the floor in a thick hairy carpet' which required a 'lawn mower to keep it in check' (117). He confesses to similarly trying his new chewing gum meal out on 'twenty Oompa-Loompas', who each time turned into a blueberry as Violet Beauregarde does

(126). The seeming risks that Wonka is willing to take with regards to his workers thus implies their inferiority and lower human value, which is further compounded by the impression of their disposability given by their monolithic presentation within the text; the Oompa-Loompas are objects, produced in an endless and identical supply to be used by Wonka as he wishes.

We might equally return here to the title of Chapter Four, 'The Secret Workers', and what this implies about the identity of the Oompa-Loompas. The work of this pseudo slave class is vital to the functioning of the factory, and yet they are never publicly credited for their labour. They are Dahl's answer to a marginalised and oppressed working class, who produce but have no control over the means of production. The Oompa-Loompas thus face a double oppression. While Willy Wonka is a white man in a position of power, and takes glory for the marvels of the factory, the Oompa-Loompas are an underappreciated and racialised working class, who must sell their labour to survive.

The imperialist connotations of the text are further emphasised when we learn how Wonka came across the Oompa-Loompas. Wonka recounts his visit to 'Loompaland' and recalls how he '[i]mported' the Oompa-Loompas from there (93), as if to further imply that these people are items imported from a foreign country. Wonka calls Loompaland a 'terrible country' of 'thick jungles infested by the most dangerous beasts in the world' (93). The terminology used to describe the country at this point is reminiscent of the depiction of colonial territories in adventure novels, where landscapes tended to be either verdant, lush, fertile paradises, or, on the contrary hostile and requiring subduing by colonial adventurers. The exoticism of the land is further emphasised by Mrs Salt, who confesses that, even as a geography teacher, she has never heard of Loompaland (93). Wonka's story presents the Oompa-

Loompas as helpless and poor, living in tree houses to escape dangerous predators, surviving on disgusting and undesirable foods (93), and ultimately experiencing malnourishment, the leader 'looking thin and starved' (95). Wonka tells them that they may work in his factory in return for cacao beans, their favourite food (ibid). Here, he is presented as a white savour, having rescued native peoples from a terrible fate and liberating them from their dark and alien cultures, in the same fashion as the 'mission civilisatrice' dictated. The Oompa-Loompas are glad for this interruption to their way of life: their leader 'leap[s] up from his chair' and is eager to go with Wonka (95), who is ultimately presented as a philanthropist. As a further dehumanising act, Wonka tells of how he 'smuggled' (95) his workers 'over in large packing cases with holes in them' (96), further implying their existence as commodity and not a people.

Willy Wonka himself, meanwhile, is at once portrayed as a magician, inventor, businessman and colonialist, as well as a genius. One might argue that it is through Wonka that the 'glorious' image of empire is sustained. He is the achiever of the impossible, inventing such paradoxical creations as non-melting ice cream that can be left in the sun all day without going runny (22) and 'chewing-gum that never loses its taste' (23), and he is victim to jealous spies wishing to steal his work (28-29). Wonka is surrounded in mystery and the identities of his workers only add to his enigmatic image. His exemplary qualities are sustained when Charlie first meets this 'extraordinary little man':

> He had a black top hat on his head.
>
> He wore a tail coat made of a beautiful plum-coloured velvet.
>
> His trousers were bottle green.
>
> His gloves were pearly grey.

> And in one hand he carried a fine gold-topped walking cane.
>
> Covering his chin, there was a small, neat, pointed black beard – a goatee. And his eyes – his eyes were most marvellously bright. They seemed to be sparkling and twinkling at you all the time. The whole face, in fact, was alight with fun and laughter. (80)

Dahl itemises each facet of Wonka's appearance here, giving each its own line to emphasise the importance of Wonka and create greater mystery and tension around his identity. The word 'and' is used at the beginning of several sentences to give an impression of the endlessness of Wonka's greatness. A sense of luxuriousness and eccentricity is attributed to Wonka through his clothing, with 'plum-coloured velvet' and a 'gold-topped walking cane', and his 'sparkling' eyes and quick movements present him to be an interesting, youthful character, albeit one shrouded in mystery. In this respect he resembles enigmatic but appealing adults such as Uncle Merry of Susan Cooper's *Over Sea, Under Stone* (1965) and Marlow in *Tam-Tam de Kotokro*.

Dahl's novel ends, of course, with a transfer of power from one white man to another. As an innocent and moral white boy, Charlie is perfectly situated to take forward Wonka's legacy and rule over the Oompa-Loompas. The Oompa-Loompas, people of colour in the original publication of the novel, are considered incapable of taking on this task: '*[s]omeone's* got to keep it going – if only for the sake of the Oompa-Loompas' (185). Indeed, the Oompa-Loompas are giggling, childish, and ultimately cannot be trusted to have such power and must be taken care of; it is the white men who are capable of talking about the factory's future, while the workers who know the factory best are not present at all. The moral of the story not only serves as a message to children about being obedient and following the orders of grown-ups, but equally reasserts of white male authority.

In conclusion, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* maintains an image of 'superior' white masculinity throughout, creating within the factory an imitation colonial territory in which Willy Wonka reigns supreme over an undervalued slave class. The Oompa-Loompas are reminiscent of a colonised people who are used either for labour or for the enjoyment of the main white men in the story, Willy Wonka and Charlie Bucket. The book's history and the genres it employs further suggest that this beloved text is underpinned by imperialist values that implicate masculine identity in subtler, but no less powerful, ways than the other works discussed here. The figure of Charlie Bucket constitutes a moral exemplar: a figure of pure white childhood innocence and the perfect candidate to carry on the imperialist legacy of Willy Wonka. Indeed, in contrast to more typical heroes in imperialist adventure works, Charlie overcomes challenges through his exemplary morality and lack of agency, both of which positively distinguish him from the other children. In a similar fashion to the other texts analysed within this chapter, there is a monolithic presentation of an indigenous group. While here the Oompa-Loompas are childlike and immature, the native peoples in *L'Enfant* and *Tam-Tam* are savage and wild. Overall, Dahl's novel is at once a fantasy, a realistic tale of deprivation and poverty, a moral tale, and a text that draws on the imperialist adventure narrative tradition. Dahl presents an image of masculinities tied together with ideologies of white Britishness, tradition, morality, obedience and adult visions of the 'ideal child'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the three texts discussed maintain an image of superior white European masculinity despite attempts throughout each of them to give a semblance of equality and understanding with native men. This attempt to portray equality perhaps stems

from the experience of the three authors, who each lived in colonial territories at some point during their lives. The complexity of this relationship contemplates the changing and dwindling power of Britain and France with their respective colonies during the period at the end of and following World War Two. In the French texts, native masculinities are often portrayed with some reverence for the skill and prowess of native men; this is particularly the case in *Tam-Tam de Kotokro*, with its specific knowledge of the cultures of the tribes it portrays. Both *Tam-Tam* and *L'Enfant* depict friendships developing between white and native boys. Yet within both, the native character becomes assimilated into white European culture and their own cultural identities are erased. All three texts portray native men in extreme terms suggesting an innate inferiority, lesser intelligence and a need to be dominated by the superior white man. In the French texts this manifests as savagery and wildness, while Dahl opts for a childish and immature depiction of native male characters.

In all three novels analysed, perspective and narrative voice serve to bolster the authority of white male characters. Both French texts focalised are through the perspective of white boys, leaving native men voiceless and seemingly present only to aid the development of the white boy. Dahl's novel, by contrast, is narrated in the third-person, but it too is centred around the perfect morality of a white boy who is surrounded by voiceless others. In this respect, these novels are united by the fraught inheritance of their imperial legacies.

Conclusion

In the 1930s, Paul Hazard expressed optimistic ideas on the reconciliatory potential of children's fiction, ideas that would become especially pertinent in the post-World War Two years when ideals of rebuilding were of central importance across Europe and beyond. Despite this, extended studies critically analysing the treatment of sociopolitical subjects within the literature for young people published during the immediate post-war decades are surprisingly rare.

The timeframe of this thesis is a complex one within children's literature scholarship. The focal decades straddle two very different eras in British children's literature: the inter- and immediate post-war years have been described as uninspiring, and yet the 1950s-1970s are commonly described as a second Golden Age (Pearson, 2019: 209-210). As a result of this, few scholarly works focus collectively on these three decades of the midcentury. John Townsend described children's post-war fiction in Britain as 'dreary' (Townsend, 1965: 163; cited in Reynolds, 2016: 5), while Elizabeth Poynter's study of 1930-1970 British adventure series refers to the earlier part of its time frame as one 'long derided by critics' (2018: 3). These views bear a striking resemblance to the patterns in children's publishing at the time. The immediate post-war years saw initial economic struggles in publishing, which then gave way to renewal and innovation into the 1950s and beyond, a pattern that has similarly been identified within French children's publishing. I argue that this collective period of three decades is a rare focus in children's literature studies due to its melding of such different moments, historically and in terms of the publishing industry. However, the many outright contrasts witnessed within these three decades can be seen, conversely, as a good reason to study them together. When one takes into account the ideal of international

brotherhood that Hazard saw in the genre of children's fiction, this period in fact draws together a number of significant ideologies. This thesis also responds to the need for more comparative children's literature studies of gender, providing an intercultural perspective on masculinity at a key moment in history.

The aim here has thus been to analyse the images of masculinities portrayed in British and French children's texts published between 1940-1970. Through each chapter, historical context concerning the status of and changes to ideologies of gender and masculinity in both nations has been used to inform close textual analysis of children's fiction. Through this combination of context and literary analysis, I have sought to understand the breadth of representations of masculinity marketed to children of the period. As Britain and France are united by many of the same historical events and publishing developments, but in distinct ways, I have analysed their children's fiction during this period in order to bring into relief cultural similarities and differences and access a deeper understanding of masculine representations during the mid-century.

Each chapter set out to answer the research objectives by contributing one focal topic representing a significant historical context: series fiction, the family unit, war, and imperialism. Chapter One asked how series detective fiction implicates the masculine hero role by bringing about a more neutral space in the form of a group protagonist. Chapter Two sought to understand how masculine identity shapes and is shaped by the family unit. Chapter Three analysed the ways in which war and conflict pushes the boundaries of masculinity and examined the implications of healing discourses. Finally, Chapter Four looked at masculinities against the backdrop of imperialism, analysing the dynamics between white European men and native men.

On concluding this research, what is most striking is how the children's fiction analysed in this thesis responds with nuance to the intricacies and complexities of mid-century masculinity across Britain and France. The three decades of 1940-1970 saw something of a fragmentation of masculine identity in both nations due to the multitude of gendered discourses prevailing in this timeframe. Through experiences of war, imperialism, women's liberation, changes to family and gender ideologies, and the boom of youth cultures, not only did French and British masculinities come to experience pressures and changes, but they also experienced a broader conflict between progress and tradition, and a harsh disconnect between desired masculine behaviours and actual lived experience.

The prevailing discourses around masculinity during World War Two promoted a need for resilience in the face of conflict. The Allies succeeded in defeating the Nazis, but in reality many men were left irrevocably traumatised and wounded, and families torn apart. The French nation had been considerably emasculated by the Occupation, and influential government and military personnel expressed a necessity to revirilise men, while Britain's self-image was preserved as one of more steadfast independence. Meanwhile, both French and British women were caught between craving the stability of tradition and the nuclear family, and the incoming women's liberation movements and gradual changes to gender roles. The huge imperial empires of both nations had given rise to beliefs of white male supremacy that dominated their cultures, and while this sentiment lingered into the late twentieth-century, decolonisation processes were simultaneously undermining European imperial authority. Children's publishing similarly hung between poles: on the one hand, children's literature and media were deeply influenced by protective, nostalgically idealised views of childhood in the post-war era, and bans shielded

young people from 'inappropriate' material; on the other hand, youth culture was developing, driven in part by market imperatives, and events such as those of Mai 1968 were the apex in transforming ideas about young people.

Together, the chapters speak to this muddled period of gendered history, whether through series fiction, detective stories, adventure, fable and fairytale, fantasy, or social realism. The thesis utilises a broad range of popular fiction in part to grasp the overarching ideas that permeated children's fiction regardless of its genre. My research highlights a variety of expressions of masculine identity in the French and British children's fiction of this period, and simultaneously a fierce underlying expectation of tradition and normativity that lingers regardless of individual content. The masculinities analysed throughout the thesis, like the concept of gender itself, reveal the variable, contingent nature of what is understood by masculine identity, and the relationship of this to social change and conflict in the period 1940 to 1970.

The thesis has witnessed masculinities that both conform to and contest essentialist and normative ideas. Overall, many texts do at the least interrogate the boundaries of masculinity and expected masculine conduct, whether this appears to be a signposted goal of the author or not. This is reflective of a period which, as has been discussed, might be characterised as transitional in so many different ways. The texts mirror the subtle undercurrents of change that punctuated mid-century history. Some male characters wish to escape the masculine identity imposed on them by society, which is especially true of the characters of Chapters Two and Three. Thus masculinities sometimes present as a protest against deeply held societal values, whether by defying the father's legacy, or by seeking to solve conflict through pacifist means, and denouncing any glory or pride in battle. Challenges also manifest

in subtler ways that are not necessarily sustained by the author's own explicit viewpoint. For example, the texts of Chapter Four are deeply rooted in imperialist ideals that present white men as superior, and this is apparent throughout the narrative structures of all three texts. However, I would argue that some challenge to preconceived ideals is evident in the friendships that develop between characters in the French texts; often these friendships suggest admiration of native masculinities by white men and boys, an admiration that at times appears to dissolve the power dynamic between the two. Yet the overarching white dominance means that the text resists posing any true challenge. This, I would argue, is evidence of the changes and ideological conflicts of the time, imperial pride standing strong and omnipresent throughout children's fiction of the period, but decolonisation also undermining this same pride and bringing about contemplation of the nature of difference. In some cases, this challenge even manifests as a struggle by female characters against essentialist values to carry out 'masculine' roles, most visibly in Chapter One. Where challenge to widespread ideals happens and female characters attempt some movement into male spaces, however, this is nearly always resisted by representatives of tradition, notably by figures of authority within and beyond the family.

No text in this thesis escapes from this societal pressure, and every text indicates some form of acknowledgement of normative or essentialist ideas, whether this is the explicit view put forth by the author or not. The texts are united by this awareness of societal expectation, which permeates the plots, structures and narrative voices of nearly all of the fiction analysed. Just as patriarchy structures and determines the dynamics of our society, so the texts are similarly structured in a reflection of this, with white male voices controlling many of the fundamental

components that make up each story. When thinking back to the target audience of the texts analysed, one might think male dominance is natural; of course boys would want to read about texts in which they are central and powerful. The significance of a discourse of male dominance being replicated in the texts marketed to boys for their consumption, however, cannot be overstated, especially during a period of time when there were significant changes to the gendered order that provided early threats to the status quo.

In terms of the differences between the texts based on nation, the tendency observed throughout this thesis has been that the French texts show more willingness to depart from preconceived ideals than the British texts. Male characters in French texts analysed in this research are more likely to depart from hegemonic masculine ideals to, for example, break away from family expectations, favour pacifist responses to conflict, and create friendships with the 'other'. This is most evident in Chapter Three, but differences are evident throughout the thesis. In Chapter One, the French text brings about a space in which feminine heroism is not only possible but largely goes without challenge, where the British texts are more firmly anchored to ideas of masculine heroism. In Chapter Two, one French text is supportive of leaving the nuclear family behind in search of one's own identity, while the other portrays many normative values but depicts an exceptionally emotive male protagonist with maternal instincts perhaps influenced by his close relationship with his mother. The British text, meanwhile, is stern in its belief that children should be raised in a functional, normative nuclear family unit. In Chapter Four, the French texts portray more willingness in white boys to befriend native boy characters, while the British text is more uniquely centred on the story of the white boy. All three texts in this

chapter reflect this same structural white dominance, but the French texts depict a more explicit desire to understand.

Whilst the study of a selected corpus cannot claim to prove absolute difference between the representation of gender in British and French children's fiction of this period, it is worth considering the specific influences that bring about the differences observed in the texts studied. As has been mentioned previously, the wartime experiences of France are interesting in this regard: the intensity with which the Occupation was felt as an admission of effeminacy and weakness, and the failure of the state to protect itself by traditional means, are mirrored within texts in which male heroes grow, heal, and fight their battles by not fighting them at all. While Britain certainly experienced its devastating share of losses during World War Two – and indeed the British texts do show some recognition of the destruction caused by war and of alternatives to conflict – it makes historical sense that British texts would be more willing to depict some glory and pride in war. In terms of imperialism, the British empire remains the largest of all time, and British culture was arguably more firmly steeped in its 'ethos and attitudes' (Richards, 1989b: 2) than France.

This research responds to a necessity to focus greater critical attention on mid-century masculinities within children's literature, attention to which is scarce in both Francophone and Anglophone scholarship. While the portrayal of women and girls is undoubtedly a vital topic of study when statistics suggest that girls read more but see themselves in less central roles, gendered studies of children's literature have somewhat neglected studies of masculinity. To reiterate the words of Connan-Pintado and Béhoteguy in the Introduction, Francophone studies typically prioritise 'la condition des filles' (2014: 8; 'the condition of girls'). While extended studies of femininity within children's literature are increasingly common in Francophone

scholarship, from Smadja and Chabrol Gagne, to Perrot and Hadengue's collection dedicated to *écriture féminine* and children's fiction, masculinity has received much less critical attention. When masculinity does appear in studies, it is treated mostly in tandem with femininity and rarely as its own topic worthy of study. The influence of feminism is a valid explanation for this phenomenon; in a patriarchal society it is doubtless vital to interrogate representations of girls and their struggles to be seen as central characters. Yet, in turn, studies of masculinity serve to reinforce the values of such feminist studies; this thesis is, itself, a testament to the dominance of masculinity in a selection of mid-century children's fiction. While the dearth of masculinity-focused studies is undoubtedly less critical within Anglophone scholarship, there is certainly a lack of studies drawing together this specific historical moment with masculinity, and the same phenomenon exists prioritising girls and femininity, as several critics have recognised (see for example Nodelman, 2002: 1-2; Stephens, 2002: x). My aim here has been to contribute to adding in the other side of the gender story, and from a comparative perspective.

However, like all research, this thesis inevitably has limitations. If it could be expanded in future research, I would wish to go beyond the current corpus, including more French and British texts to further clarify the images of masculinity exposed by this research. The inclusion of more female authors could pose interesting questions about how authorship might influence representations of masculinity. The framework and key focal topics used in this thesis might be used to comparatively examine the literatures of other European nations with reference to their individual circumstances. The focal topics, moreover, might be expanded to include representations in other popular forms such as comic books, and while texts addressing girls were not part of the corpus for this thesis, we might equally consider

how the other sex is portrayed within children's fiction directed primarily towards girls. The same might be said for a parallel study that seeks to understand how girls are portrayed within texts for boys, though the relative lack of central female characters alone might already speak volumes.

In the words of Perry Nodelman, '[t]he more that masculinity is made to appear as a set of malleable cultural conventions, the more we will be able to think about and possibly even revise its implications' (2002: 14). The miscomprehension of masculinity even in an age where men's studies exist – Nodelman has described this misunderstanding as a belief in masculinity constituting freedom from gendered pressures (1-2) – has deprived scholars of a key tool for understanding so many mechanisms and dynamics within our society. Studies of masculinities, to conclude, are invaluable in understanding how the world has come to be, including when it comes to the feminist project and the representation of girls. In light of the dominance of studies of femininity within children's literary scholarship: how better to comprehend the necessary action for equality of the sexes – whether in reality or in fictional representation – than by interrogating the very force that, as this thesis testifies, dominates?

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